

Reformed Theological Seminary – Houston

Course Syllabus

JOSHUA TO ESTHER 5OT5250

Instructor: Peter Y. Lee
Professor of Old Testament

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- **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This overview of the literature, history and themes of Joshua through Esther gives particular attention to the relevance of these books for the church and world today
- **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
 - Comprehension:
 1. To increase your knowledge of the English Bible from Judges to Esther.
 2. To increase your knowledge of introductory issues in each book from Judges to Esther.
 3. To increase your knowledge of the history of Israel from the period of the Judges to the post-exilic community.
 - Competence
 1. To sharpen your ability to interpret Judges to Esther in their historical, theological, and literary contexts.
 2. To sharpen your ability to apply the teaching of Judges to Esther in your own life and in the life of the local church.
 - Character
 1. To be a person of growing faith.
 2. To be a person of increasing hope.
 3. To be a person of deepening love.
- **CLASS DATES:**
 - Aug 28-29, Sept 4-5, Oct 2-3
 - Fridays from 3-9pm, Saturdays from 9-3:30pm
- **OFFICE HOURS:**
 - By appointment (contact the instructor to setup a time and place).

- **REQUIRED READINGS:**

- The historical books of the Old Testament Scriptures: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- Miles V. Van Pelt, editor. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: Gospel Promised*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. Pages 159-246, 399-418, 475-494, 515-541.
- Iain Provan, V. Philips Longs, Tremper Longman III. *A Biblical History of Israel*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- Victor P. Hamilton. *Handbook on the Historical Books*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- John D. Currid and David P. Barrett. *ESV Bible Atlas*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. Selections.
- Collection of articles and essays
 - ❑ S. L. Richter, “Deuteronomistic History” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (eds. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson; Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 219-230.
 - ❑ Dominique Charpin, “History of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Overview” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol. 2* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 807-829
 - ❑ “Archeology and Biblical Studies” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (ed. Tremper Longman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 100-109
 - ❑ P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., “The Apology of David,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 489-504; = *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, 8; Winona Lake, IN: 2000), 260-275
 - ❑ A. Kirk Grayson, “Assyrian Rule of Conquered Territory in Ancient Western Asia” *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol. 2* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 959-968
 - ❑ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “King Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonian Empire” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol. 2* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 969-979

- ❑ Niels Peter Lemche, “History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2 (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 1195-1218

- **REQUIREMENTS:**

- *Attendance:* You are required to attend each class. If you know you cannot make it to a class session, notify me in advance. *And no use of smart phones or tablets during class!*
- *Research Paper:* Due **Dec 4 (Friday)**. See below.
- *Reading Report:* For each of the reading assignments, provide the following information: 1) date completed; 2) percentage read; 3) 2-3 sentences describing what you learned. Due **Dec 4 (Friday)**.
- *Exam:* There will be one exam. The exam questions will be largely based on materials from the class lectures and class discussions. Details of the exam will be discussed on the first day of class (Feb 2). **The exam is due Friday, Oct 16.** See below (“Study Guide”) also for more details.
- *Due Dates on Assignments:*

Final Exam	Oct 16 (Friday)
Research Paper	Dec 4 (Friday)
Reading Report	Dec 4 (Friday)
- *Total Grade:*

✓ Reading Report:	20% of total grade
✓ Research Paper:	40% of total grade
✓ Final Exam:	40% of total grade

RESEARCH PAPERS

Provided below are the specific details of your Research Paper assignment. Cite passages from Scripture as needed. Proofread your papers for spelling and grammatical errors. The topic of each paper and their due dates are provided below.

- **Paper Topic**

- *Describe the parallel between the ministry of Elijah and Moses and explain the reason for this.*

Students who have not taken Biblical Hebrew must choose this paper topic. This paper should be approximately 3000 words in length. Use at least 8 scholarly resources. **Due Dec 12 (Friday).**

OR

- *Write a Hebrew exegetical paper that provides a grammatico-historical and historical-redemptive analysis on a text in the Former Prophets.*

For students who have taken Biblical Hebrew. This paper should be approximately 3000 words in length. You will follow a verse-by-verse approach while focusing on the major theme/message of the passage in your comments. Use at least 8 scholarly sources. **Due Dec 12 (Friday).**

- **Research Paper Requirements.**

- Double-spaced lines.
- No title page.
- A bibliography as the last page of the paper (this is not to be counted as part of the page-count) which uses at least eight good (solid scholarly, not popular theological, non-internet) sources.
- **DUE DATE:** An electronic copy of the paper is to be turned in (emailed to plee@rts.edu) on the due date (**Dec 4**) either as a Word document or PDF. Late papers will not be accepted.
- Papers will be marked down due to spelling and grammatical errors.

- **Grading Criteria:** A successful paper will conform to the following standards.
 - **Clear Thesis (Answers the question clearly):** The thesis (purpose) is well stated without any ambiguity and reflects accurately the message/theology of the passage/theme in question.
 - **Well Written (Good flow, diction, structure, style):** The paper is well organized and thoughtful in its presentation. The structure of the paper flows from the thesis and the paragraphs interconnect seamlessly where the author's development of thought can be clearly seen. The writing style is *cogent* (logical), *clear* (easy to understand), and *concise* (stating thoughts without redundancy, or treading into irrelevant materials).
 - **Well Argued (Cogent arguments that are relevant to the thesis):** The paper shows a command of the subject matter and an academic and scholarly level of analysis that is insightful and fresh. The arguments used to defend and/or describe the thesis were persuasive.
 - **Biblically Sound (Engages the text appropriately and with good exegetical insight):** The paper interacts with the relevant Biblical materials (in the original language) and demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the theme/passage in its grammatical-historical context. It brings in other relevant Scripture texts in support of its thesis/purpose.
 - **Thoughtful and Researched (Interacts with class lectures, reading, and secondary research at a "second order" level):** The paper interacts with a variety (ancient and modern, commentaries, monographs, journal articles) of relevant and useful resources, which are used to enhance the thesis of the paper – not substitute for it. There is no question about plagiarism or any other dishonest or academically questionable activity. The paper meets set requirements (e.g., word count), minimum resources in bibliography. The pages are numbered. Formatting of the paper follows the guidelines found in either *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) or *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

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Term Paper Grading Criteria and Comments

Student Name:

Class:

Paper:

	Category	Description	Score	Comments
	Clear Thesis	Answers the question clearly. 20 points		
	Well Written	Good flow, diction, structure, style. Not too long or short. 20 points		
	Well Argued	Cogent arguments that are relevant to the thesis. 20 points		
	Biblically Sound	Engages the text appropriately and with good exegetical insight. 20 points		
	Thoughtful and Researched	Interacts with class lectures, reading, and secondary research at a "second order" level. 20 points		

Total: ____/100

General Comments:

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Provided below is a tentative lecture schedule with relevant required reading assignments. The instructor reserves the privilege to change these lectures and schedule as he sees fit. Students are NOT required to prepare these readings before class.

DATE	LECTURE	REQUIRED READING
Aug 28-29	Introductory Matters Deuteronomy Joshua	• Lemche, "History of Ancient Syria" • Charpin, "History of Ancient Mesopotamia"
	Deuteronomy	• Richter, "Deuteronomistic History" • Baker, "Archeology"
	Joshua	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 101-109 • Hamilton, "Joshua" • Van Pelt, "Joshua"
	OT Historiography Judges	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 109-117 • Hamilton, "Judges"
	Judges (continued)	• Hamilton, "Ruth" • Van Pelt, "Judges," "Ruth"
Sept 4-5	Samuel	• Provan, <i>History</i>, 138-168
	Samuel (continued)	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 119-139 • Hamilton, "1 Samuel" • Provan, <i>History</i>, 193-227
	Samuel (continued)	• Provan, <i>History</i>, 228-238 • Van Pelt, "Samuel"
	Samuel (continued)	• McCarter, "Apology"
	Davidic Covenant	• Hamilton, "2 Samuel"
Oct 2-3	Kings	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 141-153 • Hamilton, "1 Kings 1-11" • Van Pelt, "Kings"
	Kings (continued)	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 155-165, 167-177 • Beaulieu, "King Nabonidus" • Grayson, "Assyrian Rule" • Hamilton, "1 Kings 12-2 Kings 25" • Provan, <i>History</i>, 239-258

	DATE	LECTURE	REQUIRED READING
		Chronicles	• Hamilton, "1-2 Chronicles," "Ezra-Nehemiah" • Van Pelt, "Chronicles"
		Exile Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther	• Currid, <i>Atlas</i>, 179-186 • Grayson, "Assyrian Rule" • Hamilton, "Esther," "Ezra-Nehemiah" • Provan, <i>History</i>, 278-304 • Van Pelt, "Ezra," "Nehemiah"; "Esther"

	Oct 16	FINAL EXAM
	Dec 4	RESEARCH PAPER
	Dec 4	READING REPORT

STUDY GUIDE FOR EXAM
Joshua to Esther (5OT5250)

This study guide is to help prepare students for the Final exam. The exam will be based on the questions from this guide. It will be in three parts: 1) Key Dates; 2) Identification; 3) Questions from lectures. If you can maneuver through this study guide, then you will do well.

- **Key Dates:** Know the year(s) in which these events occurred. Refer to Merrill for specifics. You will be asked to list them in chronological order AND the year in which the event occurred. See Lecture 14 for the majority of these dates.
 - Reign of Saul
 - Reign of David in Hebron
 - Reign of David in Jerusalem
 - Reign of Solomon
 - Beginning of the construction on the Temple
 - Division of the Kingdom
 - Reign of Jehu
 - Exile of Northern Kingdom
 - Judah made a vassal state under Nebuchadnezzar
 - First Deportation of Jews to Babylon
 - Exile of Southern Kingdom
 - Fall of Jerusalem
 - Destruction of the First Temple
 - Return to the Land
 - Fall of Nineveh
 - Decree of Cyrus

- **Key Identification**—All the Identification from class lectures and the Study Questions in the Merrill handout. Give a “short” description. “Short” means approximately 3-5 sentences.

- Othniel
- Ehud
- Deborah
- Barak
- Gideon
- Abimelech
- Jephthah
- Samson
- Jonathan
- Philistines
- Ahimelech
- Abiathar
- Abner
- Ish-baal/Ish-boshet
- Joab
- Mephibosheth
- Tamar
- Amnon
- Absalom
- Zadok
- Ahithophel
- Rezon
- Ahijah
- Jeroboam I
- Rehoboam
- Abijah
- Asa
- Omri
- Jehoshaphat
- Ahab
- Elijah
- Jehu
- Athaliah
- Jehoiadah
- Joash
- Uzziah
- Menahem
- Tiglath-Pileser III
- Pekah
- Hoshea
- Jotham
- Ahaz
- Sargon II
- Hezekiah
- Manasseh
- Josiah
- Hilkiah
- Babylon
- Nebuchadnezzar II
- Jehoiachin
- Zedekiah
- Persians
- Cyrus
- Darius the Mede
- Zerubbabel
- Esther
- Xerxes
- Artaxerxes
- Ezra
- Nehemiah

- **From class lectures**

1. Describe the contribution the Former Prophets serve in the canon of Scripture.
2. What is the theory of the Deuteronomistic History. Critique it and provide both strengths and weaknesses.
3. Describe three messages that can be found in the book of Deuteronomy.
4. How does Deuteronomy describe the role of the king?
5. According to Josh. 1-5, how are we to understand the role and nature of the leadership of Joshua?
6. What are the significant things to gain from the land distribution in the Book of Joshua?
7. Describe how Othniel and Samson are evaluated as a judge.
8. Describe how the Book of Judges portrays the tribe of Ephraim and explain why.
9. What function does Judg. 17-21 have in the overall theme of kingship for Israel?
10. Describe the ways in which the Exodus and 1 Sam. 4-6 (Ark in Philistia) correspond. Also, provide an explanation on how this helps our understanding of 1 Sam. 4-6.
11. What is distinctive about the prophetic movement after Samuel?
12. Describe how kingship is portrayed in 1 Sam. 8-12. Why is it described this way (what is the message)?
13. How does Saul manifest the fact that he does not have a proper heart for the Lord in 1 Sam. 13-15?
14. How does 1 Sam. 16-2 Sam. 5 defend the legitimacy of David's monarchy?
15. Describe the contrast between David and Saul in 1 Sam. 20-31.
16. Describe what we are told about David in 2 Sam. 1-10 (strengths and weaknesses).
17. Describe the positive characteristics of David in 2 Sam. 1-10.
18. Describe the negative characteristics of David in 2 Sam. 1-10.
19. According to 2 Sam. 11-20, is David an improvement over Saul? Explain.
20. Describe David's feelings for Absalom.

21. How is Solomon described in 1 Kgs. 11?
22. Describe how Hezekiah and Josiah portray an ideal monarch.
23. What are some of the major themes that are found in the Book of Chronicles?
24. Explain how and why the description of David differs between Samuel and Chronicles.
25. Explain how and why the description of Solomon differs between Kings and Chronicles.
26. Explain how and why the description of Rehoboam differs between Kings and Chronicles.
27. Explain how and why the description of Abijam/Abijah differs between Kings and Chronicles.
28. How does the Bible describe the Exile in terms of Yahweh's relationship to Israel?
29. What are the major themes in Ezra/Nehemiah?
30. Describe the major obstacles that Ezra and Nehemiah faced respectively.
31. Describe the ways in which a Mosaic revival occurs in post-exilic Judah.
32. What is the "theological" problem in the Book of Esther. Answer that problem.

E N D