

Houston Graduate School of Theology

OT 721 Psalms

Summer II 2019, Tuesdays (6-10pm) and Thursdays (5:30-9:30pm)

Chuck Pitts, PhD, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament

chuckpittsphd@gmail.com

713-703-7625

Houston Graduate School of Theology equips women and men to be ministers and messengers of God's mission of reconciliation through academic excellence, personal transformation, and leadership development

I. Course Description

A study of the Book of Psalms and related poetry of the Old Testament. Attention is given to form and style, to content and its relation to the other parts of the Bible, and to the use of this poetry both in the life of ancient Israel and in Christian life and worship.

II. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, the student should be able to:

- A. Describe the various literary forms found in the Book of Psalms, including possible settings in life and practical application for those various forms (measured through exegetical assignment—MDiv-6, MTS-5, MAC-4);
- B. Evaluate selected biblical psalms exegetically (measured through exegetical assignment—MDiv-6, MTS-5);
- C. Evaluate selected biblical psalms spiritually (measured through weekly journal assignment and book review—MDiv-1, MACM-2);
- D. Demonstrate a basic understanding of selective important themes and teachings of the Book of Psalms (measured through exegetical assignments, book review, and research project—MDiv-6);
- E. Demonstrate the ability to conduct in-depth research on a topic related to academic study of the Book of Psalms (measured through the research project—MDiv-6, MTS-3, MTS-6);
- F. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the use of the Book of Psalms in prayer and liturgy (measured through book review—MDiv-4, MAC-4, MACM-2).

III. Texts

Required Textbooks:

Brueggemann, Walter. Second Edition. *Praying the Psalms*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007. 978-1556352836

———. *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. 9780800634506 (B)

Brueggemann, Walter, and William Bellinger. *Psalms*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. New York: Cambridge, 2014. 978-0521600767. (BB)

DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy, Rolf Jacobson, and Beth Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 978-0802824936 (DJT)

IV. Course Requirements

- A. Attendance and class participation based on daily assignments (see policies below).
- B. Readings from assigned textbooks and papers, as assigned in the schedule below. Class meetings will be spent discussing the psalms, so completion of the required readings each week is essential.
- C. Readings from the Old Testament Book of Psalms and corresponding commentaries as assigned in the course schedule. The students may read the assigned psalms in a translation of their choice, but the students should also read the translations in the two commentaries. After reading the biblical psalms assigned for each class period, the student should complete these activities:
 1. Record thoughts and inspirations and submit as a weekly journal (See D below).
 2. Read the coinciding section of both assigned commentaries. **Reading assignments will be assessed by means of the form on the last page of this syllabus.**
- D. During each class meeting in which individual psalms are assigned for reading, each student will submit a journal of reflections on at least two psalms assigned for that week. The journal may include general reflections, insights, and inspirations of a theological, practical, or pastoral nature. While a specific length requirement for these journal entries is not included in the syllabus, these assignments should show genuine reflection and thought. The reflection may be from one paragraph to one page in length, but need not be longer. The reflections should be “reflective” rather than exegetical. The student should strive to write reflections on the psalms without technical study. Therefore, these reflections should be written **prior** to commentary study. The thoughts should show depth and breadth of thinking. The reflections may focus on a word, phrase, verse, or the entire psalm. Even if the student begins with hand-written journal entries, the assignment must be submitted in type-written form.
- E. Each student will write one (1) exegetical analysis of an individual psalm. This paper should be 6-10 pages in length. The student may analyze the psalm of his or her choice. The student should submit the exegesis paper on the date assigned in the syllabus. The student should document sources used in the study with footnotes. The student should consider looking for journal articles in the ATLAS database, because journal articles often focus intently and uniquely on an individual psalm. The analysis should include (page lengths are not to be regarded as rigid, but simply a guideline):
 1. Brief discussion of literary type as related to the selected psalm (1 page);
 2. Description of the basic movement of the psalm, including poetic devices, as applicable (i.e., what does the psalm say?) (2-3 pages);
 3. Discussion of important words, phrases, or theological motifs (2-3 pages);
 4. History of interpretation or use in the New Testament, where applicable (1 page); and
 5. A list of references used for the study (minimum 3-5 *in addition to* the required textbooks).

- F. Each student will write a critical review of the book, *Praying the Psalms*, by Walter Brueggemann. The review should be 4-6 pages in length. The student should not write a lengthy review of the contents of the book. Instead, the student will analyze the book. Below is the rubric for the book review.
1. Correct bibliographical entry for the book at the beginning of the review, according to Turabian format. 5%
 2. Brief (no more than 1-2 pages) review of the contents of the book. The student should focus on the major arguments of the author and the structure and movements of the book. If the student exceeds two pages of summary of contents, ten points will be removed from the students grade for the project. 25%
 3. Analysis of the arguments of the book. (1-2 pages) Consider these questions: To what extent did the author achieve his arguments? How did the structure and movement of the book help or hinder the achievement of the arguments? 25%
 4. The usefulness of the book for the reader's personal life of devotion. (1-2 pages) How might the ideas contained in the book aid the student's devotional life? 20%
 5. The usefulness of the book for the life of the church. (1-2 pages) How might Brueggemann's ideas help the spiritual life of the church? How might the church use his ideas in worship, liturgy, or community life? How might the ideas help a ministry of pastoral care? 25%
- G. Each student will produce a research project on a theological motif in the Book of Psalms. The student will submit a paper that should be 8-10 pages in length.

The bibliography for the project should include at least 10 sources, no more than ¼ of which may be from websites. Textbooks may (and should) be used, but not counted in the required number of sources. "Websites" does not include online books or journal articles. (See policies below.) You must use the ATLAS database, and/or other journals, which you may access in the HGST library or remotely. If you do not know how to use ATLAS or other databases, the HGST library personnel will show you how. Every student's bibliography must include articles accessed from research databases. The student should remember that meeting the minimum requirements will not achieve the maximum grade.

Below is a list of topics for the Theology of Psalms Paper:

"The King" in the Book of Psalms

"The Law" in the Book of Psalms

Messiah in the Book of Psalms

"The Covenant" in the Book of Psalms

Suffering in the Book of Psalms

Images of God in the Book of Psalms (e.g., God as creator, God as King, God as Judge, God as Warrior)

Social Justice in the Book of Psalms

"Evil" in the Book of Psalms

"Sin" in the Book of Psalms

"Mercy" in the Book of Psalms

Hesed in the Psalms

The Doctrine of Man in the Book of Psalms (=Anthropology of the Book of Psalms)

V. Grading Scale

Final grades will be calculating according to the following system.

Attendance	5%
Daily Reading	10%
Psalm exegesis	20%
<i>Praying the Psalms</i> Review	15%
Theology Paper	30%
Weekly Journal	20%

Letter grades equal the following number grades:

A = 96-100	A- = 94-95	B+ = 92-93	B = 88-91	B- = 86-87
C+ = 84-85	C = 80-83	C- = 78-79	D+ = 76-77	D = 72-75
D- = 70-71	F = 0-69			

VI. Student Workload Expectations

Classroom Attendance		32 hrs.
Reading		42.5
Commentaries	400 pp @ 15/hr	27
Bible readings	100 pp @ 15/hr	6.5
Textbook readings	155 pp @ 20/hr	8
External articles	20 pp @ 20/hr	1
Journals	14 @ one hour	14 hrs
Exegesis Assignment	10 pp @ one hour	10 hrs.
Book Review	6 pp @ 1.5 hour	9 hrs
Theology Paper	10 pp @ 1.5 hr/page	15 hrs.
TOTAL		122.5 hrs

VII. Class and Reading Schedule

July 9 Class Introduction, Studying the Psalms
 Literary Types/Canon BB 1-12; DJT Intro
 Studying Psalms B 1-15
 Introduction to Brueggemann's Rubric

July 11 Psalms of Orientation B 16-24
 Torah Psalms Psalms 1, 119
 Creation Psalms Psalms 8, 104, 139

July 16 Psalms of Orientation
 Wisdom Psalms (& others) Psalms 37, 112, 133
 Individual Laments Psalms 13, 22, 35

July 18 Psalms of Disorientation B 25-45
 Community Laments Psalms 60, 74, 137
 Laments/Penitential Psalms 88, 32, 51

****Exegesis Assignment or book review due no later than July 23****

July 23 Psalms of New Orientation B 46-57
 Thanksgiving Psalms Psalms 30, 34, 124, 136
 Enthronement Psalms Psalms 29, 47, 96

July 25 Psalms of New Orientation
 Hymns of Praise Psalms 103, 148, 150
 Book Discussion: *Praying the Psalms*

****Book Review or exegesis assignment due no later than July 30****

July 30 Psalms of Trust Psalms 23, 27
 [Rolf Jacobsen, "Psalm 23"](#)
 (For Class, "Jesus Walks," "Gangsta's Paradise," and "Pale Rider" [opening])
 Historical Psalms Psalms 78 (read fast!), 105, 106
 [Pitts, "Four Historical Psalms"](#)

Aug 1 Liturgical/Pilgrimage Psalms 84, 15, 24
 Royal/Messianic Psalms Psalms 2, 110

****Theology Paper Due no later than August 5****

The professor of record reserves the right to adjust classroom topics as the course develops.

VIII. Policies

- A. Regular attendance and regular submission of assignments on due dates in the syllabus is expected. The following guidelines have been approved for inclusion in all HGST syllabi and reflect standards for all courses:
- Fall/Spring semester 15-session course – 3-absence maximum
 - Summer term 8-session course – 1-absence maximum (equals 4 hours)**
 - 6-session hybrid – 1-absence maximum
 - 4-session hybrid – 0-absence maximum
- If a student reaches the designated number of absences, the student will no longer be allowed to stay in the class. The student does have the opportunity to appeal to the Academic Dean and should assume responsibility for scheduling that meeting as soon as possible.
- B. Work is expected on the due date. Reflection papers and Exegesis paper will be reduced one-letter grade for each week late. The final exam will be penalized one letter grade if not turned in on the last day of the course.
- C. Turnitin.com
1. All written assignments are subject to required submission to www.turnitin.com to check for originality and style. The assignments that are required for submission will be described in the syllabus.
 2. Students will create an account at www.turnitin.com. After doing so, the student will join the course page with the code and password supplied by the instructor. A list of assignments and due dates will be available on the course page.
 3. Students will submit assignments by the due date and will be required to submit the assignments in a hard copy format as well.
- D. *Electronic Equipment Usage in Classrooms*
It is expected that students will use technology (cell phones, laptop computers, iPads, etc.) during classes only for the purposes of class work. Therefore, students should turn off cell phones and refrain from texting and using laptop computers during classes except for the purposes of taking notes or doing research specifically authorized by the course instructor. Students who have emergency needs not covered by this policy must ask for an exception from the course instructor.
- E. *Please review the Academic Catalog for requirements regarding Incompletes and Plagiarism issues. For more information on Library Services, please download the Library Handbook from the HGST website.*

IX. Notes for Writing Assignments

- A. Writing assignments should conform to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th Edition. This includes matters of style and format. Counseling students should pay particular attention to the *Manual* guidelines on submission of academic papers.
- B. The instructor requires the use of footnotes for documentation. The student should number pages. According to Turabian, page numbers should be in the upper right hand corner, except

for the first page of the paper (not counting the title page). Margins should be one inch on all four sides, except where major headings require a two-inch top margin.

- C. The student should utilize 12-point Times New Roman font throughout. The instructor prefers that the student **not** use presentation or report binders or folders. She prefers submission of papers with staples or binder clips.
- D. Critical or formal writing differs from colloquial writing or spoken English at several points. The student should note the following guidelines for critical writing. The instructor expects students to follow these guidelines strictly. Failure to do so will be penalized.
1. Avoid 1st or 2nd person references (“I,” “we,” or “you”). Keep the written projects objective and professional. The student must remember that imperative forms are second person.
 2. Never use contractions.
 3. Avoid passive voice construction (i.e. The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary, but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.
 4. Be sure that number and tense always agree (i.e., Do not write in one place that “Brueggemann argues . . .” and at another place “Brueggemann argued . . .”). Subject-verb agreement is imperative.
 5. Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Dr. Pitts does not tolerate misspelled words. Failure to spellcheck will result in a substantive reduction on the grade for written assignments.
 6. Grammar check works as well!
 7. All pronouns should have clear antecedents. Avoiding “it is” and “there is” in the paper removes much of the ambiguity of pronoun usage.
 8. Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

RESEARCH AND EXEGESIS PAPER GRADING RUBRIC		
Criterion	Points Possible	Points Earned
Content/Development		
All key elements of the assignment are covered in a substantive way. (5)	50	
Content is comprehensive, accurate, and/or persuasive. (5)		
Major points are stated clearly and supported by professional literature or logic. (5)		
Meaningful use of source material. (5)		
Analytical reasoning to elaborate upon the topic or theme. (5)		
The bibliography page(s) contains adequate scholarly citations. (5)		
Research is adequate and timely for the topic. (10)		
The context and purpose of the writing is clear. (5)		
The work is original, giving credit to all borrowed ideas. (5)		
Organization		
The introduction provides sufficient background on the topic and previews major points. (4)	20	
Ideas flow in a logical sequence. (3)		
The structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow. (3)		
The paper's organization emphasizes the central theme or purpose. (3)		
Paragraph transitions are present, logical, and direct the flow of thought throughout the paper. (1)		
The conclusion logically derives from the paper's ideas. (3)		
The conclusion reviews the major points toward the appropriate audience. (3)		
Format		
The paper includes Title page, footnotes, and bibliography. (1)	10	
The paper is laid out effectively and uses reader-friendly aids (e.g., section summaries, appendices, etc.) when appropriate. (1)		
The paper follows Turabian format guidelines. (5)		
The paper is written in 12pt font, Times New Roman, double-spaced and 1" margins. (3)		
Grammar/Punctuation/Spelling		
Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed. (7)	10	
Spelling is correct. (3)		
Readability/Style		
Sentences are complete, clear, and concise. (3)	10	
Sentences are well-constructed with consistently strong and varied structure. (3)		
Sentence transitions are present and direct the flow of thought. (1)		
Words used are precise and unambiguous. (3)		
Total Points	100	

Final Reading Evaluation

I, the undersigned student, acknowledge that I have completed _____% of the reading required in the syllabus. I understand that the reading constitutes 10% of the grade for this course.

Signature

Printed name