



Course Syllabus Wycliffe College Toronto School of Theology

Course Identification

Course Number : WYB2260HS
Course Name: The Book of Psalms: A Spiritual Lifeline in Christian History and Tradition
Campus: St. George

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Witt
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Office Hours: send an email to the instructor to schedule office hours

Course Prerequisites or Requisites

None

Course Description

This course is an interactive investigation of the Book of Psalms, with a special emphasis on how the psalms have been, and can be, used within the devotional life of a Christian. The course will consider the psalms in their historical and canonical context. It will also consider the role of the Psalms in lives of both King David and Jesus Christ, as well as selected Christians – both men and women – throughout the history of the church. Particular attention will be given to the issue of how best (or if at all) in light of contemporary scholarship to apply the Psalms faithfully and intelligently to Jesus Christ.. It will run for eight weeks, from the week of June 4, 2018 through the week of July 23, 2018.

Course Methodology

Readings, Discussion Board Interactions, Video Lectures, Term Papers

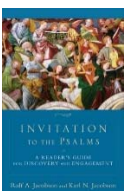
Course Outcomes

COURSE OUTCOMES	COURSE ELEMENT	PROGRAM OUTCOMES
By the end of this course, students	This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements:	This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe's statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv)

will synthesize the complexities both historically and hermeneutically associated with applying the psalms to Jesus Christ.	Discussion Boards Term Papers	MTS: 1.1, 2.2 MDiv: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2
will be able to associate several approaches to psalm study with particular individuals, where in the Bible or in Christian history.	Discussion Boards Term Papers	MTS: 1.3, 2.1, 2.2 MDiv: 1.2, 1.4, 2.2
will appreciate and appropriate the potential offered by the Psalter for spiritual reflection and growth.	Discussion Boards Term Papers	MTS: 2.1, 3.1 MDiv: 2.1, 2.3

Course Resources

Required Course Textbooks

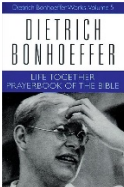


Jacobson, Rolf A. and Karl N. Jacobson. [*Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.



Athanasius. [*Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*](#). Classics of Western Spirituality. Translated by Robert C. Gregg. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980.

Alternatively: "On the Interpretation of the Psalms." Pages 56-77 in *Early Christian Spirituality. Sources of Early Christian Thought*. Translated by Pamela Bright. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
Alternatively: as an appendix in *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1982) [has a yellow cover with introduction by CS Lewis]



Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. [*Life Together and the Prayerbook of the Bible*](#). DBW 5. Edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly. Translated by James H. Burtness and Daniel W. Bloesch. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004. *Note: you can also find a single volume edition of just the Prayerbook of the Bible (Augsburg, 1974), which is cheaper.*

You will also need an **English translation of the Old Testament**. We prefer that you use a translation which is more literal than paraphrased. Recommended translations include the NRSV, ESV, NASB, or a number of similar translations. If you are used to reading "Christian" translations, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation may offer a fresh reading of the Psalms.

Beyond the course textbooks, there is a cache of articles saved as PDF files within the Course Materials section of the website. These will not be provided as a course packet.

Reading Accessibility. Each of the textbooks above are available as e-books, and can be used with audio programs for ease of reading for the course. All of the PDF files have been passed through Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to make them available for audio programs as well. Please contact your instructor if you have any difficulties using these files.

Course Websites

- (1) **Blackboard via the Student Portal** <https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.)

Course Schedule

Course Calendar with Readings Schedule

The following course calendar lists the dates for each week of the course as well as what topics we will be covering that week and the corresponding readings from your textbooks and other articles/essays.

Week	Dates	TOPIC	READINGS
Before the Course	Before June 3	"In your blue hymnals, number...": Getting on the Same Page	Jacobson, <i>Invitation</i> , 1-87 (chs. 1-3) Wenham, "Reading the Psalms Canonically" Mays, "Going by the Book" Witt, "Psalm Reading Schedules"
1	June 4-10	Warming Up Exercises: Getting a Feel for the Course to Come	Watts, "A History" [15] Tate, "Interpretation of the Psalms" [11] Daley, "Finding the Right Key" [13] Sheppard, "Theology and the Book of Psalms" Jacobson, <i>Invitation</i> , 149ff. (ch. 6) [26] Mays, "Language of the Reign of God" [8]
2	June 11-17	Hearing Voices: The Question of the Speaker in a Psalms	Jacobson, <i>Invitation</i> , 89-117 (ch. 4) Mays, "A Question of Identity" Cooper, "Typology of Jewish Psalms Interpretation." Fiedrowicz, "General Introduction" Bonhoeffer, "Sermon on Psalm 42" Theodore of Mopsuestia, <i>Commentary</i> , Ps 42
3	June 18-24	The Psalms in the OT: The Ancient Israelite Cult	Creach, "The Psalms and the Cult" [19] Sheppard, "Enemies" (pp. 69-82 only) [14] Suderman, "The Cost of Losing Lament" [17] Gerstenberger, "Genres, Life Situations..." [12] Miller, "Trouble and Woe" [14] Kugel, "Topics in the History..." [23]
4	June 25-Jul 1	David as Speaker in the Psalms	Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis" Petersen, "Portraits of David" Mays, "The David of the Psalms" Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David" Calvin, <i>Commentary</i> , Preface, Ps 2, Ps 3 Pitkin, Barbara. "Imitation of David" Peterson, "Story"

5	Jul 2-8	Christ as Speaker in the Psalms, Pt 1: Hearing Typologically	Grant, "The Psalms and the King" Mays, "In a Vision" Brueggemann, "Evangelists and the Psalms" Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms" Ps 22 Commentators: Justin Martyr, (Ps)-Athanasius, Diodore, Calvin, Luther, Mays
6	Jul 9-15	Christ as Speaker in the Psalms, Pt 2: Hearing Prosopologically	Bates, "When Christ Prays the Psalter" Williams, "Augustine and the Psalms" Louth, "Heart in Pilgrimage" Augustine, <i>Expositions</i> , Ps 3, excerpt Ps 38 Bonhoeffer, "Lecture on Christ in the Psalms" Bonhoeffer, "Prayerbook of the Bible" Ps 22 Commentators: Augustine, Charry, Bonhoeffer
7	Jul 16-22	Psalms as a Mirror of the Soul	Athanasius, <i>Letter to Marcellinus</i> Tanaka, "Athanasius as Interpreter of the Psalms" Boersma, "Church Father's Spiritual Interpretation" Ps 1 Excerpts: Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Cassiodorus
8	Jul 17-29	Praying with the Figure of "David"	Witt, "Praying the Psalms" Fry, <i>Scripture Reader's Guide</i> Wallace, "King and Community"

Requirements and Evaluation

Requirements

This is an online course which will run for eight weeks. Students are expected to complete all of the readings, assignments, and discussion board questions for each week. Plagiarism is a serious offense, with a minimum penalty for a plagiarized assignment being the grade of zero. If you borrow *ideas* or distinctive phrases, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly.

- **Readings and Online Discussion (40%).** Students are expected to complete all of the assigned reading for the course and the assignments given for each week. Since this is an online course, the material assigned each week will make up the bulk of the course, and completion of the assignments/postings on Blackboard must be done on time. Since the class will not be meeting formally in the classroom, the message board is your "classroom." Please refer to the "Guidelines for Posting and Responding" for an explanation of what is expected.
- **Reading Through the Psalms (15%).** As part of the course, students are asked to read through the entire book of Psalms two times – carefully and meditatively. Evaluation of this reading is done by the student, suggesting a mark which is fair. The first reading will be due by Sun, July 1. By this time, please write an email to the instructor stating whether or not you completing the reading, and if so, how carefully and meditatively. Has anything in particular stood out to you during this read through? Suggest a fair grade using the below the "grasp of the subject" descriptions below in the Grading section of the syllabus. The second reading will be due by Sun, Aug 19. Again, email your instructor using the above guidelines, but this time note how your reading of the Psalms might have changed given things learned in the course. Keep these emails short and sweet, at no more than 250 words. You will be provided several different reading strategies for this assignment, found in Course Materials on Blackboard--you need not follow any particular plan to fulfill this assignment.

- **Psalms of Imprecation Paper (25%).** You will write a 1500-2000 word paper on your interaction with the readings of Psalm 58 within a biblical and theological context. This paper will be due by the end of the final week of class (by Sun, Jul 29). This is a responsive assignment, so I want you to follow my instructions carefully when writing this paper.
 - *Part One: Initial Reading of Psalm 58*
Read Psalm 58 for yourself. Without engaging in *any of the readings*, speak about your initial, gut reaction to this psalm. Is this a psalm you would personally be uncomfortable praying? If so, why?
 - *Part Two: Describe how others read this psalm*
In a second section, I want you to read the following articles and commentary excerpts. Compare and contrast the interpretations of Psalm 58. How do each of these authors explain the prayers of imprecation? Do they share any assumptions? What is different about them? What makes each author uncomfortable, or perhaps surprisingly, do some of the authors not seem thrown at all?
 - Gary A. Anderson, “King David and the Psalms of Imprecation”
 - William L. Holladay, “Censored Texts”
 - Eugene Peterson, *Answering God*, 95-103
 - Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*, 63-81
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sermon on Psalm 58*
 - Commentary from James Mays and/or John Goldingay
 - *Part Three: Further Reading of Psalm 58*
Read through the psalm a few more times in light of the above engagement. Do you find that your attitude towards this psalm have changed? If so, in what ways? Are these psalms beneficial in any way for the Christian life? Feel free to draw on points made by authors as you write this section.
- **The Psalms and the Christian Life Paper (20%).** We have read quite a bit through the history of interpretation, covering a wide landscape of texts and interpreters using a variety of approaches to the Psalms. The goal of this spattering of readings was to help you understand the nuances which are involved in how Christians throughout the ages have read the Psalms. Using the articles by Mays (“A Question of Identity”), Daley (“Finding the Right Key”), and Boersma (“Church Father’s Spiritual Interpretation of the Psalms”), in this second paper assignment I want you to synthesize the material we have learned in class. The paper will consist of two parts. In Part One, I want you to take up from 2000-2500 words to describe for me the main approaches Christians have utilized to read the Psalter, and what their goals are. Feel free to draw upon the interpreters we looked at in the course, as well as others you may have discovered along the way. In Part Two, write between 1000-1250 pages about how you personally would describe the ways in which the Psalms could continue to be “a spiritual lifeline” for both the church corporate and the Christian individually. Which approaches throughout Christian history and tradition have been helpful, which have not been helpful? Coming out of your reading of the Psalms alongside the course, which approaches to the Psalms have connected with you the most?

Weekly Expectations for the Course

Regarding weekly assignments, most weeks there is reading which needs to be completed, followed by an assignment that must be posted online. Some of these assignments are individual work, while others are to be completed via group discussion. For those weeks when you are working as a group, the entire group will receive the same mark for the completed work.

Grading System

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalents	Grade Point	Grasp of Subject Matter
A+	90–100%	4.0	Profound & Creative
A	85–89%	4.0	Outstanding
A-	80–84%	3.7	Excellent
B+	77–79%	3.3	Very Good
B	73–76%	3.0	Good
B-	70–72%	2.7	Satisfactory
FZ	0–69%	0	Failure

Grades without numerical equivalent:

CR	Designates credit; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value
NCR	Designates failure; has no numerical equivalent, but has a grade point value of 0 and is included in the GPA calculation
SDF	Standing deferred (a temporary extension)
INC	Permanent incomplete; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value
WDR	Withdrawal without academic penalty
AEG	May be given to a final year student who, because of illness, has completed at least 60% of the course, but not the whole course, and who would not otherwise be able to convocate; has no numerical equivalent and no grade point value

Policy on Assignment Extensions

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than the last day of classes of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar’s office.

One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not been requested by the stated deadline.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>) or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* (<http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks>) and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). Students will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

Writing Style. The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Course Bibliography

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