



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. This is an intensive course, running for eight weeks.

Course Methodology

Readings, Discussion Board Interactions, Quizzes, Video Lectures, Term Paper

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



Mays, James L. [*The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*](#). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994. *Note: look for used copies online and save big!*

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 "Modules" section of the website. These will not be provided as a course packet, but are required reading which will end up on quizzes.

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 Website: <https://q.utoronto.ca>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the U of T Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged into Quercus, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the website material in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. Students who have trouble accessing the course materials should ask the Registrar's office for further help.

Course Schedule

This course will run from May 6 until July 5, when the final assignments are due. Instead of the normal 12 weeks for a course, it will be slightly intensive at 8 weeks. Each week students will be expected to watch the video lecture, complete the assigned readings, and participate in every-other-week discussion boards (Weeks 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8). During weeks 3, 5, 7, and 9 ("finals week"), students will be expected to complete an online quiz on readings from previous weeks. For all the details see the below course schedule, as well as the assignment information afterwards. As the course is both online and intensive, students should expect a slightly longer reading schedule than a usual semester course.

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 and the corresponding readings from your textbooks and other articles/essays.

Week Dates	TOPIC	READINGS	DISCUSSION/QUIZ
(1) May 6-12	Introducing Psalms: Praise and Lament	Mays , <i>Lord Reigns</i> , chs. 1-3, 7 (1-39, 61-71) Miller , "Trouble and Woe" Daley , "Finding the Right Key" Sheppard , "Theology and the Psalms" Beal , "History of Interpretation"	Discussion Board: Meet & Greet
(2) May 13-19	The Fivefold Shape of the Book of Psalms	Mays , <i>Lord Reigns</i> , chs. 12-13 (119-135) Wenham , "Reading Psalms Canonically" Grant , "Determining the Indeterminate" Edwards , "Unity and Disunity"	Discussion Board, Read: <i>Ps 1 Excerpts</i> —Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Hilary, Theodoret Boersma, "Church Father's Spiritual Interpretation"
(3) May 20-26	Psalms in Ancient Israel Life and Cult	Creach , "The Psalms and the Cult" Clifford , "Psalms of the Temple" Gerstenberger , "Non-Temple Psalms" Sheppard , "Enemies" (pp. 69-82 only) Suderman , "The Cost of Losing Lament"	Quiz on Weeks 1-2 Reading (to be completed by May 24)

(4) May 27- Jun 2	Hearing Voices: The Question of the Speaker	Mays , <i>Lord Reigns</i> , chs. 5-6 Bates , <i>Birth of the Trinity</i> , 27-36 Fiedrowicz , “General Introduction”	Discussion Board: Bonhoeffer, Ps 42 Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ps 42
(5) Jun 3-9	David: A Speaker to Imitate	Mays , <i>Lord Reigns</i> , ch. 9 Rendtorff , “The Psalms of David” Calvin , <i>Preface, Psalm 2, Psalm 3</i> Pitkin , “Imitation of David” Taylor , “Katharina Schutz Zell”	Quiz on Weeks 3-4 Readings and First Reading of Psalter (to be completed by June 7)
(6) Jun 10- 16	Christ: David Speaking in Christ’s Voice	Bates , <i>Birth of the Trinity</i> , 136-156 Williams , “Augustine and the Psalms” Augustine , <i>Expositions</i> , Ps 1-3 Bonhoeffer , “Christ in the Psalms” Bonhoeffer , <i>Prayerbook of the Bible</i>	Discussion Board Psalm 22 Excerpts from Justin, Ps-Athanasius, Augustine, Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret
(7) Jun 17- 23	David and Christ: David Speaking in a Figure	Mays , <i>Lord Reigns</i> , chs. 10-11 Grant , “Psalms and the King” Hays , “Christ Prays the Psalms” Wallace , “King and Community” Prescott , “Two Annes, Two Davids”	Quiz on Weeks 5-6 Readings (to be completed by June 21)
(8) Jun 24- 30	Psalms as a Mirror of the Soul	Athanasius , <i>Letter to Marcellinus</i> Tanaka , “Athanasius as Interpreter” Fry , <i>Scripture Reader’s Guide</i>	Discussion Board: Psalm 22 Excerpts from Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Bellarmine, Mays, and Charry
(9) By Jul 5		PSALMS OF IMPRECATION PAPER DUE BY JULY 5	Quiz on Weeks 7-8 Readings and Second Reading of Psalter (to be completed by July 5)

Requirements and Evaluation

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 **on their own**. 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. If in doubt, cite your source. If not in doubt, cite your source. In other words, just cite your source. If you found it, I can find it.

- **Online Discussion (30%).** As an online course, the video lectures and assigned readings make up the bulk of the course material. In an effort to create a sense of community for the course, students will also need to complete discussion board assignments through Quercus. Since the class will not be meeting formally at a set time, the discussion board is your “classroom” if you will. Throughout the course we will have discussion boards in during weeks 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8. Please read the “Guidelines for Posting and Responding” for an explanation of what is expected. Specific instructions will be given in the description of the discussion board on Quercus, but

generally speaking, students will need to post an original message by Wednesday evening of a given week, and will be asked to post a response to other classmates by Friday evening.

- **Online Reading Quizzes (20%).** In a typical 8-week intensive course, students would normally have 4.5 hours of in-class lecture/tutorial per week, with additional coursework on top of that. Since the longest the video lectures will be is around 60 minutes, your course readings will be a critical part of your learning experience, and students are expected to complete each of the assigned readings for the course. Reading quizzes will take place during weeks 3, 5, 7, and “9” (one final quiz). Quizzes will be based on the following:
 - **Week 3** – this quiz will cover readings done for Weeks 1-2
 - **Week 5** – this quiz will cover readings done for Weeks 3-4, with Reading through the Psalms checkpoint (cf. below)
 - **Week 7** – this quiz will cover readings done for Weeks 5-6
 - **Week 9** – this quiz will cover readings done for Weeks 7-8, with Reading through the Psalms checkpoint (cf. below)
- **Reading through the Psalms (20%).** As part of the course, students are asked to read through the entire book of Psalms two times. **Your first reading** of the Psalms is due by the end of the fifth week of the course, in answer to two questions given during the quiz that week: Have you completed reading through the entire book of Psalms for this course? And, has anything in particular stood out to you during this read through? **Your second reading** will need to be completed by July 5, in answer to two questions given during the final quiz: Have you completed reading through the entire book of Psalms a second time for the course? And, have you attempted to put any of the reading strategies we learned to use? What has been the result? Was it helpful? Did it change the way you read the Psalms?
- **Psalms of Imprecation Paper (30%) [due by July 5].** Students will need to write a 2000-2500 word paper on your interaction with the readings of Psalm 58 within a biblical and theological context. This is a responsive assignment, so I want you to follow my instructions carefully when writing this paper. The assignment will need to be submitted through Quercus. There are three parts to the paper. **Please read through all instructions before starting the assignment.**
 - *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 book excerpts. 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 off at all from them? What might their reactions be to Psalm 58 in particular?
 - Jamie Grant, “Crisis, Cursing and the Christian: Reading Imprecatory Psalms in the Twenty-First Century”
 - Gary A. Anderson, “King David and the Psalms of Imprecation”
 - William L. Holladay, “Censored Texts”
 - CS Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, “The Cursings”
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, “The Day with Others: Secret of the Psalter” and “Sermon on Ps 58”
 - Eugene Peterson, *Answering God*, 95-103
 - Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*, 63-81

- *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.

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 assignment 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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