

WYB3222H/WYB6222H • “For such a time as this:” Insights and Issues from the Books of Ruth and Esther for Today

This class will be offered by remote access. Students will be expected to log in to regularly scheduled Zoom sessions.

Class attendance and participation in remote or synchronous online learning classes. The same expectations for student engagement and participation which applies to in-class learning also apply to remote or synchronous learning situations. Students who log into the Zoom site but do not contribute during discussion times and are not visible through live video will not be counted as participating in the class. Please see information at <https://wycliffcollege.ca/remotelearning> Before proceeding you will require a webcam and microphone. Laptops have these by default. If you have a desktop you will need to purchase a webcam (webcams come with built in microphone).

Notice of video recording and sharing (Download and re-use prohibited)

Remote courses, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation, and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

I. Course Details:

Instructor: Marion Taylor
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 E-mail: m.taylor@utoronto.ca
 “Office” Hours: By appointment -
 Class: as **Synchronous online sessions, 2-4 PM Tuesdays** beginning September 15

2. Course Prerequisite

Old Testament Introduction or Permission of Professor

3. Course Description

We will read the books of Ruth and Esther together with a cloud of witnesses from the past and present who found them not only life giving but also, especially in the case of Esther, deeply troubling. We will examine techniques and strategies used for reading these and other Old Testament narratives through history. We will explore Ruth and Esther within the contexts of both the ancient world and Scripture. We will examine their contents making use of a variety of traditional and innovative interpretive techniques and strategies (including reading within the context of the Ancient Near East, theological exegesis, disaster and trauma studies, and narrative criticism). We will consider how these books speak to us as individuals and as the

church in the twenty-first century. The class will include short lectures, small breakout discussion groups, readings, and short papers.

4. Course Methodology

This class will be delivered remotely as **Synchronous online sessions, 2-4 PM Tuesdays beginning September 15. The course will use Zoom as the platform. Each participant will require a webcam and microphone, a default on laptops but desktops require the installation of a webcam.** Students are expected to **attend every class remotely through zoom.** The class will include short lectures, small breakout discussion groups, readings, short papers and a final paper.

5. Requirements and Evaluation

Please bring a Bible and all relevant required readings to each class. Regular and faithful attendance is mandatory. Plagiarism is a serious offense. *The minimum penalty for a plagiarized paper is the grade of zero.* If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly.

1. Very Short Reading and Response Papers (30%)

Each student will read and/or listen to the book of Ruth each week for 5 weeks- reading different translations in English or other languages OR listening to different voices in different languages. Each week students will submit their insights and responses to reading or listening to the book of Ruth before class. Think about the book's purpose, themes, and characters. Note the version read or listened to and write between 200-250 words-- include the word count. Each student will do the same for Esther for 5 weeks. For a total of 10 short reflections.

The estimated reading time for Ruth is 15 minutes and Esther is 30 minutes according to <http://ya.ccpilly.org/how-long-does-it-take-to-read-each-book-of-the-bible/>.

One of the voices for Esther should be female see <https://her.bible/books/esther/>

2. Class Participation (30%)

Students are expected to attend every class and to involve themselves fully through preparatory reading, active participation in discussions, and finding resources that will add to the class. At the first class, each student will volunteer to present on a topic related to the subject under discussion. The presentation of 5- 10 minutes can focus on an article or commentary on the chapter under discussion or to help us wrestle with the question of insights from Ruth and Esther for today or introduce an example of reception history in the church (a sermon) or art or film or poetry. For example:

1. **A sermon** (good and bad; classic or contemporary) on the book of Ruth and Esther. For example: T. D. Jakes <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/101644/modules/items/650223>; Sarah Jakes <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/101644/modules/items/652117>
Tim Keller on Esther- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNBjQCFiDxw>
<http://www.gospelinlife.com/esther-and-the-hiddenness-of-god.html>
Tony Evans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxknr4o1ISA>
Spurgeon's sermons on Ruth- <http://www.spurgeon.org/index/ru.htm>

2. Artistic interpretations of the characters in Ruth or Esther that you can share with the class. See for example, [Lilian Broca's Esther mosaics-http://www.lilianbroca.com/queen-esther-mosaics](http://www.lilianbroca.com/queen-esther-mosaics)

3. Introduce a movie or video including those for children on the books of Ruth and Esther (e.g. Veggie Tales)- see quercus for examples.

3. Final Paper (40%)

The final paper can be exegetical or topical in nature. It may take the form of a traditional essay (10-12 pages BD; 15 pages+ AD) on a particular text or problem or method—including trauma and disaster studies—or on the history of the interpretation of a character or particular text in Ruth or Esther. Please consult with the professor about your final paper. This assignment is due **December 8**.

4. AD students specializing in Bible (10%) As you prepare for class, work through the Robert Holmstedt's *Ruth: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* and Peter Srenock and Robert Holmstedt's *Esther: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. This will help you prepare for your Hebrew language exams. Those specializing in Greek can read the primary texts in the LXX instead. A one- page report on this assignment is due **December 8**. For other AD students, see professor to determine an appropriate assignment.

6. Required Texts

The textbooks for this course are available through the U of T Bookstore's website, which offers shipping or in-store pickup for physical texts. Enter your UTORid into the Bookstore's textbook tool at https://uoftbookstore.com/buy_textbooks.asp to get a personalized list of all the textbooks for the courses you're enrolled in."

1. Marion Ann Taylor, *The Story of God Commentary: Ruth and Esther* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Fall 2020) 256 pp. We have arranged for this to be available early at U of T Bookstore. Let me know if you have a problem getting it.
2. Another commentary on Ruth and another on Esther
Highly recommended for length and content and availability in kindle edition are
Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Ruth*. Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1999.
Jeremy Schipper, [Ruth \[electronic resource\] : a new translation with introduction and commentary /](#) New Haven, [Connecticut] ; London, [England] : The Anchor Yale Bible : Yale University Press, 2016. Available at the University of Toronto Library
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=4403146>
Karen H. Jobes, *Esther*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1999.
Debra Reid's commentary on Esther is available in electronic and downloadable form for the U of T library *Esther [electronic resource]: an introduction and commentary /* Debra Reid, Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press ; Downers Grove, Ill. : IVP Academic, 2008. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=4427958>
3. A modern translation of the Bible is also required (e.g. ESV, NRSV, RSV, TNIV, NIV, NJPS, NET, or NASB). The NET Bible offers extensive textual notes and is available for use

online NET Bible site (net.bible.org); or as a free download from www.bible.org. Check out also <https://lumina.bible.org/bible>
Other commentaries are listed below.

7. Course Website

Quercus: <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 in to Quercus Page 3 of 7 using your UTORid and password, 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 course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> .

Email All UofT students are required to have a valid UTOReil email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your UofT email address is properly entered in the ROSI system.

8. Class Schedule

Week 1 (September 15) Introduction to Reading Old Testament Narratives or How to Read Ruth and Esther as Narratives. Introduction to Ruth
Marina Hofman Willard, "Narrative Criticism: Methodology and Procedure."

Week 2 (September 22) Ruth 1
Read Taylor's Intro and chapter 1
Lecture, "Classic Responses to Ruth and Orpah"
Read Margaret Black on Orpah and Ruth
Handout on Grief and Loss

Week 3 (September 29)
Ruth 2
Taylor's chapter 2
Lecture- The gospel of Ruth
Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Ruth and Naomi: Economic Survival and Family Values," in *Just Wives? Stories of Power & survival in the Old Testament & Today*, 27-48.
Read and discuss Spurgeon's sermon on Ruth 2 see Quercus.

Week 4 (October 5)
Ruth 3
Post-Colonial and Asian Readings of Ruth
Chose to present one of the posted articles by Pa, Honig, Lee, or Moyo
Read Taylor's chapter 3
How to Interpret the Threshing Floor scene
Read the article that explore the work of Ephrem the Syrian that relates to Ruth

Week 5 (October 12)

Ruth 4

A look at the whole and considerations of Trauma

Gender and Violence and Trauma as it relates to Ruth, Esther and Today.

Read Taylor's chapter 4

Read posted article on Trauma in *the Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*

Read the posted article on "The Trauma of Otherness and Hunger: Ruth and Lot's Daughters."

Read the sermon "A Deeper Look at the Book of Ruth," in "*One in Three*" Sermon

Guide 2014, 15-18 WWW.IMAWORLDHEALTH.ORG • WWW.WEWILLSPEAKOUT.US

Week 6 (October 19)

Introduction to the Book of Esther; Esther 1 historical background and exegesis

Narrative analysis of the Book of Esther

Read Taylor's introduction Esther and Esther 1

Week 7 (October 26) Reading Week

Week 8 (November 3)

Esther 2-3

Read Taylor's Esther 2 and 3

Read Zonana, "Feminists Providence: Esther. Vashti and the Duty of Disobedience in nineteenth-century Hermeneutics".

Discuss the Preacher and Vashti handout.

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Vashti and Esther: Models of Resistance," in *Just Wives? Stories of Power & survival in the Old Testament & Today*, 49-67.

Mosala, The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women's struggle for Liberation in South Africa

Week 9 (November 10)

Esther 4

Read Taylor's Esther 4

Read Wilhelm Visher, "The book of Esther"- reading Esther in Germany in 1939

Skim John Donne's sermon on Esther 4:16, especially the last few pages

Arie Leder, 'Historical Narrative and Wisdom. Toward Preaching Esther "For Such a Time as This," *Acta Theologica* 2011, 31(2) 135-158.

Week 10 (November 17)

Esther 5-6

Read Taylor's Esther 4

Discuss Esther, the intercessor- see handout

Read the following posted articles:

Read Susan Niditch, “Interpreting Esther: Categories, Contexts and Creative Ambiguities”

Preaching Subversively: The Book of Esther”

Discuss Tim Keller’s sermons.

Week 11 (November 24)

Esther 7-8

Read Taylor’s Esther 7-8

Read the posted articles

Week 12 (December 1)

Esther 9

Read Taylor’s Esther 9

Read the posted articles

Week 13 (December 8)

Esther 10 and a look at the whole

Read Taylor’s Esther 10 and one other commentary on this chapter

Reflect on the significance of this chapter in light of the question of the book’s purpose.

Should it be called the book of Mordecai?

Outcomes: Basic Degree

Like all Wycliffe College courses, “‘For such a time as this:’ Insights and Issues from the Books of Ruth and Esther for Today” is shaped by a set of course outcomes/learning goals, describing the knowledge and abilities a student will have attained by the end of the course. In the chart below, these course outcomes are correlated with the outcomes for the M.Div and MTS programs as a whole. For a full list of the latter consult the Wycliffe College website.

COURSE OUTCOMES	COURSE ELEMENT	PROGRAM OUTCOMES
By the end of this course, students will be able to :	This outcome will be achieved through these course elements:	This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv)
Describe the content of the books of Ruth and Esther	reading the primary texts, commentaries and secondary readings; through lectures; and the final assignment	MTS: 1.1 M.Div: 1a; 1e
Recognise various ways Old Testament texts have been interpreted throughout history, including current issues in Old Testament scholarship	reading commentaries and articles; lectures	MTS: 1.2; 1:4; 1:5 M.Div: 1.a
Interpret a biblical book and suggest ideas for its application	Class discussions and final assignment	MTS: 1.2, 1.3 M.Div: 1a, 1e

for the church today		
Recognize how knowledge of the biblical world influences one's reading of Old Testament.	readings, lectures	MTS: 1.1 M.Div: 1.a; 1e

Learning Outcomes: Advanced Degree

The Advanced Degree Council has developed detailed statements of "learning outcomes" for each of the advanced degree programs (ThD, MA and ThM). They are available as appendices in the respective Handbooks. "Learning outcomes" have to do in part with the level of knowledge and skill that will be characteristic of a typical graduate of the program. In accordance with this overall statement, instructors are required to develop a statement of learning outcomes for each course. These outcomes will provide one of the benchmarks for evaluation and grading.

Course outcomes	Course element	Program outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:	This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements:	This course outcome corresponds to this aspect of the TST outcomes statement for the individual graduate programs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the context and contents of the books of Ruth and Esther using a variety of traditional and innovative interpretive techniques and strategies (including reading within the context of the Ancient Near East, theological exegesis, disaster and trauma studies, and narrative criticism). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> course requirements as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD: 1.1 MA: 1.1,2,3 ThM: 1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare and contrast the content and critical issues surrounding the interpretation of Ruth and Esther 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in-class discussion final paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD: 1.1 MA: 2.3, 5 ThM: 1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate at a proficient level of understanding at least two passages in Ruth and Esther 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> final paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD: 1.1 MA: 2.2, 3, 4, 5 ThM: 1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and deliver an oral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> class presentation on a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD: 5

presentation in a clear and effective manner	course reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA: 2.5 • ThM: 2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a research project and present the assembled results in a clear and cogently argued manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD: 2 • MA: 2.5 • ThM: 3.1

Additional Commentaries

- Baldwin, Joyce G. *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984.
- Bechtel, Carol M. *Esther*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Berlin, Adele. *Esther = [Ester] : the traditional Hebrew text with the new JPS translation*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001.
- Block, Daniel Isaac. *Judges, Ruth*. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- ———, *Ruth*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Bush, Frederic William. *Ruth, Esther*. Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1996.
- Campbell, Edward F. *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975.
- Chisholm, Robert B. *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013.
- Clines, David J. A. *The Esther Scroll*. Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 30, 1984.
- ———. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Davis, Ellen F. *Who Are You, My Daughter?: Reading Ruth Through Image and Text*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- Duguid, Iain, *Esther & Ruth*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2005.
- Eskenazi, T. C., and T. Frymer-Kensky. *Ruth*. JPS Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011.
- Firth, David G. *The Message of Esther: God Present but Unseen*. Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010.
- Hamlin, E. John. *Surely There Is a Future: A Commentary on the Book of Ruth*. Grand Rapid, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Harris, J. Gordon, Cheryl Anne Brown, and Michael S. Moore. *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000.
- Robert Holmstedt, *Ruth: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010
- Hubbard, Robert L. *The Book of Ruth*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Esther: A Commentary*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Linafelt, Tod, and Timothy K. Beal. *Ruth*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1999
- Macchi, Jean-Daniel, *Le Livre D'Esther*. Genève: Labor et Fides, 2016.
- Moore, C. A. *Esther*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1971.

- _____ . *Studies in the Book of Esther*. New York: KTAV, 1982.
- Nielsen, K. *Ruth: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Roop, Eugene F. *Ruth, Jonah, Esther*. Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 2002.
- Peter Screnock and Robert Holmstedt, *Esther: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- Sasson, J. M. *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Smit, Laura A, and Stephen E. Fowl, *Judges & Ruth*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos, 2018.
- **Younger, Jr. K. Lawson, *Judges, Ruth NIV Application Commentary, 2002.***
- Ulrich, D. R. *From Famine to fullness: The Gospel according to Ruth*. Phillipsburg, NJ; P and R Publishing, 2007.
- Way, K. C. *Judges and Ruth*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.

Other Useful resources on Ruth and Esther:

- Anderson, B. W. The Place of the Book of Esther in the Christian Bible. *Journal of Religion* 30 (1950): 32-43.
- Berg, Sandra Beth. *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure*. SBL Dissertation 44. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979.
- Carruthers, Jo, *Esther Through the Centuries*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.
- Fox, Michael. "The Structure of the Book of Esther. In *Safer Isaac L. Seeligmann*, Edited by Alexander Rofé. Jerusalem: Rubenstein, 1983, Pp. 291-301.
- Irwin, B. P. "Ruth 3: History of Interpretation." In *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, edited by T. Longman III and P. Enns, 693–700.
- Jensen, J. R. "Ruth according to Ephrem the Syrian." in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*. Ed. A. Brenner, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, Pp.170–76.
- Manor, D. W. "Ruth." In *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, edited by J. H. Walton, 2:242– 65. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Anthony Tomasino, "Esther," in *1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Vol 3 Ed John H. Walton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Narrative Criticism resources

- Alter, Robert and Kermode, Frank (eds). *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- Amit, Yairah. *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*. Translated by Yael Lotan. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953 and 2003.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 2nd ed. Translated by Christine Van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.

- Berlin, Adele. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983.
- Berlin, Adele. "8 Literary approaches to the Hebrew Bible", (eds.) Chapman, Stephen B. and Sweeney, Marvin A. *The Cambridge companion to the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp.163-83.
- Fokkelman, J. P. *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*. Translated by Ineke Smit. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Graybill, Rhiannon ed. "Literary Criticism, Literary Theory and the Bible", *Oxford Encyclopedia of Interpretation*. Oxford Biblical Studies online, Feb 4, 2017. <<http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t373/e101>>
- Gunn, David M. "Narrative Criticism." In *To Each Its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and Their Applications*, edited by Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999. Pp. 201-29.
- Gunn, David M. and Danna Nolan Fewell. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Longman III, Tremper. *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Miscall, Peter D. *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative*. SBLSS. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Moore, Stephen D. "Biblical Narrative Analysis from the New Criticism to the New Narratology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, edited by Danna Nolan Fewell, New York, NY: Oxford, 2016. Pp. 27–50.
- Polzin, Robert. *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts*. Semeia Supplements. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Sumner, George and Wells, Samuel, *Esther & Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2013.
- Tull, Patricia K. "Narrative Criticism and Narrative Hermeneutics", (ed.) Mckenzie, Steven L. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 37-46.
- Walsh, Jerome T. *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.