I. Course Details:
Instructor: Marion Taylor
Phone: (office) 416-946-3542
E-mail: m.taylor@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: By appointment: Wycliffe College, Rm 227
Class: April 22-26, 9-12 AM, 1-3:00 PM

II. 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 the contexts of Ruth and Esther within 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 lectures and group-discussions. **Note pre-course assignment below.**

Prerequisite: Old Testament Introduction or Permission of Professor

III. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>COURSE ELEMENT</th>
<th>PROGRAM OUTCOMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of this course, students will be able to:</td>
<td>This outcome will be achieved through these course elements:</td>
<td>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe the content of the books of Ruth and Esther</td>
<td>reading the primary texts, commentaries and secondary readings; through the inductive studies on Ruth and Esther</td>
<td>MTS: 1.1 M.Div: I a; 1 e</td>
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Recognise various ways Old Testament texts have been interpreted throughout history, including current issues in Old Testament scholarship

Interpret a biblical book and suggest ideas for its application for the church today

Recognize how knowledge of the biblical world influences one’s reading of Old Testament.

### 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.

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<td>By the end of this course, students will be able to:</td>
<td>This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements:</td>
<td>This course outcome corresponds to this aspect of the TST outcomes statement for the individual graduate programs:</td>
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| • 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 | • course requirements as a whole | • PhD: 1.1  
• MA: 1.1,2,3  
• ThM: 1.1 |
III. Requirements and Evaluation

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) First Assignment (20%) In preparation for the class, each student will read and/or listen to the books of Ruth and Esther- a total of 14 chapters. The estimated reading time for Ruth is 15 minutes and Esther is 30 minutes according to http://ya.ccphilly.org/how-long-does-it-take-to-read-each-book-of-the-bible/. Also each student will read and do a short reflection paper on Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible. Yairah Amit, Fortress, 2001. If you have read this book you may choose another book on narrative criticism listed below. Unlike the traditional book report which consists of the 3 R’s, Retell, Relate, and Reflect, this paper should show that you have read the book and

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<th>PhD:</th>
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<th>ThM:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Compare and contrast the content and critical issues surrounding the</td>
<td>• in-class discussion</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.3, 5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<td>interpretation of Ruth and Esther</td>
<td>• final paper</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Translate at a proficient level of understanding at least two passages</td>
<td>• class presentation</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>in Ruth and Esther</td>
<td>• final paper</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Design and deliver an oral presentation in a clear and effective</td>
<td>• class presentation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>manner</td>
<td>• final paper</td>
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<td>• Prepare a research project and present the assembled results in a</td>
<td>• final paper</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>clear and cogently argued manner</td>
<td>• PhD: 1.1</td>
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<td>• MA: 2.3, 5</td>
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<td>• ThM: 1.1</td>
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that you can apply Amit’s narrative approach to reading Ruth and/or Esther. Your paper should illustrate Amit’s approach to character, plot development, narration, and dialogue with brief and selected examples from the books of Ruth and/or Esther. This paper should be no longer than 2-4 pages. **If you need an extension to complete the reflection paper, which is due at the beginning of the first class, please email the professor m.taylor@utoronto.ca**

2) Insights and Questions on your reading of two commentaries (20%)
Before each class you need to read a commentary and my MSS on Ruth and Esther on the chapters being discussed. Beginning on the second day of classes, bring to class two insights and two questions raised in your readings as you will get to share them with the class. At the end of the week, hand in your insights and questions.

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 August 9.

4) Class Participation (20% for BD and AD students not specializing in Bible, 10% for AD Bible students- see #5 below) 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 sign up to present on one of the topics listed above. The presentation 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 you can share with the class 1. A sermon (good and bad; classic or contemporary) on the book of Ruth and Esther. For example: Mark Driscoll on Esther- https://marshill.com/esther
Spurgeon’s sermons on Ruth- http://www.spurgeon.org/index/r_ru.htm
2. Artistic interpretations of the characters in Ruth or Esther that you can share with the class.
3. introduce a movie or video including those for children on the books of Ruth and Esther (e.g. Veggie Tales).

5) 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 Screnock 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 August 1.

IV. Required Texts.
2. 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

3. One commentary on Ruth and one on Esther.
Highly recommended for length and content are

Also possible are the following commentaries.

V. 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 UTORmail email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your UofT email address is properly entered in the ROSI system.

VI. Course Schedule:

1. Monday April 22
Topic 1 Introduction to Reading Old Testament Narratives or How to Read Ruth and Esther as Narratives.
Marina Hofman Willard, “Narrative Criticism: Methodology and Procedure.”

Topic 2 Ruth 1
Taylor's chapter 1
Lecture, “Classic Responses to Ruth and Orpah”
Margaret Black on Orpah and Ruth
Handout on Grief and Loss

2. Tuesday April 23
Topic 3 Ruth 2
Taylor's chapter 2
Lecture- The gospel of Ruth
Read and discuss Spurgeon’s sermon on Ruth 2 see Quercus.

Topic 4 Ruth 3 and 4
Taylor’s chapter 3 & 4
How to Interpret the Threshing Floor scene
Read the posted pieces that explore modern applications of chapter 3 that related it to dating practices.
Read the article that explore the work of Ephrem the Syrian that relates to Ruth.

3. Wednesday April 24
Topic 5: A look at the whole and considerations of Trauma
Guest Rachel Tullock, Gender and Violence and Trauma as it relates to Ruth, Esther and Today.
Read the article on Trauma in the Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation under the readings link on Quercus.
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

Topic 6 Introduction to the Book of Esther
Narrative analysis of the Book of Esther
Read the introduction to Geneva Bible Study notes on Esther and have them handy for discussion.
Read and Discuss the Overview of Esther from the Docent Group

4. Thursday April 25
Topic 7 Esther 1-3
Discuss the Preacher and Vashti handout.
Mosala, The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women’s struggle for Liberation in South Africa

Topic 8 Esther 4-6
Read Wilhelm Visher, “The book of Esther”- a German reading in 1939
Skim John Donne’s sermon on Esther 4:16, especially the last few pages
Discuss Esther, the intercessor- see handout

5. Friday April 25
Ideological Criticism and Using Esther Today
Read the following posted articles:
Arie Leder, 'Historical Narrative and Wisdom. Toward Preaching Esther “For Such a Time as This,” Acta Theologica 2011, 31(2) 135-158.
"Preaching Subversively: The Book of Esther"
John Donne's sermon on Esther 4:16
Discuss Tim Keller’s sermons.

Topic 9 Esther 7-9
Read Susan Niditch, “Interpreting Esther: Categories, Contexts and Creative Ambiguities”

Topic 10 Esther 10 and a look at the whole

Additional Bibliography

Narrative Criticism


**Other Useful resources on Ruth and Esther:**


