

Associated Canadian Theological Schools

BIE 612A: Exposition of the Psalms

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Professor of Old Testament
Spring - 2010
3 credit hours
Prerequisites: RES 500, BIE 505

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Class Dates: Tuesdays
Class time: 8:30 – 9:50 a.m.
11:00 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

I. Course Description

This course provides both an overview of the Psalter and more detailed analysis of selected psalms. Special attention is paid to themes and concepts that are helpful for spiritual formation and ministry.

II. Objectives

By the end of this course, each student should:

- 1) be familiar with the important theological themes and issues addressed in the biblical Psalter;
- 2) have learned sound hermeneutical methodology for interpreting psalms;
- 3) understand the Psalms in terms of their functionality in ancient Israel and their canonical context, both as the words of the covenant people to their God and of God to his covenant people;
- 4) have a sense of the nature of the relationship between the Psalter and the New Testament;
- 5) be attuned to the creativity and literary artistry of the psalmists;
- 6) be able to draw on the resources of the Psalter for spiritual enrichment and contemporary ministry (e.g., prayer, worship, counselling, teaching, preaching).

III. Course Textbooks

Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Davidson, Robert. *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Handsel, 1998.

McCann, J. Clinton. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Allender, Dan and Tremper Longman, *Cry of the Soul*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1999.

New Revised Standard Version Bible = NRSV.

Psalms in A New English Translation of the Septuagint. Translated by Albert Pietersma. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 = NETS.

IV. Course Assignments

Typically, a student is expected to spend approximately 40 hours to complete the work necessary to earn 1 semester hour of credit, hence 120 hours for a 3 credit course. This includes time spent in class, so unexcused absences will result in grade reductions. If a student is absent from more than two classes for any reason, s/he will either be required to do make-up work to avoid further grade reductions or will have to retake the course to receive credit for it, depending on the number of absences. For full credit, assignments must be completed on time. Grades for late written work will be reduced 5% per day (weekends = 1 day) to a maximum reduction of 35%. All assignments must be completed in order to receive credit for this course. Those that have not come in by April 8, 2010 will not be accepted.

Several kinds of assignments have been created to help the student work through the required material in a meaningful way and to acquire the skills necessary for sound interpretation.

1) Readings:

Read the book of Psalms in the NRSV and NETS translations, and the textbooks by Brown, Davidson, and McCann. These readings are to be completed in accordance with the schedule in the Reading Statement found below in this syllabus.

2) Textbook Evaluations and Reading Statement:

Write a 2000 word paper in which you evaluate the books by Brown, Davidson, and McCann in terms of factors such as their

- contribution to your understanding of the book of Psalms
- treatment of issues that are relevant to the expositor
- overall informativeness
- readability
- strengths and weaknesses

Give specific examples to support your evaluative statements, and provide relevant page numbers in the books for your examples. Attach the Reading Statement (which you must complete and sign) to the front of this paper and submit both by March 30.

3) Class Presentations:

Students will make class presentations on a variety of topics related to the book of Psalms. More information will be provided on January 12 during the first class.

4) Psalms and Creativity:

In this course, attention will be given both to the creativity of the biblical psalmists and to how the the Psalms have inspired creativity in others. In a 2000 word paper, (a) do an analysis of one or more specific examples of music, film, or art in which key themes and/or forms of the book of Psalms are clearly reflected, and (b) write a psalm yourself that corresponds in form to one of the types studied in this course and that is an expression of some aspect of your own spiritual journey. Due March 9.

5) Expository Paper:

Select one of the following psalms (59, 66, 147) and write a 3000 word exposition. In your analysis:

- Identify the form of the psalm and, as part of your research, re-read it in conjunction with the others of the same type, noting both its similarities and distinctive features. Readings and class discussions regarding form-critical analysis will prepare you for this.

- Outline the psalm and explain how the parts fit together to create the whole.
- Discuss significant terms and explain their contribution to the structure and/or message of the psalm.
- Do a careful exegesis of the psalm.
- If there is a title that suggests a narrative setting for the psalm, suggest how it contributes to, or influences, the interpretation of the psalm, in comparison to a reading of it without the title.
- Summarize the essential message of the psalm and its contribution to the overall message of the Psalter.
- Discuss a contemporary application that you would make in a sermon or lesson based on this psalm, or a specific counselling context to which this psalm speaks.

This paper is to be well-researched, properly documented, and is to include a bibliography of works consulted and cited. You may consult the class texts, reference works, and other reputable and recent books and journals/periodicals (but not Study Bible notes). At least ten to twelve such sources should be used. However, be sure to use these sources for background and contextual information. Do not simply survey the interpretations of commentators for the psalm that you analyze, but give evidence of having worked through interpretative issues for yourself. Citation or other use of sources must be scrupulously documented. The grade for this assignment will be based on both the content of the paper and the quality of your writing. Due April 6.

Grading Scale

| Letter Grade | Assessment | Grade Point |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| A+ | Superior | 4.30 |
| A | Excellent | 4.00 |
| A- | Very Good | 3.70 |
| B+ | Proficient | 3.30 |
| B | Good | 3.00 |
| B- | Average | 2.70 |
| C+ | Adequate | 2.30 |
| C | Acceptable | 2.00 |
| C- | Needs Work | 1.70 |
| F | Below Standard | 0.00 |

Grade Allocations

1. Class presentation and participation 20%
2. Psalms and Creativity assignment (March 9) 20%
3. Textbook evaluations and Reading Statement (March 30)..... 25%
4. Expository paper (April 6) 35%

V. Submission of Assignments

Students may feel free to submit assignments in electronic form.

VI. Tentative Course Outline

- Jan. 12 Introduction
- 19 Interpreting Psalms
- 26 Torah/Wisdom
- Feb. 2 Complaint/Lament
 - McCann reading to be completed
- 9 Complaint/Lament
- 16 Thanksgiving
 - Brown reading to be completed
- 23 NO CLASS (Reading Week & Modular Courses)
- March 2 Liturgy and Procession
 - 9 Redemptive History
 - Psalms and Creativity assignment due
 - 16 Royal and Enthronement
 - 23 Zion
 - 30 Messianic
 - NRSV and NETS Psalms and Davidson readings to be completed
 - Textbook evaluations and Reading Statement due
- April 6 Psalms and the New Testament
 - Exposition paper due

VII. Bibliography

See Allender & Longman, "Notes," pp. 261-63; Brown, "Notes," pp. 217-62; Davidson, pp. 481-84; McCann, "Notes," pp. 182-94.

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions overnight or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), MAX (850 AM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM) by 6:30 a.m., and an announcement will be placed on the University's switchboard as well as on the website <http://www.twu.ca/conditions/>. The first announcement regarding a closure will cover the period up to 1:00 p.m. only. If classes are to be cancelled beyond 1:00 p.m., this decision will be announced by the same means before 11:00 a.m. that day. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a closure notice on the University's switchboard and website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except in counselling courses, for which APA format is used, and in CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. In RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 5th edition. For Turabian, there are two formats – Notes (Bibliography) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website: <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> (“Chicago” stands for “Turabian”) or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which style he/she recommends you use!!

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/academics/research/ethics/>. Those needing additional clarification may contact Dr. Bruce Guenther. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource in this regard has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or can be viewed in flash (self-running) tutorials of different lengths:

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.

Reading Statement
Exposition of the Psalms
BIE 612A

Note: Readings are to be completed by the dates indicated below.

Feb. 2 Read McCann

16 Read Brown

March 30 Read NRSV and NETS Psalms in conjunction with Davidson

Record the percentages for the appropriate options below. Then sign (legibly and in English) and date this statement. Due: March 30.

I completed preparing ____ % of the assigned readings by the due dates.

I completed reading ____ % of the assigned textbook readings after the due dates.

I failed to complete ____ % of the assigned readings.

NB: The total of the preceding percentages cannot exceed 100%!!

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please print your name (in English!) _____