
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DISTANCE EDUCATION



JUDGES - ESTHER

DR. RICHARD P. BELCHER, JR.



Course Overview

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Course Description:

OOT510 Judges - Esther, 2 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:
Dr. Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

An analysis of each book in this section of the canon from a literary, historical, and theological perspective. Each book is placed in the context of redemptive history to show its relationship to what has gone before and how it furthers the progress of redemption, which ultimately leads to Christ. There is an emphasis on how to interpret narrative and characters in a story.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the structure and message of each book covered in this course
- To understand how each book fits into the progress of the unfolding history of God's people
- To understand how these books lay a foundation for the coming of Christ
- To become comfortable teaching and preaching from narrative, with special attention given to how to deal with characters in a story

Required Textbooks:

Belcher, Richard P., Jr. ***Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today***. Phillipsburg, PA: P & R Publishing, 2011.

Merrill, Eugene H. ***Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel***. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. (This book is now being used in place of Walter Kaiser's book).

Pratt, Jr., Richard L. ***He Gave Us Stories***. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993.

Van Pelt, Miles V. and J. Ligon Duncan, et. al. ***A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised***. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Whitcomb, Jr., John C. *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets*. 5th revised edition. Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1977.

(This chart can be found at the BMH website (www.bmhbooks.com)).

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The [Online Student Handbook](#) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

1. Listen to all recorded [Lectures](#)
2. Complete all [Readings](#)
3. Participate in [Forum Discussions](#) (with other students and the professor)
4. Take the [Final Exam](#)
5. Submit [Research Paper](#)
6. Submit [Biblical Books Reading Requirement](#)
7. Submit [Mentor Report/Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:



Dr. Richard P. Belcher is the Professor of Old Testament and Academic Dean of RTS Charlotte. He is an ordained minister in the PCA and pastored an urban nondenominational church in Rochester, NY for ten years before pursuing the Ph. D. This pastoral experience in an unusual and challenging setting gives him great insight into the practical, modern issues that will be faced by future pastors studying with him at RTS. He graduated from Covenant College and received his M. Div from Covenant Seminary. He also received an S.T.M. from Concordia Theological Seminary, and his Ph. D. is from Westminster Theological Seminary. He has served as stated supply for numerous churches in the area since coming to RTS Charlotte in 1995.

Publications by Dr. Belcher:

The Messiah and the Psalms. Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2006.

Genesis: The Beginning of God's Plan of Salvation: Christian Focus, 2012.

Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today: P&R, 2016.

Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God's Sovereignty: Christian Focus, 2017.

Ecclesiastes: A Mentor Commentary. Christian Focus, 2017.

"Thanksgiving, Psalms of" in *The Dictionary of Old Testament: Wisdom, Writings, and Poetry.* Edited by T. Longman and P. Enns; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2008.

"Suffering" in *The Dictionary of Old Testament: Wisdom, Writings, and Poetry.* Edited by T. Longman and P. Enns; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2008.

"The King, the Law, and Righteousness in the Psalms" in *The Law is not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant.* P & R Publishing, 2008.

Grades

Forum Discussions (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts = 10 total posts).
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
 - A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examination (Final 35%):

There will be one exam with three parts. Part 1 includes outlines of the Biblical books included in the document titled "Outline of the Historical Books". Part 2 will be the identification of key historical terms from the readings and the lectures. Students will be given the key terms ahead of time in the Course Glossary. Part 3 will be a series of essays (3) based on the lectures.

The exam for this course will be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). Please note that you will need to have a proctor for your exams. Your proctor can be anyone except a relative or current RTS Student. After clicking on the exam link you will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam.

Research Paper (40%):

The research paper is required that will focus on a character of a narrative. See section titled "[Research Paper Instructions](#)" in this syllabus for more instructions.

Reading Report (5%):

The student must complete all of the required reading and submit a reading report acknowledging how much of the required reading they have completed. This report will be submitted in the Canvas classroom.

Mentor Report OR Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree program, you are required to submit a mentor report at the end of the course. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or are a certificate student, or special student (e.g. from another seminary), you are asked to write a 200-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 200 words will receive a grade deduction.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Interpreting Narrative: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives

Lesson Two

Kingship: the Restoration of Human Dominion

Lesson Three

Introduction to Judges: Israel's Failed Mission

Lesson Four

The Downward Spiral of the Canonization of Israel

Lesson Five

Ruth: Covenant Loyalty Brings Covenant Blessings

Lesson Six

Samuel and the Crisis of Leadership

Lesson Seven

Saul: a King Like the Other Nations

Lesson Eight

David: God's Choice for a King

Lesson Nine

David: the King After God's Own Heart

Lesson Ten

Solomon: the Worldwide Glory of God's Kingdom

Lesson Eleven

Elijah: the Prophetic Fight Against Idolatry

Lesson Twelve

Elisha: Yahweh's Power to Deliver

Lesson Thirteen

Covenant Curse: the Exile of the Kingdoms

Lesson Fourteen

Ezra: Laying the Foundation for Restoration

Lesson Fifteen

Nehemiah: the Need for Continuing Reform

Lesson Sixteen

Esther: the Hidden Providence of God

Lesson Seventeen

Chronicles: Looking to the Past in Hope for the Future

Research Paper Instructions

The paper must deal with a character in one of the narratives in Judges to Esther, whether a judge, king, prophet, leader, or some other fairly major character. The paper should cover how the author portrays the character (characterization) and what the author is trying to convey through this particular character in the narrative. It would be helpful to present a misuse of the character or another view of the character as a contrast to your development of the character.

The following questions may need to be addressed in the paper:

- a. What function does the narrative serve in the context of the book?
- b. What major idea is the author of the narrative trying to establish?
- c. What is the meaning of the narrative to the original reading audience?
- d. What major OT concepts, institutions, or ideas does the character relate to or develop?
- e. Is there any legitimate connections to Christ in your character or narrative?
- f. What is the meaning of the character for God's people today?

The following are criteria that will be used to evaluate the paper:

- a. Cogency of argument - is there a thesis statement, how well does the argument hang together, and how well are pertinent and fundamental points brought out?
- b. Discussions of historical context, genre, and redemptive history (where these are appropriate, but do not go overboard); just give the reader enough information to understand your paper. Some issues, like authorship, can be omitted or issues and bibliography related to authorship can be given in footnotes.
- c. The use of sources: this is a research paper so avoid study Bibles as a source; read as many commentaries as you can, including conservative commentaries, those from a critical perspective, and at least one older commentary, such as Calvin, Geneva series, etc. At least one journal article must be cited. Research is important and can be included in footnotes. Think of at least 8 sources.
- d. Do not make a Scripture reference as a footnote, but put it in parenthesis in the paper.
- e. The paper should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced, pages numbered, and with one inch margins on all sides, except the left margin should have a 1 1/4 inch margin.
- f. You are expected to use as much Hebrew as you are able.
- g. Use the guidelines in the current edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian.
- h. Don't leave blank space between paragraphs

Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Judges Through Esther

Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<i>In order to measure the success of the curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Moderate	Articulation of essential biblical, theological, and historical information is covered, but mostly written, not oral
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	The original meaning of the historical books is covered with an emphasis on research in a paper and substantial time spent on meaning for today
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	There is an emphasis on the theological message of the historical books, but not as directly tied to the Westminster Standards
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	None	
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	None	Implicit not explicit
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	None	
Teach	Ability to teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	We talk about how to preach and teach the prophets
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	None	
MAR Specific SLO	An ability to integrate such knowledge and understanding into one's own calling in society	None	