Reformed Theological Seminary-Houston

OT502: Hebrew I, a 3-hour course; Spring 2016, Thursdays 6.30-9.30pm

Professor (senior learner[[1]](#footnote-1)): Mr. Taylor Ince

*Syllabus*

1: Feb 4, Chapters 1-2

• Quiz (pre-assigned reading)

2: Feb 11, Chapters 3-4

• Quiz (chs 1-2)/Gen 1.1

3: Feb 18, Chapters 5-6

• Quiz (chs 3-4)/Gen 1.2

4: Feb 25, Chapters 7-8

• Quiz (chs 5-6)/Gen 1.3

5: Mar 3, Chapters 9-10

• Quiz (chs 7-8)/Gen 1.4

6: Mar 10, Review

• Midterm exam (cumulative)/Gen 1.5

Mar 17 NO CLASS (Happy St. Patrick’s Day)

7: Mar 24, Chapters 11-12

• Quiz (reading)/Gen 1.6

8: Mar 31, Chapters 13-14

• Quiz (chs 11-12)/Gen 1.7

9: Apr 7 , Chapters 15-16

• Quiz (chs 13-14)/Gen 1.8

10: Apr 14, Chapters 17-18 (Have you paid your taxes?)

• Quiz (chs 15-16)/Gen 1.9

11: Apr 21, Chapters 19-20

• Quiz (chs 17-18)/Gen 1.10

12: Apr 28, Review

• Final exam (cumulative: includes material from Chapters 1-20)

**Course Description:**

• An introduction to the Hebrew language of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament).

**Course Goals:**

• To learn the rudiments of the biblical Hebrew language so students might begin to read and enjoy the Bible Jesus read, embodied, and fulfilled (Matt 5.17) in hopes that they might come to know him better and make him better known as Creator, Redeemer, King, and Lover of our souls.

**Getting Started:**

• Please have your required books in hand, not just ordered.

• Read “Jesus’ View of the Old Testament“ by John Wenham before our first class (Matt Stahl will have emailed you the essay).

• I highly recommend you come to class having at least familiarized yourself with the Hebrew alphabet and vowels. You will not be quizzed on this material (chs. 1-2) until class 2, but they will be foreign and difficult to most of you. Hebrew is another world; buckle up! That’s part of what makes the adventure so wonderful.

**Good Things to Know:**

• The website “dailydoseofhebrew.com” provides many helpful resources, one of which is a short video summary of each of Futato’s 40 chapters in his textbook, Beginning Biblical Hebrew.

• Study is best in short bursts. 30 minutes 5 days per week has been proven to yield better results in language acquisition than 2.5 hours in one lump.

• Fight your fear of asking questions. Ask! Just don’t expect I shall always have the (right) answer.

**Books**

*Required*:

• Beginning Biblical Hebrew, Futato

• Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), Elliger and Rudulph (eds.). Get the 1997 edition. You may also purchase the paperback, which is cheaper (but I think the print is smaller).

• OR, you may purchase A Reader’s Hebrew Bible instead (see below)

• The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Clines (ed.)

*Recommended*:

• A Simplified Guide to BHS, Scott (would be required but, sadly, its price has ballooned)

• The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Kelley, Mynatt, and Crawford

• The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew, Van Pelt and Pratico

• Pocket Dictionary for the Study of Biblical Hebrew, Murphy

• A Reader’s Hebrew Bible, Brown and Smith (eds.)

• A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible, Wegner

• A New Concordance of the Old Testament, Even-Shoshan with introduction and partial translation by Sailhamer. Sadly very expensive but indispensable for Hebrew Bible (HB) study at the highest level. This is simply the best HB concordance; and the concordance, not the dictionary, is the scholar’s best tool because it gives you the words in context and thus affords you all you need to truly discern a word’s meaning.[[2]](#footnote-2) It is used less than a dictionary because it takes longer than a dictionary and doesn’t “give you the answer” like a dictionary. Use a dictionary, but devote yourself to your concordance.

• A English concordance of the Bible which classes the words under their original Hebrew and Greek renderings can prove a helpful companion to a Hebrew concordance (by indicating other Hebrew words in the same semantic field as the word you are looking up). Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible is one such concordance.

**Requirements:**

*Attendance*

• You are expected to attend class

• If you cannot, please inform me in advance

*Quizzes (40%):*

• We will have a timed quiz each class after the first break (barring classes 6 and 12, the midterm and final exam classes).

• We will have 10 quizzes. Your lowest 2 will be dropped. A missed quiz for any reason will count as a drop.

• The quiz will cover material from chapters reviewed in the previous class (as indicated on the syllabus). This includes the vocabulary in said chapters. The vocabulary tested in quizzes will be cumulative (e. g., I may draw from vocabulary learned week 2 in the week 8 quiz).

• Students will grade each other’s quizzes directly after quiz completion.

*Exams (50%):*

• We will have 2 exams, both cumulative, one a midterm, the other a final.

*Homework (10%):*

• The homework every week will be the Practice sections concluding each of Futato’s chapters. You will do two weekly since we will cover two chapters weekly. So for example, in our first class we will cover the first two chapters (chs. 1-2); therefore part of your homework after class 1 and before class 2 will be to do the practice material for those chapters (chs. 1-2), and so on.

• Your homework will also be to read the (two) chapters assigned for the following class. This way our class time will be review, which will maximize your language learning. This portion is recommended but not required and WILL NOT COUNT IN THE GRADING (see below).

• Homework is based on your sacred honor. It will not be graded by someone else. However, not doing the homework will likely impair your quiz and exam performance. More significantly, it will impede your progress in learning how to read biblical Hebrew.

• At the bottom of most quizzes you will mark whether completed your homework. It is all or nothing; so if you completed most of it, you need to put “no”.

• If I discover that you are lying, I will give you a zero for your homework grade for the course (not just for that day). In other words, 10% of your course grade will be a zero.

• This is designed to help your grade, not hurt it. Take advantage and, as my old professor John Currid was fond of telling us, “do your labors!” יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

**Directions:**

• Ours is a 3-hour course. We will break for 10 minutes on the top of each hour (7:30-7:40pm and 8:30-8:40pm). This, not during class, is a good time to use the restroom.

• We will adhere to the published RTS-H grading scale.

**Contact Information:**

Taylorince@gmail.com, 281.624.7680

Calling or texting me is best. Email may or may not get you an answer.



**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

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| **MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**  *In order to measure the success of the MDiv 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 MDiv outcomes.*  *\*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.* | | **Rubric**   * Strong * Moderate * Minimal * None | **Mini-Justification** |
| **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. | Strong | Lecture/reading review question, exegetical worksheets and especially the exegesis paper require clear written communication |
| **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 | All lectures, reading and other assignments focus on the content and interpretation of scripture and are presented with a methodology which integrates various ways of reading scripture. |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Moderate | A confessional view of scripture undergirds the overall approach as well as a confessional hermeneutic. A redemptive-historical hermeneutic is one of the major perspectives utilized throughout the course. |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | Personal sanctification is one of the goal integrated into the hermeneutical method presented. Application (personal and corporate) is the end goal of the course. |
| **Desire for Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Moderate | A redemptive-historical and ecclesiological reading of scripture is directed toward providing an all-encompassing worldview. |
| **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.) | Moderate | The variety and unity of biblical theology will highlight the strengths and weakness of a variety of perspectives on scripture. |
| **Preach** | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Strong | Biblical content provides corpus for preaching; application provided regularly to model application in preaching. |
| **Worship** | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | None |  |
| **Shepherd** | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | Moderate | The character and calling of a biblical shepherd is seen through the life and ministry of Jesus. The coming of the kingdom of God is presented as God’s mission in Christ and for the church. |
| **Church/World** | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Strong | Christ/culture paradigm arising out of the coming of the kingdom of God used to illustrate how to relate to broadening circles from church to world, including the mission of God as enacted in Jesus Christ. |

1. Eric Ortlund, writing to seminary professors: “I suppose this might be different in the hard sciences, but in the humanities (and biblical studies is part of the humanities, for good or bad), you are not an expert. You are a senior learner” (“Scatterings” blog post). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Let the use of words teach you their meaning” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 3d ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe [New York: Macmillan, 1958], 200, as quoted by Silzer and Finley in How Biblical Languages Work, 160). Context alone yields a word’s exact meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)