
REFORMED  THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DISTANCE EDUCATION



POETS

DR. RICHARD P. BELCHER, JR.

Course Overview

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Course Description:

OOT5300 Poets, 2 hours
Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:
Dr. Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

This course examines the literary structure, themes, and history of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, with an emphasis on understanding these texts in their own historical and literary context, how they fit into redemptive history, and what they mean for God's people today.

Course Objectives:

- To better understand Hebrew poetry and how to interpret it
- To examine how the concept of genre can help us interpret Scripture
- To see how the wisdom books fit into their context in the ancient Near East (ANE)
- To explore how this section of the canon fits into redemptive history and its relationship to Jesus Christ
- To begin to grapple with the issues raised in the wisdom books in light of the problems of the contemporary world

Required Textbooks:

Adams, James. *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace*. Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2017.

Alexander, Desmond. "The Old Testament View of Life after Death," *Themelios* 11 (1986): 41-46.

[Available for download on the Learning Management System]

Belcher, Richard P., Jr. *The Messiah and the Psalms*. Ross-Shire, SCT: Christian Focus, 2006.

_____. "Thanksgiving, Psalms of" and "Suffering" in *Dictionary of Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry, Writings*. DOTWPW; eds. Longman and Enns. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008. pp. 805-808 and 775-781.

[Available for download on the LMS]

_____. *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018. Chaps. 1, 4, 7, 10-11.

Lucas, Ernest C. *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003.

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.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989. (pp. 160-163)
[Available for download on the Learning Management System]

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

Recommended Books:

Belcher, Richard P., Jr. *Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God's Sovereignty*. Ross-Shire, SCT: Christian Focus, 2017.

_____. *Ecclesiastes: A Mentor Commentary*. Ross-shire, SCT: Christian Focus, 2017.

Online Student Handbook:

The Online Student Handbook (can be [downloaded here](#)) 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 [Midterm Exam](#)
5. Take the [Final Exam](#)
6. Submit a [Research Paper](#)
7. Submit a [Review of the Alexander Article](#)
8. Submit [Mentor Report/Course Application Paper](#)

Meet the Professor

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:



Dr. Richard P. Belcher is the John D. and Frances M. Gwin Professor of Old Testament and the Academic Dean at both RTS Charlotte and RTS Atlanta. 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:

Finding Favour with God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature (NSBT; IVP, 2018)

“The Supernatural Creation of Man: The Historicity of Adam and Eve,” in *Creation and Change* by Douglas Kelly (Christian Focus, 2017 revised)

Ecclesiastes: A Mentor Commentary (Christian Focus, 2017)

Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God’s Sovereignty (Christian Focus, 2017)

Prophet, Priest, and King (P&R, 2016)

Genesis: The Beginning of God’s Plan of Salvation (Christian Focus, 2012)

“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)

“Suffering” and “Thanksgiving, Psalms of” in *The Dictionary of Old Testament: Wisdom, Writings, and Poetry* (eds. T. Longman and P. Enns; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2008)

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

Grades

Forum Discussion (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.

Examinations (Midterm 25%, Final 25%):

There are two examinations for this course. No helps are allowed, including Bibles. The midterm examination will cover the lectures from Lessons 1-6. The final examination will cover the lectures from Lessons 7-9. The midterm exam consists of short answer questions, and short essay question, and long essay questions. The final exam consists of short answer questions and long essay questions. You can find more detailed information about the exam in Canvas.

The midterm and final exams for this course are to 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 (20%):

A research paper is required. It should focus on a particular passage from one of the wisdom books. See section titled "[Research Paper Instructions](#)" in this syllabus for more instructions.

Article Review (5%):

The review or summary of the Alexander article should focus on the four different views of Sheol (proponents, arguments against, etc.), with a clear statement of Alexander's views. This should be accomplished in about one page, typed, single spaced.

Reading Report (5%):

In addition to the textbooks for the course, the student must read the biblical books: Lamentations, Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. To receive full credit, the student must read all of the required readings listed at the beginning of each lesson.

Note: there is more reading for the Psalm lectures than the other lectures, which means you may want to spread some of the psalm reading out over several more weeks.

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

The Basics of Hebrew Poetry

Lesson Two

Lamentations

Lesson Three

Psalms

Part 1: A Brief History of Interpretation

Part 2: Psalm Titles - The Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel

Part 3: The Organization of the Psalms

Lesson Four

Genres of the Psalms

Part 1: Messianic Psalms: Teaching Christ from all the Psalms

Part 2: Lament Psalms - The Cry of the Soul to God

Part 3: The Imprecatory Psalms

Lesson Five

Wisdom Literature - A Comparative Approach

Lesson Six

Song of Songs

Part 1: Introduction to the Song of Songs

Part 2: An Overview of the Song of Songs

Part 3: An Overview of the Song of Songs - Continued

Lesson Seven

Proverbs

Part 1: The Problem of Context

Part 2: Wisdom - The Basis for a Successful Life

Part 3: Highlights of Wisdom

Lesson Eight

Job

Part 1: Patience or Perseverance?

Part 2: Nobody Knows the Trouble I See

Part 3: Where is Wisdom to be Found?

Lesson Nine

Ecclesiastes

Part 1: Introductory Questions - Who Knows?

Part 2: Approaches to Ecclesiastes - Is Everything Meaningless?

Part 3: Interpreting Ecclesiastes - A Wearisome Task

Research Paper Instructions

The paper can be centered on one passage or it can look at a major theme in one of the books studied in this course. If the paper focuses on a theme in a book, it is important to see how that theme relates to the rest of the canon (OT and NT).

ETS/JETS guidelines are to be followed for abbreviations of journals. The formatting of your paper will follow the SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd Edition. More information can be found at the SBL website (<https://www.sbl-site.org/default.aspx>) or through the RTS Library.

The following questions should be kept in mind (these should not be headings in the paper):

- A. How does the passage fit into the rest of the book?
- B. What is the major theme of the passage?
- C. How is the theme developed (an outline of the passage may be helpful here)?
- D. Are there any significant literary, historical, or theological questions?
- E. Are there any major problems in the passage?
- F. Is the passage using prior revelation in any way?
- G. What is the message of the passage to the original reading audience?
- H. Is the passage used in a significant way in later biblical history (either OT or NT)?
- I. What is the message of the passage for today?

The paper could revolve around a particular literary, historical, or theological issue in the passage or a particular problem encountered in the text. The paper should reflect a developed argument centered around a theme or an issue in the passage.

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

1. 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?
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Do not make a Scripture reference as a footnote, but put it in parenthesis in the paper.
5. 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.
*Do not leave extra space between paragraphs
6. You are expected to use as much Heberw as you are able.

Course Objectives Related to Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Poets
Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

<u>Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<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 MAR 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 poetical 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.	Minimal	Learning about our relationship to God, especially in the Psalms, aids sanctification
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	None	
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 poetical books
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	