

OT5250: Joshua to Esther

3 Hours – Fall 2020

RTS Houston

REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY



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אָמרוּ תְּנֵה־לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטָנוּ

¹(שְׂמוּאֵל א ח ו)

בִּי אֲדֹנָי וַיֵּשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מְצַאֲתָנוּ כָּל־זֹאת

²(שְׁפֹטִים ו יג)

A. פֶּשֶׁר (Explanation)

COURSE GOALS

1. To understand the historical context, content, and message of the books of Joshua through Esther.
2. To understand the role of these books and the events they describe within Old Testament biblical theology, particularly in connection with redemptive history and salvation in Jesus Christ.
3. To understand key issues in the historical development of the biblical text, canon, and critical scholarship related to the Old Testament.
4. To understand the relevance of these books for the Church and the world today and thus deepen our love for God as he is revealed in Scripture.

PREREQUISITES

None. However, Hebrew I and II are strongly encouraged in order to get the most out of this course as possible, particularly the paper.

SCHEDULE

This course will convene for concentrated class sessions on the following four sets of weekend dates:

- August 28th and 29th
- September 11th and 12th
- October 2nd and 3rd
- October 16th and 17th

For each set of weekend dates, we will meet during the following times:

- Fridays, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- Saturdays, 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM

We normally will take ten-minute breaks each hour and a forty-five-minute lunch on Saturdays. This pattern may vary slightly as needed, depending on the lecture timing.

¹ "They said, 'Give us a king to judge us!'"

² "But sir, if YHWH is with us, then why has all this happened to us?"

B. משמרות (Obligations)

REQUIRED READING

- a) Miles Van Pelt, ed. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Crossway: 2016, pp. 177–246, 399–418, 475–94, 515–41. [133 pages]
- b) Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Israel*. 2nd edition; Baker: 2008, pp. 19–36, 110–527. [434 pages]
- c) V. Philips Long, “The Art of Biblical History,” in Moisés Silva, ed. *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation: Six Volumes in One*. Zondervan: 1996, pp. 281–429. [148 pages]
- d) Aaron Chalmers, *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel: Prophet, Priest, Sage, and People*. IVP Academic: 2013, pp. 1–140. [140 pages]
- e) Mark S. Gignilliat, *A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs*. Zondervan: 2012, pp. 11–176. [165 pages]
- f) Christopher H. J. Wright, *Knowing God Through the Old Testament: Three Volumes in One*. 2nd edition; IVP Academic: 2019, pp. 1–521. [521 pages]
- g) Bible (read the books of Joshua through Esther in your native language)

COURSE POLICIES, RESOURCES, AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

“Office Hours” and Assistance

You are welcome to contact me at any point throughout the course with questions or concerns. You may do so by emailing me directly or sending a message through Canvas. Given the time constraints on our face-to-face time on class weekends, personal meetings will be limited. To make up for this, I am happy to set up a virtual meeting via Zoom or similar platforms if more time or interaction would be beneficial for you.

Attendance & Class Participation

I will not take attendance and do not award points for it, but repeated absence or lateness may affect your final grade. If for any reason you know that you will be forced to miss a day or a portion of class – or a reading quiz or other deadline – you must discuss this with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

To achieve the Course Goals set out in (A.) above, you are expected to be at full focus in class and to participate by responding to my questions and asking your own. *Do not waste* your investment in seminary education by allowing The Screen – whether phone or laptop – to rule your attention in class. However you choose to take notes, I will provide lecture outlines (.pdf and .doc) and other handouts to annotate in class. These will be made available on Canvas. See the Classroom Technology Policy below for further information.

Reading Assessment

In this course I am assuming that you enjoy reading, that you are prepared to learn independently from doing so at length, and that ongoing book-learning will shape your life and ministry. Hence, a significant portion of your grade (10%) will be based upon your completion of the assigned reading. **There is a total of 1,541 pages of reading for this course, not including Bible reading**, all of which you must complete prior to taking the final exam. Develop a schedule and stick to it. You may not always agree with what you are reading; that is okay. Take the time to understand, digest it, and reflect critically on the material.

You will complete a Reading Assessment on Canvas (no proctor required) prior to taking the final exam. You are able to take it at any time during the course – whenever you finish the reading – but **you must complete the Reading Assessment by midnight on November 18th**. The assessment requires you to:

1. Specify what percentage of each assignment (items *a–g* above) you completed. Be ready to provide an accurate number.
2. Describe your reading process for each assignment (items *a–g* above). This may look slightly different for each assignment.

A reading process that reflects a lack of attentiveness or critical engagement may affect your score for a given assignment in the assessment. All reading assignments are worth the same number of points, except the Bible, which is worth double.

Here is my personal reading process, to give you an idea of what I am looking for:

- *Familiarize the Book*: Read the book description on the back or inside flap, then look over the table of contents and get a sense for how the content is structured. Determine who the author(s) or editor(s) is/are and consider what presuppositions or worldview commitments they might have.
- *Internalize the Book*: Have a good quality pencil at hand.³ Read at a pace that allows you to track the argument and consider its implications. Underline important statements or developments, writing your own comments or markings [e.g., → * ☺ ? ✓] in the margins as you go.
- *A Note on Bible Reading*: For the record, you are allowed to underline in your Bible! If you are hesitant to do this for some reason, buy another Bible strictly for this purpose and get cracking. For this course, I strongly recommend that you use a study Bible and read all the relevant introductions, notes, and articles as well. Consider the ESV Study Bible, the Reformation Study Bible, or the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

As a final word: **Speed reading is a myth**. Cognitive science has shown that if you cannot ‘hear’ yourself read in your head (known as ‘sub-vocalization’), your reading comprehension drops precipitously. [Read this article for some useful tips.](#)

³ The pen is utterly overrated and should be avoided. I highly recommend the very affordable and excellent quality Pentel Graph Gear 1000 or, if you have a few more pennies to spend, the rOtring 600 (or even the retractable 800). If you use 0.7mm HB lead, then you will earn a heavenly reward (actually, that’s not true but it is still the best lead size and weight).

Exegetical Paper

The exegetical paper must be written on a passage from one of the books covered in this course. There are three Paper Assignments due throughout the semester that are distinct from the final paper (**due 14 November 2020 at 12:00 PM**), but that will provide foundational work for it. Detailed guides for what is expected for each of the Paper Assignments are provided on Canvas.

The paper must discuss a cohesive passage from one of the books covered in this course (*excluding* the passages used in the examples provided on Canvas). You will explain what the passage says, what it means, and how it coheres with the broader narrative and theology of the book, as well as the rest of redemptive history and its climax in the person and work of Jesus Christ. To help you do this, you will have four Paper Guides. The first three Guides correspond to the three Paper Assignments that must be handed in on the dates indicated below. The fourth Guide is not due and will not be handed in to me as a graded assignment, but is only meant to help you take the work you completed in the first three Assignments, integrate it, and enrich it as you produce the final paper.

The three Paper Assignments require you to:

1. Defend the boundaries of your passage and its internal unity.
2. *Either*:
 - a. Provide a comparative and annotated synopsis of your passage using four English translations; *or*
 - b. Provide your own English translation and defense.⁴
3. Discuss the coherence and cohesion of your passage and connect it with larger contexts in the book.

The fourth Paper Guide (not graded or handed in) will help you to:

4. Connect biblical-theological aspects of the passage with the broader narrative of redemption and apply the passage to the church today.

The final paper must be between 3,200–3,500 words (*excluding* footnotes and bibliography). You must double space, justify the text (Ctrl + J), and use Times New Roman font. Please use the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.) for citation of primary and secondary sources.

You are expected to do actual research for this paper and to demonstrate its results. To that end, you are required to use at least eight secondary sources (either books or articles), *excluding* the texts assigned in this course. Sources prior to 1970, shady internet stuff, and Bible dictionaries do not count towards this requirement. Moreover, if you have taken Hebrew I and II, it must show in your paper.

⁴ If you have taken Hebrew I & II, you must complete option (b.), but may benefit from option (a.) as well.

Your paper should also be enjoyable to read, which at a minimum requires graduate-level use of English punctuation, grammar, style, and rhetoric.⁵ Your prose should strike a balance between the two opposite ends of the spectrum of boring abstraction: On the one hand, you must avoid writing tacky or meaningless spiritual nonsense suitable only for an airport minimart. On the other hand, you must also avoid writing something that appears scholarly but is in fact only dead tree pulp decorated with irrelevant footnotes.

You must turn in all three paper assignments and the final draft in PDF format via Canvas by midnight on their respective due dates. Late assignments will be penalized by half a letter grade per calendar day. Papers will be graded according to the following general rubric:

- *Argument* (30%): Is the paper arguing a clear, coherent thesis throughout?
- *Scholarship* (40%): Has the paper handled the biblical text responsibly? Has the paper made careful and discerning use of secondary sources, including honest engagement with viewpoints with which the author disagrees?
- *Quality* (25%): Is the paper well-structured, logical, and cohesive? Is it well-written for its target audience? Is it clear and easy to read?
- *Style* (5%): Does it meet the required style guidelines? Are footnotes and bibliography composed correctly?

Policy for Extensions

Assignments are due by midnight on the dates indicated in the schedule below. In order to receive an extension without penalty, you must submit a request to me by email stating the reason for your request. The normal extension, if granted, usually does not exceed three weeks after the original due date. Multiple extensions will not be granted. Without any extension in place, late submission of the paper assignments and/or the final paper will result in reduction by half a letter grade for each calendar day beyond the original due date.

Final Exam

The final exam must be taken outside of class, on Canvas, with a proctor, at any time during the dates on the schedule below, using the LockDown Browser. The exam will involve multiple choice or true/false and essays, focused primarily on lecture content. I will provide further details and a study guide.

You must have the [LockDown Browser application installed \(link\)](#) on your computer *prior* to beginning the exam. You will log into Canvas through the Browser itself ([further instructions here](#)). You must also have a proctor present for the duration of the exam. The proctor cannot be a family member, current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated), or member of the library staff. Typical proctors are pastors or church staff members. The proctor must observe

⁵ By “rhetoric” I mean, at a minimum, the use of an introduction with a clear thesis, logical flow of argument throughout the body, and a persuasive conclusion)

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student taking exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam. The exam will contain questions requiring the proctor contact information, an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period. You will have three hours to complete the exam in one sitting. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.

C. חקוֹת (Statutes)

GRADING POLICY & SCALE

10%	Reading Assessment	A	100-97	C	82-80
20%	Paper Assignments	A-	96-94	C-	79-78
30%	Final Paper	B+	93-91	D+	77-75
40%	Final Exam	B	90-88	D	74-72
		B-	87-86	D-	71-70
		C+	85-83	F	69-0

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Lecture Number & Topic</i>	<i>Assignment Deadline</i>
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Week 1</i>	
	28 th	1. Course Introduction & Hermeneutical Foundation
	29 th	2. Deuteronomy as a Theological Framework
		3. Survey of ANE History
		4. Israelite Origins
	5. Joshua	
<i>Sept.</i>	<i>Week 2</i>	
	11 th	6. Judges
	12 th	7. Ruth
	8. Samuel	Paper Assignment 1 due 9/11 @ 6:00 PM
	<i>Week 3</i>	
	2 nd	Samuel (<i>Cont'd</i>)
	3 rd	9. Kings
		Paper Assignment 2 due 10/2 @ 6:00 PM
<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Week 4</i>	
	16 th	Kings (<i>Cont'd</i>)
	17 th	10. Chronicles
		11. Ezra-Nehemiah
	12. Esther	
	24 th	Paper Assignment 3 due 10/24 @ 12:00 PM
	17 th	Final Paper due 11/14 @ 12:00 PM
<i>Nov.</i>	18 th	Reading Assessment due 11/18 @ 12:00 PM
	19 th -21 st	Final Exam Available on Canvas Reading Assessment due by 20 th at Midnight

All parts of this syllabus are subject to change; any and all such changes will be communicated in advance in writing.

CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY POLICY

RTS recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: OT 5250 Joshua to Esther
 Professor: Ross
 Campus: Houston
 Date: Fall 2020

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<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. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Emphasis on historical context and broader conceptual frameworks for these books, particularly as written in the exam and final paper.
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	Emphasis on understanding content and message of each book, with guided process for researching, understanding, and applying scripture.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Covenantal theology employed to present scripture from a unified, redemptive-historical perspective.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	None	
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	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.)	Moderate	Concern to understand and engage with interpretive frameworks found in critical scholarship and other faith traditions.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	Introduces foundational knowledge and skill sets for application in ministry.