

Poets 05OT5300/Winter 2021 Houston  
Richard (Dick) Belcher, Jr. ([rbelcher@rts.edu](mailto:rbelcher@rts.edu))  
Tuesday-Friday 4:00 PM to 9:30 PM  
Saturday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

## Course Description

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

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

## Textbooks

- 1) James Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace* (P&R, 2017)
- 2) Desmond Alexander, "The Old Testament View of Life after Death," *Themelios* 11 (1986) 41-46 - made available to students on Canvas.
- 3) Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *The Messiah and the Psalms* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2006)
- 4) Belcher, "Thanksgiving, Psalms of" and "Suffering" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, Writings* (DOTWPW; eds. Longman and Enns; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), pp 805-808 and 775-781 – made available to students on Canvas.
- 5) Belcher, *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature* (IVP, 2018), Chaps. 1, 4, 7, 10-11
- 6) Ernest C. Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003)

7 Miles Van Pelt, ed. *A Biblio-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), hereinafter *BTIOT* (chapters 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20)

8) John Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, pp. 160-163; made available to the students on Canvas.

**Recommended**

- 1) Belcher, *Job: The Mystery of Suffering and God's Sovereignty* (Christian Focus, 2017)
- 2) Belcher: *Ecclesiastes: A Mentor Commentary* (Christian Focus, 2017)

**Assignments**

1) The biblical books (Lamentations, Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) and all assigned reading must be read. There is a place on Canvas where the percentage of reading completed can be entered (out of 100%). It is to your benefit to read as much as you are able before the class starts because after the class you have six weeks to complete all the assignments. The reading is due February 20.

2) There will be a quiz each day, which will cover outlines of the books (see the Quiz schedule).

3) There is an exam based primarily on the lectures. Questions will be given to help you study for the exam. The exam must be proctored. The exam must be completed by **Saturday, January 30, 11:59 PM.**

4) The review or summary of the Alexander article should focus on the different views of Sheol, with a clear statement of Alexander's views. This should be accomplished in about one page, typed, single spaced, and uploaded to Canvas. This assignment is due February 20.

5) A research paper is required. It should focus on a topic or a particular passage from one of the books covered in this course. See the handout dealing with the guidelines for the paper. This paper should be uploaded to Canvas and is due February 20.

**Grades**

1) Exams	30%	4) Review of Alexander article	10%
2) Paper	30%	5) Quizzes	10%
3) Reading	20%		

## Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reading</u>
January 5 Tuesday	Intro to Course	
	The Basics of Hebrew Poetry	Lucas Ch 2 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 20
	Lamentations	Lamentations Walton pp 160-163
	A Brief History of Psalm Interpretation	Pss 1-40 Lucas Ch 1, pp 11-19 Belcher, <i>Psalms of Thanksgiving</i>
	Psalm Titles: the Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel	Pss 41-80 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 14 Lucas Ch 1, pp 19-25
January 6 Wednesday	The Organization of the Psalms	Messiah book Chs 1-2
	Messianic Psalms and Genres	Pss 81-120 Messiah book Chs 3-4 Lucas Ch 1, pp 1-11, 25-34
	Lament: the Cry of the Soul to God	Adams Chps 1-4 Messiah book Ch 5 pp 67-76 Lucas, Ch 1, pp 52-64
	The Imprecatory Psalms: God's Word or Devilish?	Pss 121-150 Messiah book Chs 5-7 Adams Chaps 5-7, <i>Epil</i>
January 7 Thursday	Wisdom Literature: A Comparative Approach	Lucas Ch 3 Belcher, <i>Favour</i> , Ch 1
	An Introduction to the Song of Songs	SS 1:1-5:1 <i>BTIOT</i> Ch 18 Messiah book Ch 8
	An Overview of the Song of Songs	SS 5:2-8:14 Lucas Ch 7 Messiah book Ch 9

January 8  
Friday

Proverbs and the Problem of  
Context

Prov 1-15  
*BTIOT* Ch 16

Wisdom: the Basis for a  
Successful Life

Highlights of Wisdom

Prov 16-31  
Lucas Ch 4  
Belcher, *Favour*, Ch 4

Job: Patience or Perseverance?

Job 1-27  
*BTIOT* Ch 15

January 9  
Sat AM

Nobody Knows the Trouble I See

Job 28-42

Where is Wisdom to be Found?

Lucas Ch 5  
Belcher, *Suffering* Article  
Belcher, *Favour*, Ch 7

Introductory Questions to  
Ecclesiastes: Who Knows?

Ecc1 1-6  
*BTIOT* Ch 19

Sat PM

Approaches to Ecclesiastes: Is  
Everything Meaningless?

Lucas Ch 6

Interpreting Ecclesiastes: A  
Wearisome Task?

Ecc1 7-12  
Belcher, *Favour*, Chs 10-11

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

Course: Poets (OT 5300)

Professor: Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

Campus: Houston

Date: January, 2020

<b><u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u></b> <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> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	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.	Moderate	articulation of essential biblical, theological, and historical information is covered, but mostly written, not oral
<b>Scripture</b>	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 emphasis on research in a paper and substantial time spent on meaning for today
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	there is an emphasis on the theological message of the poetical books, but not as directly tied to the Westminster Standards
<b>Sanctification</b>	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
<b>Worldview</b>	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	Implicit, not explicit
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	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	
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	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.	Minimal	we talk about how to preach and teach the poetical books; we sing a psalm as a devotional before class and some worship