

Course: BI602 Old Testament Poetry
Credit: 3 Semester Hours
Semester: January 12–March 9, 2014
Time: Mondays, 5:30–9:20 P.M.
Instructor: Joel T. Williamson, Jr., Th.M.
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I. DESCRIPTION

Along with a general introduction to Hebrew poetry, this course gives the student a special introduction and overview for each of the Old Testament poetic books (Job–Song of Solomon, Lamentations) as well as two, brief Old Testament narratives (Ruth and Esther). Building on this foundation, the student prepares his own exposition of a selected passage, showing both its contribution to Old Testament biblical theology and its practical application in the modern world.

II. OBJECTIVES

A. General competencies to be achieved. The student:

1. Is aware of the basic introductory background to the poetic books and short narratives.
2. Understands the basic techniques used in Old Testament poetry and short narrative.
3. Knows the basic content of each book.
4. Uses a consistent “literal” hermeneutic as the basis for his interpretation and application.

B. Specific competencies to be achieved. The student:

1. Interprets specific poetic and wisdom passages in light of their literary genre, parallelism, and figures of speech.
2. Interprets specific poetic, wisdom, and narrative passages in light of their author, date, original readership, and historical background.
3. Relates the teachings of the various books to the overall teachings of Old Testament biblical theology.
4. Makes practical—and interpretively sound—applications of the material from these books.

III. REQUIREMENTS (All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late work will receive only half-credit. Unless the student has been granted a special course extension, NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER MARCH 16.)

- A. Reading (30%).** During the course, the student will read the Old Testament poetic books (as well as Ruth and Esther) in their entirety and the majority of Bullock's *Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. This reading is divided into seven assignments, each corresponding to the lecture and class discussion for its week. (The schedule of assignments is found in the Proposed Course Schedule at the end of this syllabus.) Since late readings receive half credit, the student is encouraged to read ahead if possible.
- B. Critique of *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (20%).** In five to ten pages, the student will critique Robert Alter's *Art of Biblical Poetry*. After its introductory paragraph, the paper should develop in three phases. First, it should summarize the contents of the book, using one paragraph for each of Alter's chapters. Second, it should state the student's personal assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. (Both are required.) Finally, the critique should conclude with one or two paragraphs suggesting various readerships (e.g., students, scholars) that might find the book useful and in what way. The paper should reflect the student's own perspective, not his or her research. Consequently, it should follow the "Non-Research Paper" style explained on pages 1 and 2 of the Calvary Bible College and Theological Seminary Style Guide. Due February 16.
- C. Course Work (20%).** In lieu of quizzes or examinations, the student will do critical reading of articles assigned by the professor. These articles will be distributed at the beginning of each class session and should be read these before the next class. The student will report this reading in a one- or two-page journal. This journal will note how the articles have changed his or her understanding of the issue as well as report any questions it has raised and any insights it has prompted. The professor will grade each of these journals according to the following scale:
- 0% Incomplete Reading. If the student does not complete all of the assigned reading for the week, he receives no credit for it.
 - 50% Simple Reading or Late Reading. In this case, the student reports reading the articles, but submits no journal about it or submits his journal late.
 - 75% Nonreflective Reading. In nonreflective reading, the journal reports or describes the content of the articles, but does not question or evaluate them.
 - 85% Reflective Reading. In reflective reading, the journal shows evidence of the student's attempt to learn from the material. That is, it goes beyond the reporting of information and attempts to analyze and understand the ideas developed in the articles.
 - 95% Critically Reflective Reading. In critically reflective reading, the student attempts to integrate the contribution of the assigned articles into his own understanding and belief system. In his journal, the student evaluates his own idea, assumptions, or values in light of his reading.
- D. Exposition Project (30%).** On the last day of class (March 9), the student will submit a ten- to fifteen-page, double-spaced, typewritten exposition of a passage he has chosen and the instructor has approved. This is a research paper and should conform to the Research Paper/Thesis style outlined on pages 2 through 8 of the Calvary Bible College and Theological Seminary Style Guide. STUDENTS WHO FAIL TO SUBMIT AN EXPOSITION PROJECT WILL FAIL THE COURSE.

IV. METHODS

A. Teaching

1. *Lecture*. The professor will devote most of each class session to lecturing (often flavored with “sermonizing”). The student should come to class prepared to take notes.
2. *Question and Answer*. Notes are no substitute for learning. If the student does not understand, he or she should ask the professor to clarify.
3. *Discussion*. Several deep and controversial issues complicate the material studied in this course. The professor will allow a LIMITED amount of class time for the inevitable disagreement and debate; however, he reserves the right to do the teaching. Those who wish to continue the discussion (or to instruct the instructor) should make an out-of-class appointment.
4. *Assistance*. The Learning Center (learning@calvary.edu), located in the library building, is dedicated to providing free academic assistance for all CBC and CTS students. Student tutors aid with all facets of the writing process, tutor in various subject areas, prepare students for exams, and facilitate tests. Please take advantage of this service.

B. Grading

1. Reading 30%
2. Critique of *The Art of Biblical Poetry* 20%
3. Reading Journals 20%
4. Exposition Project 30%

C. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as copying any part of a book or paper without identifying the author. This also includes taking another person’s ideas and presenting them as your own. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

V. MATERIALS

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985 (ISBN: 978-0465004317, Price: \$17.50).

Bullock, C. Hassel. *Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, rev. and expanded ed. Chicago: Moody, 1997 (ISBN: 978-0802441577, Price: \$25.49).

VI. PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	5:30–6:50 P.M.	7:00– 8:10 P.M.	8:20–9:30 P.M.	Assignments Due
12Jan14	COURSE INTRODUCTION	INTRODUCTION TO POETRY	INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY	

Date	5:30–6:50 P.M.	7:00– 8:10 P.M.	8:20–9:30 P.M.	Assignments Due
19Jan14	No Class — Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday — No Class			
26Jan14	Discussion	INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY	JOB	Reading: Job <i>Introduction</i> , Ch. 1, 3
02Feb14	Discussion	PSALMS	PSALMS	Reading: <i>Introduction</i> , Ch. 4
09Feb14	Discussion	PSALMS	PSALMS	Reading: Psalms 1–150
16Feb14	Discussion	PROVERBS	PROVERBS	Reading: Proverbs <i>Introduction</i> , Ch. 5 CRITIQUE OF ALTER
23Feb14	Discussion	ECCLESIASTES	ECCLESIASTES	Reading: Ecclesiastes <i>Introduction</i> , Ch. 6
02Mar14	Discussion	SONG OF SONGS	LAMENTATIONS	Reading: Song of Songs; Lamentations <i>Introduction</i> , Ch. 7
09Mar14	Discussion	RUTH	ESTHER	Reading: Ruth; Esther EXPOSITION ASSIGNMENT

Disabilities

Students with disabilities have the responsibility of informing the DSS Coordinator (dss@calvary.edu) of any disabling condition that may require support.