



McMaster Divinity
College

Joshua

OT 3P1180

Fall Term 2025 | Wednesdays 2 p.m. - 3:50 p.m. | Fyfe

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Office hours Wednesdays 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

Teaching Philosophy:

To foster a theologically rich, text-centred environment based on the conviction that Scripture is God's living Word, speaking into the life of the Church today. To critically explore the Bible together as a unified story, centred on Christ and situated within God's redemptive mission.

Description:

The book of Joshua is a theologically weighty and pastorally challenging text. It recounts the fulfilment of God's promises, even as unresolved tensions persist: the land is taken yet not fully possessed; some peoples are judged, others continue to dwell in the land. For many readers, it raises difficult questions about divine violence, justice, and the mission of God. In this course we will read the book canonically and theologically, rooted in the conviction that Scripture speaks even when it unsettles us. We will wrestle honestly with the ethical tensions of the conquest, while also attending to its theological themes of covenant faithfulness, holiness, leadership, memory and hope. We will also explore how Joshua points toward New Testament themes, and how even its most difficult sections can form us into faithful disciples in a world still shaped by war and longing.

Specializations:

Biblical Studies, Church and Culture

Objectives:

Knowing

- Articulate major themes in Joshua, including land, crossing, covenant and judgement
- Describe the literary structure of Joshua, including key compositional features
- Evaluate scholarly views on historicity, composition and archeology
- Explain the canonical placement of Joshua and its theological contribution to the Old Testament narrative

Being

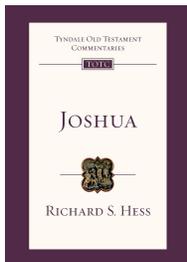
- Grow in reverence for Scripture as the living Word of God, even in texts that unsettle or challenge current readers
- Cultivate a Christ-centered posture in engagement with the Old Testament, discerning God's redemptive mission in Joshua
- Engage honestly with difficult parts in the text, including conquest and divine judgment, as opportunities for deeper growth

Doing

- Teach from the book of Joshua in textually faithful, theological rich, and pastorally sensitive manner
- Apply themes from Joshua, including leadership, holiness, identity, covenant fidelity, to the life of the Church and its mission in the world
- Challenge interpretations that avoid difficult parts of Joshua and show how Scripture invites us into deeper, faithful wrestling

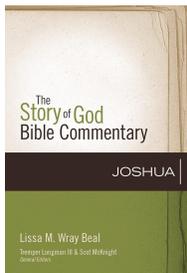
Course Resources:

Required Texts



Hess, Richard S. *Joshua*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

This commentary focuses on historical critical, linguistic, archaeology and historical investigation.



Wray Beal, Lissa M. *Joshua*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: Zondervan Academic, 2023.

This commentary focuses on narrative, theological and pastoral aspects of Joshua with a view to contemporary relevance and engagement.

Recommended Text

McConville, J. Gordon. *Joshua: An Introduction and Study Guide: Crossing Divides*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Assignment Weights:

A.	Preparation	10%
B.	Overview & Close Reading Exercise (OCRE)	10%
C.	Exegesis Paper	40%
D.	Major Paper	40%
	Marking rubrics are listed below.	100%

Course Assignments:

A. Preparation (10%). Hand in a list of everything you read to prepare for each class, and initial beside each week's readings as completed. Include titles of works read as part of the self-selected 200 weekly pages. Always check Avenue 2 Learn after Friday at 11:59 p.m. to discover any reading list updates for following week. DUE Week 13 at start of class.

B. Overview and Close Reading Exercise (O.C.R.E.) (10%) **Biblical text only**

This is an excellent and enjoyable way to get to know Joshua! It combines a book-wide overview with a close reading of chapter(s) 3-4, 6 or 24.

Only the biblical text may be used. No commentaries or external tools.

Part 1: On one page create a concise overview of the book of Joshua, including elements from every chapter. Capture key movements, significant events, notable places and repeated theological themes. You can label the parts any way you would like, for example, "Chapter 1: Succession".

You may present this overview as a visual chart, mind map, table, or well-organized paragraphs. It must fit on one page and be clear and readable. Imagine you have never read Joshua. After reading your O.C.R.E., a reader should come away with a clear sense of its big picture, major movements, and central themes.

Part 2: Carefully read chapter(s) 3-4, 6 or 24 of Joshua. I suggest photocopying the chapter(s) so you can mark it up. Write a two page, doubled spaced overview of the chapter(s) that includes: words or phrases that stand out, theological themes present, characters and places and their role in the chapter, literary structures you notice, briefly how this relates to the whole book and canonically to the New Testament, and one thing this section means for the Christian life. Let these prompts guide you, but be prepared to go deeper as the text leads. DUE Week 4 at start of class.

Marking rubric:

Criteria	Description	Weight
1. Biblical Comprehension	Clear grasp of the book's overall content, key sections, events, characters, and theological themes. (Part 1)	25%
2. Close Reading	Careful, text-based reading showing sensitivity to words, literary features, theological themes, and characters, places. (Part 2)	25%
3. Canonical Awareness	How chapter(s) relates to the whole book and to the New Testament and broader biblical theology. (Part 2)	20%

4. Spiritual Reflection	Articulates one meaningful implication of the text for Christian life and discipleship today. (Part 2)	20%
5. Clarity and Presentation	Clear, academic in tone, and almost completely free from grammar and spelling errors! Well presented, with strong attention to detail. (Part 1 and 2)	10%

C. Exegesis Paper (40%) - Exegetical-Theological Study of a Joshua Passage

This is a 12–14 page academic paper offering close exegesis of one of the following passages: Joshua 1:1-18, Joshua 3:1-17, Joshua 6:1-21, Joshua 7: 1-26, or Joshua 24: 14-28. It focuses on textual and literary analysis, historical-cultural and canonical context. It must engage with and cite at least 12 scholarly sources post-2000. The MDC style guides must be followed. Use 12pt Times New Romans font, doubled spaced, and 10pt single spaced for footnotes. DUE Week 8 at start of class.

Follow this outline and use them as headings in your paper. The comments after each heading here are meant as a pointers. Let these prompts guide you, but be prepared to go deeper as the text leads.

1. Title Page and Thesis Statement (1/2 page) - Include student name, course code, stream, section being analyzed, thesis statement, date.
2. Introduction (1 page) - How is this paper going to unfold? Broadly, what is this passage about and where does it fit in Joshua? What method and structure will I use?
3. Historical and Cultural Context (1–2 pages) - What is the historical setting of this passage? What are the relevant cultural and ANE background. Situate the passage in its historical setting. What historical-critical discussions are important for this text?
4. Exegetical Analysis (5–6 pages). What is evident when I look closely at areas such as literary structure, key words and phrases, textual variants where relevant, character and place analysis, and theological features such as the presence of God, divine initiative, covenant reminders?
5. Canonical and New Testament Connections (2 pages). How does this passage function within Joshua as a whole? What does this book mean for the New Testament? What happens when I draw on key voices in biblical theology to explore how Joshua connects with the broader biblical story?
6. Theological and Pastoral Reflection (1 1/2–2 pages). What does this passage say about God? Are there implications for Christians today? For Church and Culture students: reflect on how these themes might shape thinking on cultural issues with which the Church is called to engage.
7. Conclusion (1/2 page). Can I say this paper demonstrated my thesis? Are there big takeaways or future areas this work points toward?
8. Bibliography. Minimum 12 scholarly sources (post-2000), using MDC Style Guide.

Marking rubric:

Criteria	Description	Weight
1. Thesis	Coherent thesis that articulates a theological claim.	5%
2. Literary Analysis	Shows strong engagement with structure, devices, genre, pacing and other details of the text itself.	10%
3. Word and Phrase Study	Attention to significant word terms, phrases, names and their meaning.	10%
4. Historical Background	Situates the passage within its ANE and biblical context. Engages with historical-critical and archaeological perspectives where relevant.	25%
5. Theological Depth	Substantive theological analysis.	10%
6. Canonical Integration	Connects the passage to the broader biblical story, including how it points to Christ and the New Testament.	10%
7. Application	Offers mature reflection on the passage's relevance for Christian life and ministry.	5%
8. Scholarly Engagement	Critical dialogue. Citations are accurate and relevant.	10%
9. Writing Quality and Organization	Clear, academic in tone, and almost completely free from grammar and spelling errors! Well-structured, flows logically between sections.	10%
10. Presentation	Consistently follows MDC Style Guide. Paper follows assignment guidelines.	5%

D. Major Paper (40%) -

There are two options for this paper. Choose one:

Option A: Biblical Studies stream – Write a theological research paper (12-15 pages) exploring divine violence, covenant and land, leadership, rest or memory. If you have a different theme in mind, then let me know before Week 7 so it can be finalized by Week 7. Research this theme across Joshua and the canon. It must engage with and cite scholarly sources post-2000. The MDC style guides must be followed. Use 12pt Times New Romans font, doubled spaced, and 10pt single spaced for footnotes.

Option B: Church and Culture stream – Write an integration paper (12-15 pages) exploring how trauma, violence, moral conflict, leadership and succession, fragmented identity or covenant faithfulness in a pluralistic context in Joshua relate to Church and Culture. If you have a different theme in mind, then let me know before Week 7 so it can be finalized by Week 7.

Research this theme across Joshua and the canon. It must engage with and cite scholarly sources post-2000. The MDC style guides must be followed. Use 12pt Times New Romans font, doubled spaced, and 10pt single spaced for footnotes.

Follow this outline and use them as headings in your paper. The comments after each heading here are meant only as a pointers. Let these prompts guide you, but be prepared to go deeper as the text leads. (Yes, repetition of key phrases provides emphasis). DUE Week 12 at start of class.

1. Title Page - Include paper title, student name, course code, theme, stream, date.
2. Introduction (1–1 1/2 pages). What theological question are you exploring? (If this course was on Genesis, then a theme could be as follows: “This paper explores how Genesis 1–2 shapes our understanding of work, rest, and what it means to bear God's image—pointing to Christ and speaking to our spiritual formation today.”) How will this paper proceed in structure and method?
3. The Theme in Joshua (2–3 pages). How does the theme appear in key texts in Joshua? What are the relevant events and theological aspects? What major scholarly discussions post-2000 matter here? For Church and culture stream: how does this theme intersect with surrounding non-Israelite culture in Joshua?
4. Canonical Trajectory (3–4 pages). How does the theme develop across the canon, from the Torah, through the Prophets and Writings, and into the New Testament? How do canonical and biblical scholars discuss this and do you agree? How does Scripture provides a coherent or redemptive arc on this theme?
5. Theological Reflection (3–4 pages). What does this theme reveal about God’s character or kingdom? How does it intersect with other theme in Joshua like providence, judgment, holiness, mission? What does recent scholarly biblical literature add here? Biblical Studies stream: be sure to include both exegesis and theological reflection. Church and Culture stream: in connection to this theme and challenges to the mission of the church, ask “so what”?
6. Discipleship Application (2 pages). How do these insights connect to life in the Church today? What should preachers, counsellors, or teachers do with this text/theme? How can the Church respond faithfully to this theme in light of Christ?
7. Conclusion (1 page). What are the main findings in this paper? How has the thesis been reaffirmed after all this work?
8. Bibliography. Minimum 12 scholarly sources (post-2000), using MDC Style Guide.

Marking rubric:

Criteria	Description	Weight
1. Thesis	Coherent thesis that articulates a claim.	5%
2. Methodology	Frames the topic and clarifies the method and structure of the paper.	5%

3. Engagement with Joshua	Deep and textually grounded interaction with Joshua.	15%
4. Canonical Integration	Connects the passage to the broader biblical storyline, including how it points to Christ and the New Testament.	15%
5. Theological Depth	Substantive theological analysis.	20%
6. Application	Offers mature reflection on the passage's relevance for Christian life and ministry, according to student's stream.	15%
7. Scholarly Engagement	Critical dialogue. Citations are accurate and relevant.	10%
8. Organization	Well-structured, flows logically between sections.	5%
9. Writing Quality	Clear, academic in tone, and almost completely free from grammar and spelling errors!	5%
10. Presentation	Consistently follows MDC Style Guide. Paper follows assignment guidelines.	5%

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Work Due
1	Sept. 10	Course Introduction, background to Joshua, texts, canon, ethics	- Joshua 1-24 , "Introduction" in Hess, "Introduction" in Wray Beal	A.
2	Sept. 17	Succession and leadership, God's presence in transition	- Joshua 1 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
3	Sept. 24	Rahab and the spies, theological risk, hospitality from the margins, missional inclusion	- Joshua 2 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
4	Oct. 1	Crossing the Jordan, remembrance and ritual, ark, stones, Exodus, baptism	- Joshua 3-4 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A. B.
5	Oct. 8	Preparation, Fall of Jericho, Gilgal, circumcision, destruction (<i>herem</i>), archeological interpretations	- Joshua 5-6 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
MDC Reading Week				

6	Oct. 22	Sin in the camp, Achan, sacrifice and mercy at Ai	- Joshua 7-8 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
7	Oct. 29	Gibeonite deception, the long day, covenant, ethics of deception, sun standing still	- Joshua 9-10 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A. Final theme for D.
8	Nov. 5	Northern campaign, final battles, rest, stylization of conquest, tribal geography	- Joshua 11-12 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A. C.
9	Nov. 12	Land allotment, theology of place, Genesis 12 and Psalm 78, boundaries, cities, justice	- Joshua 13-21 and some corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
10	Nov. 19	ETS/SBL. Check A2L on day of class. Unity and division, conflict, shared memory	- Joshua 22 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
11	Nov. 26	Final words, covenant, warning, Moses, forgetfulness	- Joshua 23 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A.
12	Dec. 3	Renewal at Shechem, historical creed, implications of "choose"	- Joshua 24 and corresponding commentary in Hess and Wray Beal. - 100 pages for C. or D.	A. D.
13	Dec. 10	Theology of Joshua, NT application, Christology, rest, on going influence	- Wright, <i>Mission of God</i> , ch 14 and ch 15.	A.

Course Policies:

The best way to reach me is email. Give me 2 weekdays to respond. If you leave a voicemail, then email me to say so.

Avenue 2 Learn will be used. Make sure you log in after 11:59 p.m. the Friday before each class to check announcements and any readings updates.

Come see me during office hours. Use this link to book a 15 minute chat by adding your name under the date. If you are second, we start 15 minutes after office hours start. If you are third, and office hours start at 2p.m., we will meet at 2:30p.m. <https://tinyurl.com/3zrs4tyc>

Attendance is mandatory unless there is a big crisis, such as illness or loss. Please let me know by email what is going on. Keep an eye on the syllabus, Avenue 2 Learn, or talk to peers to catch up on material missed.

If a class is cancelled, perhaps due to inclement weather, then check Avenue 2 Learn at the start time of that class for instructions.

Lectures will use the NIV (2011) translation of the Bible, which I prefer for all assignments.

Make every attempt to use excellent English in what you write. Read over your assignments multiple times before submitting them. Short sentences often speak more clearly than long ones. Review *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White (4th ed., 2000).

Formatting requirements for all assignments are according to the McMaster Divinity College style guide. <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MDC-StyleGuide-May-2024.pdf>

Submit all assignments in PDF format via Avenue 2 Learn. Extensions are rarely granted, so plan to finish ahead of schedule in case the unexpected arises. Late work is docked at a rate of 2% per day. Assignments submitted after the last class will be not counted.

Explore the Digital Theological Library for fast and wide-reaching access to over 1.5M commentaries, monographs and scholarly articles.

Academic Standing and Grades:

Percent Grade	Letter Grade	Grade point (12pts)	Grade point (4pts)	Grade Guideline
90-100	A+	12	4	for work displaying mastery of the subject-matter, creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationship
85-89	A	11		
80-84	A-	10		
77-79	B+	9	3	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
73-76	B	8		
70-72	B-	7		

Note: Letter grades are given for all courses. Plus and minus signs indicate work of higher or lower quality within the guidelines for each letter grade.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the

previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI:

You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA:

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language:

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore:

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Disclaimer:

The course content outside the official MDC syllabus language is the intellectual property of the Professor. This syllabus may change up to and including the first day of class.

Selected Bibliography:

Primary Texts

Hess, Richard S. *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

Beal, Lissa M. Wray. *Joshua*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019.

Commentaries

Alter, Robert. *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets; Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: Norton, 2013.

Amos, N. Scott. *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*. Reformation Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020.

Auld, A. Graeme. *Joshua: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 2011.

Boling, Robert G. *Joshua*. Anchor Bible 6. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.

Butler, Trent C. *Joshua 1–12*. 2nd ed. Word Biblical Commentary 7A. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

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Coleson, Joseph E. *Joshua*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012.

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- McConville, J. Gordon, and Stephen Williams. *Joshua*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Mobley, Gregory. *Joshua*. Theological Bible Commentary. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Nelson, Richard D. *Joshua: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Pitkänen, Pikka M. A. *Joshua*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.
- Pressler, Carolyn. *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Rösel, Hartmut N. *Joshua*. Historical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.
- Soggin, J. Alberto. *Joshua: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972.
- Woudstra, Marten H. *The Book of Joshua*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981.

Younger, K. Lawson, Jr. *Judges, Ruth: Revised Edition*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021.

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Theological Themes

Billings, Rachel M. "*Israel Served the Lord*": A Paradoxical Portrait of Faithful Israel in the Book of Joshua. University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.

Briend, Jacques. "The Sources of the Deuteronomistic History: Research on Joshua 1–12." In *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, edited by Albert de Pury, et al., 360–86. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000.

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Taylor, Larry M. "Theological Themes in the Book of Joshua." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41 (Fall 1998): 70–85.

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Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Merrill, Eugene H. "Palestinian Archeology and the Date of the Conquest: Do Tells Tell Tales?" *Grace Theological Journal* 3 (1982) 107–21.

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