



## The Book of Ruth: Foreignness, Redemption, and the Family of God

OT 3P1330/OT 5P1260 | Programs: MDiv, MATM | Specializations: BS, PS

Spring 2026 | Online (asynchronous)

Optional End of Course Zoom Meeting – Date/Time TBD

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*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.*

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### I. Faculty Information

**Name:** Isaiah C. Padgett, MATS

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**Office Hours:** via Zoom by appointment

### II. Christian Worldview and Teaching Statement

#### *Christian Worldview*

God created and blessed humanity with not only the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–27), but also with minds capable of thinking, reasoning, understanding, and learning about God and all of creation. Just as Christians should seek to bring glory and honor to God in all that we say and do, so too should this be the case for the process of education. The ultimate goal/trajectory of education can and should be towards bringing glory and honor to God while delighting in God's creation which itself continues to "declare the glory of God" (Ps 19:1). However, though we seek to better understand God's creation, this creation is also fallen (Gen 3). As such, in a distinctly *Christian* worldview, education should not be simply the accumulation of knowledge, but also the development of *wisdom* which includes the ability to discern between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood.

#### *Teaching Statement*

In his groundbreaking work on humanistic psychology, Abraham Maslow famously outlined the so-called hierarchy of needs. At the lowest tiers of the pyramid lie an individual's basic physiological needs—food, water, and shelter. As one moves to higher tiers, one will eventually reach "self-actualization," or rather, "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 92). For education, such a perspective highlights that it is not knowledge in and of itself that is the goal, but rather the formation of the whole person. Yet in Christian education, I believe that the development of the whole person is not for its own sake as in Maslow's individualistic framework, but rather includes three distinct elements: horizontal, vertical, and inward.

To speak of education horizontally is to recognize that we learn in community (Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Learning*, 231–32). Learning is not simply an individual exercise; rather, there is immense value in learning together that cannot be achieved by a singular focus upon learning in isolation. This also involves the understanding that ideas like the development of critical thinking, the questioning of knowledge, and the formation of the individual are western, post-Enlightenment educational values not always shared by other cultures (Ott, *Teaching and Learning Across Cultures*, 12–14.). There is value in learning in community, which my teaching philosophy emphasizes.

To speak of education vertically is to recognize that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and *mind* (Matt 22:37). This is a theological statement, but it also has practical value in defining the orientation and foundation for our learning. Education is not only about gaining knowledge and facts but also involves a greater understanding of God and creation with all its intricacies. We begin with learning facts, data, and information, to understanding how information is related, with the goal to develop the student's ability to critically evaluate and interpret what they have learned.

To speak of education inwardly is to emphasize the internal development/growth of students. Practically, this involves teaching strategies that emphasize multiple learning styles (including non-western), dialogue between students and the teacher, and drawing connections between past experience and knowledge so as to better highlight the interconnection between what the student has learned/is learning and the person they are becoming.

### **III. Course Description**

When reading the Old Testament, it can be easy to focus upon the grand narrative of God's interaction with Israel and all of humanity. But what of the more mundane and everyday moments? This course focuses upon a story where the events are seemingly ordinary: the book of Ruth. As such, this course examines the book of Ruth with an eye toward its interpretation and application. This involves an exploration of the background, themes, theology, and ethics of the book of Ruth, as well as its broader biblical-theological connections. Emphasis will be given to themes such as foreign identity, the constitution of the people of God, kinsman-redemption, and the preservation of the Davidic line. The goal is to allow students the opportunity to reflect upon how the book of Ruth calls Christians to a greater awareness of their neighbours, their communities, and the social, cultural, economic, and political challenges in the world.

### **IV. Course Delivery Mode**

This Spring term course is delivered entirely online *asynchronously*; this means that there are no required in-person or Zoom meetings that students must attend. This also means that the entirety of the course lectures, readings, etc. are available online through Avenue 2 Learn each week. For this course, **each week begins at 12:00am EST on Monday and ends at 11:59pm EST on Sunday**. Additionally, all assignments are to be submitted through Avenue 2 Learn rather than emailed directly to me (however, please email me if you are having trouble submitting through Avenue 2 Learn). There will be **an optional**

**Zoom meeting during the final week of the course (Date/Time TBD)** to discuss any questions about the final assignment. Again, this is entirely optional, but I highly encourage you to participate if you are able.

## **V. Course Objectives**

### ***Knowing:***

- Describe the historical, literary, and canonical background of the book of Ruth
- Summarize and trace the story, themes, and theology of the book of Ruth
- Recognize the interpretive and ethical challenges of the book of Ruth, particularly issues of foreign migration/identity, gender/sexuality, and social and economic life, and how these aspects of the book inform Christian life and faith today

### ***Being:***

- Reflect upon the story of Ruth and its importance for Christian faith
- Cultivate a spirit of openness, love, and hospitality towards the marginalized in society

### ***Doing:***

- Compare the biblical-theological connections between the book of Ruth and other portions of Scripture
- Craft a creative project integrating the themes/story of Ruth with modern vocational concerns
- Produce an exegetical paper, research paper, or sermon on a theme or passage within the book of Ruth

## **VI. Course Resources**

### ***Required Reading:***

Hawk, L. Daniel. *Ruth*. ApOTC 7B. Leicester: Apollos, 2015. ISBN #9781783593071.  
[\[available on DTL\]](#).

Fentress-Williams, Judy. *Ruth*. AOTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012. ISBN #9781426746253.  
[\[available on DTL\]](#)

Lau, Peter H. W., and Gregory Goswell. *Unceasing Kindness: A Biblical Theology of Ruth*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 41. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016. ISBN #9780830891757. [\[available on DTL\]](#).

Other articles will be assigned for reading and will be made available in Avenue 2 Learn. An extended bibliography of recommended resources is also provided in Avenue 2 Learn.

### ***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](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

## VII. Course Grading Scale and Assignment Weights

### Grading Scale

Percent Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point (12pt. scale)	Grade Point (4pt. scale)	Grade Guidelines
90-100	A+	12	4.0	For work displaying mastery of the subject-matter, creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
85-89	A	11	4.0	
80-84	A-	10	3.7	
77-79	B+	9	3.3	
73-76	B	8	3.0	For work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
70-72	B-	7	2.7	
67-69	C+	6	2.3	
63-66	C	5	2.0	For work which meets basic course requirements but demonstrates a low level of comprehension
60-62	C-	4	1.7	
57-59	D+	3	1.3	
53-56	D	2	1.0	For work which falls below minimum standards
50-52	D-	1	0.7	
0-49	F	0	0	Unsatisfactory work and/or failure to meet course requirements

### Important Notes:

- 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. Some courses, such as Ministry Formation, may be evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis.
- In the M.Div., M.T.S., Dip.Min. and Cert.C.S., and Occasional programs, any course below C- does not count for credit and must be repeated if it is a required course.
- In the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, any course below B- does not count for credit and must be repeated.
- Students who repeat a course and fail a second time will not be permitted to register in that course again, even in the case of a required course. If the failed course is an elective course, a substitute course may be permitted with the approval of the Academic Dean or designate.
- The absolute deadline for all course assignments is the last day of the examination schedule. Any missing assignments will receive a grade of "0".
- Once the final grade sheet has been submitted, the course instructor may not change a grade without consultation with the Academic Dean or designate.

### Assignment Category Weights

Category	Due Date	Weight
Weekly Discussion Boards	Initial post – Wednesday of each week Responses – Friday of each week	35%
Canonical Context Assignment	Friday, May 29 <sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST	10%
Vocational Project	June 26 <sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST	20%
Major Assignment	August 14 <sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST	30%
Reflection Paper	August 14 <sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST	5%
		100%

## **VIII. Course Requirements/Activities**

*The following expectations and requirements are for ALL STUDENTS regardless of program. Additionally, students are expected to adhere to the following for all assignments:*

- All assignments must be submitted in A2L. Unless otherwise instructed, assignments submitted by email will not be accepted.
- All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses, <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.
- The length requirement for all papers does not include the title page or bibliography.
- All assignments must be submitted in excellent modern English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, augmentation, and rhetorical components.
- Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due by 11:59pm EST on the date assigned.

### *Reading and Video Lectures*

Each week you will be assigned reading and video lecture materials as indicated by the course schedule and online modules. This reading and watching is to be completed by **Wednesday of each module week**. Students are to indicate how much of the reading/lectures they have completed at the beginning of their weekly discussion post. Given that this activity is presumed within the course, no positive mark is given, but a loss of grade can occur by failing to indicate the completion of the reading/lectures as discussed below.

### *Online Discussions (35% of grade)*

Each module week has an asynchronous discussion board forum that students are expected to fully participate in. The goal here is to get you to think more deeply about the reading and lectures and to give you the opportunity to voice your thoughts, questions, areas of agreement, and areas of concern or criticism. Students are to write a 400–500-word initial post which is **due by Wednesday of that module week**. The following must be included in the post:

- A statement noting how much of the reading/watching the student completed for the week.
- Discussion on one of the questions raised during the reading/lectures. Each lecture will include various questions to ponder which you can then discuss in your post.
- Finally, include a question that you yourself have created to stimulate further discussion.

After making an initial post, students are to write a 150–200-word response to at least two other students discussing the question that student posed. Responses are **due by Friday of that module week**. Initial posts and response posts will be docked 25% per day they are submitted late.

### *Canonical Context Assignment (10% of grade)*

For this assignment, students are to select one row from the following biblical passages, read the passages, then reread the book of Ruth in light of this reading:

- Gen 12:10–20; Gen 26:1–33
- Gen 38; Josh 2:1–21; 6:22–25
- Gen 19:30–38; Deut 23:3–6
- Lev 25:23–28; Deut 25:5–10

- Prov 7; 31:10–31
- Ezra 9–10; Neh 13:1–3
- Matt 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38

Students will then write a short biblical-theological paper (between 4–5 pages) discussing what insights they have gained from this parallel reading and how such a reading changes how the story of Ruth is understood. For this assignment, you may consult and cite secondary resources, **but only after your initial reading**. The goal is to get you to think about the theological and ethical topics within Ruth and these themes might be interacting/dialoging with the rest of Scripture.

### *Vocational Project (20% of grade)*

For this assignment, students are to creatively craft a project geared towards their vocational and ministerial calling, with the aim towards a specific target audience. The goal is to allow students the opportunity to incorporate the book of Ruth into their own vocational work that is focused on both their program specialty and their own unique giftings. Projects must be approved by the instructor, but some examples could include:

- An art project depicting a scene from the book of Ruth
- A poem, hymn, or song incorporating a scene, theological motif, or character from the book of Ruth
- An outline for a church play on the book of Ruth
- A church lesson plan for teaching a chapter or theme from the book of Ruth to a specific age group (e.g., children, teens, young adults, adults)

Projects will be graded based on the following:

- The incorporation of the book of Ruth into the project
- The appropriateness for the target audience
- The quality of the project
- The effort put into the project

### *Major Assignment (30% of grade)*

For this assignment, students are to choose one of the following:

- *Exegetical Paper*

For this option, students will **write a 15–18-page exegetical paper** on a passage from the book of Ruth. The passage must be approved by the instructor. The paper must draw from at least 10 recent (i.e., from 1990 onwards), scholarly articles/books not including the textbooks. Ancient sources, Bibles, Study Bibles, and dictionary articles do not count towards this requirement. Additionally, internet sources (e.g., blog posts) and old commentaries (e.g., Matthew Henry's commentary) should be avoided. See the rubric in A2L for more details on the layout and requirement of the exegetical paper.

- *Research Paper*

For this option, students will **write a 15–18-page research paper** on a particular topic, theme, or issue within the book of Ruth. This option is especially recommended to students considering further studies past their current program. Students considering this option must discuss this with the instructor and their topic must also be approved by the instructor.

- *Recorded Sermon with Manuscript*

For this option, students will **record and submit a 20–25-minute sermon** that either expounds upon a theological theme and traces it through the book of Ruth OR exposit a passage within the book of Ruth. The sermon should both highlight the ancient context/issues and connect this theme/passage to the contemporary context. Students must also submit a written manuscript with an outline of the sermon at the beginning. The manuscript may be in sentence, paragraph, or bullet point format, but must still adhere to the MDC style guide requirements, including proper citation of sources and quotations.

*Theological Reflection Paper (5% of grade)*

For this assignment, students are to write a short reflection (between 4–5 pages) upon their time in the course, what they have learned during their study of the book of Ruth, and how this is connected to their understanding of Scripture and their own vocational calling. This is not a research paper (no sources are required), but rather this assignment is intended to highlight your own thoughts and experiences that connect what you have learned about the book of Ruth to your own vocational goals.

**IX. Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)**

Module	Week	Topic	Reading/Video Lectures	Assignments
1	May 4 <sup>th</sup> – May 10 <sup>th</sup>	Course Orientation	<i>Lecture: "Welcome to the Course!"</i> <i>Scripture Reading: Ruth 1–4</i>	
2	May 11 <sup>th</sup> – May 17 <sup>th</sup>	The Background/Context of the Book of Ruth	<i>Lecture: "Introducing the Book of Ruth – Background, Context, and Canonical Placement"</i> <i>Assigned Reading: Hawk, "Introduction" (pgs. 17–43) and Fentress-Williams, "Introduction" (pgs. 13–30)</i>	
3	May 18 <sup>th</sup> – May 24 <sup>th</sup>	Ruth 1	<i>Lecture: "Ruth 1: Famine, Tragedy, and the Problem of Foreignness"</i> <i>Scripture Reading: Ruth 1</i> <i>Assigned Reading: Hawk, "Ruth 1:1–22" (pgs. 45–68) and Fentress-Williams, Ch. 1 (pgs. 31–53)</i>	
4	May 25 <sup>th</sup> – May 31 <sup>st</sup>	Ruth 2	<i>Lecture: "Ruth 2: A Vulnerable State and the Light and Dark sides of Communities"</i> <i>Scripture Reading: Ruth 2</i> <i>Assigned Reading: Hawk, "Ruth 2:1–23" (pgs. 68–91) and Fentress-Williams, "Ch. 2" (pgs. 54–69)</i>	<b>Canonical Context Assignment due – Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST</b>

5	June 1 <sup>st</sup> – June 7 <sup>th</sup>	Ruth 3	<p><i>Lecture:</i> “Ruth 3: An Encounter in the Night and Literary Suggestiveness”</p> <p><i>Scripture Reading:</i> Ruth 3</p> <p><i>Assigned Reading:</i> Hawk, “Ruth 3:1–18” (pgs. 91–117) and Fentress-Williams, “Ch. 3” (pgs. 70–87)</p>	
6	June 8 <sup>th</sup> – June 14 <sup>th</sup>	Ruth 4	<p><i>Lecture:</i> “Ruth 4: Torah Improvisation and Preserving the Davidic Line”</p> <p><i>Scripture Reading:</i> Ruth 4</p> <p><i>Assigned Reading:</i> Hawk, “Ruth 4:1–22” (pgs. 117–42) and Fentress-Williams, “Ch. 4” (pgs. 88–108)</p>	
7	June 15 <sup>th</sup> – June 21 <sup>st</sup>	The Theology and Ethics of Ruth	<p><i>Lectures:</i> “Exploring the Theological Themes of Ruth” and “The Ethical Challenges (and Opportunities) of Ruth”</p> <p><i>Assigned Reading:</i> Fentress-Williams, “Conclusion” (pgs. 109–119)</p>	
8	June 22 <sup>nd</sup> – June 26 <sup>th</sup>	Conclusion	<p>Optional Zoom meeting discussing the Major Assignment – <b>Date/Time TBD</b></p>	<p><b>Vocational Project Assignment due – June 26<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm EST</b></p>

## X. Course Policies

### Communication

- *Email* – The best way to get in contact with me, is by email (padgett@mcmaster.ca). While I am not always able to, my personal policy is to respond to the messages you send to me within 24 hours of receiving them and to at least let you know that I have received your message(s) and that I will respond as soon as I can.
- *A2L* – Since this is an asynchronous course, Avenue 2 Learn (A2L) is where the majority of the course material and communications will be found. It is your responsibility to log into A2L regularly to check for announcements, course content, and course activities.
- *Virtual Meetings* – While this is an asynchronous online course, I can meet with any student virtually. Please contact me via email to set up an appointment.

### 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 Generative 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 Generative AI:** You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work for you. Using AI to produce content for you and then submitting that content as if you produced 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. Additionally, although there may be value in using an AI tool to correct mistakes in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI is not to be used for translating from your native language to English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

## **AODA**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term they are enrolled in. This will generate a notification to course instructors outlining the activated accommodations for the student in their course. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations will be implemented once the faculty member has been notified. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- **Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries:** [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca)
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** [sobtar@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sobtar@mcmaster.ca)
- **MDC Registrar:** [mdcreg@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mdcreg@mcmaster.ca)

## ***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).

## ***Presence and Meaningful Participation***

Presence and participation in this course are expected. Faculty know from many years of experience that a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well she or he will score in the course. Although there are exceptions to this rule of thumb, low levels of presence and participation

tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.

A word needs to be said about what constitutes “presence” (attendance) and “participation” in an asynchronous course. Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities to meet the expected level of attendance and meaningful participation. Be aware that merely logging into the online class is not, by itself, sufficient as a demonstration of attendance and participation by the student. “Academically related activities” certainly includes participation in and completion of the course requirements that are described below. Additionally, just as students are expected to engage with the course content/materials throughout the week outside of the learning management system (A2L), so also students are expected to engage one another in formative dialogue “outside of class.” This is an important part of belonging to and maintaining a community of learning and is a staple ingredient in what constitutes “presence.”

### ***Online Etiquette***

It is critical in any MDC class that students show respect for classmates and the instructor. This is even truer in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that we use to interpret what a person is communicating to us are not present online (except, perhaps in video posts). Therefore, it is especially critical that we be mindful of how our words will be interpreted by those who are reading them. As the instructor of the course, it is my responsibility to monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. Most if not all courses at MDC are devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. Invariably there will be disagreements; these disagreements must be discussed and negotiated in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving the instructor and the others enrolled in the course. The instructor will expect that you will give some thought to your postings. Excessive postings are also frowned upon because these amount to dominating the discussion. Please limit your postings to less than 200 words. Instructors reserve the right to ask students to take a step back to allow others discussion time if she or he feels that an individual is dominating the discussion. In your responses, please try to be clear which point your response refers to. Students who violate these guidelines may be dismissed from class.

### ***Disclaimer***

© 2026 by Isaiah C. Padgett. This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class. Students will be kept apprised of any changes.