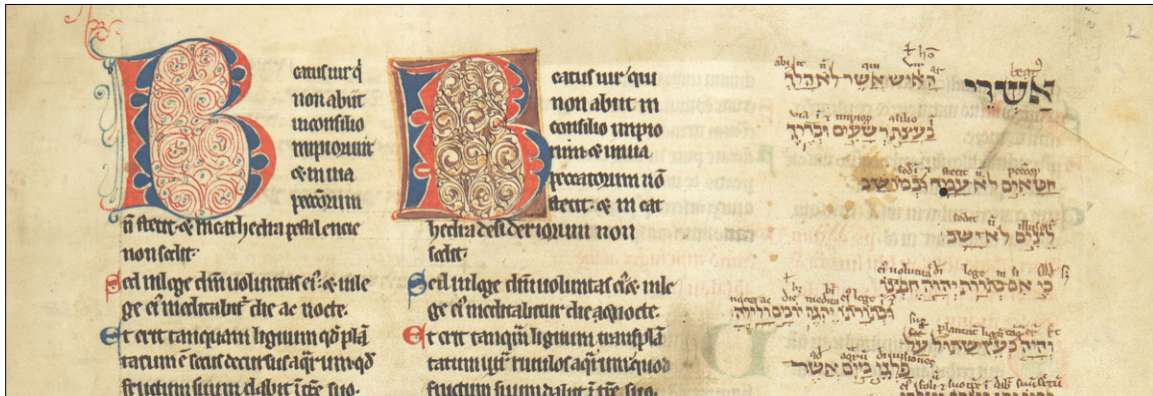




Psalms

Worshipping in Spirit and Truth

OT 3P1220/5P1200 (draft)
 McMaster Divinity College
 Mark J. Boda, Ph.D.
 Professor of Old Testament

Fall Semester 2026
 Wednesdays, 4:00–5:50pm
 TBD
 Format: In Person & Livestream

CONTACT

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DESCRIPTION

This course explores the book of Psalms as a catalyst for personal devotion and contemporary ministry. Giving attention to its original form and function within a worshipping and reading community will unlock its riches for life today both individually and corporately. Attention will be given to its historical setting, literary form, canonical shape, and biblical-theological significance. Opportunities will be provided to hone skills for interpreting Hebrew poetry for life today as well as to create contemporary expressions based on the Psalms' themes and forms of the Psalms.

PURPOSES

Knowing: That students have a firm and thorough intellectual grasp of the content, literary form, historical context, and theological teaching of the book of Psalms in its historical, canonical, and contemporary contexts.

Being: That students gain an appreciation for the book of Psalms, its expression of theology, its significance for contemporary worship and teaching. That students encounter the triune God showcased in the Psalms and experience a deepening in their relationship with this God.

Doing: That students acquire competency in interpreting the Psalms, maintaining a balance between ancient context and contemporary significance.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Allender, Dan B., and Tremper Longman. *The Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions about God*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015.

Futato, Mark D. *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. [DTL]

Firth, David G. *Psalms*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series. Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2025.

Optional for Integrating the Psalms

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. [DTL]

Optional for Interpreting the Psalms

deClaissé-Walford, Nancy L., Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. [DTL]

Longman, Tremper. *How to Read the Psalms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.

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.

ONLINE RESOURCES

We will be using **Avenue to Learn** for resources for learning, discussion boards, submission of assignments. Livestreaming will be facilitated through **Zoom** with the link provided in our Avenue 2 Learn course site.

COMMUNAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

We will spend considerable time together on Wednesday afternoons. This time will be used to orient you to the psalms in their original context both in the historical context of Israel as well as in the literary context of the Psalter. These times together will lay the foundation for your independent learning experiences below.

September

- 16 Course Orientation
- 19 *Due: Choice of Psalm (A2L)*
- 23 Interpreting the Psalms
- 30 Interpreting the Psalms

October

- 7 Interpreting the Psalms
- 14 *NO CLASS: Reading Week*
- 21 Interpreting the Psalms
- 28 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 31 *Due: Interpreting the Psalms (A2L)*

November

- 4 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 11 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 18 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 25 Psalms in the Life of God's People

December

- 2 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 9 Psalms in the Life of God's People
- 12 *Due: Integrating the Psalms (A2L)*
- 16 Final Class: Worship

INDEPENDENT & COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES (OT 3XP3)

Overview: Besides your participation in our class experiences, there are basically two learning experiences that you will complete for this course (but more if you are taking it for a research degree; see further below).

- 1. Interpreting the Psalms:** In this learning experience, you will select one psalm and interpret it. After being provided with detailed guidance explaining how to interpret the Psalms, you will choose a single psalm and interpret it following the guide. You will receive input from others on your interpretation and then you will do more work on your passage, consulting secondary literature and revising your work, and ultimately producing a research paper.
- 2. Integrating the Psalms:** In this learning experience, the psalms will become paradigms in form and theology for contemporary expression. You will choose only *ONE* of many possible learning experiences (one that fits your interests, learning style, and degree specialization).

1. INTERPRETING THE PSALMS

GOAL: The goal of these learning experiences is to use the principles for interpreting Hebrew psalms to interpret a single psalm. *This will be developed in the first half of the course and is due on October 31st by 11:59pm.*

PHASE ONE: Initial Interpretation and Optional Peer Review

1. Each week during the first half of the semester you will be introduced to aspects of the interpretation of Psalms in class. There will be lectures (with workshopping of principles) to guide you as well as resources in the textbooks.
2. You will choose a psalm from the list below (a different one for each person in class and one you have not studied in depth before) and each week you will take that psalm and practice the given steps for interpretation on it. In this initial phase, you do not have to consult a major amount of secondary literature (though for some things, like translation, you may need to), but you are encouraged to do so. You can post this initial interpretation to Avenue 2 Learn and receive feedback each week from a doctoral student. Understandably, this is an initial draft of your work, so do not be afraid if you have not resolved certain issues yet.

Available Psalms: 4, 8, 12, 47, 52, 61, 64, 67, 75, 98, 99, 101, 111, 112, 113, 114, 130, 138, 141, 142, 149

Post choice of Psalm to A2L Discussion by September 19th, 11:59pm

Due Date: Weeks of Sept 23–Oct 7

Submission: Optional PDF submitted to appropriate discussion in Avenue 2 Learn

Follow up Reading (after class)

Required:

Futato, Mark D. *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. [DTL]

Optional:

Firth, David G. *Psalms*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2025.

deClaissé-Walford, Nancy L., Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. [DTL]

Longman, Tremper, III. *How to Read the Psalms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988. [DTL]

1. Translation

Required: Futato: 125–31 (“The State of the Text”)

Optional:

- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 2–9 (“Title, Text, and Translation”)

2. History

Required: Futato: 117–25 (“The Role of History”)

Optional:

- Firth: 3.1.3 (“The Psalms and Israel’s Worship”); 4. (“Psalms Titles”)
- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 9–13 (“Authorship, Superscriptions, and Date”)
- Longman: ch. 2 (“The Origin, Development and Use of the Psalms”)

3. Form

Required: Futato: 139–73, 181–82 (“Interpreting the Categories”)

Optional:

- Firth: 3.1.2. (“Standard Forms of Psalms”)
- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 13–21 (“Form Criticism and Historical Approaches to Interpretation”)
- Longman: 19–36 (“The Genres of the Psalms”)

4. Imagery

Required: Futato: 41–49, 53–55 (“Seeing the Pictures”; “Excursus: Mythopoeic Imagery”)

Optional:

- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 42–43 (“Evocative Language”)
- Longman: ch. 6 (“The Art of the Psalms”); ch. 7 (“OT Poetry”); ch. 9 (“Imagery in the Psalms”)

5. Structure: Parallelism and Voicing

Required: Futato: 23–41, 49–53 (“Analyzing the Parts”; “Penetrating Parallelism”; “Following the Patterns”)

Optional:

- Firth 3.1.1. (“Psalms as Poetry”)
- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 39–42 (“Parallelism”)
- Longman: 89–110 (“Old Testament Poetry”; “Understanding Parallelism”)

6. Thrust

Required: Futato: 29–31, 31–33, 49–53 (“The Strophe”; “The Stanza”; “Following the Patterns”)

7. Context

Required: Futato: 57–116 (“Viewing the Whole”)

Optional:

- Firth: 3.2. (“Interpreting the Psalter”); 5. (“The Psalter as a Theological Compilation”)
- deClaissé-Walford et al.: 43–46 (“Themes and Theology”); Introduction IV. (“The Canonical Shape of the Psalter”); VII. (“Analysis of Contents”)

8. Canon and Application

Required: Futato: 173–80, 183–208 (“What Do the Categories Have to Do with Christ?”; “Proclaiming the Psalms”)

Optional:

- Longman: 51–86 (“The Psalms: The Heart of the Old Testament”; “A Christian Reading of the Psalms”; “The Psalms: Mirror of the Soul”)

PHASE TWO: Exegesis Paper

1. After completing this initial work and receiving optional feedback on Phase One, return to your psalm and consult a minimum of five secondary sources (especially commentaries) beyond the textbooks for the class. These secondary sources must reflect recent research (at least after 1990; best after 2000), and must be extended treatments of your chosen biblical text, period, or book. This requirement does not include ancient sources or versions used (e.g., Josephus, Qumran, Septuagint), modern translations, study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, or other reference works. Internet resources (e.g., blogs, podcasts, sermons, etc.) are usually not acceptable and must be approved by the professor (unless they are accessed through McMaster's ATLA or DTL resources).
2. Next, go through this secondary material and revise your initial raw research.
3. Finally, drawing from the depth of research you have done on this psalm, write a minimum 15–20 page research paper demonstrating your research and following the outline below, which highlights where your work from Phase One will be used in your paper (the percentages reflect the amount of your paper that should be devoted to each point):

Cover Page: Record how much of Futato's *Interpreting the Psalms* you have read (reduced grade up to -10% for incomplete reading).

Introduction (2.5%): This should (1) demonstrate the relevance of your topic (i.e., Why are you writing this particular paper?), (2) provide a clear thesis statement (tell us what you're *arguing* in this paper, not just what your *topic* is; i.e., What is the main idea of your psalm?), and (3) explain the flow of your paper.

I. Translation (10%): This is where you put your translation with notes justifying it.

II. Basic theme and overall flow of the Psalm (10%): This is the *Analysis of Thrust* you did (some will use some of the *Analysis of Form* here as well, since it often gives some clues to the overall structure).

III. How rhetoric (imagery and structure) set within history and culture point to the basic theme (40%): This will start with a section from your *Analysis of History*. Then, going verse by verse, draw in insights from your *Analysis of Form* (i.e., identify the basic elements of the form as you proceed), *Analysis of Imagery* (i.e., identify the images as you work through each verse), and *Analysis of Structure* (i.e., identify the relationship between the lines and the meaning of each line). Do these all together in an integrative way—that is, verse by verse, rather than all your imagery and then all your structure—and try to provide the basic meaning of each verse as you go. Allow the structure of the passage to structure your discussion.

- IV. How this relates to the theology and structure of the Psalter (10%):** Drawing from your *Analysis of Context*, take the theme you've identified in section #1 above and show how other psalms resonate with it and fill it out further.
- V. How this relates to the rest of the canon (15%):** Drawing from your *Analysis of Canon*, take this theme again and relate the message of the psalm to the rest of the OT and NT (of course, you're limited in what you can do for this by the scope of the paper, but make sure you do connect it to how the NT echoes this theme). Include discussion of any NT quotations of your psalm. Consider the question: Why does it matter that the Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit?
- VI. Application (10%):** Drawing from your *Analysis of Application*, apply your theme to the church and culture today. Make sure that you are specific and address both individual and corporate elements.
- VII. Conclusion (2.5%):** Summarize the key points of your paper; do not introduce any new arguments here. You will need to write in paragraph-style and not bullet-point form.
4. Consultation of the MDC Style Guide to ensure that your work is formatted properly and sources cited correctly.

Value: 40%

Due Date: October 31st by 11:59pm

Submission: PDF submitted to Avenue 2 Learn

2. INTEGRATING THE PSALMS

GOAL: The goal of these learning experiences is to display the impact of our study of ancient worship in the Psalter upon contemporary worship and faith. *This will be developed in the second half of the course and is due on December 12th by 11:59pm and to be shared on December 16th in class.*

PHASE ONE: The *first step* in this learning experience (regardless of which one you choose) involves participating in the class experiences on the "Psalms in the Life of God's People" (Oct 25–Nov 29), reading both Brueggemann's *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* and the entire book of Psalms (before reading the Psalter make sure you read the guide for the Phase Two track you've chosen, as you may have something you need to note as you read through these psalms). On the cover page of your assignment please note how much of Brueggemann and the Psalter you have read (reduced grade for incomplete reading).

PHASE TWO: The *second* step in this learning experience is choosing *ONE* of the options from *ONE* of the tracks below. (Note: These options are exemplary and you may suggest a different focus in consultation with the professor; if you have a creative idea, you are encouraged to propose it.)

1. **Shepherding Track**

Create a resource tool for ministering to those facing a particular form of psychological or emotional anguish through the psalms. This tool should give you the ability to access different psalms for different stages of emotional processing, as well as to know how to use them in these different settings. You will need to investigate the psychological aspects of these stages in order to know how to shape your tool. Then, you will visit one person who is experiencing this form of psychological or emotional anguish and, in the course of your visit(s), use the tool. A short description of this experience should accompany your resource tool upon submission.¹

Begin by studying the different stages of emotional processing as described by psychology and counseling experts. Reflect on recent reflection on this process within Christian theology and articulate your own understanding of ministry to people in these stages of suffering. As you read through the book of Psalms from beginning to end, look for Psalms that would be helpful to use during each stage. Do a focused study on one psalm for each of the stages so that you have a firm grasp of its meaning and significance and how it relates to the particular stage. Write this up into a resource tool that presents both the psychological aspects and biblical content with integrity (each stage should take around 3–5 pages). This part of the paper should interact with at least three commentaries or other peer-reviewed theological resources that focus on your psalm(s). Then visit someone at least once (but hopefully more than once) and write up your reflections (minimum of one-page) on that experience.

- a. **Psalms for the Sick and Dying:** Interact with the five different stages of the sick-dying-funeral process popularized by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: MacMillan, 1969).
- b. **Psalms for the Anorexic:** Interact with one of the following (or a more recent work):
 - Janet Treasure and June Alexander, *Anorexia Nervosa: A Recovery Guide for Sufferers, Families, and Friends*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).
 - Carolyn Costin, *The Eating Disorder Sourcebook: A Comprehensive Guide to the Causes, Treatments, and Prevention of Eating Disorders*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).
 - Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing Ourselves and Our Relationships; A Radical New Vision* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

¹ Note: Mental health disorders are complex and should be treated by a licensed mental health clinician whenever possible. This resource is designed to serve as a supplement to the ongoing work done in a professional counseling setting, not as a replacement of it.

- c. **Psalms for the Trauma or Abuse Survivor:** Interact with at least four of the paths to recovery offered by Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

2. Worship Arts Track

Create three separate pieces of art that explore and express the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation) as well as the richness of theology in the Hebrew Psalter. These must be newly created this semester by you. Accompanying each piece will be a two-page artist's statement summarizing the underlying thought and emotion of the piece. This summary should make clear how each piece you've created fits with its respective part of the cycle of worship. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church.

- a. **Asaph Recommissioned:** Write three psalms with accompanying music.
- b. **Bezalel & Oholiab Recommissioned:** Produce three pieces of visual art.
- c. **David Recommissioned:** Create three separate expressions of dance.
- d. **Nathan Recommissioned:** Create three separate short stories.
- e. **Ezra Recommissioned:** Taking your lead from the medieval scribal artistic tradition, reproduce three psalms from the basic types in the cycle of worship.
- f. **Divine Drama Recommissioned:** Create three separate dramatic presentations, each 5–10 minutes long (complete with scripts, lighting/sound/staging instructions, etc.).

3. Worship Leadership Track

- a. **Levitical Liturgy:** Plan six church services incorporating various types of psalms. Each service must be unique, integrated, and creative. You should include worship elements as well as texts, sermon themes or passages (minimum of 2 pages for each). At the top of each service plan, you must introduce us to the theological vision you have for that service and any appropriate time of the year or in the life of the church it would be used. After each element in the service, you must include a short explanation of what is expected in this element. For the element(s) that incorporate the psalm(s), be sure to identify what your chosen psalm(s) contribute theologically to that element.
- b. **Levitical Scripture Reading:** Design three 30-minute Scripture reading experiences based on compositions within the book of Psalms. These must reflect the breadth of expression represented in the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation) as well as the richness of theology in the Psalter. These must be newly created this semester by you. Accompanying each piece will be a minimum two-page summary of the underlying thought and flow of the experience. The summary should make clear how each experience fits with its respective part of the cycle of worship.

Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church.

4. Preaching and Teaching Track

- a. **Preaching/Teaching the Psalms:** Plan a minimum four-week-long series on the psalms with initial notes on the meaning of the psalms or psalm topics used for this series. Consult and interact with at least five commentaries or other peer-reviewed sources in order to better understand the meaning of the psalms or topics you've chosen. Carefully identify the ministry and cultural context in which this will be preached or taught. Focus attention on the sermon or lesson plan for one of the weeks and then preach the sermon or teach the lesson in some context, providing a reflection on your experience. The series notes should be provided in a 6–8 page paper with an appendix consisting of the written version of the sermon or lesson plan and your reflection on preaching or teaching it (appendix not counted towards page requirement).
- b. **Use of the Psalms in Preaching/Teaching:** In a 6–8 page paper, lay out a hermeneutical and homiletical/pedagogical vision for preaching or teaching the psalms, drawing on at least five of the best biblical studies resources. Identify your approach to the biblical text and culture. Develop a sermon or lesson plan on a single psalm and then preach the sermon or teach the lesson in some context, providing a reflection on your experience. Include a written version of the sermon or lesson plan and your reflection on preaching or teaching it in an appendix to the paper (appendix not counted towards page requirement).

5. Theology and History Track

- a. **Psalms in History and Tradition:** Research the way the Psalms have been used through Christian history in the worship and proclamation of the church, providing coverage of various eras: early church, medieval church, Reformation church, and modern church. Your research should reflect consultation of and engagement with at least seven peer-reviewed resources (e.g., books, commentaries, journal articles) on the topic. Write an 8–10 page paper bringing this research into conversation with your own church or denominational tradition and personal approach to the Psalter, identifying ways you can envision your tradition expanding their use of the Psalter. Discuss this with a key leader within your church tradition and report on your discussion(s) in an appendix to your paper (appendix not counted towards page requirement).
- b. **Psalms in Jewish and Christian Tradition:** Interview five different leaders in religious traditions which use the Psalms as a religious resource. Follow this up with research of your own into these traditions, drawing on at least five of the best in historical and theological resources for this research. Then, write a 10–12-page paper expressing the breadth of approaches to the psalms within faith

communities with a vision for how this should impact your own faith tradition and personal approach to the psalms.

6. Biblical Interpretation Track

Write a 10–12 page paper on one of the following topics, utilizing at least ten of the best peer-reviewed resources in recent biblical scholarship. In an appendix (not counted towards page requirement), provide an accessible version of this paper for use in a Bible study or sermon in a church setting.

- Reading the Psalter as a Book
- Collections within the Psalter
- The Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120–134)
- Wisdom and the Psalter
- The Psalms and Intertextuality (i.e., how the Psalms connect with other sections of the Old Testament)
- The Use of the Psalms in the New Testament
- The Psalms and Christian Ethics
- The Psalms and Trauma
- The Dynamics of Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry and Psalms [Hebrew required]
- Hebrew Exegesis, Translation, Syntax, or Discourse Analysis on the Psalms
- The Shifting Role of Genre for Analyzing the Psalms
- A focused study on one of the key genres in the Psalms (Lament, Hymn, Thanksgiving, etc.)
- Another topic relevant to your degree specialization or future research, chosen in consultation with the professor

Value for Phases One & Two: 45% (on the cover page record how much of Allender-Longman and the Psalter you have read, reduced grade up to -10% for incomplete reading)

Due Date: December 12th by 11:59pm

Submission: PDF submitted to Avenue 2 Learn (for visual materials send links to a web service such as DropBox, Vimeo, YouTube, etc.)

PHASE THREE: The *third step* in this learning experience is to share your project with the rest of the class at our worship session during our final class on campus.

Value for Phase Three: 15%

Due Date: December 16th (in class)

ADVANCED ELECTIVE CREDIT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (OT5P1200)

Students taking this course for Advanced Elective credit will be provided with a syllabus supplement outlining additional requirements they must meet to receive credit towards their degree. Advanced Elective students can expect their course requirements to include doctoral levels of reading and research-supported writing as well as a presentation of their research in a format appropriate to the class. For any questions about what to expect for Advanced Elective requirements in this particular course, contact the course instructor.

Note: The Syllabus Supplement will be made available no sooner than ten days after enrollment in the course. Advanced Elective students are encouraged to register for this course as early as possible to ensure they know their course requirements well in advance of the course start date.

FORMAT AND EVALUATION

So I can properly evaluate your work the following guide is to be used for papers in this class. See further: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>.

- **Medium for Submission:** All material in this class is to be submitted in .pdf format through Avenue 2 Learn.
- **College Style for Submission of Written Work:** All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Press Style Guide <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.
- **Further style details:** Title page, footnoting where appropriate, and bibliography are not included in the length required. Material should be written in excellent modern literary English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and rhetoric (including an introduction, conclusion, and logical flow of argument). If it helps, an outline may accompany the paper, but this is not included in the length of the “paper.” Secondary and primary sources should be used, cited, and footnoted appropriately.
- **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 student will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments. When referencing biblical texts, students should preserve the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God while using gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Biblical quotations should be taken from a gender-inclusive translation such as: NRSVue (2022), NIV (2011), CEB (2011), NLT (1996), or CEV (1995).

- **Citations:** You must cite the source of your material very carefully, not only when quoting from a section, but also when drawing from it as a resource. Quotations should be kept to a minimum as I favour summary and integration of secondary literature (footnoted).
- **Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresenting the authorship or ownership of written work through deception or other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include copying or using unauthorized aids during tests or examinations; plagiarism, that is, presenting another person's (or generative AI's) words, ideas, data, or creative work as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement and citation; or submitting work for credit in more than one course without instructor permission..

*This is a special issue for those pursuing second and third degrees in theology. It is understood that students will be building on earlier ideas and work, but it is expected that students will not hand in material that is merely "warmed over" previous work. If there is reason for concern, speak with the professor about this.

- **A special note about Generative AI:** Students are expected to do their own thinking and write their own papers and assignments. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work. The use of AI to produce content that is then submitted as though it were the student's own work constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While AI tools may be used to correct errors in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI must not be used to translate assignments from a student's native language into English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in the English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.
- **Rubric:** The following evaluation guide should be kept in mind as you write:
 - **Presentation:** Is the spelling correct? Does the grammar/syntax reflect proper English? Is the paper laid out properly?
 - **Argumentation:** Is there a good introduction and conclusion? Does the argument flow with ample support? Is the question answered? Does the voice of the paper writer dominate the argument, rather than merely provide a string of quotations?
 - **Content:** Are all the points considered? Is there proper documentation of sources used? Is there appropriate use of secondary literature while providing engagement with data (often the biblical text) which proves the argument?

POLICIES

- **Absence Due to Illness:** If you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me as soon as possible to let me know. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about how we will make up class sessions. Even if much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.
- **Inclement Weather:** If on a class meeting day MDC closes due to inclement weather, I reserve the right to move the lessons and, where possible, class activities for the week to A2L (asynchronous format). This will help to ensure that we stay on target in the course.
- **GuardMe Statement:** Students at McMaster Divinity College have access to the GuardMe Student Support Program (GMSSP), which offers free, confidential mental health and wellness support 24/7. Through the program, students can connect with counsellors, access helpful tools and resources, and receive support anytime, from anywhere. Support is available by phone (1-844-451-9700) or visit gmssp.org to download the Student Support App.
- **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 in which they are enrolled. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. 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
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- **MDC Registrar:** mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

ACCOUNTABILITY

Note on Timeliness of Submissions: It is very important that all participants in this class submit their material in a timely fashion, especially because in some cases student material is necessary for the class to function (exchanging papers, final worship session) and also for the professor to complete his work in time at the midterm and end of the semester. For that reason, there are penalties for late materials in this course. Each *DAY* a paper is late will mean the loss of 2% of the potential grade. Take this into account when planning out your semester.

Note on Timeliness of Attendance: From time to time, you may find that you are late for class. Late arrivals, hereafter called “tardies,” are unacceptable and will lead to a negative disposition in the professor and your classmates. Such “tardies,” however, can be redeemed at the rate of Timbits for the entire class at the session following the tardy as well as a coffee for the professor.

Rule of the Timbits (הלכה התמבטים): Because tardies raise the ire of the covenant community (bound by this covenantal syllabus document delivered here at the foot of the “Mountain”), those who are late for class must have a means by which to atone for such “accidental sins” (בשגגה; if they are defiant sins, בְּיָד רָמָה, then the offender will be “cut off” from the community, see Num 15:27–31),² which means anyone late for class will need to bring Timbits for the entire class (מִנְחָה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נֶסֶךְ) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מִנְחָה and נֶסֶךְ will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חֲטָאת, Lev 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שְׁלָמִים, Lev 3) enhancing the fellowship of the covenant community. See the high professor for further details and any torah-rulings (cf. Hag 2:10–14) regarding specific situations.

Especially important is to take seriously the cry of Joel of old in 1:13:

חֲגֹרוּ וְסָפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים	Gird yourselves <i>with sackcloth</i>
הִילִילוּ מִשְׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ	And lament, O priests;
בָּאוּ לִינוּ בְשָׁקִים מִשְׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵי	Wail, O ministers of the altar!
כִּי נִמְנַע מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וְנֶסֶךְ:	Come, spend the night in sackcloth
	O ministers of my God,
	For <u>the grain offering and the drink offering</u>
	Are withheld from the house of your God.

And note his promise of a reward to those repent in 2:14:

מִי יֹדַע יָשׁוּב וְנָחַם	Who knows whether He will turn and relent
וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה	And leave a blessing behind Him,
מִנְחָה וְנֶסֶךְ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	<u>Even a grain offering and a drink offering</u>
	For the LORD your God?

² Of course, see the “definitive” work on this: Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Siphut 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 53–54. For specific torah rulings, see also the fuller הלכה התמבטים in our Dropbox.

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