



Psalms and Contemporary Culture
OT 3XP3/6XP6 (draft)
McMaster Divinity College
Dr. Mark J. Boda
Professor of Old Testament
Fall Semester 2013
Saturdays: Sept 21, Oct 19, Nov 9, Dec 7.



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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.

Specializations:

Biblical Studies
Church and Culture
Christian Worldview

URPOSES

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

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

EXTBOOKS

Brueggemann, W. (ed., P. D. Miller). *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. ISBN #0800627334

Futato, Mark. *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007. ISBN #9780825427657

Broyles, Craig C. *Psalms* New International Biblical Commentary Old Testament series 11. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. ISBN #1565632206

Schaefer, Konrad. *Psalms* Berit Olam. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2001. ISBN #0814650619

All required textbooks for this class and others at McMaster Divinity College are available from R.E.A.D. On Books, and should be purchased as early as possible, and at least by the beginning of the term when R.E.A.D. On Books has its book table here at the College. They can be contacted at: 195 The West Mall, Suite 414, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1; phone 416-622-0655 ext. 4; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca; or www.readon.ca.

ROPBOX

We'll be using Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) this semester for sharing resources for reading as well as distributing papers for evaluation. You will receive an invitation to Dropbox early in the semester which will lead you through the process for signing up and gaining access to our shared Dropbox.

ROGRAM

LASSROOM EXPERIENCES

We will spend considerable time together one Saturday each month in the fall semester. 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.

Dates: Sept 21, Oct 19, Nov 9, Dec 7.

NDEPENDENT AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Outside the classroom sessions, learning experiences have been designed in order to integrate and apply the content learned.

Overview: Besides your participation in our class experiences there are basically two learning experiences that you will complete for this course (three if taking this for research degree credit).

Interpreting the Psalms

In this learning experience you will take one psalm and interpret it. You will be given a detailed guide explaining how to interpret a psalm. Then you will take one psalm and interpret following the guide. Through email you will receive input from your classmates on your interpretation and then you will do more work on your passage, consulting secondary literature and revising your work and ultimately produce a research paper.

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 interest and learning style).



INTERPRETING THE PSALMS

Goal: The goal of these learning experiences is to use the principles for interpreting Hebrew Psalms to interpret a psalm.

A. Phase One: Initial Interpretation

1. Begin by reading the guide for interpreting psalms which will be made available in class with an example from Psalm 11.
2. Read Futato (2007) on interpreting the Psalms as a reference to fill out the interpretive steps covered in the guide above.
3. Take one psalm (approved by professor) you have not studied in depth before and practice the steps for interpretation on this psalm. After reading the psalm in 3 translations (or translating the psalm yourself, if you have taken Hebrew, which is not expected for this course), practice interpretation on the psalm without reference to secondary literature (that is, commentaries, etc.). As you encounter things in the psalm that you do not understand or cannot resolve without reference to secondary literature, write down a question that you will be able to follow up later. Understandably this is an initial draft of your work, so do not be afraid if you have not resolved issues yet. Try to encounter the text for yourself using the steps I have given you and Futato's guidance as well.
4. This will be exchanged by email with your partner from class, the professor and your assigned research degree mentor to discuss and evaluate.

Due Date: 5 October @ 11:59 pm.

Value: 5%

Medium: send in digital format (pdf) to one other student and professor via email

B. Phase Two: Peer Review

Take another student's initial interpretation and write up a basic review for them. Provide evaluation that both affirms areas of strength (25%) and areas for improvement (75%) in the initial draft which has been posted. Email this review to this student, the professor, and your research degree mentor.

Due Date: 12 October @ 11:59 pm.

Value: 5%

Medium: send in digital format (pdf) to one other student and professor via email

C. Phase Three: Research Paper

After receiving feedback on Phase One, you will return to this passage and consult a minimum of 10 secondary sources beyond the textbooks for the class (especially you should use commentaries). These secondary sources must include both books and articles, must reflect recent research (after 1980, and best after 2000), and must be elongated treatments of your biblical text, period, or book. This requirement does not include ancient sources used (Josephus, Qumran) or Bibles, Versions, Study Bibles, Bible Dictionaries (or other reference works). Internet resources are usually **not** acceptable and must be approved by the professor (unless through the ATLA resources at McMaster). Go through this material and revise your initial raw research. Finally, drawing from this depth of research you have done on this psalm, create a minimum 10 page research paper which reflects your research and follows the outline below (the percentages are the amount of your paper which should be devoted to each point):

Cover page (note how much of Futato 2007 you have read, grades reduced for incomplete reading)

Introduction (2.5%)

1. Basic theme and overall flow of the Psalm (10%)

2. How rhetoric (imagery and structure) set within history and culture point to the basic theme (50%). Allow the structure of the passage to structure your discussion which is an integrated piece.

3. How this relates to the theology and structure of the Psalter (10%)

4. How this relates to the rest of the canon (15%)

5. Application (10%)

Conclusion (2.5%)

Value: 40%

Due Date: 26 October @ 11:59 p.m.

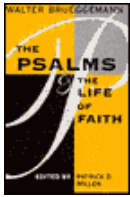
Medium: send in digital format (pdf) to professor via email



INTEGRATING THE PSALMS

Goal: The goal of these learning experiences is to display the impact of our study of Hebrew worship in the Psalter on contemporary worship and faith.

A. Phase One: The first step in this learning experience (no matter which one you choose) involves participating in the class learning experiences on the cycle of worship, reading Brueggemann (1995) and reading the entire Psalter (before reading the Psalter make sure you have read the guide for the Phase Two track you choose, 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 (1995) and the Psalter you have read.



B. Phase Two: The second step in this learning experience is to choose ONE of the learning experiences within ONE of the tracks below (if you have another creative idea please feel free to suggest it):

1. Shepherding Track

a. Psalms for the Sick and Dying: Create a resource tool for ministering to the sick and dying through the psalms. This tool should give you the ability to access different psalms for different stages in the sick-dying-funeral mode 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 resource tool. You will visit one person who is sick or dying and in the course of your visit(s) use the tool. A one page description of this experience should accompany the resource tool. Begin by studying the different stages of the sick-dying-funeral popularized by Kübler-Ross (*On Death and Dying* [New York: MacMillan, 1969]; there are 5 stages, see Mills library for resources). As you read through the Psalms from beginning to end (1-150) looking for Psalms that would be helpful to use during each stage. Do focussed study on one psalm for each of the five stages so that you have a firm grasp of its meaning and significance and how it relates to the particular stage. Write this up in a resource tool that presents both the psychological aspects and biblical content with integrity (each stage should take 3-5 pages). Then visit someone at least once (but hopefully more than once) and write up your reflections on that experience. You will share your experience at the end of the semester.

b. Psalms for the Anorexic: Do the same as above but for the conditions of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. The following materials would be helpful:

Costin, Carolyn. *The Eating Disorder Sourcebook: A comprehensive Guide to the Causes, Treatments and Prevention of Eating Disorders*. Toronto: N.T.C. Publishers Group, 1999.

Crabb, Larry. *Connections: A Radical New Vision*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997.

Crook, Marion. *Looking Good*. Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1992.

Treasure, Janet. *Anorexia Nervosa: A Survival Guide for Families, Friends and Sufferers*. London: Psychology Press, 1997.

2. Worship Arts Track

a. Asaph recommissioned: Write three psalms with accompanying music portraying the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, New/Reorientation) as well as the richness of theology in the Hebrew Psalter. These must be newly created this semester by you and will be shared with the class at the worship finale. Accompanying each piece of written music and lyrics will be a two page summary of the underlying thought and flow of the piece. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of a local worshipping community. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

b. Bezalel and Oholiab recommissioned: Produce three separate pieces of visual art which explore and express the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, New/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. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

c. David recommissioned: Create three separate expressions of dance which explore and express the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, New/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 dance. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each dance could be used in the context of the worship of the local church. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

d. Divine drama recommissioned: Create three separate 5-10 minute dramatic presentations (complete with script, lighting/sound/staging instructions) which explore and express the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, New/Reorientation) as well as the richness of theology in the Hebrew Psalter. These must be newly created this semester by you. Accompanying each presentation will be a two page artist's statement summarizing the underlying thought and emotion of the presentation. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

e. Ezra recommissioned: Taking your lead from the medieval scribal artistic tradition, reproduce three psalms from the basic types in the cycle of worship (Orientation, Disorientation, New/Reorientation). 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. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

3. Worship Leadership Track

a. Levitical Liturgy: plan six church services which incorporate various types of psalms. Each service must be unique, integrated, and creative. You should include worship elements as well as texts, sermon themes/passages. 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. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

b. Levitical Scripture Reading: Design three half hour 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, New/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 summary of the underlying thought and flow of the piece. Suggestions should be offered as to how and where each piece could be used in the context of the worship of the local church. You will share some of your work with the class near the end of the semester.

4. Research Track

If you are heading towards a research degree (thesis) you are encouraged to write a second research paper on a topic related to the reading in Brueggemann. This paper has the same requirements as the previous assignments on interpreting the Psalms and should engage a depth of scholarship on a topic agreed with the professor.

C. Phase Three: The *third step* in this learning experience is to share your project with the rest of the class at our closing worship class.

Value for Project: 40% (note how much of Brueggemann and Psalter you have read, reduced grade for incomplete reading)

Due Date: 30 November @ 11:59 p.m.

Medium: send in digital format (pdf) to professor via email, for visual materials send photographs or video (or link to online access, eg, www.youtube.com).

Value for Presentation: 10%

Due Date: 7 December

RESEARCH DEGREE CREDIT

For Students taking this course as OT 6SA6:

1. Mentoring/Teaching/Participation (10%)

Attend all Saturday sessions

Provide feedback to MDiv/MTS students on exegesis work

Do a half hour presentation in class

2. History of Scholarship (20%)

Read key works in the History of Psalms Research over the past century and write a paper reviewing this history critically including your own perspective. Works: Gunkel, Mowinckel, Westermann, Gerstenberger, Albertz, Kraus, Eaton, Brueggemann, Wilson, Whybray, Brown, Nasuti, Tanner, Bauckham, Mandolfo, Moyise.

3. Translation (20%)

Translate 1 psalm per week with poetic notes (based on Berlin, Watson). Send to professor by Wednesday 11:59 pm.

4. Research Paper (40%)

Write a paper on an approved research topic related to the study of the Psalter

5. Discussion/Virtual Lectures (10%)

Meet bi-weekly for discussion and/or virtual lectures with key leaders in Hebrew Poetics. Final meeting during exam week, share results of research paper



OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL READING:

To supplement Futato on interpreting Psalms

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
- Berlin, Adele. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. Second ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Kugel, James L. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its history*. New Haven: Yale University, 1981.
- Longman, Tremper. *How to read the Psalms*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1988.
- Longman, Tremper. *Literary approaches to biblical interpretation*. Foundations of contemporary interpretation ; v. 3. Grand Rapids, Mich: Academie Books, 1987.
- *Miller, P. D. *Interpreting the Psalms*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. ISBN 0800618963
- *Petersen, David L, and Kent Harold Richards. *Interpreting Hebrew poetry*. Guides to biblical scholarship. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992.
- *Ryken, L. J. C. Wilhoit, and T. Longman, eds. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1997.
- Watson, Wilfred G. E. *Classical Hebrew poetry : a guide to its techniques*. Journal for the study of the Old Testament. Supplement series ; 26. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

To supplement General Introduction to the Psalter

- *Bullock, C. Hassell. *Encountering the book of Psalms: A literary and theological introduction*. Encountering biblical studies. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Day, John. *Psalms*. OTG. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993.
- Estes, Daniel J. *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- *Johnston, Phillip, and David G. Firth. *Interpreting the Psalms : issues and approaches*. Downers Grove, Ill./Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press/Apollo, 2005.

To supplement Brueggemann on overall shape and themes of Psalter

- Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms*. Word Biblical themes. Waco, Tex: Word Books, 1987.
- DeClaissé-Walford, Nancy L. *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*. Macon, Ga: Mercer University, 1997.
- *Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Theology of the Psalms*. Translated by Keith R. Crim. Continental Commentaries. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.
- Mays, James Luther. *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms*. Int. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1994.
- *McCann, J. Clinton, and Nancy Rowland McCann. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993.

To supplement Brueggemann on Psalms and Life of Faith

- *Allender, Dan B., and Tremper Longman. *The Cry of the Soul: How our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God* Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994.
- Futato, Mark David. *Transformed by praise: the purpose and message of the Psalms*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2002.
- Goldingay, John. *Praying the Psalms*. Grove spirituality series no 44. Bramcote: Grove Books, 1993.

To supplement Broyles and Schaefer for Commentary:

- *Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms 101-150* Word Biblical Commentary 21. Waco: Word Books, 1983.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Augsburg Old Testament studies. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.
- Clifford, Richard J. *Psalms 1-72*. Abingdon Old Testament commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- . *Psalms 73-150*. Abingdon Old Testament commentaries. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- *Craigie, Peter C. *Psalms 1-50* Word Biblical Commentary 19. Waco, Tex: Word Books, 1983.
- *Eaton, J. H. *The Psalms : a historical and spiritual commentary with an introduction and new translation*. London ; New York: Continuum, 2005.
- Gerstenberger, Erhard. *Psalms: Part 1 with an introduction to cultic poetry*. FOTL 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- . *Psalms: Part 2 and Lamentations*. FOTL 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- *Goldingay, John. *Psalms* 3 vols. Baker commentary on the Old Testament wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Kidner, Derek. *Psalms 1-72: an introduction and commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. London: Inter-Varsity, 1973.
- . *Psalms 73-150: a commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms*. London: Inter-Varsity, 1975.
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Psalms 1-59: A commentary*. Continental Commentaries. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988.
- . *Psalms 60-150: a commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989.
- Mays, James Luther. *Psalms Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.
- *Tate, Marvin E. *Psalms 51-100*. Word Biblical Commentary 20. Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1990.
- Terrien, Samuel. *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*. ECC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- *Wilson, Gerald H. *Psalms (1-72)*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

FORMAT AND **E**VALUATION

So I can properly evaluate your work the following style guide is to be used for papers in this class.

- **Medium for Submission:** All material in this class is to be submitted in digital format to me via email. Please use pdf format and ensure that what you send is what you want me to read. If you need a free program for creating pdfs go to <http://primopdf.com>.
- **Layout:** All material which is submitted should be double spaced with 1" margins utilizing a readable font (10-12 pts). It must have a title page, footnoting where appropriate and bibliography, all of which are not included in the length required. It 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 and the paper should follow the "MDC Writing Style Guide" available at:
<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/resources>.
- **Gender Inclusive Language:** McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. For policy see: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.
- **Citations:** You must cite the source of your material very carefully using a consistent system, not only when quoting from a section, but also when drawing from it as resource. Quotations should be kept to a minimum as I favour integration of secondary literature (footnoted).
- **Statement on Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained,*** and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. If you are a Divinity College student please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~
<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

So I can properly evaluate your work and help you grow in your biblical and writing skills 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?
- **Content:** Are all the points considered? Is there proper documentation of sources used?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Note on Timeliness of Submissions: Since this is a seminar style course all participants must be timely in their submission of material. People will need to read the various submissions and once the schedule is set there is no room to switch dates. For that reason there are considerable penalties for late materials in this course. Each **DAY** a paper is late will mean the loss of half a letter grade (5%). 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 second tardy as well as a coffee for the professor.

Rule of the Timbits (הלכה התמבתיים): 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, ביד רמה, then the offender will be “cut off” from the community, see Num 15:27–31),¹ which means anyone late for class will need to bring Timbits for the entire class (מנחה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נסך) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מנחה and נסך will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חטאת, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שלמים, Leviticus 3) enhancing the fellowship of the covenant community. See the high professor for further details and any torah-rulings (see Haggai 2:10–14) regarding specific situations.

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

חגרו וספדו הכהנים	Gird yourselves with sackcloth
הילילו משרתי מזבח	And lament, O priests;
באו לינו בשקים משרתי אלהי	Wail, O ministers of the altar!
כי נמנע מבית אלהיכם מנחה ונסך:	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:

מי יודע ישוב ונחם	Who knows whether He will turn and relent
והשאיר אחריו ברכה	And leave a blessing behind Him,
מנחה ונסך ליהוה אלהיכם	<u>Even a grain offering and a drink offering</u>
	For the LORD your God!

¹ Of course, see the “definitive” work on this: Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 53–54. For specific torah ruling also see the fuller הלכה התמבתיים in our Dropbox.

