
McMaster Divinity College
Summer Semester, 2015

MS/OT 3XI3

PREACHING THE SCRIPTURES OF ISRAEL

Mondays and Wednesdays, May 25 – June 10

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: Room 141

Dr. Michael Knowles

Divinity College 214

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Course Statement

Paul writes that “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Accordingly, the Christian church reads the Hebrew Bible with reference to its own life as well as to the life of historical Israel. Maintaining this dual focus, this course will explore the hermeneutical and practical dimensions of preaching the Scriptures of Israel in the context of contemporary Christian faith. Texts will be studied in translation, although students are encouraged to use appropriate language tools in the course of exegesis and sermon preparation.

Specializations: Biblical Studies; Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives

KNOWING

- ▶ To review the basic genres and types of literature that constitute the Scriptures of Israel.
- ▶ To facilitate a basic, yet comprehensive understanding of the theological relationship between Hebrew Scripture and the Christian corpus (i.e. “Old Testament” vis-à-vis “New Testament”).
- ▶ To formulate critical principles and creative guidelines for the interpretation and application of Hebrew Scripture.

BEING

- ▶ To be informed and personally formed by the spirituality that arises out of Israel’s relationship with God.
- ▶ To appropriate and embody Christian identity as foundational for the life of discipleship and the particular responsibilities of pastoral ministry.
- ▶ To function as a mutually-accountable community of instruction and learning.

DOING

- ▶ To gain experience interpreting and preaching the Scriptures of Israel in a Christian context.
 - ▶ To formulate specific interpretative and rhetorical strategies for the ministry of preaching.
 - ▶ To develop critical skills and evaluative acumen by means of peer evaluation.
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Texts

Grenville J. R. Kent, Paul J. Kissing, and Laurence A. Turner, eds. *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010.

Supplemental readings are from the following texts (to be distributed in class):

Howse, Christopher, ed. *Best Sermons Ever*. London: Continuum, 2001.

Mathewson, Steven D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Word in Small Boats: Sermons from Oxford*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Rutledge, Fleming. *The Bible and the New York Times*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Home By Another Way*. Cambridge, MA.: Cowley, 1999.

Webster, John. *The Grace of Truth*. Ed. Daniel Bush and Brannon Ellis. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Oil Lamp, 2011.

Course Outline and Schedule

Monday, May 25

Whose book is it anyway?

Basic issues for a Christian reading of Hebrew Scripture

Reclaiming the Old Testament, 233–50

Wednesday, May 27

A. Pentateuch

Reclaiming the Old Testament, 47–63

Donna E. Allen, “The Divine-Human Dance” (Exodus 3:1–12)

Barbara Brown Taylor, “Rest for the Land” (Leviticus 25:1–17)

- B. Historical Literature *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 13–46
Steven Mathewson, “The Greatest Thing You Can Do for Your Kids” (Genesis 22:1–19)
Donald Sunukjian, “The Cripple’s Story” (2 Samuel 9)
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Monday, June 1

- A. Prophetic Literature *Inductive Study due*
Reclaiming the Old Testament, 141–78, 197–214
Diane McLellan Walker, “Being Beautiful” (Ezekiel 16:1–14)
Barbara Brown Taylor, “Famine in the Land” (Amos 8:4–12)

B. Student Sermons

Wednesday, June 3

- A. Wisdom Literature *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 102–21
John Chrysostom, “Vanity of Vanities” (Qohelet 1:2)
Oliver O’Donovan, “Facing Death” (Job 38:1)

B. Student Sermons

Monday, June 8 Written sermons [June 1] due

- A. Praise & Lament *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 64–101
Oliver O’Donovan, “Reading” (Psalm 1:2)
Fleming Rutledge, “Seeing Sin As God Sees It” (Psalm 51)

B. Student Sermons

Wednesday, June 10 Written sermons [June 3] due

- A. The Old Testament in the New
Fleming Rutledge, “Exiled into Babylon”
John Webster, “The Triumph of Divine Resolve” (Isaiah 53:6, 10)

B. Student Sermons

Monday, June 15 Written sermons [June 8] due

Wednesday, June 17

Written sermons [June 10] due

Wednesday, June 24

Educational Resource due

Course Requirements

Assignments

% of Final Grade

1. Completion of all assigned reading, including preparation of assigned texts for discussion in class.
2. Peer evaluation of sermons/adult education resources presented in class.
3. *Inductive Study of a Biblical Book or Books* (BS, PS) 20%

Review in depth one of the following books or portions of the biblical text, looking for clues to the structure, meaning, and theological purpose of the work(s) as a whole. Where do similar themes, titles, vocabulary, or other structural indicators occur? Provide an outline of your findings, together with an explanation of their significance for understanding the message of the book in Christian usage and application. Although modest use of secondary sources may prove helpful, findings should primarily be based on a close and careful reading of the biblical text itself.

Genesis 1–25

Joshua (24 chapters)

1 Kings (22 chapters)

Esther (16 chapters)

Canticles/Lamentations (13 chapters)

Hosea (14 chapters)

Daniel (14 chapters)

Zechariah (14 chapters)

Length: 8 pages/2,000 words

Due date: June 1

4. *Sermon Presentations* (BS, PS) 20% + 20%

Present two sermons, each in a style of your own choosing, one for presentation in class and the other in written form. Sermons must be based on and give evidence of close attention to a text from the Hebrew corpus. Sermons presented in class should be addressed to fellow students (pre-use or re-use of sermons intended for other settings is not permitted).

- Oral sermon: Maximum 15 minutes / various presentation dates (sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class)
- Written sermon: 1,500 – 2,000 words / due one week following sermon presentation in class

5. *Educational Resource* 40%

a. Biblical Studies specialization

Write an in-depth five-part study guide for adults in your church, indicating the relevance of one of the following texts or characters for Christian faith, discipleship, and ministry.

- i. Songs of Pilgrimage (Psalms 120–134)
- ii. Life Stories (a study in the life of one or more minor biblical character such as Huldah, Mephibosheth, Manasseh, Ruth, Shimei, Micaiah, Deborah, Hannah, etc.)
- iii. Long Live the King! (lessons for Christian leadership from the life of King David)
- iv. Holy Wisdom, Holy What? (Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth and the worldview of faith)

b. Pastoral Studies specialization

Plan an age-appropriate five-part Christian education series (i.e. five sessions or days) on one of the following topics:

- i. Fish Food: a children's summer day camp based on the life of Jonah
- ii. "Who Can Find A Valiant Woman?" (Prov 31:10): a series for pre-adolescents or adolescents, highlighting women of the Old Testament
- iii. Israel's First Family: sessions for newly-married couples examining the lives of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel
- iv. Strangers in a Strange Land: a "college and careers" group study exploring what it means to keep faith in a society that lives by other values, focussing on one or more of Joseph, Esther, and Daniel.

Students registered in a specialization other than Biblical or Pastoral studies may choose either option. Whichever alternative you select, your resource or exercise must demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the relevant texts and a concrete application to the life-situation of your intended audience. As far as possible, the resource should demonstrate an awareness of wider biblical themes.

Material submitted for grading may include (where appropriate) an event outline, materials to be given to participants, leader's notes, and a brief commentary on how and why the sessions or exercises have been constructed in the manner

described. You may include suggestions regarding suitable music, drama, multi-media, or other creative elements, but the main focus of your resource should be to help participants understand and appropriate the theological, devotional, and practical insights conveyed by Hebrew Scripture for the life of Christian faith and discipleship. Assignments should make use of secondary sources appropriate to the student's programme specialization (in particular, be sure to acknowledge Christian education materials).

Length: 12 pages/3,000 words

Due: Wednesday, June 24

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. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

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.

Style

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://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdc_styleguide.pdf. To assist with prose composition, students are encouraged to make use of grammarly.com, which is funded by the university, along with the Writing Support Services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below.

Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

Deadlines and Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are due in class at 6:00 p.m. on the due date, after which they will be considered late and penalized accordingly. The penalty for late submission of assignments is 1% per calendar day (without limit).

Once classes have concluded, graded assignments will be available for retrieval from the Student Records Office (Room 210) for 30 days after the end of the semester (calculated as the day on which grades are due), following which they will be discarded.

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions up to and including the first day of class.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content		Argument		Presentation	
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements		Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions		Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation	
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements		Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion		General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax	
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements		Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements		Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style	
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing		Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion		Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors	
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing		Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation		Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax	