

Preaching Jonah



MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Spring 2020
May 19–June 5

Instructor

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Course Designations

OT 3XP3

Course Specializations

Biblical Studies

Pastoral Studies

Students must choose a major for the course. Recommended texts and the final assignment are dependent on the choice of major.

Course Schedule

This course will be offered in an online format to accommodate isolation requirements. The advantage is that equal access to the course is available for all. The format will include synchronous online time

through WebEx. The purpose of these sessions is to provide class interaction on some of the important topics of Jonah. These will be scheduled within a three-week period beginning May 19, the original start date of the course.

The times of the online lectures will be established by a consensus of the class before the course begins. This communication will take place through Avenue to Learn. All lectures will be recorded and will be available for the student to watch at a time of their choice, for all those unable to join in synchronous time. Links to the recordings will be sent to all students that request them. The recording is done through WebEx and the recording is held by them.

Students require no special software, only access to the internet at a modest speed (most dsl connections are adequate). The student will receive an invitation for each lecture from WebEx with a link and a password. This link will immediately put you in contact with all your classmates and the instructor. A microphone and audio will be necessary, WebEx will access those on your computer which have been adequate for all students previously.

Course Description

Why is there a book of Jonah, and what should it do when you read it or preach it? Jonah is unique among all Biblical books. Among its distinctions are the conflict it has caused in interpretation and the vast diversity of sermons preached or theology derived from it. This course will probe the intentions and purpose of the author of this prophetic composition, his method of accomplishing his goals, and how ministers can further his goals in their preaching. It will examine structure, genre, and setting in order to ascertain how this book intended to teach about God and his mercy.

Course Objectives

Knowing

- Become familiar with the text of Jonah, including translation (exegetical) questions.
- Understand Jonah in relation to the latter prophets and the scroll of the twelve.
- Appreciate diverse perspectives of literary analysis of Jonah in Jewish and Christian traditions.
- Become familiar with interpretations of Jonah from pre-Christian times to the present.

Being

- Becoming Christ-like in forgiving others because they know not what they do.
- Responding to injustice and wrong without hate and a quest for revenge.
- Practicing love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us (Eph. 5:2).
- Dealing with anger in a mature and responsible manner.

Doing

- Preach and teach Jonah to challenge vengeful attitudes and inspire Christian perspectives.
- Correct false emphases on what is important in the book of Jonah.
- Demonstrate forgiveness with help from examples like those of Sokreaksa Himm (see below).

Course Texts

The student will need to have access to the three required texts. These are well worth owning for all students. Other texts are recommended for the specializations.

Required Texts

Ehud Ben Zvi, *The Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*, JSOTSup 367, Sheffield Academic press, 2003.

Janet Howe Gaines, *Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma*, Atlanta/Leiden: Society of Biblical Literature/Brill, 2003.

Samuel A. Meier, *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy*, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

Recommended Texts

Biblical Studies Specialization

Catherine Muldoon, *In Defense of Divine Justice: An Intertextual Approach to the Book of Jonah*, CBQMS 47; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2010.

Pastoral Studies Specialization

Kevin Youngblood, *Jonah, God's Scandalous Mercy*, Hearing the Message of Scripture, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Acquisition of Texts

The student is advised to contact the McMaster Bookstore for the availability of texts: READ ON Bookstore, Etobicoke, ON, M9C 5K1; ph. 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Online resources include ABEbooks (<https://www.abebooks.com/>), Bookdepository (<https://www.bookdepository.com/>, free delivery worldwide), and Amazon.

Purchase of books, including texts, are to be a life-long investment for the student. Most commentaries on Jonah are bound with others. Commentaries on Jonah are usually a part of volumes that include other books, influencing the choice of what is the best investment. Students are encouraged to pick their commentaries accordingly.

Library Services

The online resources of ATLA (Ebsco) and JSTOR are available as previously. As a student you have access to these data bases.

Mills library provides information about library services at this link:

<https://library.mcmaster.ca/news/message-university-librarian-regarding-access-mills-innis-and-thode-library-collections-during/>

The paragraph below outlines some key areas of service:

Articles and chapters from print journal volumes or print books from Mills, Innis and Thode Libraries can be scanned and delivered to you electronically. For journal articles: find your journal in the library [catalogue](#) and use the scan and send link displayed in the record (you will be asked for article details in the form). For book chapters: find your book in the [catalogue](#) and use the “scan one chapter” link displayed in the record. We’re working hard to fulfil all requests (we currently have someone coming to campus a few times a week to do this work).

Course Lectures and Discussion

**Times are subject to change based on class consensus. All sessions are recorded and should be viewed by those unable to attend the sessions.

1. May 19
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Introduction of class and of Syllabus*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Introduction to Prophets and Scroll of the Twelve*
2. May 20
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. *Textual History of Jonah (Masoretic, Qumran, Septuagint)*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Jonah Among the Twelve Prophets*
3. May 22
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Setting of Jonah Historically and Literarily*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Jonah as a Prophetic Work (Genre, Purpose, Function)*
4. May 25
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Narrative of Jonah (Jonah 1–4)*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Jonah the Hebrew among the Nations (Jonah 1:1–2:1)*
5. May 27
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *What is evil? (Jonah 3:1–4:3)*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Is it Good for You to be Angry? (Jonah 4:4–11)*
6. May 29
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Prayer of Jonah (Jonah 2:2–11)*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Theology of Mercy and Judgment (Jonah 4:2, Ex. 34:6; Ps. 103:8)*
7. June 1
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *The Sign of Jonah*
 - b. 10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Practice of Forgiveness (Story of Sokreaksa Himm)*
(Himm was left for dead with his family in a mass grave in the Cambodian killing fields in 1975; he went back to forgive his killers, begin a school, and a church. More recently he visited the scene of the grave. His book is called *After the Heavy Rain*. If possible, he will join the class for this session to tell his story.)
8. June 3
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *DPT Presentation*
 - b. 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Preaching Jonah*
9. June 5
 - a. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. *Ph.D. Presentation*

- b. 9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Interpreting Jonah as a Prophet*

Course Assignments and Grading⁹.

**All written assignments are due June 30. Extensions can be arranged with the professor.

1. Discussion questions posted on Avenue to Learn (20%)

The following are sample threads that will lead off each week. Others will be added as issues are brought up in discussions that take place during the lectures.

- a. Literary Genre of Jonah (due May 21)
- b. Mercy and Justice (due June 1)
- c. Jonah and the Day of the Lord (due June 5)
- d. Each student will initiate at least one discussion thread

2. Jonah as a Prophet (30%)

Jonah the prophet preached restoration to an Israel as wicked as the Assyrians in 2 Kings 14:25–27, but judgment and repentance to Nineveh. Summarize the times and the diversity of the prophets as presented by Meier, placing the historical Jonah and the literary Jonah in this spectrum. Meier gives scant attention to Jonah. In what ways is the book of Jonah unique as a prophecy and how does it contribute to the books of the prophets? This paper should be about 2000 words in length.

3. Response Papers (20%)

- a. Ehud Ben Zvi believes the book of Jonah was written by literati of Jerusalem in the Persian period as a means of discussing their concept of God and related questions. This discussion also reveals a lot about them, not just what they might have thought about other groups. In about 5 or more pages, evaluate how this may help us understand and read Jonah.
- b. Janet Howe Gaines focuses on the lessons Jonah has for the importance of forgiveness. What is your response to the examples she gives? What other examples would you put in this category? (If you are a Canadian, the question of residential schools has been big.) In about 5 pages or more, explain how you respond to the role of forgiveness and the part that Jonah may have in learning it.

4. Application of Jonah (30%)

- a. *Pastoral Studies Major*

Prepare a sermon on Jonah or an appropriately selected portion of Jonah. The sermon should be about twenty-five minutes in length. The suggestions of Zvi and Youngblood may be of help. The sermon should be written out and a list of at least fifteen items consulted and used in its preparation appended.

b. Biblical Studies Major

Select a text portion from Jonah, a question of interpretation, or an aspect of theology related to Jonah for detailed research. The paper should have a minimum of 15 research items and be about 2000 words in length.

Course Policies

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: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>.

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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

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://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Select Bibliography

Commentaries

Allen, Leslie C. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Malachi*. NICOTT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

Baldwin, Joyce. *Jonah*. In *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary 2*, edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey. 543–590. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

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Block, Daniel I. and Kevin Youngblood. *Jonah, God's Scandalous Mercy*. Hearing the Message of Scripture. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Brewer, Julius A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah*. ICC. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912.

Bruckner, James. *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Cary, Philip. *Jonah*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008.

Chisholm, Robert. *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew: Grammar, Exegesis, and Commentary on Jonah and Ruth*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006.

Fretheim, Terence E. *The Message of Jonah: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977.

Sasson, Jack M. *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*, AB 24B. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Simon, Uriel. *Jonah*. The JPS Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Tucker, W. Dennis. *Jonah: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006.

Wolff, Hans W. *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg/London: SPCK, 1986.

Literary Studies

Bolin, Thomas H. *Freedom beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined*. JSOTSup 236. Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Craig Jr., Kenneth M. *A Poetics of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.

Good, Edwin M. *Irony in the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Bible and Literature Series 3. Sheffield: Almond, 1981.

Goswell, Gregory. "Jonah among the Twelve Prophets." *JBL* 135/2 (2016) 283–299.

Kelly, Joseph Ryan. "Joel, Jonah, and the YHWH Creed: Determining the trajectory of the Literary Influence." *JBL* 132/4 (2013) 805–826.

Lacocque, André and PierreEmmanuel Lacocque. *Jonah: A Psycho-Religious Approach to the Prophet*. Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990. Pp. xxvii + 264. \$29.95.

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Sherwood, Yvonne. *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

_____. "Cross-Currents in the Book of Jonah: Some Jewish and Cultural Midrashim on a Traditional Text." *Biblical Interpretation* 6/1 (1998) 49–79.

Wiseman, Donald J. "Jonah's Nineveh." The Tyndale Biblical Archaeology Lecture, 1977. *Tyndale Bulletin* 30 (1979) 29–51.

Theological Studies

Chow, Simon. *The Sign of Jonah Reconsidered: A Study of its Meaning in the Gospel Traditions*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995.

Gaines, Janet Howe. *Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma*. Atlanta/Leiden: Society of Biblical Literature/Brill, 2003.

Green, Barbara. *Jonah's Journeys*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Judgment of Jonah*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.

France, R. T. *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1971.

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Perry, T. A. *The Honeymoon is Over: Jonah's Argument with God*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *Jonah, Jesus, and Other Good Coyotes: Speaking Peace to Power in the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.

Wolff, Hans W. *Studien zum Jonabuch*. Neukirchener Verlag, 1965.

Disclaimer: 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.