

## Ph.D./M.A. Seminar: Critical Studies in Prophecy

PhD – CHTH G125-C08

MA–OT6ZC6

McMaster Divinity College

Winter Semester 2023

Wednesday, 11:00am-12:50pm

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### I. Description

This course focuses attention on recent research on the prophets and prophetic books of the Old Testament. Key streams of research over the past few decades will be investigated with the opportunity for students to engage key passages utilizing new methodologies.

### II. Purpose

**A. Knowing:** To have a thorough knowledge of critical studies on the history, sociology, literature, and theology associated with the prophetic books of the Old Testament.; to understand the key methodologies which have been used for study of these figures and books in the Old Testament and ancient Israel and Judah.

**B. Being:** To gain a deeper appreciation for the theological potential of the prophetic books for Christian believers; to be challenged to deeper personal faith in God by the prophets and their message.

**C. Doing:** To be able to access the best resources for the study of the prophets and prophetic books; to employ recent methodologies for the study of the prophets and their associated literature; to continue to increase Hebrew translation skills; to hone the ability to critically review literature and written papers in an oral setting

### III. Reading Resources

The assigned readings listed in the schedule below will be distributed electronically.

Boda, Mark J. & McConville, J. G., eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012.

Sharp, Carolyn. *The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

## IV. Schedule

### January

#### 11 Orientation

#### 18 Class

- Primary Text: Zech 11:4-16
- Critical Studies: From Inner-biblical Allusion to Intertextuality
- Assigned Reading:
  - Boda: *Exploring Zechariah 2 (preface, chs. 1, 9)*
  - “Intertextuality and Innerbiblical Interpretation” by Michael Stead in DOTPr

#### 25 Class

- Primary Text: Zech 8:1-13
- Critical Studies: Redaction and Compositional Criticism
- Assigned Reading:
  - Boda: *Exploring Zechariah 1 (chs. 3, 5, 11)*
  - Boda: “Authors, Real and Implicit”
  - One of the following:
    - “Editorial/Redaction Criticism” by Paul Redditt in DOTPr
    - “Formation of the Prophetic Books” by J. Stromberg in DOTPr
    - “Redaction Criticism and the Prophets” by James D. Nogalski in OHP

### February

#### 1 Class:

- Primary Text: Hag 2:1-9
- Critical Studies: Form and New Form Criticism
- Scholar: TBA
- Assigned Reading:
  - See readings distributed in A2L
  - “Form Criticism” by Colin Toffelmire in DOTPr
  - “Genre Criticism and the Prophets” by Barbara Green in OHP

#### 8 Class:

- Primary Text: Amos 4:1-13
- Critical Studies: Sociological Approaches
- Scholar: TBA
- Assigned Reading:
  - See readings distributed in A2L
  - “Social-Scientific Approaches” by Danny Carroll in DOTPr

**15 Class:**

- **Primary Text:** Zeph 1:1-6
- **Critical Studies:** Literary Approaches
- **Scholar:** TBA
- **Assigned Reading:**
  - See readings distributed in A2L
  - “Literary Approaches” by L. Wray Beal in DOTPr
  - If wanted: “Metaphorization and Other Tropes in the Prophets” by Julia M. O’Brien in OHP

**22 Class:**

- **Primary Text:** Isa 40:1-11
- **Critical Studies:** Prophets and the ANE
- **Scholar:** TBA
- **Assigned Reading:**
  - See readings distributed in A2L
  - “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy” by J. Stökl in DOTPr
  - “Prophetic Intermediation in the Ancient Near East” by Martti Nissinen in OHP

**March**

**1 No Class: Intensive Hybrid Week**

**8 Class:**

- **Primary Text:** Jer 14:1-9
- **Critical Studies:** Liberation/Feminist approaches
- **Scholar:** TBA
- **Assigned Reading:**
  - See readings distributed in A2L
  - One of:
    - **FEMINIST INTERPRETATION** by Carol Dempsey in DOTPr
    - **“Feminist Interpretation of the Prophets”** by Christl M. Maier or **“Womanist Approaches to the Prophets”** by Valerie Bridgeman in OHP

**15 Class: Paper reviews**

- **Critical Studies:** Isaiah (Student)

**22 Class: Paper reviews**

- **Assigned Reading:** At least 1 Review of Research from DOTPr (Jeremiah by J. A. Dearman) or OHP (Jeremiah by Mark Leuchter)

**29 Class: Paper reviews**

- **Critical Studies:** Ezekiel (Student)

**April**

**5 Class: Paper reviews**

- **Assigned Reading: Review of Research from OHP (The Twelve by Rainer Kessler)**

**V. Course Internet Resources**

This semester we will be using Avenue 2 Learn for distributing course materials and papers. Papers will not be distributed in paper form, but only digitally.

**VI. Learning Experiences**

**A. Class Experiences**

This is a graduate seminar style class of collaborative learning in which professor and students are engaged in active learning together. Learning to critically (in its positive sense) engage material is essential to functioning in a graduate program and is expected of all students in our MA/PhD. It is expected that all students will not only attend these sessions, but also that they will assume responsibility for contributing to and learning from the experience. This means that readings will be completed prior to arrival in class and that student and presenter alike will pursue the acquisition of knowledge in the learning environment. It is expected that ALL members of the class will ask questions and contribute insights whenever opportunity is given, during and following presentations by professor or student alike.

**Value:** 15%

**B. Seminar Preparation Notes**

**1. Translation:** Each week students will prepare for the seminar meeting by translating the assigned portions in the Hebrew Bible (BHS). Each person in the class will provide a basic translation of their own with rudimentary justification in footnotes of difficult elements. Then each person will provide a deeper analysis of the passage by attending to one of the following (a different one each week): 1) syntactical analysis; 2) lexical analysis; 3) poetic structural analysis; 4) voicing analysis; 5) metaphor analysis

**2. Reading:** Each week students will prepare for the seminar meeting by reading assigned secondary readings, noting any comments and questions in a minimum two page review.

**Value:** 25%

**Due:** The eve of the seminar, 11:59pm

**Submission:** A2L Discussion (PDF file)

**C. Critical Studies Review**

During the semester each student will prepare a review of critical scholarship on a key topic in the study of the prophets of the Old Testament. For these reviews an up-to-date bibliography on the topic must be prepared and distributed. The student will present a 20 minute overview of current scholarship on the topic, followed by a 20 minute session fielding questions from seminar participants. The bibliographies should indicate key works and their significance noted in a couple of sentences. The overviews should be synthetic and identify key and unresolved issues.

**Value:** 10%

**Due:** According to the schedule, eve of the seminar, 11:59pm

**Submission:** PDF to A2L in Assignments and Discussion

## D. Critical Paper

For this assignment the student will write a critical paper on the prophets or prophetic books in the Old Testament (hopefully relevant to their doctoral work) engaging the best in recent scholarship while showing awareness of the classic works in the field. These papers should provide a new perspective on the field, such as would be expected in a journal article. The hope is that this paper will be useful for conference presentations in the near future. Papers are due in PDF format by 10 March at 11:59 p.m. (send to professor by email) to be posted on the course web site. Each member of the class will provide 2 page reviews of all the other papers in the class and must be prepared before the class in which the paper is presented and must be posted to the discussion in A2L within 5 minutes after the end of class.

**Value:** 35% for paper, 15% for student paper reviews

**Due:** Paper: 10 March at 11:59 p.m.; Review: Mar 15, 22, 29; Apr 5 after class

**Submission:** PDF to A2L in Assignments and Discussion

## VII. Format and Evaluation

**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 Avenue 2 Learn. Please use .pdf format and ensure that what you send is what you want me to read.
- **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 <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. 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 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).
- **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. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

\*\*\*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.

**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?

### VIII. 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, בְּיָד רָמָה, then the offender will be “cut off” from the community, see Num 15:27-31).<sup>1</sup> which means anyone late for class will need to bring Timbits for the entire class (מְנַחָה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נֶסֶךְ) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מְנַחָה and נֶסֶךְ will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חֲטָאתָ, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שְׁלָמִים, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| חַגְרוּ וְסַפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים                       | Gird yourselves <i>with sackcloth</i>                |
| הַלֵּילֹל מִשְׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ                      | And lament, O priests;                               |
| בָּאוּ לֵינוּ בַשָּׁקִים מִשְׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵי         | Wail, O ministers of the altar!                      |
| כִּי נִמְנַע מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וְנִסְדָּ: | 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 who repent in 2:14:

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

