

This course begins January 7, and concludes April 9

Class meets in person: Wednesdays: 11:00am-12:50pm

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Office. 236

Course Description:

Isaiah is known as “the prince of the prophets” and the book named after him is probably the most famous Old Testament prophetic book. There is a majestic character to the book, with its towering theology and memorable passages arguably unmatched in holy writ. In order to appreciate its theological depth and wrestle with its interpretation, this course undertakes a thorough examination of the book of Isaiah in light of the historical and literary setting of the book and the experience of ancient Israel. Special emphasis will be placed on the composition of the book, the call of the prophet, messianic passages, the servant songs and the book’s teaching on social justice. This study will emphasize the importance of the original historical context and its message to its original audience, but also examine the later reception history of the prophecies of the book. In its pages, the prophet brings together the coming glory of the Messiah along with the humiliation of the Suffering servant making it essential for understanding the mission and ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. The message of the book of Isaiah will be examined in an effort to discover its continuing relevance for the church and society today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies and Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives:

Knowing:

- To have an introductory knowledge and understanding of the prophetic book of Isaiah
- To understand and appreciate the challenges to the unity of Isaiah
- Gain an understanding of the literary structure of the book of Isaiah
- To gain an understanding of the contemporary relevance of the Book of Isaiah for the Church today

Being:

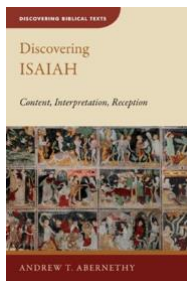
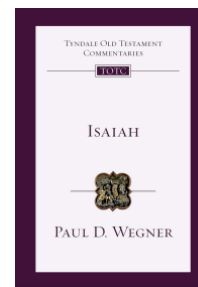
- To embrace the contemporary relevance of the book of Isaiah for the Church and society today
- To become a faithful and informed interpreter of Isaiah
- To grow closer to God through study of the book of Isaiah

Doing:

- To be able to trace out themes that run throughout the Isaiah, (Zion, Trust, Holiness, Worship, the former things, Justice, and Messiah)
- To describe key prophetic literary forms and their conventions
- To be able to describe key OT historical events, tracing them chronologically and geographically and understand their significance for interpreting the book of Isaiah
- To be able to articulate the implications of Isaianic theology for a systematic theology and a Christian worldview.
- To complete an in-depth study on a passage from Isaiah

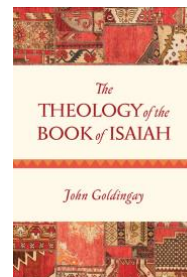
Required Textbooks:

1. Paul D. Wegner. *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 20. InterVarsity, 2021.



2. Andrew T. Abernethy. *Discovering Isaiah: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Discovering Biblical Texts. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021.

3. John Goldingay. *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.



Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks 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.

Course Requirements:

I. Formal Assignments: *The assignments and their weights are as follows:*

A. Inductive Study of Isaiah 56-66: 25% 6-7 pages. Due Feb 12. See inductive study guidelines below.

B. Theological Theme Paper: 30% 10 pages. Due Mar 12. In this option you will choose one biblical-theological theme (e.g. social justice, atonement etc.), and write a paper that succinctly traces this theme throughout the book of Isaiah. This paper will note the diversity represented in the different passages but also note continuity. Finally, the paper will discuss how this theme is picked up in the New Testament and reflect on how the theology of Isaiah functions for the New Testament writer. A rough outline of the paper should be:

- i. **Introduction** stating the theme and its significance in the book of Isaiah.
- ii. **Discerning the Theme:** Analyze passages that evince your chosen theme, noting diversity and continuity with other passages and reflecting theologically on this theme
- iii. **NT connections.** Note NT texts that pick up on and develop this biblical theological theme. How does the OT function for the NT writer?
- iv. **Application for today.** How is this theme relevant for Christians today? How does the book of Isaiah function for Christian theology today?

C. Statement and Annotated Bibliography. 5% Due Mar 26. In preparation for the major assignment students will write a one-paragraph statement of their project along with an annotated bibliography of at least 12 bibliographic items of secondary sources. These secondary sources do not include primary sources (the Bible, Josephus, Qumran). By way of **supplement** to these 12 sources, a student may use a **maximum of 2** Internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of these Internet resources. Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc.

Annotated Bibliography Instructions

- A) List the sources you select in proper bibliographic format as outlined in the MDC style guide (in alphabetical order by author's last name).
- B) After each item listed include an annotation.

C) Annotations should be approximately 100-200 words explaining the author's thesis and what evidence or arguments used to support it. Annotations should show that you have read and understood the article or book and assess the relevance of the item for your own research for your major assignment.

D. Major Assignment. 40%. 12-15 pages. Due April 9. See "Major Assignment Evaluation Guidelines" below.

i. Major Assignment for Biblical Studies Specializations:

There are two (2) options for Biblical Studies: Choose only **one** (1) of the following:

a. Research paper: 12-15 pages. This is especially recommended if you are planning to go on to a research degree or write a thesis in OT (or if you have a particular topic in mind that you wish to write on). The topic of this research must be related to Isaiah and approved by the professor.

b. Exegetical Paper: 12-15 pages. In this option, you will choose one passage from the book of Isaiah and write an exegesis paper. The chosen text should be between 10-20 verses. This paper will:

- Take into account the genre of the chosen text
- Take into account the historical context of the chosen text
- Provide a close reading of the text, noting key words, phrases, and literary features
- Identify different interpretive options and consider the validity of each and argue for the chosen interpretation.
- Elucidate the theological message of the chosen text
- Explain the applicability of the text for today for believers

ii. Major Assignment for Pastoral Studies Specializations:

There are three (3) options for Pastoral Studies Specializations. Choose only **one** (1) of the following:

a. Sermon on passage from Isaiah (oral presentation). 20-25 minute video-taped sermon submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive or uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo. Beginning with the text of Isaiah this sermon will expound a theological theme from the book, tracing it throughout Isaiah and applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be delivered orally but include a written manuscript with an outline. The manuscript may be a combination of sentence, bullets/point form, paragraphs (it need not be a complete essay of the words you preach). This manuscript should be grammatically correct and include appropriate citation of sources employed.

b. Sermon on passage from Isaiah (written manuscript). This assignment is the same as the previous assignment (oral presentation of a sermon) but instead of an oral presentation it will be written, but with an aim to oral delivery. The sermon must be written as it would be spoken and must not be in point form etc. but be a

full written manuscript. It is expected it will conform to MDC style guide and be grammatically correct and acknowledge its sources appropriately with footnotes.

c. Exegetical Paper: 12-15 pages (as outlined above)

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 Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in PDF format only. Upload the PDF file to the appropriate assignments folder on Avenue to Learn. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g. evans.researchpaper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received before the end of the calendar day on which they are due (i.e. before midnight EST).

Policy concerning late papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by **April 11** in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

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, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to

negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

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.

Class Schedule

Wk	Date	Content	Assignment Due
1	Jan 8	Course Overview Intro to the book of Isaiah	--
2	Jan 15	Isaiah 1:10-17 Critique of popular religion Isaiah 1-5 - The Portrayal of Zion	--
3	Jan 22	Isaiah 5 - The vineyard Song, Isa 6-9 as literary unit, Isaiah 6 and the Grave Commission	--
4	Jan 29	Isaiah 7 Immanuel, Isaiah 8 Maher-shalal-hash-baz Isaiah 9 Unto Us a Child is Born	--
5	Feb 5	Isa 13-23 Oracles against the Nations	--
6	Feb 12	Isa 24-27 The Isaian Apocalypse	Inductive Study due Feb 12
7	Feb 19	NO CLASSES	
8	Feb 26	Isaiah 36-37, The Assyrian Crisis Isaiah 38-39, The Babylonian Threat	--
	Mar 5	Isaiah 40, The New Commission, The Comfort of Isaiah, The Resistance to the prophet	--
9	Mar 12	Exodus and Creation Imagery, Ongoing Exile?	Theological Theme Paper due Mar 12
10	Mar 19	Messiah in Isaiah, Who is the Servant? Jesus as the Servant	--
11	Mar 26	Isa 63 and Metaphors for God, Anti-temple rhetoric in Isaiah 66?	Statement and Annotated Bibliography due Mar 26
12	April 2	Isa 65-66 as conclusion, Isaiah as a Whole	--
13	April 9	A Christian Theology of the Book of Isaiah	Major Assignment due Apr 9

Paper Evaluation

Name: _____ Topic: _____

I. The next items are rated according to this scale: 1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1 2 3 4 5
Range and Use of Sources	1 2 3 4 5
Clarity in Defining Issues	1 2 3 4 5
Strength of Argument	1 2 3 4 5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues	1 2 3 4 5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions	1 2 3 4 5
Analysis /Critical Thinking	1 2 3 4 5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1 2 3 4 5
Development of Thesis (focus)	1 2 3 4 5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1 2 3 4 5
Organization/coherence of ideas	1 2 3 4 5
Grammar/Spelling	1 2 3 4 5
Neatness/Presentation	1 2 3 4 5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if so indicated

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language
<input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay
<input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention
<input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g. Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short
<input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly
<input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance
<input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |
|---|--|

Inductive Study Guidelines

An inductive study is a direct study of a biblical text without using any secondary resources. A close reading and analysis of the biblical text (following good hermeneutical principles) constitute the essence of the study.

No secondary resources may be used for this study (no study Bibles, commentaries etc.). However, one exception is if you consult an Atlas or Bible dictionary for a place name, term, or custom that you don't know about.

Initial Reading and Observations

To be able to write a good inductive study you will become intimately acquainted with the text.

Your inductive study should use the following **five (5)** headings (make sure the space given to each section reflects its weight—i.e. a section worth 5% should be a significantly smaller section than one worth 30%)

1. Table of contents of Isa 56–66 with descriptions (5%)

After becoming very familiar with Isa 56-66 (reading it in at least two modern translations—preferably in one sitting), and noting the content, structure, genre, and tone of Isa 56–66, write your own table of contents by giving a title to each 'chapter' (i.e. chapters as you determine them). Don't feel you have to stick to the chapter and verse divisions. These divisions are not part of the original text and are not always helpful in outlining structure book (E.g. the story of Genesis 1 does not end in until Genesis 2:4). Explicitly delineate what your chapter is by using the chapter and verse notations of your translation (e.g. your chapter 1 may be Isa 56:1-4; chapter 2 may be Isa 56:5-64:2)

2. Explaining the detailed structure of Isa 56–66 (30%)

This step will expand and your outline and explain why you divided up Isa 56–66 the way you did. You will justify your structure and how you see the different sections of the biblical assigned section. Explain your reasoning. How are these different sections broken down into smaller sections? Make sure you explain how you determined these sections and justify it. Look for patterns, key words, repeated phrases and/or different types of material (poetry etc.) present in Isa 56–66, all of which could be used as structuring devices.

3. Identifying the main theme of Isa 56–66 (35%)

In this step you will determine *what* the main theme of Isa 56–66 is and explain *why* you think it is. There won't be *many* different themes in one assigned section. If you find many themes, beware—you may have just noticed some smaller motifs). Remember, the goal is to find out what the theme is from your own reading of the text (not to make up your own theme). You must demonstrate that this theme is present in the text (giving examples from Isa 56–66 that point to this theme). Sometimes, noticing what is repeated will help you determine theme (examples of repetition can help support your assessment of theme). Sometimes, the plot or characters in the story will point to what the theme of the work is. How does Isa 56–

66 develop this theme? (The theme will likely be throughout Isa 56–66, or most of it). You must propose one “theme statement” that encapsulates the central message of Isa 56–66, when you take it as a whole.

4. Theological emphases (20%)

In this section you will determine what some of the most prominent theological emphases of Isa 56–66 are and explain how they are developed. What issues are raised for the reader (both original/implied readers and modern readers—like yourself!)? Are these theological emphases connected to or found in other biblical books too?

5. Ideas for integrating the results of your study for preaching, teaching, a Bible study, etc. (10%)

The fun part! Are the theological emphases found relevant to your life, your career, or your calling? Do they contribute to your worldview? How could you practically apply these insights/truths in your life? Or in the life of the Church? How would you preach or teach Isa 56–66? How could you communicate the results of this study in a Bible Study? Give an outline of how you could integrate the results of your study in real ministry situation. Make sure to delineate your intended audience (youth group, adults in a service, or Sunday school, etc.).

Selected Bibliography

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