



MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS
Winter 2025

Preaching Difficult Texts with Ezekiel
(MS 3P1060 / MS 5P1070)
January 6–April 7 2025 (Monday 11:00 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.)

INSTRUCTOR:

John W. Hilber, PhD

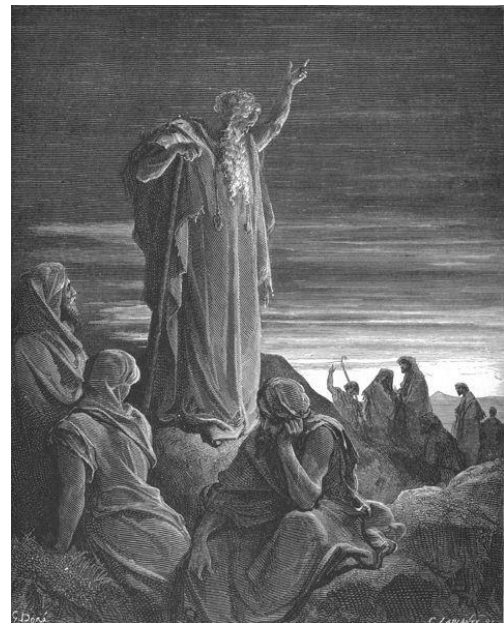
Divinity College Room 203

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In-Person and Synchronous Online: This course is offered either in-person (for those resident in the Hamilton area) or synchronously online. There is a course web page on [Avenue to Learn](#) (A2L) that will offer all resources needed to navigate the requirements for the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Old Testament presents many challenges to the preacher; not only are there interpretive problems but perhaps even more difficult is the application to Christians today. Few books showcase these challenges more than the prophet Ezekiel. The book projects its own poignant message, but it also serves as a useful case study for learning better how to interpret and exposit Old Testament themes more generally. *Through a study of Ezekiel's message, this course advances the student's ability to interpret and preach a variety of difficult Old Testament genres.* Ezekiel utilizes biographical, legal, ritual, martial, symbolic, and apocalyptic traditions and styles. This course examines the message of Ezekiel with particular attention to the hermeneutical and homiletical challenges that the book presents.



MODE OF DELIVERY

In-Person learning is the traditional mode of study where the student is present in the classroom.

Synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time.

Asynchronous learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction.




The Prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 14:1–21). From Gustave Doré's English Bible (1866)—Source: Wikimedia Commons.

This course is offered both In-Person and through Synchronous online learning. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

Students are also encouraged to meet with the instructor (by appointment either in person or on Zoom) to discuss any questions raised in class and/or the assignments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



- a.  Knowing
1. To trace the development of the message of Ezekiel through its major parts.
 2. To demonstrate sound word-study methodology.
 3. To articulate the main considerations for application of various and difficult OT genres.
- b.  Being
1. “To present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15)
 2. To allow the Scripture to motivate, form, and transform one’s life and ministry in the way of the Lord.
- c.  Doing
1. To interpret the major units of Ezekiel meaningfully within broader context.
 2. To expound with rationale the key themes of a biblical passage.
 3. To apply difficult biblical-theological themes to Christian living.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbooks

1. Ezekiel: A Focused Commentary for Preaching and Teaching (required)

John W. Hilber. *Ezekiel: A Focused Commentary for Preaching and Teaching*. Eugene: Cascade, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-4982-9421-8 (paperback) OR 978-4982-9422-5 (ebook)

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.

Suggested Resources

—STEP Bible (<https://stepbible.org>)

This online software is designed to help non-original language readers of the Bible to search the appropriate Hebrew or Greek word in their native tongue (over 300 world language translations incorporated!). ***It is free but necessary (or an equivalent such as Accordance or Logos) in order to complete the word study assignments.***

—IVP Bible Dictionary Series is arguably the best “first-stop” when embarking on study of a biblical topic:

Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=2009926>

—Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1997.

Non-Hebrew readers will need to consult the English words in the index to find the relevant article, but I am aware of no good alternative to this set for thorough and methodologically sound semantic studies in the Old Testament.

DTL: <https://libguides-thedtl-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/c.php?g=1083471>

—The following commentaries are particularly useful for interpretation and exposition:

Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*. Anchor Bible 22. Garden City, Doubleday, 1983.

Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*. Anchor Bible 22A. Garden City, Doubleday, 1997.

Stephen I. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48*. Anchor Bible 22B. New Haven: Yale, 2018.

John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale OT Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1969.

Daniel Bodi, “Ezekiel.” In *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton, 400–517. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Class notes will offer further suggested reading and resources under respective topics.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Short Answer Essays	30%
Word Studies	25%
Analysis of Message Suggestions	25%
Sermon Outline	15%
Journal	5%
Participation (missing more than two classes may result in grade deduction)	
Total Grade	100%

Assignment Details:

Note: All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate Assignment Box on Avenue to Learn (A2L) [in PDF format only](#).

Short Answer Essays—30% Relate to Outcomes a.1; a.3; b.1; c. 1.

Students will answer a series of essay questions that capture the essence of important topics covered in class. Some questions will require interaction with supplemental readings (provided on A2L). The questions are due in two parts as scheduled in the course outline. The professor will randomly choose two of these essays from each part to read for grading. Each student is guaranteed a minimum “B” grade for a reasonable and conscientious effort to answer the question. Higher marks will be awarded for good quality answers. All questions will be discussed explicitly in class.

Word Studies—25%. Relates to Outcomes a.2; b. 1.

Five short word studies from Ezekiel will be assigned. Worksheets with instructions will be provided on A2L. Instruction in proper method will be covered the first week of class.

Analysis of Message Suggestions—25%. Relates to Outcomes b. 1; c. 1; c. 2.

Four expository units from the required textbook-commentary will be assigned for critical analysis. These will be submitted in two parts as outlined in the course syllabus. The student will explain what details of the text support the suggested message and will note (with explanation) any important themes that the suggested message misses or that cannot be defended from the text (about one page double spaced for each expository unit). The suggested messages in the textbook may be the professor’s but they are far from infallible! So substantiated criticism is welcome.

Sermon Outline—15%. Relates to Outcomes b. 1; b. 2; c. 1; c. 2. c. 3.

The student will write a 3-page (maximum) sermon outline for an expository unit of Ezekiel and deliver it orally to the class (5 minutes maximum). There must be a single, full sentence capturing the message of the unit (can be borrowed or modified from the textbook-commentary, Hilber, *Ezekiel*) as well as a single, full sentence stating the message for each first-level point of the outline. Each first-level point of the outline will be explained in a clear paragraph, noting only the key elements that support the point as well as a transitional statement linking each point. A concluding paragraph will articulate an appropriate direction of application. An example paper will be available on A2L.

Journal—5%. Relates to All Outcomes a. 3; b. 2; c. 3.

The student will read the book of Ezekiel twice during the semester. One reading will be in conjunction with reading the corresponding units presented in the textbook-commentary, Hilber, *Ezekiel*. Another reading will be conducted in no more than three sittings. (e.g., 1–24; 25–33; 34–48 are logical units). The student will reflect briefly (a couple of sentences) on any biblical-theological or applicational insights that stands out in personal appreciation. The journal should be three to five pages double spaced.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Marks will be deducted for late assignments if there is no valid reason, such as illness (a doctor’s note may be required) or serious family crisis. The deduction will be 3% per day. Extensions must be approved before the due date.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION

- All thoughtful student participation is welcome. There are no “dumb questions” or “stupid answers.” Students will respect the contributions of other students, although they may disagree, and respond to them without ridicule or scorn.
- Students are expected to attend all online classes. Missing a class in order to work on other assignments is a consequence of poor planning and is unacceptable. If you are genuinely ill or there is a serious emergency, your absence is acceptable. Please email the professor to explain.
- Students are expected to be on time for class. Admittedly, unavoidable delays do occasionally happen. If you arrive late, please email an explanation to the professor after class.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

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.

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 (1992), 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.

The professor reserves the right to examine the student on an assignment orally if there is reason to believe that the work submitted is not the student’s own creation.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructors 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Date	Text(book) (due dates in parenthesis)	Support Reading (see A2L)	Content	Assignments Due
1	Jan 6–12	• Hilber, 1–9 (1/10)	• Introduction to Hermeneutics • –Words and Contexts • –Covenants (1/10)	• Ezekiel in Context • Using STEP Bible for Word Studies	
2	Jan 13–19	• Ezek 1–3 • Hilber, 10–29 (1/13)	• Interpreting Prophets (due 1/13)	• Call of the Prophet	• WS 1 (1/13)
3	Jan 20–26	• Ezek 4–7 • Hilber, 30–47 (1/20)	• OT Law and the Christian (due 1/20)	• Idolatry & Materialism	• WS 2 (1/20)
4	Jan 27–Feb 2	• Ezek 8–11 • Hilber, 48–72 (1/27)	• Temple Abandonment in ANE (1/27)	• Rebellion, Judgment, & Hope	• WS 3 (1/27)
5	Feb 3–9	• Ezek 12–15 • Hilber, 73–97 (2/3)	• Aqhat Epic (2/3)	• Exile Justified	
6	Feb 10–16	• Ezek 16–24 • Hilber, 98–154 (2/10)	• Davis • Stiebert (2/10)	• God’s Unrequited Love	• WS 4 (2/10) • Analysis Part 1 (2/16)
7	Feb 17–23	Spring Break—No Class			
8	Feb 24–Mar 2	• Recapping			• Questions Part 1 (2/24)
9	Mar 3–9	• Ezek 25–28 • Hilber, 155–74 (3/3)	• Cooper • Block (3/3)	• Judgment of the Nations	
10	Mar 10–16	• Ezek 29–33 • Hilber, 175–97 (3/10)	• Pratt (3/10)	• A Turn in Fortune	• WS 5 (3/10)

11	Mar 17–23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezek 34–37 • Hilber, 198–227 (3/17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hilber • Osborn (3/17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promise of Restoration 	
12	Mar 24–Mar 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezek 38–39 • Hilber, 228–240 (3/24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooper • Block (3/24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanence of God’s Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis Part 2 (3/28)
13	Mar 31–Apr 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezek 40–48 • Hilber, 241–64 (3/31) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literal Interpretation (3/31) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return of Glory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal (4/4)
14	Apr 7–11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recapping • Sermons 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon (4/7) • Essay Questions Part 2 (4/7)