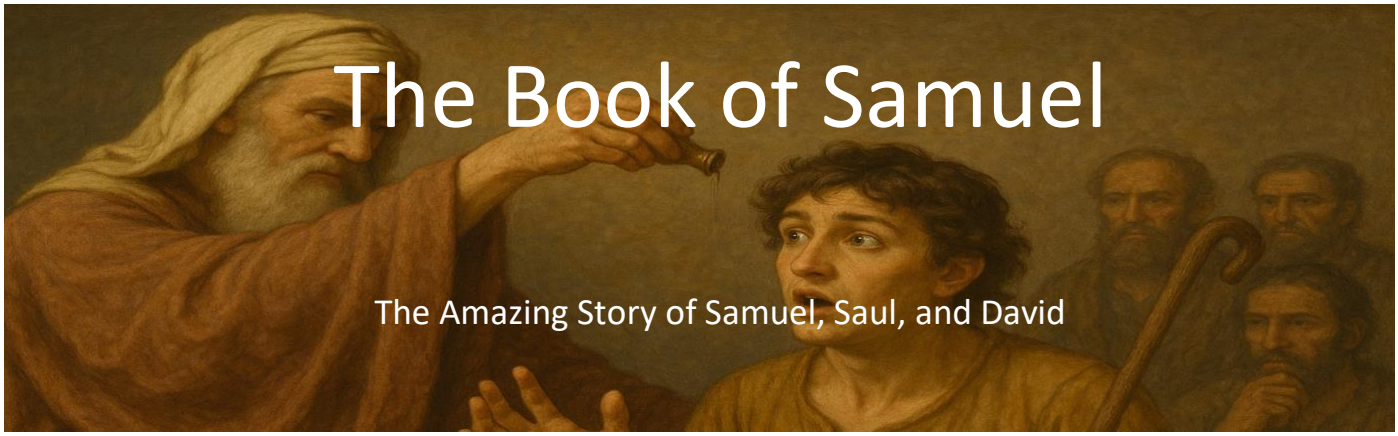


OT 3XS3/5XS5
Winter Term 2026 | Wednesdays 9:00am – 10:50pm | Room TBA

Professor: Dr. Paul S. Evans
Phone: (905) 525-9140 Ext. 24718
E-mail: pevans@mcmaster.ca
Office: 236

Course Description:

This course will provide a close reading of the biblical books of 1–2 Samuel, exploring important historical, literary and theological issues raised by the text. We will investigate what the proper role of the monarchy was in Israel's history; why Saul was rejected as king; whether Samuel was an unbiased prophet; the nature of Saul's failure as king, and what qualities of David set him apart as a king. Sustained attention will be paid to the rise of David from young shepherd boy, to Israel's hero and king, and his latter decline as sin, family crises and other tragic events threatened to depose him later in life. The key role of David in salvation history will also be explored with a biblical theological exploration of the "son of David" in messianic expectation. This course will consider the nature of the biblical narrative and its theological importance in both its ancient context and for the modern church today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies and Church and Culture

Course Objectives:

Knowing

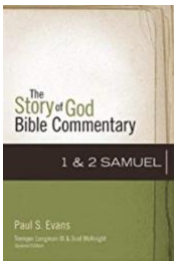
- To gain in-depth knowledge of the contents and message of the books of Samuel
- To gain familiarity with the assumptions, methods and conclusions of modern critical scholarship on the Old Testament

- To gain an appreciation for the literary character of ancient historiography

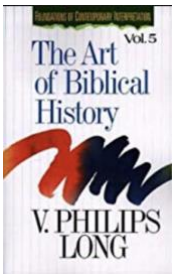
Being
- To embrace the contemporary relevance of these biblical books for the Church today
- To grow closer to God through study of his Word

Doing
- To be able to interpret Samuel in its original contexts
- To be able to apply the book of Samuel to contemporary audiences.

Required Texts



Paul S. Evans *1–2 Samuel.* Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.



V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, vol. 5 in Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

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 Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

1. 20% - Chapter Review of *The Art of Biblical History*. **4 pages.** Due Jan 28
Students must abstract and critically review either chapter 2 or 3 of this textbook. The review paper must be **no more than 4 pages** double-spaced. The paper must summarize the contents of the chapter and give critical interaction and evaluation of the chapter. See "Review Guidelines" below.

2. 30% - Character Study: 8-10 pages Due Feb 25.
After reading handouts and articles on characterization in biblical narratives students will write a paper on the characterization of their chosen biblical character. **Possible topics:** Samuel, Saul, David, Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba, Joab, Absalom, Jonadab, Ahithophel. *Choice of another biblical character must be approved by your professor*

3. 10% - *Statement and Annotated Bibliography*. Due Mar 18.
In preparation for the major assignment students will write a one-paragraph statement of their chosen topic, 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.

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.

4. 40% - Major Assignment. 12-15 pages. Due Apr 1.
All major assignment papers must follow the MDC Style Guide. Papers should be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes should be single-spaced and 10pt). The major assignment must draw on (and explicitly cite) at least 12 sources within the paper. See "**Major Assignment Evaluation Guidelines**" below.

A. Major Assignments for Biblical Studies Specializations:
There are two (2) options: Choose only one (1) of the following:

1. Research Paper: 12 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 Samuel and approved by the professor.

2. Exegetical Paper: **12 pages** Students will write an exegetical paper on a chosen text from the book of Samuel (your chosen text must be approved by your professor).

The exegetical paper should include

1. A thesis statement
2. Discussion of the historical and cultural context
3. An exegesis of the passage
4. Discussion of how the passage fits within its broader context
5. Theological reflections and conclusion

B. Major Assignments for Church and Culture Specializations:
There are <u>two</u> (2) options: Choose only one (1) of the following:

i. Research Paper: 12–15 pages. The topic of this research must be related to Samuel. The research in this paper should take a culturally sensitive approach to interpreting the biblical text. Topics must be approved by your Professor.

ii. David at the Movies / TV:

For this assignment student must watch one or more of the following movies or TV series on David's story (see list below). After viewing the media, students will write a paper that looks at how their movie/ TV series has employed the biblical narrative and critically assesses its interpretation in the context its contemporary culture. Preparation for the paper will require a student's independent study of the relevant biblical narratives, utilizing the textbooks.

The paper should answer the following questions: What questions does the movie/ TV series lead you to ask of the biblical text? What is your assessment of the legitimacy of such a retelling of a biblical story? What is helpful about the imaginative retelling of the biblical story? What is problematic about the novel in light of your knowledge of the biblical text? Does your knowledge of the contemporary cultural context at the time of the movie / TV series explain some of its approach? Would you recommend the movie/ TV series? Why, or why not? If you would recommend the movie/ TV series, to what audience?

Media Options (*students may suggest others with approval from professor)

- *King David* (Paramount, 1985). Movie directed by Bruce Beresford. Starring Richard Gere as David
- *House of David* (Amazon, 2025). TV series co-directed, and co-written by Jon Erwin. Starring Michael Iskander as David
- *David and Bathsheba* (20th Century-Fox 1951). Movie directed by Henry King. Starring Gregory Peck as David.
- *Kings* (NBC 2009) Directed by Francis Lawrence. Starring Christopher Egan as David (Sebastian Stan plays Jonathan).

Class Schedule

Wk	Date	Content	Assignment Due
1	Jan 7	Course Overview: • Introduction to Samuel	--
2	Jan 14	1 Samuel 1–2 • Hannah's Story • The asked-for Son • Prophecy against Eli's sons	--
3	Jan 21	1 Sam 3–7 • Calling Samuel • Fall of Shiloh and the Elide House • Israel repents	--
4	Jan 28	1 Sam 8–14 • Rise of Saul • Saul Saves • Saul will not wait • Saul will not lead	*Chapter Review due Jan 28
5	Feb 4	1 Sam 15–18 • Saul disobeys • David anointed • David called • David delivers • David outshines • David covenants	--
6	Feb 11	1 Sam 19–26 • Jonathan arbitrates • David leaves • Saul executes • David Runs • David Spares	--
	Feb 15-21	Reading Week	
7	Feb 25	1 Sam 27–31 • David the Philistine • Saul and the Necromancer • Death of Saul	* Character Study due Feb 25
8	Mar 4	2 Sam 1–4 • David avenges Saul • David crowned king • The Civil War	--
9	Mar 11	2 Sam 5–10 • David established • David takes Jerusalem • David brings the Ark • David Honours covenant	--
10	Mar 18	2 Sam 11–14 • David's great fall • David's repentance • Problems in David's House	* Statement and Annotated Bibliography due Mar 18
11	Mar 25	2 Sam 15–21 • Absalom's Rebellion • Rizpah and Hearing God through the voice of the suffering	--
12	Apr 1	2 Sam 22–24 • David's Mighty Men • The Census	* Major Assignment due April 1
13	Apr 8	• David as Messianic figure • Samuel as a Whole	

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. ***Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.***

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 must be in pdf format only and posted to the appropriate place on A2L. Include your last name in the file name of your paper (e.g., evans.paper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm on their due date. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

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 requests 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 the last day of classes (April 10) 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: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), 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) 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.

Policy Concerning Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, students are advised to check the McMaster University website to determine whether the university is open. In the event that the university is closed then McMaster Divinity College will also be closed, the course instructor will adjust the teaching schedule accordingly. NOTE: Assignments that are due on a day the university is closed due to weather are still due on that day.

Policy Concerning Illness

Students who are registered to attend class in-person are expected to inform the course instructor if they become ill. These students are expected to return to the classroom once they have recovered from their ailment. Students who are registered to attend class via the live stream option are expected to inform the course instructor if they become ill and their illness prevents them from attending on-line. Students are advised that classes will not be recorded. As a result, students are expected to check A2L for any course handouts and to obtain notes from their peers. **NOTE**: Unless the student has been granted an illness accommodation by the course instructor, any assignment due on a day the student is ill must be submitted on that day.

PAPER EVALUATION

I. The following 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

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

III. Comments

CHAPTER REVIEW GUIDELINES

I. The chapter review from V. Phillips Long. *The Art of Biblical History* should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content: 1 - 2 Pages
Critique of Content 1 - 2 Page
Personal Reflection ½ - 1 Page
Total=*no more* than 4 pages per review! Pages 5ff *will not* be read

The following items are rated according to the following scale:
1 = poor/inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good/more than adequate; 4 = very good;
5 = excellent/superior.

Summary of Content (noted key concepts etc.)	1 2 3 4 5
Quality of Critique (evidence of critical thought)	1 2 3 4 5
Reflective Thought (theological depth, sensitivity)	1 2 3 4 5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	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 checked

□ Use inclusive language
□ Write a unified review
□ Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention
□ Cite primary resources correctly/ consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc)
□ The paper is too long/too short
□ Edit your paper more thoroughly
□ The paper needs balance
□ Cite secondary resources correctly/ consistently

III. Comments

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