

# Psalms

OT-536 (2 or 3 units)

**Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary**

Summer 2005  
June 6-17, 2005  
Monday to Friday  
8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

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## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will first perform a brief survey of poetic literature in the Ancient Near East, and we will examine the fundamental characteristics of Hebrew poetry. This first section will then be followed by a general introduction to the Psalter as well as a discussion of the hermeneutical issues specifically related to the interpretation of the Psalms. We will then study some selected Psalms. We will also give special attention to the relevance of the Psalms for the believer and the Christian community.

## **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. The students will become familiar with Ancient Near Eastern poetic literature.
- B. Introduce the students with the basic principles of Hebrew poetry.
- C. Allow the students to become familiar with the general structure of the Psalter and with the various types of Psalms.
- D. The students will become familiar with the hermeneutical issues involved in the study of the Psalter and will be exposed to an exegetical approach that takes into account the specificity of Hebrew poetry.
- E. Allow the students to become familiar with the Psalter's theological perspective particularly as it pertains to God's nature and human experience.
- F. Allow the students to reflect on the relevance of the Psalms for the Christian community.

## **III. RELATED DEGREE OBJECTIVES**

This course will address the following curriculum objectives:

- Assumptions and principles of biblical interpretation.
- Ability to distinguish between primary and derivative teachings of Scripture.
- Knowledge of historical, political, intellectual, social, economic, and religious world of the biblical texts.
- General knowledge of the Bible.
- Commitment to inspiration and authority of the Bible.
- Personal application of the biblical texts.
- Biblical exegesis.
- Biblical theology.
- Ability to use the biblical texts in a relevant fashion in the Church and society.

#### IV. TEXTS FOR THE COURSE

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984  
(ISBN: 0-8066-2120-6)

Craigie, Peter. *Psalms 1-50*. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 19. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983. (ISBN: 08499-0218-5)

#### V. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS (2-3 units)

##### A. Reading

The students are required to read a total of 1000 pages, including Brueggemann and Craigie. Students should attempt to read as broadly as possible and will hand in a report that will list the bibliographical data of the books/monographs/articles (journals, encyclopedias, etc.) read and a brief annotation for each entry indicating the topic covered and usefulness.

**Students are required to have read Brueggemann's book for the first day of class and to be ready to hand in a short 1.5-2 page report.**

**The report on Craigie is due on June 30, 2005.**

**In these reports, the students will highlight and expand on one or two elements that they found particularly helpful for their understanding of the Psalms.**

##### B. Devotional

Each student will be asked to select one Psalm for presentation at the beginning of a class. The student will read the Psalm, propose a few exegetical observations and comment on its relevance for Christians and for corporate worship. Approximate length of the presentation: 10 minutes.

##### C. Exegetical Paper(s)

Each student will be required to prepare ONE (2 units) or TWO (3 units) exegetical papers on one or two selected psalms. Approximate length: 10-12 pages. The specific parameters of this paper will be provided in class. While the papers are expected to reflect sound academic research, the students are encouraged to present them in a way that would make them readily usable in the context of a sermon or a Bible study.

**Due Date for the exegetical papers: August 1, 2005**

**Students taking the course for 3 units are encouraged to submit their first exegetical paper well before this deadline, so as to benefit from some feedback and use it to improve the second paper.**

##### LATE PAPERS:

Late papers will be accepted up to five (5) week days after the due date provided the student submits a written note at least 2 days before the day the paper is due. The written note will include a formal request. An extension will be granted only for clearly serious reasons: death (!), illness, family crisis. In this case, a late paper will not be penalized but the professor reserves the right not to annotate said paper. Only a grade will appear.

Longer extensions will be approved only for medical reasons or by permission from the academic dean. Papers submitted beyond the 5-day grace period without adequate justification will be penalized by 10% for each day past the 5-day grace period.

#### **D. Oral Presentation**

Students will be required to present the **preliminary** results of their research on one psalm. Students will present an outline of the psalm, provide a brief summary, comment on the psalm's major theological statements, and suggest some avenues for application/contextualization. Students are invited to present their psalm as creatively as possible and to propose questions for class discussion. Approximate length of presentation (including discussion): 20-35 minutes depending on the number of participants. Presentation schedule will be determined in class.

### **VI. COURSE OUTLINE**

- A. General Introduction to Poetic Literature
  - 1. General Introduction to Poetry
  - 2. Poetry and Wisdom in Ancient Near Eastern Literature
- B. Poetic Literature in Israel
  - 1. Hebrew Poetry
  - 2. The Psalter
- C. Exegesis of Selected Psalms
- D. Student Presentations
- E. Conclusion

### **VII. COURSE GRADING**

#### **A. Two units**

1. Reading:	20
2. Participation and Attendance:	10
3. Exegetical Paper:	60
4. Oral Presentation:	10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>

#### **B. Three units**

1. Reading:	20
2. Participation and Attendance	10
3. Exegetical Paper I:	25
4. Exegetical Paper II:	35
5. Oral Presentation:	10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>

### **VIII. ACADEMIC POLICIES**

Policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, extensions, the use of inclusive language and other matters are at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/>. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and to follow them.

## IX. COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. General

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### 2. Psalms

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