



**OTEN5317 Old Testament Exegesis (Eng.): Psalms**  
**New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**  
**Division of Biblical Studies**  
**Spring 2023 Thursdays 6:00 – 8:50 p.m. or NOLA2U Flex**  
**LSC 217**

**Instructor:**  
Ricky Michalski  
[rickymichalski@gmail.com](mailto:rickymichalski@gmail.com)  
(504) 495-8968

### **Mission Statement**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

### **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the scholarly study of the Book of Psalms. The class will study historical settings for the composition and compilation of the Psalms, subsequent trajectories in their use and interpretation, the nature and purpose of their poetry, theological directions in the Psalms, and the relationship of individual psalms to the book as a whole and the canon as a whole. A major focus will be on particular challenges in the interpretation of the Psalms and on theories and practices for meeting such challenges. The goal of the course is to form readers who are not only aware of the Psalms' historical significance but attentive to their intricate texture as revelatory literature.

### **Student Learning Objectives**

Students who complete this course successfully should:

1. Know the Psalms' historical settings and literary patterns
  - a. Know the historical conditions under which the Psalms were composed and compiled
  - b. Know the Psalms' major forms and be acquainted with some aspects of translation challenges
  - c. Know how the Psalms have been read and used throughout Christian history
2. Understand the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of Psalms scholarship
  - a. Understand the Psalms' theological achievements in multiple contexts
  - b. Understand how to read the Psalms with careful attention to their literary quality
  - c. Understand contemporary perspectives on the Psalms and how select scholars have contributed to our ongoing reception of the Psalms
3. Apply the fruits of literary, historical, and theological scholarship to the interpretation of the Psalms
  - a. Apply a variety of literary-critical approaches to the interpretation of the Psalms
  - b. Use scholarly resources to meet interpretative challenges
  - c. Explain the original and contemporary theological significance of particular psalms
  - d. Explain how the Psalms relate to the rest of the canon
4. Value the Psalms as living sustenance for the public life of the church today

## Textbooks

Alter, Robert. *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction*. 2nd ed. Encountering Biblical Studies. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018.

## Course Teaching Methodology

Each class meeting will include a lecture-based presentation offering structured introductions to high-level studies on the Psalms. These presentations will help students synthesize multiple perspectives on the Psalms, make connections with other topics in biblical studies and theology, and explore specific avenues of interest. Written responses to assigned readings will help students think creatively through exegetical problems and possible solutions. These written responses will guide students' participation in class discussions. A research paper will require students to explore the field on their own and increase their competence in discussing challenging issues in interpretation. Daily reading of the psalms will foster appreciation for their vitality and relevance to all of life.

***If you are taking this course as a NOLA2U Flex student, please note the following attendance policies:***

1. You are required to be in class either through viewing the lectures live or viewing the recorded lectures on Blackboard. When you view the recorded lecture, you will be considered present for that class. Regardless of if you watch the class live or recorded, you are only allowed to miss the amount of class time specified in the NOBTS attendance policy as stated in the graduate catalog. (See "Absences" category in the website catalog at: <https://catalog.nobts.edu/generalinfo/academicpolicies>.)
2. You will be asked to certify that you have been present for the live session or have viewed the recorded session. This certification will be done through [assignment by professor] after having watched the class live or viewing the recorded session.
3. All video lectures are available for 7 days after the video is posted. If you are unable to view the video within that time frame, you will be considered absent for that class session.
4. Technical issues will not be considered a valid reason for missing a lecture.

## Course Requirements

### Attendance Policy

***If you are taking this course as a NOLA2U Flex student, please note the following attendance policies:***

1. You are required to be in class either through viewing the lectures live or viewing the recorded lectures on Canvas. When you view the recorded lecture, you will be considered present for that class. Regardless of if you watch the class live or recorded, you are only allowed to miss the amount of class time specified in the NOBTS attendance policy as stated in this syllabus.
2. You will be asked to certify that you have been present for the live session or have viewed the recorded session. This certification will be done through [assignment by professor] after having watched the class live or viewing the recorded session.
3. All video lectures are available for 7 days after the video is posted. If you are unable to view the video within that time frame, you will be considered absent for that class session.

Technical issues will not be considered a valid reason for missing a lecture.

Traditional Classes: Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Any student missing more than nine hours may receive an automatic grade of “F” for the course. Three tardies will count as one absence.

### Reading

1. Students will read through the Psalms regularly throughout the semester. A guide will be given on the first day of class.
2. The textbooks should be read according to the course schedule.
3. Additional articles to read and respond to throughout the semester will be distributed on the first day of class.
4. Broad individual reading for the final paper should begin early in the semester. Once a research topic is selected, individual reading should become more specific. Research-related reading must be of scholarly interest, rather than devotional or homiletical.

### Weekly Reading Responses

Each week beginning with week 2, students will write a roughly 500-word response to one or more of the assigned readings. Each response should include a brief summary of the argument or major points, critical interaction, and questions/discussion points to guide dialogue in class (or on the discussion board for Flex students). Responses should draw connections with lectures and other readings and, for articles dealing with specific psalms, should specifically reflect upon the form and content of those psalms.

### Preparation and Participation

Careful reading of the assigned texts for each class meeting is expected. Attention to and synthesis of assigned texts is evaluated in terms of classroom participation (or discussion board participation for Flex students). Students should anticipate contributing to classroom conversation each week on the basis of their reading, their written reading response, and lectures.

### Final Paper

A research paper of 5,000–6,000 words will be submitted at the last meeting. This paper will focus on an area of difficulty in the interpretation of a particular psalm or in the reception of the book as a whole. Historical, literary, and theological angles are all appropriate. The topic should be discussed with the instructor early in the semester, and must be approved by March 9. The student will give a 5-minute presentation of their research problem and conclusions and lead a brief class discussion on possible implications of their topic/argument.

## **Evaluation of Grade**

Preparation and Participation:	20%
Weekly Reading Responses:	50%
Final Paper:	30%

### Rubric for evaluation of final paper

	<b>Substance of arguments (40%)</b>	<b>Research (30%)</b>	<b>Composition (20%)</b>	<b>Presentation (10%)</b>
<b>A</b>	<p>Presentation of original concepts with subtlety and depth in conversation with major sources</p> <p>Strong, complete arguments with clear connection to data</p> <p>Research question relevant to the nature of the text, the needs of the church, and the norms of the academy</p> <p>Discovery, use and presentation of a significant quantity of high-quality data</p> <p>Original and imaginative arguments that attempt to advance our understanding of the text</p> <p>Minor arguments clearly serve the major argument</p> <p>Conclusions drawn persuasively from argument</p>	<p>Thorough representation of the field</p> <p>Meaningful use of sources in the construction of the argument</p> <p>Responsible and honest interaction with sources</p> <p>Transparent acknowledgment of sources</p> <p>Up-to-date</p> <p>Factually accurate, scholars' views are presented with nuanced understanding</p>	<p>Compelling, readable prose</p> <p>Unique, confident authorial voice establishing rapport with reader</p> <p>Serious style but not stuffy</p> <p>Very well-ordered thinking and wording</p> <p>Artful and tactful</p>	<p>Clean text without distractions</p>
<b>B</b>	<p>Promising but inconsistent/incomplete arguments</p> <p>Competent conceptual development</p>	<p>Serviceable representation of the field</p> <p>Ambiguous acknowledgment of sources</p> <p>Relatively up-to-date</p> <p>Factually accurate</p>	<p>Serviceable presentation of research</p>	<p>Minor errors in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or formatting</p>
<b>C</b>	<p>Failure to connect arguments with data</p> <p>Ambiguous concepts</p> <p>Inaccurate data</p> <p>Relevance is obscure</p>	<p>Shallow representation of the field, or passively reliant on small set of sources</p> <p>Ambiguous acknowledgment of sources</p> <p>Key parts of the research are significantly outdated</p> <p>Minor factual errors</p>	<p>Inconsistent language sometimes obscuring content or degrading research credibility</p>	<p>Frequent errors obscuring content</p>
<b>D</b>	<p>Derivative arguments</p> <p>Obscure concepts</p> <p>Grossly inaccurate data</p> <p>Research is off-topic or irrelevant</p>	<p>Inaccurate representation of the field</p> <p>Irresponsible or trivial handling of sources</p> <p>Most of the research is significantly outdated</p> <p>Major factual errors</p>	<p>Damaged language obscuring content and degrading research credibility</p>	<p>Pervasive errors obscuring content</p>
<b>F</b>	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>

## Resources

### Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. [www.NOBTS.edu/itc/](http://www.NOBTS.edu/itc/)- Email for general technical questions/support requests.
2. [Selfserve@nobts.edu](mailto:Selfserve@nobts.edu)- Email technical questions/support requests with the [Selfserve.nobts.edu](http://Selfserve.nobts.edu) or [My.nobts.edu](http://My.nobts.edu) site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, Faculty portal, etc.)
3. [Canvas@nobts.edu](mailto:Canvas@nobts.edu) Click on the “Help” button for technical questions/support requests regarding the NOBTS Canvas System. You can also email questions to [Canvas.nobts.edu](http://Canvas.nobts.edu) / [nobts.instructure.com](http://nobts.instructure.com).
4. [Bluejeanshelpdesk@nobts.edu](mailto:Bluejeanshelpdesk@nobts.edu) - Email technical questions/support requests with Bluejeans and NOBTS Bluejeans classrooms (On and Off-Campus).
5. [TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu](mailto:TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu)- Email technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Nextiva Phone system.

**504.816.8180** - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time)

### Help with writing

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be located online at the Writing Center’s page on the seminary website at <https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>.

## Course Schedule

Date	Focus	Reading Due	Assignment Due
Week 1: Jan 19	Introduction to the course  Introduction to the Psalms		
Week 2: Jan 26	What is the Book of Psalms and where did it come from?  Introduction to Classical Hebrew poetry	Bullock, <i>Encountering the Book of Psalms</i> (Part 1)  Alter, <i>The Art of Poetry</i> (excerpt)  James, <i>An Invitation to Biblical Poetry</i> (excerpt)	Response to Alter
Week 3: Feb 2	Classical Hebrew poetry	Alter, <i>The Book of Psalms</i>  Cole, “An Integrated Reading of Psalms 1 and 2”  Lefebvre, ““On His Law He Meditates””  Willgren, “Why Psalms 1–2 Are Not to Be Considered a Preface to the <i>Book of Psalms</i> ”  Davis, “Exploding the Limits”  <b>Begin monthly psalm cycle</b>	Response to Alter  Response to Lefebvre and Willgren
Week 4: Feb 9	Historical settings  Nations, identities, and voices in the Book of Psalms	Bullock, <i>Encountering the Book of Psalms</i> (Part 2)  Adamo, “The Significance of Psalm 121 in an African Context”  Cook, ““They Were Born There””  Gillingham, “The Exodus Tradition and Israelite Psalmody”  Southwood, “Metaphor, Illness, and Identity”	Response to Bullock  Response to Gillingham
Week 5: Feb 16	Psalter theology: Who is God in the Psalms?	Charry, <i>Psalms 1–50</i> (excerpt)  Blaising, <i>Psalms 1-50</i> (excerpt)  Bonhoeffer, <i>Psalms</i>	Response to Charry  Response to Blaising

Week 6: Feb 23	Reception history: How were the Psalms read in the past?	Sæbø, <i>Hebrew Bible, Old Testament</i> (excerpt) Edwards, “The Disunity and Unity of the Psalter in the Fathers”	Response to Sæbø Response to Edwards
Week 7: Mar 2	Ethics and exegesis	Wenham, <i>Psalms as Torah</i> (excerpt) Strawn, “What Is It Like to Be a Psalmist?” Gatti, “Cursing Back to Life?”	Response to Wenham Response to Strawn
Week 8: Mar 9	Ethics and exegesis	Brueggemann, <i>Israel’s Praise</i> (excerpt) James, <i>The Storied Ethics of the Thanksgiving Psalms</i> (excerpt) Janowski, <i>Arguing with God</i> (excerpt) Stone, “All These Look to You”	Response to Brueggemann Topic for final paper must be selected and approved
Mar 16	SPRING BREAK		
Week 9: Mar 23	The forms of the Psalms The Psalms in Israel’s worship Psalms as praise	Bullock, <i>Encountering the Book of Psalms (Part 3)</i> Gunkel, <i>Psalms</i> (excerpt) Mowinckel, <i>The Psalms in Israel’s Worship</i> (excerpt) Westermann, <i>Praise and Lament in the Psalms</i> (excerpt)	Response to Gunkel
Week 10: Mar 30	Royalty in the Psalms	Wilson, “The Use of Royal Psalms At the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter”	
Week 11: Apr 6	Wisdom in the Psalms Torah in the Psalms	Crenshaw, <i>Old Testament Wisdom</i> (excerpt) Dell, “I Will Solve My Riddle to the Music of the Lyre” Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh” Burt, “Your Torah Is My Delight”	Response to Crenshaw Response to Dell

Week 12: Apr 13	Interpretive challenges	Johnston and Firth, <i>Interpreting the Psalms</i> (excerpt)	Response to Johnston and Firth
Week 13: Apr 20	Textual and translation challenges  The Septuagint, the New Testament, and the mediated theology of the Psalter	(Nothing due—research for final paper)	
Week 14: Apr 27	Special topics	(Nothing due—research for final paper)	
Week 15: May 4	Paper presentations	Submit and present final paper	<b>Final paper</b>



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