

Hebrew Bible Psalms in Interpretation

Professor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 3.1.0
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1 Course Description

From the Academic Calendar: The Psalms of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament have a special part in the life of the synagogue and church. A major goal of this course is therefore to gain perspective on how the Psalter has fed and informed Jewish and Christian faith in various periods: in biblical times, Rabbinic and Patristic periods, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and finally the early and late modern periods. By interacting with recent research into the shape and shaping of the Psalter we will also consider the anthology's arrangement. Study will generally occur in one of two modes. First, secondary reading and class discussion will look at hermeneutical and historical factors involved in reading and understanding the Psalter. Second, seminars will help put theory into practice by featuring about a dozen particular psalms in connection with their reception history.

2 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to: report on at least three distinct periods in the reception of the Psalter; analyze key differences between ancient and modern interpreters, and a variety of Jewish and Christian interpreters; interpret a psalm afresh while interacting with its past readers; recite at least twelve verses of a psalm from memory; respond creatively to a psalm in a way that engages with and illuminates the text.

3 Required Texts & Materials

The following texts are required. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copies. Library copies that are not reference works will be placed on a 2-hour reserve.

- [NRSV] M. D. Coogan, ed. *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: NRSV*. 4th ed. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0195289602.
- [Shape & Shaping] Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford. *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1628370010.
- [Two Psalms] Susan Gillingham. *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0199652419.

An acceptable alternative study Bible is the NJPS: Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition* (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). A reference copy is available in the library, and it is well worth consulting.

4 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings will be recommended throughout the semester. Excerpts from this literature may either be placed on reserve or made available for download through the course website. Outstanding students will also pursue leads on their own, making maximum use of notes and bibliographies in the required textbooks.

Major modern commentaries on the Psalms include:

E. Hengstenberg (² 1849–52)	W. O. E. Oesterley (1939)	E. Gerstenberger (1988)
J. Olshausen (1853)	A. Cohen (1945)	M. Girard (1984–1996)
H. Hupfeld (1855–62)	H. Lamparter (1958)	J. Day (1990)
W. M. L. de Wette (⁵ 1856)	A. Weiser (1962)	M. Tate (1990)
F. Delitzsch (1871)	E. J. Kissane (² 1964)	A. C. Feuer (³ 1991)
J. J. S. Perowne (⁷ 1890)	A. Deissler (1965)	J. L. Mays (1994)
J. Wellhausen (³ 1898)	M. J. Dahood (1966–70)	K. Seybold (1996)
A. F. Kirkpatrick (1891–1901)	H.-J. Kraus (⁴ 1972)	C. Broyles (1999)
C. A. Briggs (1906–07)	A. A. Anderson (1972)	F.-L. Hossfeld,
B. Duhm (² 1922)	D. Kidner (1975)	E. Zenger (1993–2008)
H. Gunkel (⁴ 1926)	J. Rogerson, J. McKay (1977)	J.-L. Vesco (2006)
R. Kittel (⁵⁻⁶ 1929)	L. Jacquet (1975–79)	W. Brueggemann,
E. W. Barnes (1931)	P. Craigie, L. Allen (1983)	W. Bellinger (2014)
H. Schmidt (1934)	C. Stuhlmüller (1985)	M. Oeming, J. Vette (2000–16)

5 Course Outline

We will adhere to the schedule in [Table 1](#) as closely as possible, though the professor reserves the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

§. Seminar	[Two Psalms]	[Shape & Shaping]	Date
1. Psalm 1	Chap. 1	deClaissé-Walford	10 Jan.
2. Psalm 2	Chap. 2	Wittman	17 Jan.
3. Psalm 8	Chap. 3	Nasuti, McCann	24 Jan.
4. Psalm 19	Chap. 4	Gerstenberger, Gericke	31 Jan.
5. Psalm 22	Chap. 5	Jones, Petrany	7 Feb.
6. Psalm 49	Chap. 6	Botha, K. Jacobson	14 Feb.
~. No Class: Term Break (Monday to Friday)			21 Feb.
7. Psalm 88	Chap. 7	Ndoga, Magonet	28 Feb.
~. No Class: Grad Projects (Tuesday and Wednesday)			7 Mar.
8. Psalm 90	Chap. 8	Tucker	14 Mar.
9. Psalm 110	Chap. 9	Wallace	21 Mar.
10. Psalm 118	Chap. 10	Flint	28 Mar.
☞ Exegetical essays are due by the start of the last class			
11. Psalm 147	Chap. 11	R. Jacobson	4 Apr.
☞ End of Term: Final marks are due for all courses			12 Apr.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

See the AST website for a list of other [important dates](#).

6 Evaluation and Grade Structure

1. The professor will set **reading prompts** throughout the semester, as often as once a week. Prompts will consist of questions drawn from the secondary reading, and so presuppose that students have read the assigned material carefully. Points may be deducted if it becomes evident that the reading has not been taken seriously.
2. Students are to **memorize 12 verses of a psalm** and recite them to the professor privately, in his office, before the end of tenth week of class. Any psalm (or combination of psalms) is allowed unless you have memorized it before.
3. Students must **creatively represent one psalm** in the class immediately following that psalm's workshop (e.g., Psalm 2 in Week 3). Engage as many of the senses as possible, using whatever you can find or create. Be inventive! The only conditions are (a) that you explain or demonstrate a connection with the text studied and (b) that your presentation last between 5 and 8 minutes (plus 2 minutes for questions).
4. The last half of each week's class will be devoted to a **seminar-style discussion** of an individual psalm. Students will select a commentator for a period of 3–4 weeks, during which time they are responsible to report on the the author's commentary and bring its insight to bear on the seminar discussions. How should you prepare?
 - (a) Read the primary seminar text closely and carefully. Look for distinctive words, themes, and images in the psalm, and stay alert to intertextual connections between it and other biblical literature. Jot down your observations.

- (b) Consult your commentary. It should be read carefully, too, but after you have got a sense for the psalm on its own. One good approach might be to read the psalm twice, make some preliminary notes, and then study your commentator and fill out your preliminary notes.
 - (c) Augment your knowledge of each commentary you study by reading about its place in reception history. Key recourses are listed in [subsection 8.2](#), below (see especially Magne Sæbø's comprehensive reference work, *HB/OT*). Remember that you will be the resident authority on your chosen commentator.
5. Students are to compose an **exegetical essay** on one of the psalms from the seminar. Consider all the perspectives brought to bear in class on a psalm of your choice, noting anything useful for your discussion, and then dig deeper into the text and its history. Your work should be aided by the preliminary researches of your classmates, but you will need to read more widely on your own; the seminar is only a starting point. You are expected to develop a strong thesis, and to interact with a healthy representation of secondary literature. The final paper is due at the start of the last class.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in [Table 2](#).

Reading Prompts	15%
Psalm Memorization	10%
Creative Representation	15%
Seminar Contributions	20%
Final Paper	40%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

AST's **Academic Calendar** provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks. Note that, at AST, a grade of "C" is deemed "Unsatisfactory."

7 Other Course Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances.

Essay submissions must be typewritten, double-spaced, and free from error. In this course they should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd Edition (refer to the free, online [Student Supplement](#)). **Plagiarism**, if **detected**, will result in failure of the course.

Students should request permission to record a class. If permission is granted, I stipulate that the recording be for personal use only. It may not be shared or distributed.

Finally, as **cognitive psychologists have demonstrated**, "laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." I therefore encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in the classroom. Please do your part to foster an environment of open dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates.

8 Additional Bibliography

For the weekly Psalms seminar, students should focus on a commentator from the list below and give a short (5 minute) overview of the interpretation of the psalm in question. Be sure to work with three different commentators over the semester, from at least two different

major periods. (For those with the language skills, registering notes on Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin versions can be one selection.) The goal is to gain maximum insight into the message of the Psalms by close attention to text, translation, and commentary.

8.1 Ancient Sources

1. Versions

- (a) John R. Kohlenberger, III, ed., *The Comparative Psalter: Hebrew-Greek-English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [Ref BS 1419 2007]. Very useful, but not to be mistaken for a critical edition or a full account of ancient versions.
- (b) The Septuagint/Old Greek (LXX/OG) is available in **two main editions**, each with major and minor editions. A. Rahlfs produced the Göttingen Septuagint's *editio maior* of *Psalmi cum Odis* in 1931 (3rd ed., 1979).
- (c) Vulgate/Jerome: *Biblia Sacra Latina* **[online]**.
- (d) Targumim: *The Aramaic Bible, Vol. 16: The Targum of the Psalms* (trans. David M. Stec; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2004) [BS 709.2 B5 1987 vol.16]. Also, **Edward Cook's translation is available online**.

2. Early Church / Synagogue

- (a) John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. R. C. Hill; 2 vols.; Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998) [BS 1430.3 J63 1998].
- (b) Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* (trans. M. Boulding; 6 vols.; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2000–2004). Older English translations of *Enarrationes in Psalmos* appear in the Ancient Christian Writers series (trans. S. Hebgin, F. Corrigan; Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1960–) and in **P. Schaff's NPNF translation, first printed 1847–57 and now online**. For the Latin original see *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), vols. 93–95.
- (c) Diodore of Tarsus, *Commentary on Psalms 1–51* (trans. R. C. Hill; Atlanta: SBL, 2005) [BR 65 D393 D5613 2005].
- (d) Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. R. C. Hill; 2 vols; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000–2001).
- (e) Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1–81* (trans. R. C. Hill; Atlanta: SBL, 2006).
- (f) Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* (trans. P. G. Walsh; New York: Paulist Press, 1990–1991) [BR 60 A35 no. 51–53].
- (g) Midrash Tehillim / *Midrash on the Psalms, Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic* (trans. W. G. Braude; 2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

3. Medieval

- (a) Aquinas, *Postilla super Psalmos / Commentary on the Psalms* (1272–1273). A Latin–English parallel edition for (most of) Psalms 1–54, ed. by Stephen Loughlin, is **online as part of the Aquinas Translation Project**. See also: Thomas Ryan, *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).
- (b) *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (trans. Mayer I. Gruber; Leiden: Brill, 2004) [BS 1429 R3713 2007].

4. Reformation Era

- (a) Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536): *Expositions of the Psalms* (Collected Works of Erasmus, Vol. 63–65; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, 2005, 2010) [CWE 63: Pss 1, 2, 3, 4; CWE 64: Pss 88, 22, 28, 33; CWE 65: Pss 38, 83, 14].
- (b) Martin Luther (1483–1546): *Werke*, 35 = *Luther's Works*, 10–14 [BR 330 E5 1955]. See also: J. S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1969).
- (c) John Calvin (1509–1564): *Commentary on the Psalms* (1557–, ET 1839–). All of Calvin's commentaries are available online, in English translation, at the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#): Psalms [1–35](#), [36–66](#), [67–92](#), [93–119](#), [119–150](#). See also: Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

5. Early Modern / Modern / Critical

- (a) Select an example from [section 4](#) or nominate an early modern or modern commentator of your own discovery.
- (b) If you have modern language skills beyond English, this is an opportunity to put them to use. See the first pages of F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), and idem, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), for lists of commentaries in an array of European languages.

8.2 Other Literature on the Psalms and Reception History

- Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, OT vols. 7–8: Craig A. Blaising and Carmen Hardin, eds., *Psalms 1–50* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008); Quentin F. Wesselschmidt and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Psalms 51–150* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).
- Willaim Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
- H. Attridge and M. Fassler, eds., *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) offers an [expanded bibliography online \(PDF\)](#). Volume 2 has not yet appeared, but see her *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- M. Sæbø, *HB/OT*: For help with specific periods and commentators in biblical reception history see Magne Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (3 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996–2015).