

BSTH 4403: TOPICS IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Cross-listed as BSTH 3153: Writings

Ecclesiastes

Instructor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 1.0-WIP
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Hours	Mon. & Wed., 2:30–3:30 PM	Website	classes.tyndale.ca

Commuter Hotline Class cancellations due to inclement weather or illness will be announced on the commuter hotline at 416-226-6620 ext. 2187. Weather information is also posted at tyndale.ca/weather.

MyTyndale.ca This course may have materials stored on its website, such as handouts or readings that may be needed in order to complete assignments. Students are responsible for checking these course pages on a regular basis. Here, too, students are able to view their grades throughout the semester. For more information see Section 7.3.2, below.

Mail Students are responsible for information communicated through their campus mailboxes and student e-mail accounts. A mailbox directory hangs beside the mailboxes. For more information contact the Registrar's office.

1 COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the Academic Calendar:

BSTH 4403: A seminar style course involves the advanced study of a particular topic or figure in biblical theology that will change from year to year. It can be taken more than once for credit, provided that the topics are different. Students will be expected to contribute to the seminar by doing research and presenting the results to the seminar. Prerequisites: BSTH 101, 102, 201 and 270.

BSTH 3153: Survey of especially the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, which may cover Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs and should address the role of wisdom in Israelite religion and culture. Comparison will be made with wisdom texts in the Apocrypha and Ancient Near East. Other texts from the Writings may also be included. Prerequisites: BSTH 101, 102, 201.

2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes for this course are in part a function of each student's ability to meet specific objectives. By the end of the course students should be able to: list biblical books classified with the Writings (in the Tanak) and wisdom literature; understand differences in the way this literature is classified; give examples of extra-biblical parallels to wisdom literature; locate Ecclesiastes relative to other Solomonic literature; recognize quotes from Ecclesiastes by chapter; name major commentators on Ecclesiastes, ancient and modern; report on specific commentators verbally, to the rest of the class; articulate interpretive options in reading Ecclesiastes; defend their own preferred readings in writing, with detailed textual support.

3 REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

All required textbooks are available in the Tyndale Bookstore.

- [Johnson] Samuel Johnson, ed. by Thomas Keymer. *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (new edition). Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0199229970.
- [Christianson] Eric S. Christianson. *Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries* (paperback). Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. ISBN 978-0470674918.
- [Dell] Katharine Dell. *Interpreting Ecclesiastes: Readers Old and New*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2013. ISBN 978-1575062815.

4 SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

Students must have access to a Study Bible. I recommend *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford University Press, 2010) or *The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2014) if you need to acquire one. Many serviceable English translations of the Bible exist, but the NRSV and NJPS are standard among biblical scholars. For this class the ESV is an acceptable alternative.

Articles and book chapters from the vast literature on Ecclesiastes in reception, and in the context of the Writings and wisdom literature, may be recommended and placed on the course website as the semester progresses. Students are encouraged to pursue secondary literature on their own as well.

5 EVALUATION

5.1 GRADE STRUCTURE FOR BSTH 4403/3153

1. Each class will typically begin with a **reading quiz**. These are designed to ensure that you have read the assigned material carefully, and will frequently set a jumping-off point for seminar discussions. Quizzes may not be made up in the case of absence, though in special cases they may be taken in advance.
2. The last part of each class will be devoted to a **seminar-style discussion** of one chapter of Ecclesiastes. Each student will be assigned a commentator for a period of 3 weeks, and they are responsible to report on that commentator and bring their insight to bear on the discussion. How should you prepare?

- (a) Read the seminar text closely and carefully. Look for distinctive language, themes and images, and stay alert to intertextual connections between the main passage and other biblical literature. Jot down your observations.
 - (b) Consult your designated commentary. It should be read after you have got a sense for the chapter on its own. One good approach might be to read the chapter through twice, making some preliminary notes, and then to read your commentator and fill out your preliminary notes.
 - (c) Notes will be collected near the end of the semester, and I may ask to see them sooner if there is any doubt about the adequacy of your preparation. Remember that you are the resident authority on your designated commentator.
3. In weeks 7 and 8 students are to present a **case study** to the class. In 12 minutes you must report on and analyze a specific instance of the reception of Ecclesiastes in art, literature, film, history, theology, philosophy, or public discourse (3153 students may use Johnson's *Rasselas* as their case study). Use half your time for description and summary, and half for analysis and critique. Presentations will be evaluated for the quality of the selection, and the depth of analysis.
4. A comprehensive **final paper** is due at the start of the exam period as schedule by the Registrar (see Section 6.2).
 - (a) For **4403** students are to write an exegetical analysis of one chapter of Ecclesiastes. In 16–20 pages, these papers must advance a thesis about the text and must demonstrate, through careful citation, a thorough awareness of relevant commentary and scholarly literature.
 - (b) For **3153** students must give a more general account of Ecclesiastes either in the context of the Writings or of wisdom literature. In 10–12 pages, these papers must cite assigned textbooks and other literature as appropriate, and should make plentiful reference to the text of Ecclesiastes.
 - (c) The instructor may set deadlines for drafts in the second part of the semester, and may host a peer review or offer bonus points for visits to the writing centre. All students in this class should be prepared to read a 1,000 word excerpt from your final submission in the exam period.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is as follows:

Reading Quizzes	30%
Case Study	10%
Seminar Contributions	30%
Final Paper	30%

Table 1: Distribution of Grades

5.2 GRADING SYSTEM AT TYNDALE

Tyndale University College provides the following general benchmarks for summative assessment. I may furnish more detailed rubrics for particular assignments. Note also (at right) the percentage ranges and grade point values for letter grade designations.

A, B – Excellent, Good These grades are earned only when evidence indicates that the student has consistently maintained above average progress in the subject. Sufficient evidence may involve such qualities as creativity, originality, thoroughness, responsibility and consistency.

	percent	pts.
+	90–100	4.00
A	85–89	4.00
–	80–84	3.70
+	77–79	3.30
B	73–76	3.00
–	70–72	2.70
+	67–69	2.30
C	63–66	2.00
–	60–62	1.70
+	57–59	1.30
D	53–56	1.00
–	50–52	0.70
F	0–49	0.00

C – Satisfactory This grade means that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the subject to the satisfaction of the instructor. These requirements include the understanding of subject matter, adequacy and promptness in the preparation of assignments and participation in the work of the class.

D – Poor This grade indicates that the accuracy and content of work submitted meets only the minimal standards of the instructor. Consistent performance at this level is considered inadequate for graduation.

F – Failing Work submitted is inadequate. Attitude, performance and attendance are considered insufficient for a passing grade.

6 POLICY ON ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS

All policy in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of this syllabus applies to this course in addition to policy in the current [Academic Calendar](#). In some cases the syllabus underscores the general policy, while in other cases it supersedes it.

For all matters not covered in this syllabus, refer to Section 5 of the Academic Calendar, “University College Academic Policies, Procedures, and Notices.” Students are strongly encouraged to read this document carefully at least once in their career at Tynedale, and to review it every year they matriculate.

6.1 ASSIGNMENTS

This is a university course. All papers and other writing assignments should therefore be written at the university level. Submissions must be typewritten and double-spaced, should be free from error, and in this course should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style* (refer to the free, online [SBLHS Student Supplement](#).)

If you ever struggle with composition—anything from the relatively simple matters of spelling, grammar and proper citation to deeper-level issues of tone, structure and argument—then please make use of the Writing Centre (see Section 8.1). Experienced writers know that drafts and peer feedback are integral to the writing process. Inexperienced writers are often unaware that their surface-level errors create credibility problems with their readers. When you [misspell common words](#), fail to know [how to use an apostrophe](#), or do not bother to cite your sources correctly, why should your readers trust you with more important matters like the facts and ideas under discussion?

6.1.1 DEADLINES

Assignments *must* be submitted on time. Even if the work is rough or incomplete, you must turn in something by the due date to receive any credit whatsoever. Unless I specify differently in class, papers and take-home exams are due by 11:59 PM on the due date. All other work is due at the start of the day’s class.

Note that, because no late work is accepted in this class, there is no scale of penalty for unexcused late assignments. If a truly extraordinary event keeps you from doing your best work, then let me know so that we can make special arrangements. I am guided by the Academic Calendar in what counts as extenuation. “Extensions are not granted for what best could be described as ‘poor time management’ or ‘over-involvement’ in an extracurricular activity.”

6.1.2 SUBMISSION AS PDFS

Papers and some other assignments in this course are to be submitted electronically through the course pages (Section 7.3.2). To preserve formatting, formal writing assign-

ments must be uploaded in Portable Document Format. There are many ways of creating PDFs; it is your responsibility to know how to do so on the computer platform you use, and to generate and submit your PDFs on time.

6.1.3 BACKUP

In the event of the loss of assignments post-submission—electronic systems fail, and my office has flooded before—students are required to keep backup copies of all assignments submitted.

Learning how to secure and preserve your work is a peculiar challenge of the digital age. Plan on the crash of your hard drive, and the theft of your laptop (the first is inevitable, the second quite probable). If you do not have a backup strategy, I recommend that you start with a free account on [dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com).

6.2 EXAMINATIONS

My examination policy follows that outlined in Section 5 of the Academic Calendar, part of which is summarized below for emphasis.

1. Midterm exams will be held as scheduled by the instructor. If you miss the exam for a legitimate reason, you must write the exam within the same number of days that you were absent from school (possibly the next day).
2. Final examinations will take place during the exam period as scheduled by the Registrar. Students are responsible for noting the date, time and location of their final exam in this class. Students are also responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Registrar's examination policies.
3. Special rules apply when midterms and finals are held, including one that prohibits students from leaving their seats during the final fifteen minutes of the exam period. See the Academic Calendar for full details.
4. Provisions exist for students who are justifiably unable to write the final exam at the scheduled time. See the Academic Calendar for details, and make arrangements through the Office of the Registrar.
5. Normally, a final exam can only be reschedule in two circumstances: (a) a documented illness, or (b) a conflict with another exam (two at the same time, or three within 24 hours). [Apply to the Registrar](#) in either case.

7 STUDENT EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES

7.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Integrity in academic work is required of all students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity. It includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors, using false information in an assignment (including false references to secondary sources), improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism.

Tyndale takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to apply consequences for academic dishonesty. Consult Section 5 of the Academic Calendar for more information on the school's policy and its application to your work in this course.

7.2 ATTENDANCE

“Faithful attendance at classes is an important indicator of student maturity and involvement” (Academic Calendar). Remember, too, that you are responsible for everything that happens in every class. Your best policy is to attend and engage. Please do not ask me to repeat for your benefit anything I have said in a class you have missed.

Keeping a record of attendance is mandatory for faculty at Tyndale (in contrast to many other colleges and universities). The University College publishes guidelines for how attendance should bear on your final evaluation in a course, and I adhere to them. Note that four lates equals one absence.

What should you do if you miss an undue number of classes? First, if possible, arrange for a classmate to brief you on the material missed, or get my permission for a classmate to make a recording for you (see Section 7.3.4). Second, promptly notify the Dean of Students in person or by phone. If illness is the cause you will need to submit a doctor’s certificate upon return. The Dean of Students will notify your professors of the reason for the absence and suggest that they take this into consideration when assigning grades.

7.3 TECHNOLOGY

Technological innovation has brought students and educators a number of powerful new tools, and I encourage you to use them as you research, write, and collaborate. Some of these tools also call for disciplined use and management.

7.3.1 EMAIL

Email can be a chore, and you may prefer other channels of communication. As a matter of policy, however, students must use their myTyndale accounts for all course-related email correspondence. During term time you should check your school account at least once a day (optional on weekends). I myself aim to check my school email at the beginning and end of each workday. At other times my email client is often closed. I will try to answer your messages within 24 hours, though you should not expect replies on weekends.

Keep your messages topical and brief. I would vastly prefer to conduct any conversations of substance in person, or else over the phone. Please note and make use of my office hours. If these hours do not suit your schedule, I would happily receive an email from you requesting an alternate meeting time.

7.3.2 CLASSES.TYNDALE.CA

Tyndale’s course pages are an efficient means of distributing articles, notes, slides, and other course-related materials. This is also where instructors log attendance and upload grades for assignments. Students are therefore required to check the site for updates about their classes as well as for any materials needed for lectures and assignments.

My own use of this platform varies from semester to semester, and from course to course. At times I may ask you to use the forums, quiz module, or other parts of the system. At a minimum I will use the site as a repository for course materials, and as a destination for your submission of PDFs (Section 6.1.2).

7.3.3 LAPTOPS AND OTHER DEVICES

Use of laptops is forbidden in my classroom, except to facilitate presentation. I implement this policy because of the cognitive costs of multitasking, with the aim of giving you and your peers the best chance of success. I also hope to foster a culture of keen intellectual engagement.

As [cognitive psychologists at McMaster and York Universities demonstrated in 2013](#), “laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers.” There is little new in their finding that the allegedly multitasking student does less well in class (11% worse on the quiz in their experiment). This effect has been shown many times. Rather, their novel discovery is that classmates *without* laptops who sat with a *view* of another student’s screen did worse than the students who had a computer (17% worse than those with no laptop in sight).

Prohibiting laptops is not the only possible response to these findings. However, there is evidence that [writing by hand](#) brings a number of cognitive benefits, and a [2014 Princeton University study](#) “found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand.” If you are a heavy laptop user then consider this an opportunity to experiment with different technologies in the classroom.

As for the myriad networked devices that many of us carry, it’s a simple matter of professionalism to keep these things silent and out of sight. E-readers and tablets are permitted *only if they are used to display the assigned reading*. If this is how you choose to read, let me invite you to put the machine in airplane mode while class is in session.

7.3.4 RECORDING OF CLASSES

Students must request permission from the professor of any class that they would like to record. Where permission is granted, students are expected to supply their own equipment. In general I prefer *not* to have my classes recorded, and I am not at all friendly to being recorded without my knowledge. In cases where I grant permission, I stipulate that the recordings must be for personal use only. They should not be shared with other students, even with students in the same section, and they absolutely must not be posted online or otherwise distributed.

If a student is not able to attend a lecture and would like to have it recorded, it is the responsibility of the student first to obtain the professor’s permission, and then to find another student to record the lecture. I will not make the recording for you.

8 STUDENT SUPPORT

8.1 TYNDALE WRITING CENTRE

Through a combination of tutorials, workshops and resources, Tyndale’s Writing Centre offers a comprehensive program of writing support to Tyndale students, including individual 30-minute tutoring sessions. Students may bring essays that have been graded (and, at least for my classes, essays that have not yet been submitted for a grade) and will receive detailed suggestions for improving their writing. This service, at no charge to students, is available by appointment.

Professors may recommend that a student go to the Writing Centre for help: students are strongly encouraged to follow such recommendations. The Academic Standards Committee may require an undergraduate student who is experiencing difficulty in his or her academic program to go to the Writing Centre for assistance and support. Many top students also elect to go.

8.2 TYNDALE UC TUTORING PROGRAM

Tyndale University College is committed to helping its students achieve academic success. For this purpose, students in need of academic assistance may request peer tutoring,

free of charge, in each academic department. This includes students on academic probation, students who have received failing grades in a course or courses, or students who have been referred for tutoring by their instructor.

For more information on scheduling tutoring appointments, or for those interested in becoming peer tutors, students may contact the Office of the Senior Vice President Academic or their respective University College department chairs.

8.3 ACCOMMODATION

Students with documented disabilities may be granted special accommodation for exams, and in some cases for other assignments. It is even possible to get permission to use a laptop in class (Section 7.3.3), although I will need to be convinced of the use case. It is up to the student to contact the Dean of Students as early as possible in the semester—not later than the second week—and to document the need. The Dean of Students will then advise each of the student’s professors of the accommodations that may be required. Please note that special arrangements for assignments need to be made with me well in advance of assignment due dates (Section 6.1.1). Timely requests shall not unreasonably be denied.

9 COURSE OUTLINE

Readings should be completed before the start of the class for which they are assigned. We will adhere to the schedule as closely as possible, though I reserve the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

§. Seminar Text	Secondary Reading	Date
1. Ecclesiastes 1	Christianson 17–86, 87–155	11 Sept.
2. Ecclesiastes 2	Christianson 156–163, Dell 9–36	18 Sept.
3. Ecclesiastes 3	Christianson 164–179, Dell 37–56	25 Sept.
4. Ecclesiastes 4	Christianson 180–183, Keymer on Johnson	2 Oct.
5. Ecclesiastes 5	Christianson 183–185, Johnson Ch 1–9	9 Oct.
6. Ecclesiastes 6	Christianson 184–187, Johnson Ch 10–19	16 Oct.
—. <i>No Class: Reading Day</i>		23 Oct.
7. Ecclesiastes 7	Christianson 188–201 + Case Studies	30 Oct.
8. Ecclesiastes 8	Christianson 201–205 + Case Studies	6 Nov.
9. Ecclesiastes 9	Christianson 206–215, Dell 59–67	13 Nov.
10. Ecclesiastes 10	Christianson 216–224, Dell 68–75	20 Nov.
11. Ecclesiastes 11	Christianson 225–246, Dell 76–83	27 Nov.
12. Ecclesiastes 12	Christianson 247–263, Dell 84–95	4 Dec.
📌 Final Exam (as schedule by the Registrar)		9–16 Dec.

Table 2: Schedule of Readings

See the Registrar’s website for a list of other [important dates](#). The last day to add a class, or to drop one without penalty, is ordinarily the end of the term’s second week.

10 COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Refer to the detailed bibliographies in the back of [\[Christianson\]](#) and [\[Dell\]](#).