

HB 3116
SUMMER TERM 2024
COURSE SYLLABUS



Hebrew Bible Ecclesiastes

| | | | |
|------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Professor | Daniel R. Driver, PhD | Course | Version 3.0 |
| Phone | 902-425-7051 | Meets | Daily in Session 3 |
| Email | daniel.driver@astheology.ns.ca | When | 9:15 AM–12:15 PM |
| Office | AST Library | Where | Classroom 3 |
| Hours | Mon–Thur, 1:00–2:00 PM | Website | danieldriver.com |

1 Course Description

Ecclesiastes will be studied in the context of the Writings and other wisdom literature, and in connection with the book's reception history. By the end of the course students should be able to: understand the basic shape of the Writings; have a critical appreciation of the idea of wisdom literature; characterize some ancient and modern commentaries on Ecclesiastes; develop their own readings, supporting them with detailed exegesis.

Prerequisites: BF 1001; RM 1000 or GTRS 6000.

2 Required Texts & Materials

The following text is required. Students should obtain their own copies.

- [Qohelet] Debra Band and Menachem Fisch. *Qohelet: Searching for a Life Worth Living*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023. ISBN 978-1481318730.

Students may also wish to access a good Study Bible. I recommend either the NRSV (ed. Michael Coogan) or NJPS (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler) editions published by Oxford University Press.

3 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings will be recommended throughout the course. Excerpts from this literature may be placed on reserve or made available electronically. The following titles are especially notable in relation to this course. They are not required.

- [BHQ] Megilloth. Vol. 18 of *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*. Edited by Adrian Schenker et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004.
- [Barbour] Barbour [Grillo], Jennie. *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- [Bolin] Bolin, Thomas M. *Ecclesiastes and the Riddle of Authorship*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- [Christianson] Christianson, Eric S. *Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- [Dell 2013] Dell, Katharine J. *Interpreting Ecclesiastes: Readers Old and New*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- [Dell 2023] Dell, Katharine J. *The Lord by Wisdom Founded the Earth: Creation and Covenant in Old Testament Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023.
- [Fox] Fox, Michael V. *Ecclesiastes: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*. The JPS Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.
- [Krüger] Krüger, Thomas. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. Translated by O. C. Dean Jr. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.

Also, the following basic works are also worth consulting and even owning. [RLGS] in particular contains sound advice on core skills like reading religious texts, writing essays and reviews, revising essays, making oral presentations, and learning languages.

- [RLGS] Northey, Margot, Bradford A. Anderson, and Joel N. Lohr. *Making Sense in Religious Studies: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2019. AST Library: Reference BL 41 N67 2019.
- [SBL2] Collins, Billie Jean, et al. *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. Designed to augment *Chicago Style* (the standard at AST), there is also a free *Student Supplement for SBL2*. AST Library: Reference PN 147 S26 2014.

4 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.

| §. Primary Text | Questions & Themes | Date |
|--|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Ecclesiastes 1 | What is <i>hevel</i> ? | 15 July |
| 2. Ecclesiastes 1–12 | Five questions from you | 16 July |
| 3. Ecclesiastes 2 | Who is King Qohelet? | 17 July |
| 4. Ecclesiastes 3–4 | What is time? | 18 July |
| 5. Ecclesiastes 5–6 | Christianson 183–185; Fox 33–38 | 19 July |
| –. No Class: Midterm Break | | 20–21 July |
| 6. Ecclesiastes 7–8 | Christianson 188–201; Fox 43–53 | 22 July |
| 7. Ecclesiastes 9–10 | Christianson 201–205; Fox 53–61 | 23 July |
| 8. Ecclesiastes 11 | Christianson 206–215; Fox 61–67 | 24 July |
| 9. Ecclesiastes 12 | Christianson 216–224; Fox 67–72 | 25 July |
| 10. Ecclesiastes 1–12 | Christianson 225–246; Fox 72–76 | 26 July |
| ☞ End of Term: Summer Administration hours begin | | 29 July |

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

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

5 Evaluation

The grade structure for HB 3116 has the following elements.

1. I will set **discussion prompts** each week. They are intended to help you engage with the assigned reading material, the lectures, and your classmates. Prompt responses may vary in length. In fact there is no required word count, though if it helps you may think of about 300 words as a rule of thumb. Questions will go up by the start of each class day (Fridays, 10 AM Atlantic Time). Answer the week's question before the following Wednesday. Then, before the next class, take some time to read the responses of your classmates. You are invited to post another 50 words or so as you interact with them. No post is required in the week of your creative presentation.
2. Students are to make a **creative presentation** related to one chapter of Ecclesiastes, due the week after the chapter is assigned. (A presentation on Ecclesiastes 1, for example, would be due at the start of Week 2.) Presentations may be audio or video, and they may take virtually any form you wish – a podcast, a homily, an interview, a dramatic piece, an explication of fine art (cf. [\[Christianson\]](#)), a show of original artwork, or some other creative thing you envision. It should last 15 to 20 minutes, and should feel like it deserves 20% of the final grade. The only strict requirement is that the work be sharable by URL. (Try SoundCloud or YouTube.) Sign up for a week early on and, when the time comes, post your title and link to the presentation forum.
3. A major **exegetical paper** will give students an opportunity to work directly and closely with the biblical text. The first task is to identify an appropriate text. Select a suitably short passage from Ecclesiastes. Focus on just a few verses that interest you: a full chapter is almost certainly too much material to handle well in a paper of this

length. Then, conduct an analysis and explication of your passage. Advance a thesis that relates to the text itself, and your explication of it. If you are unsure how to craft a thesis, see me and [RLGS, Chs 3, 5, 8, 11] for further guidance. Feel free to build on an idea first explored in one of your discussion prompts. The paper is due one week before the last class (on 29 March 2019). It should be 4,000 words long, plus or minus 10%. The total count includes footnotes but not the final bibliography, which should contain at least a dozen scholarly sources.

The breakdown for the semester’s total work is shown in Table 2.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Discussion Prompts | 40% |
| Creative Presentation | 20% |
| Exegetical Paper | 40% |

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

AST’s Academic Calendar provides guidelines and criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks. Note that graduate and undergraduate programs are currently assessed on a different scales at AST (see Table 3). For graduate students, a grade of C is deemed “Unsatisfactory,” whereas for undergraduate (BTh) students, a C is “Satisfactory” and the grade of D is possible for “Marginal” performance.

| Graduate Courses | | | Undergraduate Courses | |
|------------------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| A+ | 94–100 | Exceptional | 90–100 | Excellent |
| A | 87–93 | Outstanding | 85–89 | Excellent |
| A– | 80–86 | Excellent | 80–84 | Excellent |
| B+ | 77–79 | Good | 75–79 | Good |
| B | 73–76 | Acceptable | 70–74 | Good |
| B– | 70–72 | Marginally Acceptable | | |
| C | 60–69 | Unsatisfactory | 60–69 | Satisfactory |
| D | | | 50–59 | Marginal |
| F | 0–59 | Failure | 0–49 | Failure |
| FP | 0 | Failure due to Plagiarism | 0 | Failure due to Plagiarism |

Table 3: Summary Definitions of Grades at AST

6 Other Course Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances. Students must submit something before the deadline if they wish to receive credit. Unless I state otherwise, assignments are to be uploaded by 11:59 PM (Atlantic) on the date indicated.

Essay submissions must be typewritten and double-spaced. They should be free from error. In this course they should follow SBL Style (see [SBL2] in section 3, above). As a reminder, AST upholds an Inclusive Language Policy. Please use gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Our traditions have different norms for speech about God; you are of course free to follow and explore those traditions when referring to God.

Plagiarism is the failure to attribute (by means of footnotes when writing or aloud when speaking) any ideas, phrases, sentences, materials, syntheses, et cetera, that another author has composed and that you have borrowed for your own work. Plagiarism is unethical. Academic penalties for plagiarism at AST are serious, and may include failure of the course

or even suspension of further studies. Unintentional plagiarism is considered plagiarism. AST's Plagiarism Policy is found under that heading in the Academic Calendar.

Students should request permission to record a class or lecture. If permission is granted, or if recordings are provided (as in the case of an online or hybrid course), I stipulate that all recordings be for personal use only. They may not be shared or distributed.

If you have needs that require modifications to any aspect of this course, please consult with the instructor as soon as possible. Any documentation regarding disabilities that you wish to divulge to AST should be provided to the Registrar's Office, where it will be kept in a confidential file.

Finally, I encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in my classes. In classroom settings, realize that, as **cognitive psychologists have demonstrated**, "laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." Do your part to foster an environment for dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates. In online and hybrid settings, consider both the physical environment in which you choose to work and the virtual environment that you help create through your participation in various forums. Let your engagement in this course be marked by rigour and charity alike.

7 Bibliography

Articles and book chapters from the vast literature on Ecclesiastes in reception, and in the context of the Writings and wisdom literature (so-called), 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, with an awareness that a good, focussed bibliography is an essential component of the exegetical paper. For a place to start your research, refer to the detailed bibliographies in the back of [\[Christianson\]](#) and [\[Dell 2013\]](#), among others. See what you can find through the following databases, too:

- **Oxford Bibliographies Online: Biblical Studies** – s.v. "Ecclesiastes/Qohelet," by Timothy J. Sandoval and Marcus Hayes
- **Old Testament Abstracts**
- **ATLA Religion Database (Full Text)**
- **EBR: Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception Online** – s.v. "Ecclesiastes, Book of," by various authors (and try other lemmas)