



**TYNDALE**  
University College

**RLGS 3263: Text & Interpretation—The Psalms in the Christian Tradition**  
**Fall 2008, Room 2085, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:55–4:10**

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Class cancellations due to inclement weather or illness will be announced/posted here.

**Mailboxes:** Every student is responsible for information communicated through the student mailboxes. A mailbox directory is posted beside the mailboxes.

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

*Text & Interpretation:* Each course in this series examines the literary structure, narrative development, authorial purpose and interpretation of a book in the Hebrew Bible in its historical context, with an effort to discover the continuing relevance of that book in the development of Judeo-Christian theological understanding. Prerequisites: RLGS 1013 and RLGS 1023.

## **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The Psalms of the Old Testament have always played an important part in the life of the church, as they still do today. A major goal of this course, then, is to gain some historical perspective on how the Psalter has fed and informed Christian faith in various periods—at the time of the New Testament, the early and medieval churches, the Reformation, and finally the early and late modern periods. We will also briefly consider the parallel life of the Psalter in the synagogue. This goal accounts for the fact that there are two required commentaries for the course, one ancient (Augustine) and one modern (Broyles).

The course meets twice a week, which facilitates two sub-foci. Tuesdays, first, are dedicated to some hermeneutical factors involved in reading the Psalter with the historic church. Thursdays, second, allow us to put theory into practice by reading particular psalms.

## **III. REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. Saint Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms, Vol. 1 (1–32)* (intro. by M. Fiedrowicz; tr. by M. Boulding; Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2000). A new English translation of an influential Christian commentary, representative of the tradition.
2. Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007). A companion for Augustine's commentary and an argument for its renewed place in the life of the church today.

3. Craig Broyles, *Psalms* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). A recent modern commentary, representative for our purposes, and in one affordable volume.
4. Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). An abridgment of a work on the message of the Psalms by a popular biblical theologian.

#### IV. SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:

1. David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37/1 (1980): 27–38. [Get it here: <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/search/index-browse.htm>]
2. Brevard Childs, "The Psalms," pages 504–525 in *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).
3. James Kugel, "The Psalms of David," pages 458–473 in *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York/Toronto: Free Press, 2007).
4. Rolf Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms," pages 53–64 in P. Flint and P. Miller, eds., *The Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
5. Hermann Gunkel, "The Religion of the Psalms," pages 134–167 in *Water for a Thirsty Land* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). First published in English translation under the same title, pages 69–114 in *What Remains of the Old Testament* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928). German original 1922.
6. John O'Keefe, "'A Letter that Killeth': Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore and Theodoret on the Psalms," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8/1 (2000): 83–104.
7. William Holladay, "The Psalms for Jews" [Ch 9, pages 134–160], "The Psalms for Christians: West and East" [Ch 10, pages 161–190], and "The Psalms for Reformation Protestants" [Ch 11, pages 191–217] in *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
8. Jonathan Magonet, "Through Rabbinic Eyes: Psalm 23," pages 47–61 in *A Rabbi Reads the Psalms* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: SCM, 2004).
9. Hans-Joachim Kraus, "The Psalms in the New Testament," pages 177–203 in *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986 [German orig. 1979]).
10. Brevard Childs, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," pages 151–163 in *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).
11. Gerald Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," pages 72–82 in J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).
12. J. Clinton McCann, "Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter," pages 93–107 in J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).
13. Gerald Sheppard, "Theology and the Book of Psalms," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 143–155.
14. Erhard Gerstenberger, "Theologies in the Book of Psalms," pages 603–625 in P. Flint and P. Miller, eds., *The Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

#### V. COURSE EVALUATION:

1. Every Tuesday class will commence with a **reading quiz**. These are designed to ensure that you have read the assigned material carefully. Quizzes may not be made

- up in the case of absence, though in special cases they may be taken in advance. You will be responsible for the content they cover. If you miss a quiz, see a classmate.
2. Once a week, typically on Thursdays (though twice on Tuesdays, in weeks 4 and 7), you must produce and hand in a sheet of **notes summarizing your research** into a given psalm. These are to be typed, in a standard type-face, and should be between one half and one full page in length (500 words max). At the top they should also clearly state your name, the date, the psalm in question, and the commentator used. Note that your work will be circulated to all classmates after the psalm workshops.
  3. You are also asked to **creatively represent one psalm** in the class immediately following that psalm's workshop (e.g., Psalm 1 at the start of Week 2, or Psalm 8 at the start of week 4). You can and should use audios, visuals—whatever you can find or create yourself. Be inventive! The only conditions are (1) that you explain / demonstrate a *connection with the text* studied and (2) that your presentation last 5 minutes or less. AV options: CD, DVD, VCR, PowerPoint (save 2007 as 2003; test!).
  4. In the first half of the semester students will compose an **essay** on one of the psalms we have workshopped up to that point: 1, 2, 110, 8, 16, 19 or 22. You are to consult all the perspectives brought to bear on the psalm of your choice, and to incorporate as many as is expedient for your discussion. The aim is to dig deeper into one psalm, and this will be facilitated in part by the preliminary researches of your classmates (the notes under item 2 are for your consultation here). You will need to read more widely on your own, however; the seminar and the notes of your classmates form a starting point, but they will not be sufficient in themselves. A word of caution: anybody inclined to do Psalm 22 has a very short turn-around and will have to work well in advance of the seminar on Psalm 22. Due Fri, 24 Oct at 5:00 pm, no exceptions.
  5. In Week 10, at the conclusion of our walk through J. Byassee's book on Augustine, you are to write a **response paper / review** of *Praise Seeking Understanding*. What is the author's hermeneutical proposal? Now that you know some of Augustine's exegesis of the Psalms personally, do you agree? Whether or not you agree, what are some of the advantages to the church in recovering a traditional exegete like Augustine? What limitations are there? Your task is to offer either an informed critique, or a critical endorsement, of Byassee's work. Your paper is due at the start of class; it will set the stage for our final discussion of the merits of the text.
  6. The **final exam** will be held during exam week, Wednesday 10 December – Wednesday 17 December (including Sat.), as scheduled by the Registrar. It will feature an essay on your choice one psalm after those covered in the essay (item 4), namely, Psalms 23, 46, 49, 82, 88, 90 or 118. (The same warning applies to Psalm 118 as to 22: you will have considerably less time to read around if it is your choice.)
  7. The semester's work will be weighted as follows:
 

Reading Quizzes	20%
Research Note Sheets	20%
Psalm Representation	10%
Essay (Ps 1–22)	20%
Byassee Response Paper	10%
Final Exam (Ps 23–118)	20%

Students are responsible to keep a backup print copy of all assignments (note esp. items 2–5).

**On writing:** Good writing, like good reading, is a skill which must be honed in the practice. It takes work. It also involves revision: the *reworking* of first and second attempts. Alan Jacobs underscores the difference between *editing*—tidying up around the house—and *revising*—the remodeling of your house. There are a number of excellent resources available to help you with this task, and I strongly urge you to use them. One is Tyndale’s Writing Centre. Others are freely available online. Jacobs, for instance, lists a number of questions to which you should have answers: Do you have a thesis? What is it? Do your sub-theses support it? Do you explain how? Are your paragraphs well-organized? Are they healthy (supported, well-illustrated) and not anemic? Is your writing clear and vivid?

For more, please see Prof. Jacobs’ page, here: [http://ajjay.jottit.com/on\\_revising](http://ajjay.jottit.com/on_revising)

And also: <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/bedfordresearcher/links/writingprocess.asp#revising>

And finally: <http://www.tyndale.ca/universitycollege/writingcentre>

## VI. COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>
Week 1	9/9 Introductions and Rationale for the Course	11/9 Psalm 1
Week 2	16/9 Brueggemann (all); Steinmetz	18/9 Psalms 2 & 110
Week 3	23/9 Childs, IOTS; Kugel; Rendtorff	25/9 Psalm 8
Week 4	30/9 *Psalm 16*	2/10 No Class (DRD away)
Week 5	7/10 Byassee, Intro and Ch 1; Gunkel	9/10 Psalm 19
Week 6	14/10 Byassee, Ch 2; O’Keefe	16/10 Psalm 22
Week 7	21/10 Byassee, Ch 3; *Psalm 23*; <b>Essay Due</b> (Fri)	23/10 No Class (reading days)
Week 8	28/10 Byassee, Ch 4; Magonet; Holladay, Ch 9	30/10 Psalm 46
Week 9	4/11 Byassee, Ch 5; Holladay, Chs 10–11	6/11 Psalm 49
Week 10	11/11 Byassee, Conclusion; <b>Response Paper Due</b>	13/11 Psalm 82
Week 11	18/11 Kraus; Childs, Ps 8	20/11 Psalm 88
Week 12	25/11 Wilson; McCann	27/11 Psalm 90
Week 13	2/12 Sheppard; Gerstenberger	4/12 Psalm 118
Week 14	8–9/12 <b>READING DAYS:</b> The final exam will be held during exam week, Wed 10 Dec–Wed 17 Dec (including Sat.), as scheduled by the Registrar. The exam will include an <b>essay</b> , on analogy with the essay due in Week 7, on a psalm of your choice from Psalm 23–Psalm 118.	

*\*Starred psalms on Tuesdays will be discussed seminar style, as on Thursdays. Please prepare accordingly! A sheet of notes based on your research is also due.\**

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Each week, students should focus on a commentator from the list below (or elsewhere, by arrangement) and give a short (5 minutes max.) account of his exegesis of the Psalm in question. Present on the basis of your **study notes**—item 2 under “Course Evaluation.” Also be sure to work with three different commentators over the semester (about three weeks each), preferably in three different major periods. (For those with the language skills, registering notes on Hebrew and Greek texts is also an option; cf. the Targums, too.) The aim is to gain as much insight into the message of the Psalm by close attention to text, including translations, and commentary.

### Versions

1. Kohlenberger, John R., ed, *The Comparative Psalter: Hebrew-Greek-English* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) [Ref BS 1419.K645]. Useful for our purposes, but not to be mistaken as a critical edition or a full account (esp. LXX editions). This should be studied each week as the focal point of our discussions. Copies provided. **Required.**
2. The Septuagint (LXX) is available in two modern editions: (1) as part of the Rahlfs edition [Ref BS 741.R3 2006], the Psalms volume of which was edited by Rahlfs in 1931, with a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1967 (a further revision is planned but is some way from completion; and (2) the Göttingen critical edition. A recent English translation based on Rahlfs is available at: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/24-psalms-nets.pdf>
3. Vulgate/Jerome: *Biblia Sacra Latina ex Biblia Sacra Vulgat* [Ref BS 75 1800].
4. Targum: *The Aramaic Bible, Vol. 16: The Targum of the Psalms* (trans. David M. Stec; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2004) [Ref BS 709 .2 .A72 v.16 2004]. There is also an online translation by Edward Cook: [http://targum.info/?page\\_id=11](http://targum.info/?page_id=11)

### Commentaries

#### A. Early Church / Synagogue

1. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. R.C. Hill; 2 vols.; Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998).
2. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, is also translated in the ACW (=Ancient Christian Writers) series, and is available online in an older translation at: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF1-08/>. Latin original: CSEL 93. **Required.**
3. Diodore of Tarsus, *Commentary on Psalms 1-51* (trans. R.C. Hill; Atlanta: SBL, 2005) [electronic resource: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/tyndale/Doc?id=10131575>].
4. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. R.C. Hill; 2 vols; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000-2001) [1 day library reserve, BS 1430.T54].
5. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1-81* (trans. R.C. Hill; Atlanta: SBL, 2006) [photocopy on 1 day reserve].
6. Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* (trans. P.G. Walsh; New York: Paulist Press, 1990-1991) [1 day reserve, BR 60.A3 v.51-53 1990].
7. *Midrash Tehillim / Midrash on the Psalms, translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic* (trans. William G. Braude; 2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) [1 day reserve, BM 517.T52 E5 1959].

#### B. Medieval

8. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Psalms* [a parallel ET for Pss 1-54 (work in progress) is online: <http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP> ; cf. French translation link].  
Secondary lit: Thomas Ryan, *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000) [BX 2350.65.R93 2000].

9. *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (trans. M.I. Gruber; Leiden: Brill, 2004) [photocopy on 1 day reserve].

Secondary lit: Hermann Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963).

#### C. Reformation

10. Luther, *Werke*, 35 = Luther's Works, 10-14 [1 day reserve, BR 330 .E5P4 1955].

Cf. Luther, *Commentary on the Psalms called Psalms of Degrees* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1819) [BS 1445 .S6 L8 1819].

See also: J.S. Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament interpretation from Augustine to the young Luther* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1969) [1 week reserve, BR 333.5.B5 P7 1969].

11. Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms* [online at <http://www.ccel.org/> or <http://www.thirdmill.org/books/calvin.asp> or esp. Ref BS 485.C245 1979 vols. 4-6].

See also: Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms* (ET from Dutch; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) [BS 1430.53.S45 2007].

#### D. Early Modern / Critical

12. E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. P. Fairbairn and J. Thomson; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1851-1858) [BS 1430 .H46; Ref BS 1430 .H46].

13. Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890), *Biblical commentary on the Psalms* (trans. Franics Bolton; 3 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) [BS 1430 .D44 1952 (multiple copies); Ref. BS 491 .K414 vols. 3-4].

14. C. H. Spurgeon, *The treasury of David: an expository and devotional commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983) [BS 1430 .S68 T7 1983] and (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 1984) [Ref BS 1430 .S68 T7 1984].

15. C. A. Briggs, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Psalms* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906-1907) [BS 1430 .B7; Ref BS 491 .I6 vols.19a-19b].

16. Hermann Gunkel, [will put my copy on reserve; any German readers?].

See also *The Psalms: a form-critical introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) [2 copies in stacks; BS 1430 .2 .G7813 1967].

#### E. Modern

17. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms: A Continental Commentary* (trans. H.C. Oswald; 2 vols; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988-1993) [1 day reserve, BS 1430 .3 .K725].

18. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) [BS 1430.3.A63 1972; Ref BS 491.2.N48 v19 1981].

19. M. J. Dahood, *Psalms I, II, and III* (3 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956-1970) [Ref BS 491 .2 .A52 v.19a 1965; ... v.19b 1968; ... v.19c 1970]. Stacks also.

20. Word Commentary Series: P. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983) [Ref BS 491 .2 .W67 v.19 1983]; M. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990) [Ref BS 491 .2 .W67 v.20 1990]; L. Allen, *Psalms 101-50, revised* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002) [Ref BS 491 .2 .W67 v.21 2002]. Stacks also.



21. F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) [Ref BS 491 .2 .H47 v.19b 2005].
22. Craig Broyles, *Psalms* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). **Required.**
23. \*Want to recommend somebody else?\* You may make a suggestion of your own here, but it will require my prior approval. The commentary must be sufficiently academic, or have significant theological interest, to pass muster.

Other Secondary Literature

- H. Attridge and M. Fassler, eds., *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- Willaim Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) [BS 1430 .3 .H65 1993].
- Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Psalms 51-150* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007) [Ref BS 491 .2 .A523 v.8 2007].
- Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). This book provides an expanded bibliography online, including several web links. You might consider looking here to get ideas for your **creative psalm representation**:  
<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/9780631218555.pdf> (link on Blackwell)
- And for a general bibliography associated with the new Blackwell series, surf to:  
<http://www.bbibcomm.net/> (see esp. the Bibliography and Resources pages)