

3HEBR ST 513
BIBLICAL TEXTS: POETRY

UW-Madison
Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies
Fall 2012

Jeremy M. Hutton
jmhutton@wisc.edu
Office: 1344 Van Hise Hall
Office Hours: To be determined; usually by appointment
Office Phone: (608) 262-9785
Course e-mail list: hebrst513-1-f12@lists.wisc.edu

Place and Time:

Class meeting time: T 8:50-9:40; Th 8:50-10:45
Class meeting place: Van Hise 1351
Final exam date: Dec. 18, 2012, 12:25-2:25 pm

Course Description:

This course is an in-depth study of the Book of Psalms in Hebrew, perhaps best described as the hymnal of Second Temple Israel. It will provide students with a forum for detailed, critical engagement with the text and historical interpretation(s) of the Psalms, the largest single body of poetry in the Hebrew Bible. Modern scholarship has wrestled with appropriate methodologies for understanding the Psalms, with some (but not total) success. Students will analyze the text (alongside its ancient translations) from a variety of methodological perspectives, so that they might broaden their own understanding of appropriate ways to enter into inscrutable texts: they will engage theories of Hebrew poetry in order to come to grips with the Psalms' literary features; they will approach the text with philological, linguistic, and text-critical tools, in order to deal with the corpus's formation and the early history of its interpretation; and finally, they will learn appropriate methodologies for assessing the forms of religious practice and belief attested by the Psalms, in order to understand the social and historical background(s) in which the Psalms were composed, read, and interpreted in antiquity.

Catalogue Description:

Philological and linguistic study of the Book of Psalms in Hebrew, with readings in the ancient translations. Special attention will be given to the book's bearing on our understanding of ancient Israelite religion(s).

Student Achievement Goals:

Students will:

1. demonstrate competence in engaging Classical Hebrew poetry, with an a view towards the literary appreciation of the text.
2. (a) learn how to use and (b) gain experience with the multitude of available reference grammars, dictionaries, commentaries, elements of secondary literature, and electronic resources pertinent to the study of Classical Hebrew poetry, with particular emphasis on the Psalms.
3. apply methodologies for understanding the religious practices and sentiments related by the corpus.

Course Rationale:

The ability to deal critically with the facets of biblical study handled in this course—literary appreciation of Hebrew poetics and historical study of the religions of ancient Israel—is a necessary skill in the field.

Course Requirements:

Requirements differ for graduate students and undergraduate students. Both groups will be expected to fulfill the requirements listed here, but undergraduate students will not be expected to work in a second ancient language (i.e., they will not be expected to work in Greek at all, unless they choose to do so), and the standards for their satisfactory completion of the readings and assignments will be set at a commensurately lower level.

1. 15% — Class attendance and participation, having prepared diligently to translate the biblical readings for the day, analyzing all forms and syntactic constructions. Unexcused absences will be deducted from the final grade.
2. 15% — Once during the semester, students will lead a Thursday session of the class (ca. 45 minutes thereof) in a detailed reading a Psalm (for which the rest of the class has prepared the LXX). The Student will prepare text and notes for the portion under investigation (graduate students will be expected to use observations from LXX + one other ancient version [Targ., Vulg., Pesh., etc.]). Further details will be distributed at the beginning of the class.
3. 30% — Final research paper, based on the student’s presentation (req. 2 here).
4. 20% — Midterm exam (1 hr.)
5. 20% — Final translation exam (cumulative, 1 hr.)

Texts:

Required:

- Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (London: T&T Clark, 2005 impression). [CHP]
- Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Rev. ed., with a foreword by David Noel Freedman; Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Dearborn, Mich.: Dove Booksellers, 2008). [DBP]
- access to: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia [BHS]* (ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984).
- access to: Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906; repr.,

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson **OR** rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1952 [**BOTH WORK**]).

- coursepack available for photocopying in the mailroom and access to Learn@UW, where some resources will be posted (including the recommended sources below).
- access to the Menahem Mansoor graduate study room (#1334 Van Hise), where a few other resources are held.

Recommended:

- James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). [*IBP*]
- Francesca Stravakopoulou and John Barton, eds., *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 61–81.

A Note on Grading in the Course:

The default grading system of this course is for a letter grade. The Professor **will adhere stringently to the following definition of grades:**

A	Excellent, highly innovative work demonstrating outstanding command of the material, and very few doubts as to preparation for further, independent* training in the area.
AB	High quality work, demonstrating credible innovation, with above-average grasp of the material and foreseeable capabilities to work independently in the field.
B	Good, dutiful, and solid work, but with moderate innovation and slightly-above-average grasp of the material; a few doubts as to the student's preparation to work independently in the field in future study, but some further study will enable the student to do so.
BC	[This one strikes the professor as a relatively unnecessary grade, and will not be used except in extraordinary circumstances. If the student has not achieved the threshold of a B, see the next grade down...]
C	Satisfactory, but on weak footing; a few concerns arise concerning the student's ability to move forward competently, but not enough to prevent doing so; ostensibly a recommendation against pursuing advanced study in the area without significant further study.
D	Poor, barely adequate work; a recommendation not to continue in advanced study in the area.

* "Independent" here should not be construed as an automatic invitation to ask the Professor for an independent study opportunity. Rather, an A or AB is intended to signal that the student is fully prepared to begin to write those components of a dissertation in which this material will feature heavily. Expectations of further study, of course, apply.

F Failure to attain a sufficient level of achievement in the coursework to convince the professor that the student is ready for or capable of further study in the subject.

Please notice that **B=good** and **C=satisfactory** in this schema. The professor wishes to draw particular attention to this fact for a number of reasons; students are invited to consult with the professor privately in order to decide whether the graded option is best for them.

NOTA BENE: The Professor does not conduct business concerning special exemptions/assignments, etc. over e-mail, via Twitter, on Facebook, via text message, over the phone, or even via carrier pigeon (as impressive as that feat might be). In order to make any requests, students must speak with the professor face-to-face, either before or after class, or at a pre-arranged time (it is completely permissible to arrange the meeting through one of the media listed above).

Course Schedule:

T Sept 4:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 1–7
- *CHP*, 1–3 (ch. 1; Introduction)
- Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (with a foreword by James L. Crenshaw; Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Dearborn, Mich.: Dove Booksellers, 2004), 1–41.

Th Sept 6:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 8–15 (LXX Ps 8:1-10)
- *CHP*, 4–10 (ch. 2; Comparative Poetry)
- *IBP*, 1–27

T Sept 11:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 16–18
- *CHP*, 11–65 (ch. 3; Methodology)

Th Sept 13:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 19–24 (LXX Ps 22:1-6)
- *IBP*, 28–58

T Sept 18 (Rosh ha-Shanah):

Required Readings:

- Psalms 25–30
- *CHP*, 66–86 (ch. 4; Hebrew Poetry)
- Aloysius Fitzgerald, “A Note on Psalm 29,” *BASOR* 215 (1974): 61–63.
- Herbert Niehr, “‘Israelite’ Religion and ‘Canaanite’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravakopoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 23–36.

Th Sept 20:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 31–35 (LXX Ps 34:1-10)
- *IBP*, 59–95

T Sept 25:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 36–41
- *CHP*, 87–113 (ch. 5; Meter)

Th Sept 27:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 42–47 (LXX Ps 44:1-9)
- *IBP*, 171–203

T Oct 2:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 48–52
- *CHP*, 114–159 (ch. 6; Parallelism)

Th Oct 4:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 53–58 (LXX Ps 53:1-9)
- *DBP*, 1–30

T Oct 9:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 59–65
- *DBP*, 31–63

Th Oct 11:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 66–69 (Ps LXX 67:15-23)
- *DBP*, 64–102

T Oct 16:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 70–73
- *CHP*, 160–200 (ch. 7; Stanza and Strophe)

Th Oct 18:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 74–78 (Ps LXX 73:12-19)

T Oct 23:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 79–83
- *DBP*, 103–126

Th Oct 25:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 84–88 (No LXX today)
- *DBP*, 127–141

T Oct 30:

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Th Nov 1:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 89–92 (LXX 88:19-29)
- Nicholas Wyatt, “Royal Religion in Ancient Judah,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravropoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 61–81.

T Nov 6:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 93–101
- *CHP*, 201–221 (ch. 8; Verse-patterns)
- Francesca Stravropoulou, “‘Popular’ Religion and ‘Official’ Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravropoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 37–60.

Th Nov 8:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 102–105 (LXX Ps 103:1-9)
- “Hymn to the Aten,” in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature or ANET*.

T Nov 13:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 106–107
- *CHP*, 222–250 (ch. 9; Sound Play)

Th Nov 15:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 108–114 (LXX Ps 113:1-8)
- Jeremy M. Hutton, “Southern, Northern and Transjordanian Perspectives,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravropoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 149–174.

T Nov. 20 — SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE (NO CLASS)

Th Nov. 22 — THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)

T Nov 27:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 115–118

- *CHP*, 251–272 (ch. 10; Imagery)

Th Nov 29:

Required Readings:

- Psalm 119 (No LXX today)
- Joel LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (OBO 242; Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 1–25.

T Dec 4:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 120–132
- *CHP*, 273–348 (ch. 11; Poetic Devices)

Th Dec 6:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 133–139 (LXX Ps 136:1-9)
- F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “Psalm 133: A (Close) Reading,” *JHS* 8 (2008): art. 20.

T Dec 11:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 140–145
- *CHP*, 349–359 (ch. 12; Secondary Techniques)
- Rainer Albertz, “Personal Piety,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravakopoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 135–148.

Th Dec 13:

Required Readings:

- Psalms 146–150 (LXX Ps 150:1-6)
- Carol Meyers, “Household Religion,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. Francesca Stravakopoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 118–134.