
Poets

Lectures by
Richard Belcher, Ph.D.

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Virtual Campus

RTS Distance Education

The Virtual Campus of Reformed Theological Seminary offers students the convenience of home study with the quality of on-campus instruction. This course is based on classroom lectures using the GUIDE approach to learning.

Each lesson contains the following:

Getting Started

To prepare adequately for each lesson, a reading assignment and audio lecture are listed.

Understanding

To maximize student learning, the purposes and objectives for the lesson are given.

Investigating

To integrate readings, lectures, and outline, students are encouraged to notate information in a manner that will prove beneficial for study and examination. The study guide allows space for note-taking to expand the outline.

Developing

To further develop the concepts presented, suggested readings and applications are offered.

Evaluating

To help students summarize and synthesize the material covered, study questions are provided.

COURSE SYLLABUS
Poets 00T512 2 hours
Dr. Richard Belcher
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

Professor

Dr. Richard “Dick” Belcher is the Professor of Old Testament. He is an ordained minister in the PCA and pastored an urban nondenominational church in Rochester, NY for ten years before pursuing the PhD. This pastoral experience in an unusual and challenging setting gives him great insight into the practical, modern issues that will be faced by future pastors studying with him at RTS. He graduated from Covenant College and received his MDiv. from Covenant Seminary. He also received an S.T.M. from Concordia Theological Seminary and his Ph.D. is from Westminster Theological Seminary.

Course Description

This course examines the literary structure, themes, and history of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, with an emphasis on understanding these texts in their own historical and literary context, how they fit into redemptive history, and what they mean for God’s people today.

Required Textbooks

- Desmond Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life after Death,” *Themelios* 11 (1986): 41-46. - supplied
- Richard P. Belcher, Jr., *The Messiah and the Psalms* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2006)
- Belcher, Chapter 5 of *Divine Retribution in Ecclesiastes: An Analysis of the Deed-Consequence Relationship with Implications for the Interpretation of the Book* (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000). - supplied
- Belcher, articles for DOTWPW (Thanksgiving, Psalms of and Suffering). - supplied
- John N. Day, *Crying For Justice* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), the whole book.
- Ray Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *Introduction to the OT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), hereinafter IOT, chapters 15-19.
- Ernest C. Lucas, *The Psalms and Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003)
- D. Brant Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds., *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), chaps. 10, 12, 13.
- John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), chaps 6-7.

All required books are available through the RTS Online Bookstore at <www.rts.edu/bookstore>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
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Online Student Handbook

The Online Student Handbook has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the online Virtual campus experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual. You will find it located at the RTS/Virtual website (<http://virtual.rts.edu>) under the Student Services tab.

Requirements in Brief

- Follow the Study Guide provided.
- Listen to all Recorded Lectures.
- Complete all Readings.
- Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and Professor)
- Take the Mid Term Exam
- Take the Final Exam.
- Write a Course Paper
- Write a Review of the Alexander Article
- Submit Mentor Report/Course Application Paper

Required Reading (5%)

In addition to the textbooks for the course, the biblical books (Lamentations, Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) and all assigned reading must be read.

Note: there is more reading for the Psalm lectures than the other lectures, which means you may want to spread some of the psalm reading out over several more weeks (Due Date: Course Ending Date).

Forum Discussions (10%)

The student is to participate in forum discussions in the online tutorial. 10% total (5% Student to Student, 5% Student to Professor, with minimum of 5 posts each, including the Introduction and 4 Topical Question responses.

Examinations (Midterm 25%, Final 25%)

There are two examinations for this course. No helps are allowed, including Bibles. The midterm examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lessons 1-11. The final examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lessons 12-20. Both exams will include identification questions, which consist of terms, names, or concepts that have been discussed in class. You should be able to answer the identifications in two or three fact-filled sentences. There are also short essay questions and long essay questions, which are based on the questions at the end of the lectures (called Evaluating). The student is given a choice in the identification questions and the essay questions. All exams are to be requested online via the links in the Virtual Classroom during week 4 for the Midterm and week 8 for the Final. All exams are proctored. Upon completion, please upload your exam in the Virtual Classroom.

Article Review (5%)

The review or summary of the Alexander article should focus on the different views of Sheol, with a clear statement of Alexander's views. This should be accomplished in about one page, typed, single spaced.

Research Paper (25%)

A research paper is required. It should focus on a particular passage from one of the wisdom books. See the handout dealing with the guidelines for the paper (Due Date: Course Ending Date).

Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%)

Each MA Distance student is required to have his mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student's grade. For students who are not registered in the MA program, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. (Due Date: Course Ending Date).

Assignments

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall in the Virtual Classroom, using the upload links provided. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time. No late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information

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COURSE OUTLINE
Poets 00T512 2 hours
00T510 2 hours
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Lesson One

The Basics of Hebrew Poetry

Lesson Two

Lamentations

Lesson Three

A Brief History of Psalm Interpretation

Lesson Four

Psalm Titles: The Prayerbook and Hymnbook of Israel

Lesson Five

The Organization of the Psalms

Lesson Six

Messianic Psalms and Genre

Lesson Seven

Lament: The Cry of the Soul to God

Lesson Eight

The Imprecatory Psalms

Lesson Nine

Wisdom Literature: A Comparative Approach

Lesson Ten

Introduction to the Song of Songs

Lesson Eleven

An Overview of the Song of Songs

Lesson Twelve

Proverbs and the Problem of Context

Lesson Thirteen

Wisdom: The Basis for a Successful Life

Lesson Fourteen

Highlights of Wisdom

Lesson Fifteen

Job: Patience or Perseverance?

Lesson Sixteen

Nobody Knows the Trouble I See

Lesson Seventeen

Where is Wisdom to be Found?

Lesson Eighteen

Introductory Questions to Ecclesiastes: Who Knows?

Lesson Nineteen

Approaches to Ecclesiastes: Is Everything Meaningless?

Lesson Twenty

Interpreting Ecclesiastes: A Wearisome Task

GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCH PAPER

Poets

00T510 2 hours

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The paper can be centered on one passage or it can look at a major theme in one of the books studied in this course. If the paper focuses on a theme in a book, it is important to see how that theme relates to the rest of the canon (OT and NT). If the paper focuses on one passage, the following questions should be kept in mind:

- a) How does the passage fit into the rest of the book?
- b) What is the major theme of the passage?
- c) How is the theme developed (an outline of the passage may be helpful here)?
- d) Are there any significant literary, historical, or theological questions?
- e) Are there any major problems in the passage?
- f) Is the passage using prior revelation in any way?
- g) What is the message of the passage to the original reading audience?
- h) Is the passage used in a significant way in later biblical history (either OT or NT)?
- i) What is the message of the passage for today?

The paper could revolve around a particular literary, historical, or theological issue in the passage or a particular problem encountered in the text. The paper should reflect a developed argument centered around a theme or an issue in the passage.

The following are criteria that will be used to evaluate the paper:

- a) Cogency of argument - how well does the argument hang together, and how well are pertinent and fundamental points brought out?
- b) Discussions of historical context, genre, and redemptive history (where these are appropriate)
- c) The use of sources: a variety of commentaries should be examined (both older and modern commentaries should be examined), and at least one journal article must be cited.
- d) The paper should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced with one inch margins on all sides, except the left margin should have a 1 1/4 inch margin.

Do not leave extra space between paragraphs!

e) Please number the pages.

f) You are expected to use as much Hebrew as you are able.

g) Use the guidelines in the current edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian.

Sample first references for books, journal articles, and an article in a book:

1John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988) 25-28.

2Michael Fox, "Aging and Death in Qohelet 12," *JSOT* 42 (1988) 55-57.

3James L. Crenshaw, "The Shadow of Death in Qoheleth," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (ed. J. G. Gammie; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) 205-206.

4P. J. S. Els, "bha ('hb)," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem VanGemeren; 5 vols; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) I:277-99.

Second shortened footnote references:

4Hartley, *Job*, 29-30.

5Fox, "Aging and Death," 60.

6Crenshaw, "The Shadow of Death," 210.

7Els, "bha ('hb)," 288.