

**Five Outsiders: Exegesis of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes,  
Song of Songs, and Lamentations**  
Course Syllabus, OT 6309f  
Spring 2019

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**Class Meeting Time:** Monday 4:00-6:40 PM.

**Office Hours:** Mon. 11:00-12:00 AM, Tues. 10:00–12:00 AM; Wed., Thurs.,  
1:00–3:00 PM.

**Course Goals:**

- 1) Students will identify and engage in informed discussion of major issues in the interpretation of the five festival scrolls, or *Megillôt*.
- 2) All students will prepare presentations on a passage from one of the five scrolls, reflecting awareness of literary and historical issues which arise from these books, and conduct research for these presentations using appropriate commentaries and helps.

**Course Objectives:**

- 1) The student will acquire an in-depth knowledge of the five scrolls in their literary, historical, and theological setting.
- 2) The student will acquire knowledge of and be able to discuss and debate the methods and arguments of the commentators listed in “required texts” below.
- 3) The student will learn how to write an exegesis paper on a passage from one of the five scrolls, using appropriate library and technological resources.
- 4) The student will learn how to go from “text to sermon” in practical, ministerial application of the research done on the exegesis paper.

**Means of Assessment:**

Regular class attendance and participation is required. All students should come prepared to discuss the particular section of the five scrolls assigned for the day. This involves reading the Bible passage for the day, relevant sections in the commentaries, and doing your own studies of important words and contexts.

2–3 hour final exam:

25%

*1 1/2 hour mid-term exam.*

25%

One 7 page, typed exegesis paper on one passage found in the five scrolls, plus a brief oral presentation of a rough draft of the exegesis paper.

25%

One 5 page, typed sermon or Bible study based on this exegesis paper.

25%

### **Class Discussions:**

Three of the required texts are commentaries. There is a very important reason for this. We will be involved in detailed exegesis of the text of the five scrolls. These volumes will help you with the preparation of study notes for class preparation, as well as with your exegesis papers. You should come prepared to discuss these passages from week to week as they are assigned.

### **Preparation of Papers:**

#### *Exegesis Paper:*

We will be reading and doing exegesis of the text of each of the five scrolls. The course will entail “hands on” experience with exegesis of the English text. Those who have had Hebrew or Greek, of course, are encouraged to use those abilities and tools in their exegesis.

Exegesis papers must use the proper research style as laid out in K. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (latest edition). Exegesis papers should pay careful attention to the literary context (extended and immediate), use of important terminology, and historical setting. Most importantly, students are expected to use Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Whitaker’s NRSV Concordance, and/or a Hebrew concordance in order to determine the author’s use of words and phrases. For historical background, you will find John Bright *A History of Israel* (4th edition) particularly helpful. Commentaries and other resources will

be suggested throughout the semester (see select bibliography). While I am most interested in your own exegesis of the texts, you should be aware of and make use of important commentaries, dictionaries, word books, introductions, etc. Your final exegesis paper must have at least two sources (articles, books, commentaries, etc.) which you found via the ATLA database in the library.

Also, see the written guide for the preparation of exegesis papers, which you should follow in the preparation of your exegesis paper.

*Sermon or Bible Study Series:*

The sermon will be based upon the results of your exegesis paper. The sermon or Bible study itself is not an exegesis, but uses the results of exegesis to make practical application for the life of the church. A bibliography and aids for writing a sermon from the Old Testament will be provided.

***Required Texts:***

All students are encouraged to make use of all relevant scholarly helps in their pursuit of the understanding of the text of Holy Scripture. The following are intended to orient you and to be “conversation partners” for our class discussions, but you will wish to consult other books and articles, particularly for your exegesis paper.

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible of the New Revised Standard Version*, or another good study Bible.

Wesley J. Fuerst. *The Books of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Lamentations: The Five Scrolls*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary. London: Cambridge University, 1975.

Roland Murphy. *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*. Forms of Old Testament Literature, vol. 13. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Irene Nowell. *Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*. New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013.

F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. *Lamentations*. Interpretation Commentary. Louisville: W/JKP, 2002.

***Recommended Texts:***

Brown, William. *Ecclesiastes*. Interpretation Commentary. Louisville: W/JKP, 2000.

Jenson, Robert W. *Song of Songs*. Interpretation Commentary. Louisville: W/JKP, 2005.

Levenson, Jon D. *Esther: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: W/JKP, 1997.

Nielsen, Kirsten. *Ruth: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville, W/JKP, 1997.

***Select Bibliography on the Five Scrolls:*** see attached sheet.

***Software, Database, and Internet Resources:***

There are several application software and database resources which Austin Graduate School of Theology provides which are especially helpful for the graduate student. All students in OT 6309 are expected to become familiar with these resources and utilize them especially in the research and preparation of papers:

*Accordance Bible Search software:* Computer concordance, Bible, and Bible-related database and search engine. Available on library computers, or you may elect to use your own Bible search software, such as *Bible Works*, *Logos*, or *Olive Tree Software Bible Study App*.

*Online Periodicals:* Through EBSCO, Austin Graduate School has access to over 200 full-text journals on the web. See the librarian for access.

*ATLA Database:* The American Theological Library Association maintains a massive bibliographic database of theological journals and books. You must use this resource for identifying important books and articles for writing the exegesis paper (see above). See the librarian for training and access to this database.

***Schedule of lectures and oral presentations of exegesis papers:***

*Week 1, Jan. 28:* Introduction to the *Megillôt*. Reading the book of Ruth.

*Week 2, Feb. 4:* Ruth chapters 1–2.

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Fuerst. pp. 1–20.

Murphy, pp. 1–12, 83–90.

Nowell, pp. 7–8, 31–41.

*Recommended:* Nielsen, pp. 1–65.

*Week 3, Feb. 11:* Ruth chapters 3–4.

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Fuerst. pp. 20–31.

Murphy, pp. 91–97.

Nowell, pp. 41–47.

*Recommended:* Nielsen, pp. 66–100.

*Week 4, Feb. 18:* Esther chapters 1–3.

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Fuerst. pp. 32–62.

Murphy, pp. 151–162.

Nowell, pp. 105–117.

*Recommended:* Levenson, pp. 1–77.

*Week 5, Feb. 25:* Esther chapters 4–6.

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Fuerst. pp. 62–73.

Murphy, pp. 162–165.

Nowell, pp. 117–124.

*Recommended:* Levenson, pp. 77–99.

*Week 6, March 4:* Esther chapters 7–10.

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Fuerst. pp. 73–90.

Murphy, pp. 165–170.

Nowell, pp. 124–138.

*Recommended:* Levenson, pp. 99–136.

*Week 7, March 11:* Ecclesiastes chapters 1–3.

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Fuerst, pp. 91–117.  
Murphy, pp. 125–136.  
Nowell, pp. 71–82.

*Recommended:* Brown, pp. 1–47.

*Week 8, March 18:* Ecclesiastes chapters 4–6.

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Fuerst, pp. 118–128.  
Murphy, pp. 136–139.  
Nowell, pp. 82–88.

*Recommended:* Brown, pp. 48–71.

*Week 9, March 25:* Mid-term exam

*Week 10, April 1:* Ecclesiastes chapters 7–9.

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Fuerst, pp. 128–135.  
Murphy, pp. 139–146.  
Nowell, pp. 88–95.

*Recommended:* Brown, pp. 71–97.

*Week 11, April 8:* Ecclesiastes chapters 10–12.

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Fuerst, pp. 136–158.  
Murphy, pp. 146–149.  
Nowell, pp. 96–102.

*Recommended:* Brown, pp. 97–137.

*Week 12, April 15:* Song chapters 1–4.

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Fuerst, pp. 159–184.  
Murphy, pp. 97–116.  
Nowell, pp. 9–21.

*Recommended:* Jenson, pp. 1–53.

*Week 13, April 22:* Song chapters 5–8.

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Fuerst, pp. 184–200.  
Murphy, pp. 116–124.  
Nowell, pp. 21–30.

*Recommended:* Jenson, pp. 53–103.

*Week 14, April 29:* Lamentations chapters 1–3.

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Fuerst, pp. 201–245.  
Dobbs-Allsopp, pp. 1–104.  
Nowell, pp. 48–62.

*Week 16, May 6:* Lamentations chapters 4–5.  
*(Sermons and exegesis papers due)*

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Fuerst, pp. 245–262.  
Dobbs-Allsopp, pp. 105–154.  
Nowell, pp. 62–70.

*Week 17, May 13: Final Exam.*

*All final exegesis papers and sermons will be due no later than the last day of class, prior to finals week.*