

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A study of the major theological concepts of the Old Testament writings from the perspective of the ancient settings and with the use of biblical theological language. The close relationship between the Old and New Testaments also is stressed.

II. COURSE RATIONALE

This course represents the opportunity to begin reading Old Testament theology, to learn about important contributors and their contributions to the discipline of Old Testament theology, and to begin doing Old Testament theology for oneself.

The professional in Christian ministry must acquire the knowledge and the tools of the profession, that s/he may be worthy of the confidence placed in her/him as one competent to minister. Part of this knowledge is a grounding in the history of the theological approaches to the Bible. One tool is the ability to do Old Testament theology. This includes interacting with others through the theological thinking they have committed to writing, beginning for oneself to think and write theologically, and holding one's own in theological discussion with others.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- A. Discuss the importance of OT theology as a discipline.
- B. Summarize and discuss varied approaches to OT theology.
- C. Identify and discuss current issues in OT theology.
- D. Discourse on some aspects of OT theology.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

- A. Brueggemann, Walter. *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- B. Coleson, Joseph E. *'Ezer Cenedo: A Power Like Him, Facing Him as Equal*. (n.p.): Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, 1996. (Available 1st class session.)
- C. Hasel, Gerhard F. *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (4th Edition). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991.
- D. Ollenburger, Ben C., ed. *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004.

V. STUDENT EVALUATION

Your course grade will be determined by the following:

- A. Class attendance will influence your grade: two absences will lower any grade; three absences will result in failing the course.
- B. Eight 600-word essays will be assigned; *any* six are required. If you write seven/eight essays, the lowest one/two grade(s) will be dropped.
N.B.: Papers are due at class time on due dates. Because class discussion usually will be based, in part, on topics discussed in these papers, they *cannot* be accepted more than ten minutes late. Papers deficient in style, grammar, spelling, etc., cannot earn a grade of A. (*Use Turabian's Guide*, and the summary style sheet appended to this syllabus.)
- C. A final paper or other project will be due November 27. Details of this assignment will be discussed and arranged during the second week of class.

VI. SCHEDULE OF READINGS FOR IN-CLASS LECTURE/DISCUSSION

Aug. 19 – Introductions; syllabus; OT content/themes; Twain; Lewis; Tolkien; Rowling; others, including music, painting, sculpture, cinema, and other arts
(No advance reading assumed here, though you should not expect to be able to read all course texts during the days of class sessions.)

Aug. 20 – Hasel, Parts I-III; Ollenburger, Part 1, and Gabler's "Oration" (Appendix)

Aug. 21 – Hasel, Part IV; Ollenburger, Part 2

Aug. 22 – Ollenburger, Parts 3 and 4

Aug. 25 – Ollenburger, Part 5

Aug. 26 – *Reverberations of Faith*

Aug. 27 – Tribble (Ollenburger, Part 5); Coleson

Aug. 28 – "Prophets" and "Theodicy" in *Reverberations of Faith*

Aug. 29 – Hasel, Parts V-VI

Nov. 27 – Final paper/project due

VII. SCHEDULE OF DAILY ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

- Aug. 20** – Having read Hasel, Part III, present your own understanding of the “reality” and importance of the history/history of tradition/salvation history/story recorded in the Old Testament.
- Aug. 21** – Having read Hasel, Part IV, and Eichrodt on Covenant in Ollenburger (pp. 39ff.), either identify a theological center for the OT and defend your choice, *or* argue that no one center can define the OT adequately.
- Aug. 22** – Develop one-hundred-word summaries of the most important points/issues from each of any *six* of the excerpts in Ollenburger, Parts 3 and 4.
- Aug. 25** – Respond to any *one* excerpt in Ollenburger, Part 5, except Tribble.
- Aug. 26** – Respond to “Atonement” *or* “Holiness” *or* “Righteousness” *or* “Sin” *or* “Worship” *or* “YHWH” in *Reverberations of Faith*.
- Aug. 27** – Summarize Coleson’s understanding of the phrase, *‘ezer cenegdo*, and his reasons for adopting this understanding. (Do not use “help/helper/helpmate” anywhere in your essay, for any reason.)
- Aug. 28** – Write a response, or your thinking that may undergird a response, to a high school student in your congregation/youth group who asks you, “Why did God let my little sister die of cancer last year?”
- Aug. 29** – Prepare a detailed sermon outline, *or* a small-group study plan, *or* a coherent essay, introducing the purpose and importance of Old Testament theology (or “theology from the Old Testament”) to/for a congregation or study group.

BECOMING A BETTER ACADEMIC WRITER
Avoiding common mistakes and uninspired usages
in formal academic writing

Correct: Use past and past perfect tenses when discussing historical persons and events.

Moses approached the bush; he had seen nothing like this before!

Incorrect: Do *not* use the so-called “historical present.”

Moses approaches the bush; he hasn’t seen this before!

Correct: *Never* split *any* infinitive: Jack learned *never* to split an infinitive.

Incorrect: His professor could count on Jim to *always* split his infinitives.

Likewise, it is poor usage in most situations to split an auxiliary verb from its main verb, or a verb of being from a predicate adjective.

Good usage: Really having done her best, Jill retired from the scene.

Poor usage: Having really done her best, Jill retired from the scene.

Good usage: Recently having discovered she really is excellent at debating,
Jill plans to try out for the debate team.

Poor usage: Having recently discovered she is really excellent at debating,
Jill plans to try out for the debate team.

An exception can be “not”: I am *not* going to write, seriously, “I am going, not, to write this sentence.” or, “I not am going to write this sentence”!

Correct: Write complete sentences; use at least a subject and a predicate in each clause.

Sarah wrote at least a paragraph in her Bible-study journal every day.

Almost always incorrect: An incomplete sentence *almost* always is incorrect.

Always promising herself to really do it tomorrow.

Common issues involving the use of apostrophe:

Correct:

boys, meaning “more than one boy”

boy’s, meaning “belonging to one boy”

boys’, meaning “belonging to more
than one boy”

its, meaning “belonging to it”

it’s, meaning “it is”

Incorrect:

boys’, meaning “more than one boy”

boys/boys’, meaning “belonging to one boy”

boy’s, meaning “belonging to more than
one boy”

it’s, meaning “belonging to it”

its, meaning “it is”

A common issue with commas and periods:

Correct:

He said, “It’s over.”

He said, “It’s over,” and left.

(This is American usage; British, Canadian, and many others are opposite.)

Incorrect:

He said, “It’s over”.

He said, “It’s over”, and left.

Correct, referring to Deity: He, Him, His, You, Yours, Thy, Thine
(Lowercasing of *all* pronouns referring to Deity also is correct; just be consistent.)

Always incorrect, referring to Deity: Himself

Correct: Bible, biblical

Incorrect: bible, Biblical

Correct: None dares do it.
(Hint: “None” equals “no one.”)

Incorrect: None dare do it.

Correct: They do their own thing.
(Don’t introduce a number usage problem to solve a gender usage problem.)

Incorrect: Everyone does their own thing.

Correct/refined: as though

Incorrect/inelegant: as if

Correct/refined: concerning, regarding
(I do not judge, as though academically inferior, people who say, e.g., “As to that, we all are entitled to our own opinions and usages,” but in writing I find this an execrable usage, and these *are* tips to help you in writing papers for my courses. A word to the wise . . .)

Abominable: as to

Prune your prose judiciously:

Effective: Many people lived there.

Much less effective: There were many people who lived there.

Effective: He said she was alive.

Less effective: He said that she was alive.

Always check Turabian or Chicago for correct usage of ellipses:

Correct: The three dots themselves *always* are separated by two single spaces: . . .

What precedes and follows depends on what is left out of the quotation.

Always Incorrect: Microsoft Word’s default ellipses; they do *not* know this issue.

Always place biblical references in the text, enclosed in parens, never as footnotes.

Always place punctuation after the second parenthesis, not before the first:

Correct: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

Incorrect: “Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

These commonly are misused and/or misspelled--*always* check before submitting:

affect/effect; prophecy/prophesy; than/then; whose/who’s; might/may; to/too/two;
for/four/fore; Canaan; Isaac; Israel; Ezekiel; Brueggemann; canon; desert

These commonly are misused--*always* check before submitting:

“Jew/Jewish” instead of Israel/Israelite before end of Northern Kingdom, 721 B.C.;

“church” instead of Israel in Old Testament period; “Palestine” before A.D. 135