

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OTL622 Judges
Summer, 2008 (May 19-30)

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I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A study of the book of Judges, giving special consideration to the narrative forms, to the Deuteronomistic understanding of Israel's history, and to the book's major theological concepts.

II. COURSE RATIONALE

The Church of the Nazarene, together with the larger Wesleyan/Holiness movement and most Christian denominations, views the Bible as a foundational document, informing all the life of the church. The book of Judges, narrating as it does some of the early history of Israel's settlement in the land of promise, makes a vital contribution to the whole of the Scriptures.

Most people raised in Sunday school at least have heard of Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. Becoming better acquainted with their stories, and being introduced to other, lesser-known persons from that era are reasons enough to study Judges. The larger lessons of Israel's faith and fickleness, of the depths individuals and communities can sink to when they forget their God, are graver reasons for attending to its narrative. Larger than the human history, though, and ultimately redeeming and sanctifying it, the unremitting faithfulness and passion of God to and for God's people shines vividly through the darkness.

The accounts of the book of Judges have encouraged God's people ever since to hang on when the odds seem hopeless, and even when God's own people seem irremediably lost in their own waywardness. Because it deals with an important period in early Israel's history, because it depicts in vivid profile the highs and lows of the human condition, because it reminds the community of faith throughout its pages of God's unwavering commitment to human redemption--for these and many other reasons, Judges both merits and rewards careful study.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you will:

1. Be familiar with the content of the book of Judges;
2. Be able to summarize the important positions regarding authorship, provenance, dating, occasion, and audience of the book of Judges;
3. Be able to identify the major theological themes of Judges, and discuss some of its contributions to the life and thought of God's people;
4. Have experience with the exegesis of some of the book of Judges;
5. Use your knowledge and understanding of Judges in ministry assignment(s).

IV. COURSE TEXTS

1. Cundall, Arthur E., and Leon Morris. *Judges and Ruth (Tyndale OT Commentaries)*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968.
2. King, Philip J., and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

V. STUDENT EVALUATION

1. More than one absence from class will lower your course grade.
2. Any six of the 600-word essays listed below will be due at class time on the days listed; electronic submission is preferred (Bb Digital Dropbox or e-mail attachment). On matters of mechanics, style, etc., NTS uses Turabian's text.
3. A post-course final project will be discussed, crafted, and adopted during the second week of class sessions.

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

May 19 – Syllabus and introductions; Judges 1-2 and Israel's geography and early history

May 20 – Judges 1-3

Essay subject: Chronology of Iron Age I/Period of the Judges

May 21 – Judges 4-5

Essay title: *Devorah: 'Ishah Nevi'ah, 'Eshet Lappidot*

May 22 – Judges 6-9

Essay subject: Agricultural data in Gideon's story

May 23 – Judges 10-12

Essay subject: Jephthah's house: its physical arrangement and social workings

May 27 – Judges 13-16

Essay subject: She deserved better: the sad case of the unnamed wife

May 28 – Judges 17-18

Essay subject: The geography of the Danite migration

May 29 – Judges 19-21

Essay subject: Wooed, won, mortally wounded: her last twenty-four hours

May 30 – Living, preaching and teaching Judges

Essay subject: The geography of one narrative: Deborah, *or* Gideon, *or* Jephthah, *or* Samson, *or* the Levite's disastrous affair