

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A study of the major Hebrew historical writings from the Persian (early Second Temple) Period of Judah's history. Ezra/Nehemiah and Chronicles are the primary sources; attention also is given to Haggai and Esther. The theological, political, and cultural change wrought by Judah's exile and return is a major focus.

II. COURSE RATIONALE

The faculty of NTS view the Bible as foundational, informing all the life of the church. We believe this view accords with historic Christianity, as well as with the direction of God found in the Bible itself.

The book of Chronicles constitutes what we may call a "second history" of Israel before the division of the Israelite monarchy, and of Judah particularly, following that division. Chronicles offers a valuable second point of view and, often, material unknown to, or unincorporated by, the Deuteronomistic authors.

Ezra/Nehemiah is our most important source for the state of the tiny third-level province of Judah in the first century after the Return. How the Jewish people reestablished themselves in their ancient homeland is a fascinating story of great theological import. We could say more--but not now.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

- A. Identify the major content and themes of Chronicles, Ezra/Nehemiah, and Esther.
- B. Express an adequate understanding of early Second Temple theology.
- C. Bring these works into your own ministry theology and praxis.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS

- A. Kidner, Derek. *Ezra and Nehemiah*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979.
- B. Reid, Debra. *Esther*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- C. Selman, Martin J. *1 Chronicles*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- D. Selman, Martin J. *2 Chronicles*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

V. STUDENT EVALUATION

Your course grade will be determined by the following:

- A. Class attendance will influence your grade: three absences will lower *any* grade; four absences will result in failing the course.
- B. Eleven 600-word essays will be assigned; *any* nine are required. If you write ten/eleven essays, the lowest one/two grade(s) will be dropped. Note the “Alternative Opportunities” component of this requirement, below.
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, as your guide in these matters.)
- C. A final exegetical paper or other project is due December 9. Details of this assignment will be discussed/arranged during the early weeks of the course.

VI. SCHEDULE OF IN-CLASS LECTURE/DISCUSSION

Students should have read the biblical texts, and commentary upon them, by class time:

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|-------|--|
| Sept. | 9 – Syllabus; course introduction, etc.
16 – 1 Chronicles 1-9
23 – 1 Chronicles 10-21
30 – 1 Chronicles 22-29 |
| Oct. | 7 – 2 Chronicles 1-9
14 – 2 Chronicles 10-16
21 – Reading and Research Week; no class session
28 – 2 Chronicles 17-26 |
| Nov. | 4 – 2 Chronicles 27-36
11 – Ezra 1-8
18 – Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 1-6
25 – Nehemiah 7-13 |
| Dec. | 2 – Esther; Haggai
9 – Final papers/projects; miscellanea/conclusion |

VII. SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

- Sept. 16 – List the references (chapter and verse) from Joshua 14-21 and 1 Chronicles 2-6 that mention Hebron. Suggest an answer (with evidence) to the question, To whom was Hebron assigned?
- 23 – Discuss the location, size, and topography of David's Jerusalem. Include a map on a separate page as an appendix to your essay.
- 30 – Attend the Mercer Lectures, September 25-26.
N.B.: *This assignment is not optional.*
- Oct. 7 – 2 Chronicles 7:14 is a famous "revival text" in conservative American Protestantism. Should it be used this way? Why or why not?
- 14 – Attend the Earle Lectures, October 14-16.
N.B.: *This assignment is not optional.*
- 28 – List and profile the relatives of Athaliah whom you can identify, giving special attention to kinship and position(s).
- Nov. 4 – Describe Hezekiah's achievement mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:30. Include a map, diagram, or schematic as the final page of your work.
- 11 – Place Judah on a map of the western Persian Empire, and discuss Judah's borders and the size of the province *Yehud*.
- 18 – Compare/contrast the prayers of Ezra (ch. 9) and Nehemiah (ch. 1).
- 25 – Discuss the seeming theological tension between the particularism of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the universalism of Ruth and Jonah.
- Dec. 2 – Characterize the person and actions of one of the main *personae* of the story of Esther. Suggest briefly how you would introduce that person in a sermon or study session.
- 9 – Final exegetical paper/project due.

Alternative Opportunities:

Two of the ten weekly "essay" assignments *must* be fulfilled by attendance (physical presence) at the following lecture series:

September 25-26 – Mercer Lectures on Christian Holiness – Geoffrey Wainwright
October 14-16 – Earle Lectures in Old Testament – Terence Fretheim

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