

THE PROPHETS AND THE WRITINGS (OT2)

[Mercer School for Ministry](#)
Autumn/Winter 2019–20

Rev. Dr. Michael Hull
hull.michael@icloud.com

Course Description

The course introduces the Prophets and the Writings including synopses of their outlooks, ideologies, and theologies. The course pays close attention to their literary traditions, historical and cultural contexts, and thematic structures. Selected passages from both the Prophets and the Writings are exegeted in detail.

Intended Learning Outcome and Objective

The intended learning outcome of this course is that students will broaden their understanding of the Wisdom Literature and (Latter) Prophets by reading them closely (in a number of translations with reference to the original languages) and by reading salient commentary upon them.

The course's objective is for students to become familiar with the Prophets and the Writings so as to strengthen their theological reflection, spirituality, preaching, and pastoral ministry.

The means of instruction is the Socratic method. The course outline (below) indicates both the topics covered and the required reading necessary for active participation in each seminar. Active participation, facilitated by the required reading, is mandatory. The course takes a flipped-classroom approach to seminars, namely, students are expected to come to the seminars having completed the required reading in order to discuss it.

Texts and Study Aids

The principal text is the Holy Bible. The preferred translations are the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989) and the New International Version of the Bible (2011). There is one required commentary: John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2014). There have been only slight changes from the first edition, and now there is a third edition; any edition is fine for the course, but the second edition is the one used in the course. Ryan P. Bonfiglio, *A Study Companion to "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible"* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2014), is highly recommended to assist the student in reading Collins' text. Because of the excellent further-reading recommendations given by Collins at the end of every chapter, there is no bibliography in this syllabus.

Course Outline and Evaluation

The course meets for five seminars: September 28, October 19, November 23, December 21, and January 18 on [Skype](#). In addition to the required readings, students are also tasked with writing five short essays of 500 to 750 words and emailing them to the instructor around the time of each seminar and no later than January 28 for all five. A letter grade, following [Mercer's Academic Policies and Procedures](#), will be allotted for each essay, and an average of the five will constitute the final grade.

1. Amos & Hosea; Isaiah, Micah, Nahum & Zephaniah; and the Babylonian Era (Habakkuk, Jeremiah & Lamentations (September 28)

Reading: Collins, 305–69; Bonfiglio, 137–71

Writing: Amos' oracles against the nations (1:2–2:16) seem to assume accepted and customary standards of behavior among nations. Explain two of them with some application to contemporary issues.

2. The Exilic Period (Ezekiel & Obadiah); the Additions to the Book of Isaiah; Postexilic Prophecy (October 19)

Reading: Collins, 371–443; Bonfiglio, 173–203

Writing: Ezekiel 16 speaks of Israel as a useless vine. What has Israel failed to do, akin to a vine that bears not fruit?

3. Ezra & Nehemiah; the Books of Chronicles; and the Psalms & Song of Songs (November 23)

Reading: Collins, 449–506; Bonfiglio, 205–33

Writing: Psalm 1 is often classified as a "wisdom" psalm. What is a wisdom psalm? Why is Psalm 1 so classified?

4. Proverbs; Job & Qoheleth; the Hebrew Short Story (Ruth, Esther, Tobit & Judith) (December 21)

Reading: Collins, 507–64; Bonfiglio, 235–68

Writing: Job 1:1–2:13 describes God's actions against Job's wealth, posterity, and health. How does Job retain his faith in God in spite of such deprivation?

5. Daniel & 1–2 Maccabees; the Deuterocanonical Wisdom Books (Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon & Baruch; and From Tradition to Canon (January 18)

Reading: Collins, 565–616; Bonfiglio, 269–96

Writing: What do you make of Daniel 6 and Daniel in the lions' den?