BS 601—Prophetic Books
Semenari Theologji Malaysia
Second Semester 2019
Thursday, 8:00–11:00 a.m.
Syllabus

Instructor Contact

<table>
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<th>The Rev. Aaron Decker</th>
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<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>Tue &amp; Thu, 2:30–4:30 p.m. (If I’m not around, check the library.)</td>
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Objectives
- To become more familiar with the diverse prophetic witness of Israel, and see how it fits into the historical context of Israel and the narrative arc of salvation.
- To experience the rhetorical range with which the prophets delivered and shaped their message.
- To explore ways the Bible's prophetic literature can be used both to form the foundation of the Church’s preaching and teaching today, as well as to inform the Church's prophetic voice in the modern social context.
- To gain practice in a diverse range of Old Testament exegetical methodologies from all parts of the fundamentalist-modernist spectrum, and on into postmodernism.
- To consider subtopics relevant to prophecy within Christianity, including connections to the New Testament and Christology, Apocalyptic literature and interpretation, and prophecy in modern Charismatic/Pentecostal/Adventist movements.

Textbooks
The following books are required for the course, in addition to readings posted on the lecturer's website. While they are of course available in paperback, you may prefer to obtain them in electronic format, which is cheaper and easier to deal with when moving your home! Prices listed are from Amazon as of 15 Mar 2019. Each of them will be also available on red spot in the library, if you would prefer not to purchase them, though that may make your life more difficult.

Bibles
- A scholarly English study Bible. I recommend either the Oxford Annotated Bible or the Harper Collins Study Bible. The instructor will be using the NRSV translation. NIV, and ESV are also acceptable. KJV and the Message are not. If you are unsure about your version, see the instructor. (While I would like you to have a high-quality study Bible for your ministry, simply having a good English Bible for class is fine; these study Bibles are in the library and you can reference their commentaries there.)
- If you have Hebrew skills (even at a rudimentary level), you will need a Hebrew Bible or access to the Hebrew Biblical text. (Interlinear or Online is ok.)
- If you do not have Hebrew skills, you will need at least two other translations of the Bible.
These do not have to be in English; any language with which you are comfortable is fine. (Online is ok.)

**Secondary Literature**
- Recommended, but not required: *Global Bible Commentary*. Ed. Daniel Patte. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2004. *This is an excellent resource that every religious leader should have, but especially those of us living in the global south. We will be using a number of the articles in this book, but they will be available electronically in case your book budget is limited. If you would like to get it, it is available in both paper and electronic versions.*

**Basic Course Plan**

Most class sessions for this course will be divided into three parts.
- The first hour will be primarily lecture-driven, and oriented toward understanding context, message, and style of the particular prophetic books assigned for that day.
- The second hour will focus on the secondary readings assigned. Students will be expected to raise questions and offer comments on what they have read and how it pertains to the prophetic witness under consideration.
- The third hour will be spent doing a close reading (as a class) of one particular prophetic "focus" text. These texts are listed below. Students should prepare for this time by doing their own close reading of the text. Guidelines for how to do this will be provided, and will differ depending on whether or not the student has some Hebrew knowledge.

**June 13 — Introduction to Prophecy**
- Focus Text: Joel 1–3 (No Preparation Required)

**June 20 — The Former Prophets**
- Read
  - Exodus 15:1–20; Numbers 12 (Miriam)
  - Numbers 22–24 (Balaam)
  - Judges 4–5 (Deborah)
  - 2 Samuel 7 (Nathan)
  - 1 Kings 17–1 Kings 9, 13:14–21 (Elijah and Elisha)
  - Blenkinsopp I.1–7
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: 1 Kings 17:8–24; 2 Kings 4:1–37 (The Hungry Widow and Her Son)

**June 27 — Amos**
- Read
  - Amos
  - Blenkinsopp I.1, III.8, III.9
- Secondary Readings


- Focus Text: Amos 7:1–8:3 (Vision Cycle)

**July 4 — Hosea**
- Read
  - Hosea
  - Alter Ch 1, 2
  - Blenkinsopp I.2, III.10
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Hosea 11 (Out of Egypt I Called My Son)

**July 11 — First Isaiah**
- Read
  - Isaiah 1–39
  - Alter Ch 3
  - Blenkinsopp I.3, III.12
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Isaiah 6:9–7:17 (Immanuel)

**July 18 — First Isaiah**
- Read
  - Blenkinsopp I.4, IV.13
- Secondary Readings
  - Brueggemann Preface, Ch 1, 2
- Focus Text: Isaiah 5:1–7; 27:1–11 (Song of the Vineyard)

**July 25 — Jeremiah**
- Read
  - Jeremiah 1–29
  - Blenkinsopp IV.14, IV.15
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Jeremiah 28 (Hananiah and the Yoke). You may wish to skim Jeremiah 27 for context.
August 1 — Jeremiah
- Read
  - Jeremiah 30–52
  - Alter Ch 6
- Secondary Readings
  - Brueggemann Ch 3, 4
- Focus Text: Jeremiah 17:1–4; 31:27–37 (New Covenant)

August 9
No Class — Reading Week

August 15
No Class — Day of Prayer and Fasting

August 22 — Ezekiel
- Read
  - Ezekiel
  - Blenkinsopp V.16–18
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Ezekiel 37:1–14 (Valley of Dry Bones). We may continue on to the prophetic action in 15–28 if we have time, so you may want to skim it.

August 29 — Second Isaiah
- First Assignment Due
- Read
  - Isaiah 40–66
  - Blenkinsopp V.19
- Secondary Readings
  - Brueggemann 5, 6, 7, Postscript
- Focus Text: Isaiah 42 (The First Servant Song)

September 5 — Second [and Third] Isaiah
- Read
  - Blenkinsopp VI.21
  - J. Severino Croatto. "Fourth Isaiah." *Global Bible Commentary.* (You may wish to read his essays on Second and Third Isaiah as well.)
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Isaiah 55:1–56:8 (Come to the Waters)

September 12 — Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- Read
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- Blenkinsopp VI.20, VI.22
- Paul Swarup. "Zechariah." Global Bible Commentary.
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Malachi 2:17–3:12 (Purify the Sons of Levi)

September 19 — Daniel and Apocalyptic
- Read
  - Daniel, Revelation
  - Blenkinsopp VI.23
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Daniel 3:1–30 (The Fiery Furnace—note that this is in Aramaic)

September 26 — Obadiah, Nahum, Jonah
- Final Assignment Due for Those Graduating
- Read
  - Obadiah, Nahum, Jonah
  - Blenkinsopp VI.24
  - Chen Nan Jou. "Jonah." Global Bible Commentary
- Secondary Readings
- Focus Text: Jonah 4 (Jonah Pouts)

October 3 — Prophecy After the Old Testament
- Read
  - Acts 2, 10:1–11:18, 16:6–40
  - 1 Cor 12-14
- Focus Text: Acts 10:1–48

October 10

Study Week

Exam Week

No exam. Final assignment due on 16 Oct for non-graduating students.

Student Assessment

Summary

Note that the two written assignments may be submitted in either order. One is due August 29. Graduating students should turn in the second by September 26; other students by October 16. Any assignments can of course be submitted before the due date. Please submit assignments electronically, 1.5 spaced, preferably in PDF format (though I can convert if needed).

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<th>Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
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Class Participation

While the first hour of each class section will be mostly lecture-driven, the second and third hours will require discussion and participation. All students are expected to have completed the reading and study required to participate in the discussion. Proof that they have done so will be shown by their actual participation. Students who consistently remain silent during discussion, or who cannot bring relevant ideas to the conversation, will be noticed and graded accordingly. (Students who tend to dominate the conversation are appreciated, but should also look for ways to pastorally invite space for their more timid colleagues to share.)

Research Paper

Students will prepare a paper on an Old Testament prophetic passage or topic of their choosing. The paper can be a thesis-driven research paper, exploring a question/hypothesis related to prophetic literature. It can also be an in-depth exegetical paper, focused on a particular passage and its interpretation. The lecturer is available for conversation about possible paper topics if desired, and the student should consider what topics and/or prophets interest them as a way of preparing for that conversation.

A long essay, as indicated by the seminary handbook, should be 1500–2000 words long, with at least 7–9 references based on your standing at the seminary. Most importantly, however, is that you adequately answer the question/interpret the passage, offering your own thoughts first, and
supporting them with evidence from other scholars.

Sermon/Practical Theology Assignment

Students should select a passage from the Old Testament prophets on which to do interpretive research appropriate for writing a sermon. Exegetical discoveries and conclusions should be written in brief, and can be informal. (I want to see your exegetical work, but I don’t want you to have to turn it into a formal paper.)

The student should then write a sermon on that text. The sermon should be shorter than most preached in Church contexts here. Aim for about 1200–1500 words. Your goal is to take the exegetical work you have done and, using a prophetic imagination, write a prophetic sermon based on that text. It may be helpful to envision a particular church or context; if so, you might briefly describe that context before the text of your sermon so that I can see what you are doing.

Though I am an experienced preacher, I am not a homiletical scholar, and feel I should not evaluate your preaching style. Rather, your evaluation will be based primarily on the way you exegete the prophet’s words and the way you help them become relevant for your listeners. Our class conversations about prophetic imagination and prophetic rhetoric will also be considered. (The rubric for exegetical papers will roughly be followed, with adaptations for the sermon genre.)

Students who do not expect to be preaching regularly in their future ministry, or who have not yet taken homiletics, may wish to suggest some other practical theology assignment (children’s lesson plan, worship service design, pastoral care guidelines, ministry organization vision plan, series of hymn compositions, etc., be creative!) to the lecturer for approval to substitute.

Grading Rubric

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Rubric Criterion for Exegetical Papers</th>
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<td>100</td>
<td>Student offers a clear interpretation of the text, grounded in modern methodologies discussed in class and in other Bible coursework. (This interpretation does not have to be shared by the lecturer.) Student has clearly engaged with the ideas learned in class, as well as with secondary literature and the Bible text itself. A firm grasp of some of the problems typically seen in the text is evident, and the student has made some clear decisions based on the evidence they have uncovered. Implications for interpretation (for the Church or the academy) are drawn out at the end of the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Student interprets the text well, tenuously using modern methodologies as discussed in class. Student has clearly engaged with the ideas learned in class, as well as with secondary literature and the Bible text itself. Student is unclear about some of the problems in the text, but makes an adequate attempt to sort through them. Student mentions problems, but makes no attempt to decide them (or say why they cannot be decided), or does make a decision but without evidence. Implications for interpretation are brief.</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Student interprets the text, using some modern methodologies mixed with haphazard readings. Untested theological assumptions are made, but are well-grounded in the student’s tradition. Class discussion or secondary literature is brought in sparsely. Student ignores some major problems in the text. A clear interpretation is offered, but with little evidence outside their own ideas.</td>
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Student offers an interpretation of the text that mostly ignores the historical grounding of the Hebrew prophetic witness. The interpretation shows signs of engagement with authentic theology, but that theology seems ungrounded. Neither class discussion nor secondary literature is used thoughtfully, but only to support previously-held conclusions. Student focuses on popular interpretation of the text instead of well-defined and agreed-upon interpretive problems. No evidence is offered for many conclusions.

Student ignores the methodologies used in class (historical grounding, taking the text seriously and imaginatively, exploring form as well as meaning, serious skepticism toward Christological interpretations, etc.). Student does not ground their writing in the class discussion or biblical text in any way.

Student does not turn in assignment, offers an assignment that is neither exegetical nor thesis-driven, or offers an assignment that has no clear connection to the Bible’s prophetic witness.

Other policies

Your instructor for this course is both a scholar and a pastor. The latter, hopefully, means that he is approachable! If you have any questions, worries, ideas, concerns, etc., please do not be afraid to speak with him at any time.

According to the Seminary’s Academic Handbook, students may not miss more than two hours of any course, and greater absence than this can constitute failure of course. Your professor is extremely understanding about legitimate problems that may interfere, including but not limited to physical or mental health, family emergencies, or surprise vocational obligations. If you expect to be absent, please contact the instructor as early as possible before the class session. If an emergency arises, please contact the instructor as early as possible after the emergency is resolved.

The above attendance policy, however, does not apply to assignments. The instructor reserves the right not to accept assignments submitted after the due date. If an assignment is accepted, any delay submitting work will result in a significant grade penalty, except in emergency cases. Please note that ministerial or church duty (such as preaching on a Sunday or conducting a last-minute funeral) does not constitute an emergency. As a church leader, you will need to find ways to complete your daily work and prepare for these events at the same time; now is a good time to start practicing!

Part of the goal of a seminary education is to help the student learn to communicate more effectively, both in spoken and in written formats. Part of clear communication is admitting when miscommunication happens. Please do not ever hesitate to ask for clarification from the instructor regarding any instruction or material. I am always happy to explain again (and again) if necessary.

Work submitted by students is expected to conform to standard English writing style, and be free of errors. (Leniency will of course be given, as appropriate for the student's year of education.) Do not be afraid to invite other students—or even the instructor—to read your work before the due date to help you improve your writing.

Feel free to discuss your assignments and resources with other students. However, your writing must be your own work. The seminary also has strict rules about plagiarism. I would rather read a paper in your own words with grammar/spelling/clarity errors than one in which you have
copied sections from someone else's writing. I want to know what you think, not what others think. Feel free to run your paper through an online plagiarism checker before submission if you want to be certain your work is your own. Copying another person's work without giving credit, or submitting another person's work in a way that makes up the majority of your submission (even if it is cited), will cause your assignment to be rejected, and can be grounds for failure of the course.

This syllabus is meant to be a resource for the student and a general guide for the course, but does not constitute an inflexible contract between the instructor and student. If the student has checked the syllabus first, questions for clarification or suggestions for changes are always welcome.