Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte
OT 644 Exegesis of Old Testament Narratives
Fall 2015

Course Instructor   Dr. Christine Palmer
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Meeting Times     Fridays 6:30 - 9:00
                  Saturdays 9:00 – 4:30
                  Sept 25-26; Oct 23-24; Dec 11-12

I. Course Description
This course helps develop the language and exegetical skills necessary for the interpretation of the Old Testament through reading select passages of Hebrew narrative. It aims to move students into an intermediate level of Hebrew grammar and to develop a greater understanding of narrative syntax. Students will apply exegetical methods to passages from throughout the biblical corpus in preparation for effectively preaching and teaching out of the Old Testament.

II. Course Objectives
1. Strengthen exegetical skills and competence in reading biblical Hebrew.
2. Grow in appreciation of the historical, literary, and theological dimensions of Hebrew narrative.
3. Become equipped to faithfully preach and teach from the Old Testament.

III. Textbooks and Resources
Required for this course is the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS).
If you do not own a BHS, you may photocopy the passages for class use. We will consult the critical apparatus in our translations and also reference the Masoretic notes in the margins to help us develop an appreciation for how carefully the text has been studied and transmitted through the ages.

Additional resources for study (not required):
IV. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attendance  Attendance and active class participation are required for all class sessions. According to seminary policy, a letter grade penalty will be assessed for an absence of more than 3 hours.

2. Readings (10%)  Select articles will be posted on Sakai. You will be asked to submit a reading report at the end of the class stating the percentage of readings completed.

3. Translation (30%)  Your original translation of the assigned passages must be emailed to me the day before we meet for class by 4:00 pm. Your effort in grappling with the text will strengthen your Hebrew translation skills and yield deeper theological insights. You will be graded on effort, completion, and a growing understanding of concepts covered in class. Cut and paste translations will not receive a passing grade.

In class, you will be asked to translate directly from the Hebrew text with the aid of notes and translation helps prepared in advance. You will also be asked to parse select verbs, though you need not include parsing in the translation you submit. *Please note that the use of computers for translation is not permitted.*

4. Assignments (10%)  Guiding questions for each assigned passage will be posted on Sakai. The assignments are intended to focus your reflection on key issues of interpretation which will be covered in class. Your answers must be submitted together with your translation the day before we meet for class by 4:00 pm. Late work will incur a grade penalty.
5. **Exegesis Paper** (50%). The paper should reflect the exegetical method you have learned in OT 511 and practiced in OT 644. You may choose from the following passages:

- Gen 18:16-33  
  *Abraham’s Intercession*
- Gen 22:1-19  
  *The Sacrifice of Isaac*
- 1 Sam 1:1-20  
  *Hannah’s Prayer*
- 1 Sam 24:1-22  
  *David Spares Saul*
- 1 Kgs 18:20-40  
  *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal*

V. Course Schedule

**Week of Sept. 7**  
Read Satterthwaite, “Theological Implications of Narrative Techniques” and Walton, “Principles for Productive Word Study” (posted on Sakai). Begin translation work.

**Week of Sept. 14**  

**Week of Sept. 21**  
Complete Assignment #1 and email it to me together with your translation by Thursday, September 24, 4:00 pm.

**CLASS — SEPTEMBER 25-26**

**Week of Sept. 28**  
Read Walsh, “Narrative Components,” “Repetition,” and “Narrative Sequence” (posted on Sakai). Begin translation work.

**Week of Oct. 5**  

**Week of Oct. 12**  
Translate Jonah 1-4. You are not responsible for the poetry of Jonah 2:1-10, but do read it carefully in English.

**Week of Oct. 19**  
Complete Assignment #2 and email it to me together with your translation by Thursday, October 22, 4:00 pm.

**CLASS — OCTOBER 23-24**

**Week of Oct. 26**  
Begin working on your exegesis paper. Select a passage and review OT 511 methods or Stuart’s *Old Testament Exegesis*. Read the cycle of narratives in which it occurs in English translation. Work on literary and historical context.

**Week of Nov. 2**  
Translate your passage, noting syntactical and grammatical features. Try to build your translation closely to the narrative syntax of the Hebrew text while still making good English sense.
Week of Nov. 9  Consider how the narrative art of your passage (the telling of the story) contributes to its interpretation. Reflect on theological themes.

Week of Nov. 16  Read Sakenfeld, “Faithfulness in Action” (posted on Sakai). Begin translating Ruth.

Week of Nov. 23  Happy Thanksgiving!


Week of Dec. 7  Complete Assignment #3 and email it to me together with your translation by Thursday, December 10, 4:00 pm.

CLASS — DECEMBER 11-12

Week of Dec. 14  Interact with commentaries on your passage and explore implications. How is the character of God and his dealings with humanity revealed in the text? Papers are due December 19, 2015.

Some Specific Instructions: Exegesis papers must be at least 15 pages in length, 1.5 spaced, 12 pt font, and 1” margins. Please do not include the Hebrew text. Use SBL citation.

1. **Translation.** Provide your own annotated translation of the passage (raised-letter annotation system). Although you should consult several standard Bible translations, this paper should ultimately reflect your own engagement with the Hebrew text and your emerging understanding of narrative syntax. Include in the annotation reasons for your lexical choices, text critical issues, unusual forms, and meaningful grammatical constructions. Aim for an optimal equivalence translation, preserving some of the flavor of the original language.

2. **Historical and Cultural Context.** What is the historical moment out of which this narrative arises and to which it speaks? Consult a reference on ancient Israelite history like Bright’s *History of Israel*. Discuss questions of dating, authorship, and audience. How does the cultural context illuminate the passage? Does the passage have a geographical setting? Consult a Bible atlas if appropriate.

3. **Literary Context.** Locate your passage within the larger structure of the book. Why is it placed there and how does it contribute to the progression and development of the larger narrative?

4. **Verse by Verse Commentary.** Comment on narrative sequence and narrative breaks providing background information. Explain how the crafting of the narrative conveys meaning and its theological implications. How does the syntax and narrative style
(chiasmus, repetition, use of dialogue, selectivity of detail, narrative time, etc) contribute to the communication of the main message of the passage?

5. Semantic Analysis. Are certain words or ideas repeated, and what is the significance of this? Check words of historical and theological import in dictionaries and establish a semantic range. When doing a word study, give particular attention to how that word is used in the book or narrative cycle in which your passage appears.

6. Biblical Theological Context. Discuss the theological message of your passage. What unique contribution does it make to biblical theology? In other words, what would be lost if this portion of Scripture were not in the Bible at all? Discuss intertextuality: Does your passage allude to other portions of Scripture? Is your passage quoted or alluded to in any other biblical texts? How has this passage been adapted by other biblical authors? Does it in any way anticipate, or is it directly quoted in, the New Testament?

7. Secondary Literature. After you have worked through your passage and studied it in depth, consult commentaries and scholarly articles. Critically interact with other scholars and their ideas in your discussion. Based on your study of the text, what is your judgment of their interpretation?

8. Application. Once you have determined the meaning of the text in its original setting, consider how this passage embodies and communicates a revelation of the Lord. How are we personally confronted and encountered by the Scripture? How can this passage be applied to the life of the community of faith?

9. Bibliography. Cite major commentaries, dictionaries, and scholarly sources you have consulted on your passage. Use SBL Handbook of Style.

Note: Take special care to cite appropriately, quote fully, and attribute all sources.
Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the semester as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required in this case. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the stated date. Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise).
individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

Returned Work
Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self-addressed and postage- paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.

Virtual Writing Center
Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three prerequisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status.
Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.