OT 103: The Exile and Return of God’s Covenant Nation: The Prophetic and Restoration Books (Isaiah – Malachi; Ezra – Esther)  
Guide: Dr. Tim Laniak

Dates and Times:  
Classes will be held at the Gordon-Conwell Seminary campus, 14542 Choate Circle, Charlotte, NC, 28273 on Tuesday evenings (6:45-8:45) from March 15 through May 10, 2016. This course is Part 3 of a 3-part sequence that tours the entire Old Testament. (The first two courses are available online.) Those interested may register for some or all of the courses; there are no prerequisites. However, it is strongly recommended that you engage in the whole journey through the Old Testament and then continue through the New Testament next year.

Registration:  
*Registration for courses is required.* Please visit our [web site](http://www.gcts.edu) or contact Michelle Littlejohn at [dlittlejohn@gcts.edu](mailto:dlittlejohn@gcts.edu) or 704-527-9909, for more information. Those interested may sign up either as participants (those who sit in the class for personal enrichment only) or as credit students (those who get feedback on weekly assignments and may receive credit toward a seminary certificate). Students are required to join in break-out groups for a ½ hour before class each evening. These sessions are led by Gordon-Conwell graduates.

Certification:  
Credit students who meet all of the requirements for the complete 6-course sequence in Old and New Testaments are eligible to receive a Certificate in Biblical Literacy. This certificate will exempt those interested in any masters or other certificate program at the seminary from OT and NT Survey courses.

*Note: The cost of the 6-course sequence is about the cost of one graduate level course. Therefore, students completing the Certificate in Biblical Literacy will have taken two courses for the price of one.*

BibleJourney also offers two courses to supplement the training of Bible teachers. *Interpreting the Bible* equips students with practical skills for interpreting every genre of the Bible. *Teaching the Transforming Word* equips students with the tools to be effective Bible teachers. Watch the BibleJourney website for these offerings for which there are separate certificates.

Program Objectives:  
1. To provide students and participants with a comprehensive grasp of the main figures, events, and themes in the Old Testament, their relationship to the New Testament, and their ongoing significance for our lives.
2. To enlighten students and participants with background information and resources that clarify God’s revelation in its original setting.
3. To equip students and participants to interpret the Bible correctly by introducing appropriate tools and methods.
4. To raise up competent teachers who can communicate biblical truth effectively.
Format:
Classroom sessions will include presentations on each book of the Bible, featuring “in the text” summaries, “behind the text” background, and “in front of the text” interpretation and implications. Ideally, the assigned readings for each week should be done before class.

Text books:
1. *The Bible* (The NIV Archaeology Study Bible or the new NIV Study Bible)

Note: These textbooks will be used throughout the BibleJourney course sequence.

Assignments:
1. Weekly 1-2 page assignments will be expected of those who take the class for credit. Assignments (provided in the syllabus below) will be submitted to the teaching assistant and discussed during the weeknight sessions.
2. Students will also complete a reading log for the assigned texts.
3. For each of the biblical books in this course, you will answer five “Guiding Questions” (see course outline for details and due dates). You will discuss these in breakout groups during the term and then write up your final essays as Assignment #9.
4. A final test will be taken at the end of the course.

**Plan on 5-10 hours each week for reading and assignments.**

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments (5 points each)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Log</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Test</td>
<td>100</td>
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**Attendance and Missed Classes:**
Credit students will need to be in attendance during all classes. Alternative assignments will be given to those who miss a class.

**Discounts and Refunds:**
Gordon-Conwell has significantly reduced the tuition for these courses to make them affordable to our community. We assume that churches will further subsidize this outreach for their members if hardship exists. Full refunds will be provided only through the second week of the course for any reason.
Course Outline

1. (3/15) The Prophets; Assyrian Period (Pt 1): Amos

   Readings for next week: Hosea, Micah, Jonah, Nahum; Youngblood, chp. 10; The Story of Israel, pp. 88-91

2. (3/22) Assyrian Period (Pt 2): Hosea, Micah, Jonah, Nahum; Asst 1 Due

   Readings for next week: Isaiah; The Story of Israel, p. 99

3. (3/29) Assyrian Period (Pt 3): Isaiah; Asst 2 Due

   Readings for next week: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Joel; The Story of Israel, pp. 91-99

4. (4/5) Babylonian Period (Pt 1): Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Joel; Asst 3 Due

   Readings for next week: Jeremiah, Lamentations

5. (4/12) Babylonian Period (Pt 2): Jeremiah, Lamentations; Asst 4 Due

   Readings for next week: Ezekiel, Daniel

6. (4/19) Babylonian Period (Pt 3): Ezekiel, Daniel; Asst 5 Due

   Readings for next week: Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah

7. (4/26) Persian Period (Pt 1): Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah; Asst 6 Due

   Readings for next week: Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

8. (5/3) Persian Period (Pt 2): Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; Asst 7 Due

   Readings for next class: The Story of Israel, 99-103

9. (5/10) Pulling the pieces together; Asst 8 Due

   May 24 Guiding Questions on the Prophetic Books Due

   June 7 Final Test (25-35 question multiple choice) taken with a proctor due
Suggested Summaries of the Whole Bible


Richter, Sandra L. *The Epic of Eden* (InterVarsity, 2008).


Williams, Michael D. *Far As the Curse is Found* (P&R Publishing, 2005).

Focus: “In, Behind, and In Front of the Text”
Objective: To engage a full interpretive process with a short passage in the prophets.

Assignment 1 – The Prophets (Introduction)
One objective in BibleJourney is to be able to interpret passages in the Bible from each literary genre. To help achieve this goal, our approach involves three interpretive movements. First, there is an initial investigation into a passage’s literary context. In this step, we make observations by a careful reading “in the text.” This is then followed by an examination of the historical-cultural contexts of the passage. Here, we use reference works and compare extra-biblical resources to get “behind the text.” Finally, we cross the “principalizing bridge” back into our own context as a means to consider the theological and practical implications. This puts us squarely “in front of the text.”

The first assignment of this term is to complete all three of these steps on Micah 6:6-8. To summarize:

1) Discuss what is “in the text” (literary structure, themes, genre, images/symbols, word meanings, etc.).
2) Give background details on issues “behind the text” (historical, geographical, cultural, archaeological contexts, ANE parallels, etc.).
3) “In front of the text”: (the theological connections and practical implications that arise from the text) Remember that these issues can only “bridge the gap” once you have a correct historical understanding of the text.

The length of this assignment should be no more than three pages – one for each section. Think of it more like an outline with notes. Please cite all resources utilized in your work using Turabian style.

TOOLS: Utilize the different kinds of resources used throughout the semester: Study Bible; Old Testament introductions, surveys and theologies; Bible dictionaries and atlases; background and standard commentaries (e.g., the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary) and word study helps (e.g. www.blueletterbible.org, BibleWorks, or Logos for word searches). For additional helpful resources, remember to check out the reference section in the library and also the bibliographies on the website: http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Bibliographies.cfm
Assignment 2 – Pre-exilic prophets (Assyrian period)
We have discovered that many of the genres in the Bible have predictable patterns or structuring devices. One of these patterns is called a “chiasm.” Chiasms are named after a Greek letter written “X” because elements at the beginning of a passage are repeated in inverse order as you move toward the end of the passage. Once the passage reaches its middle turning point or hinge, you can recognize a reversal in the echoing elements. Chiasms can draw your attention to what is at the beginning and end of a passage and highlight the turning point in the middle. The standard way to describe a chiasm is to use an outline with a sequence of letters followed by the same letters (with a “prime” mark) in reverse order. For example, an outline for a prophetic passage might appear as follows:* 

A – God speaks a word of warning to Israel  
B – List of terms of judgment (key term: “scattered”)  
C – Prediction of peoples’ rejection  
D – Promise of a new day  
C’ – Prediction of a remnant returning  
B’ – Reversal of terms of judgment (“scattered” are “gathered”)  
A’ – God speaks a word of warning to nations who refuse to join Israel

The parallel element can be a key word or phrase, reference to a similar event, the choice of speech vs. narrative, spatial or temporal indicators, etc.

Your assignment is to (1) Outline the chiasm in Hosea 1:9-2:23 by organizing the key words or narrative elements in a chiastic outline (use as many letters and their primes as necessary). Bear in mind that repeated elements may include key words or phrases, direct (quotes) or indirect speech, spatial or temporal indicators, etc. (2) Underline the first and final statements and circle the central statement. (3) Write a paragraph summarizing the flow of the passage’s thought, drawing attention to the beginning, middle, and end.
Assignment 3 – Pre-exilic prophets: Isaiah

For this week’s assignment, you will be discussing the issue of authorship in the book of Isaiah. In dealing with this issue, most Jews and Christians have held to the view of single authorship by Isaiah and the unity of the book. However, more recent developments in biblical scholarship have led some to adopt a position of multiple authors or editors while maintaining an appreciation for its unity. Your assignment is to write a 1 to 2 page paper on your view of Isaiah’s authorship, using specific examples from the book of Isaiah.

Please note that the purpose of this assignment is not merely to understand and restate the “arguments” in the debate, but to evaluate the positions, to examine the biblical text itself, and then to offer evidence (biblical, historical, etc.) concerning the view you adopt on authorship. In order to do this, you will need one or more good Old Testament Introductions or commentaries on Isaiah. In other words, this is an assignment in which you will need to utilize the reference section in the library. (Note that the GCTS library and other websites have many of these resources online.) If you need suggestions in finding resources, please see the following link for a list of annotated resources (look at section IV): [http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/annotated-survey-ot.pdf](http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/annotated-survey-ot.pdf)

You can also access this bibliography from the BibleJourney website. Go to [www.gordonconwell.edu/biblejourney](http://www.gordonconwell.edu/biblejourney), click on “Research Tools,” followed by “Bibliographies,” click on “Annotated Survey of Old Testament Reference Tools,” and look for section IV, “OT Introductions...” This bibliography will give you a short description of each resource, a picture, and its location in the GCTS Library.
Focus: “In Front of the Text”
Objective: To begin to appreciate the various ways Old Testament passages are interpreted by New Testament writers.

Assignment 4 – Babylonian period: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Joel

1) Briefly describe the original meaning of this verse in light of the historical context of Habakkuk.

TOOLS: After making your own observations, use an Old Testament Survey and class notes to confirm your findings.

2) Identify the New Testament passages where the phrase, “live by faith” is quoted or alluded to.

TOOLS: Use the online concordance, www.blueletterbible.com. Type in “live by faith” without quotation marks. List the passages with exact and inexact matches.

3) Read the quote in Romans 1:17 in its literary context. Summarize the similarities and/or differences between the Old and New Testament meanings.

TOOLS: Begin by making your own observations. Then use a commentary for deeper insight.

One exceptional academic resource to consider is:

*** Make a bibliographic note (Turabian style) for the commentaries you use. Sample for single author:
For other commentary choices (including their theological orientation) check out the resources listed under section II of our annotated bibliography:

Focus: “Behind the Text”
Objective: To place the prophets and their messages in historical (geo-political) context.

Assignment 5 – Exilic prophets (Babylonian period): Jeremiah, Lamentations
A century after the demise of the Northern Kingdom, the world around God’s people once again began to change dramatically. Your assignment is to document this change by preparing a 1 to 2 page essay describing the larger historical/geo-political context of Judah from 626-528 BC., identifying pivotal events and naming Judean kings and prophets along with key Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rulers. In order to make this assignment useful to you in the future, attach to your essay 1) a chart of the kings (Judean and Mesopotamian) and prophets, 2) a map of the major nations at this time, and 3) any other images or sources that are important for historical purposes (i.e., archaeological remains; ANE texts, etc.). Please note your sources!

TOOLS: The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary is an excellent resource for this assignment. Also consult one or two of the following types of reference works: Old Testament Introduction, History of Israel, or Bible Atlas.

A list of recommended resources can be found at:

Or click your way there by going to http://www.gordonconwell.edu/biblejourney, click “Research Tools”, then “Bibliographies”, click on “Annotated Survey of Old Testament Reference Tools” and look for section IV.
Focus: In the text
Objective: To successfully identify a Hebrew term and trace its occurrences in the Old Testament.

Assignment 6: Exilic prophets (cont.): Ezekiel, Daniel
One of the interesting features of ancient biblical languages is the variety and richness of word meanings and word usage. For example, at least thirteen different Hebrew words have meanings such as shame, disgrace, reproach, humiliate, etc. Not surprisingly, these highly emotive words are concentrated in books that refer to Israel’s devastating experience of exile.

In this assignment, you will locate two of these Hebrew words, identify the English transliterations, provide a range of meanings, and then determine how many times they occur in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Begin by locating the Hebrew word translated “disgrace” twice in Ezekiel 16:52 (NIV). For your paper, (1) record this word in English transliteration and (2) list some of its other meanings. Then search for this Hebrew word in both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and (3) note the number of occurrences in each book.

Next, repeat these steps for the word translated “reproach” in Jeremiah 15:15 (NIV).

For extra credit, follow the same steps with a third word for shame that appears with these other two in Jeremiah 51:51.

TOOLS: To complete this assignment, you have three options:
1) Perform a word search at the Blue Letter Bible website (www.blueletterbible.org). Remember to set the version for the search to NIV and then use the “LexiConc” tab to access the “Strong’s number.” This number will lead you “underneath” the English to the Hebrew word. Click on http://www.blueletterbible.org/help/bible_search.cfm for a brief tutorial on how to perform searches at this site.

2) You can also perform a word search in BibleWorks,* an excellent program for in-depth exegesis and study of biblical passages. For instructions, click on the Help
tab and then click on “Study Guides.” Under “Analyzing the Biblical Text” you will find help in performing word and phrase searches.

3) You can also perform a search in Logos,* another excellent computer resource for those who wish to build a portable, electronic library. For those using Logos 4, you can check out the video at http://www.logos.com/video/2286/bible-searching for instructions on how to do a simple search. If you own or are using version 3, the same basic instructions will apply.

4) The seminary also supports the program Accordance.

* BibleWorks, Logos and Accordance are available on campus in the seminary’s library. Our library staff will be glad to orient you to these wonderful tools!
Focus: “In Front of the Text”
Objective: To explore the importance of Sabbath as an ongoing observance for God’s people.

Assignment 7 – Ezra-Nehemiah
Although the prophets decried empty ritual, they continued to promote the proper place for meaningful ritual, including Sabbath observance. One of the two signs of the covenant community, Sabbath is a primary concern in Isaiah 56:2, 6; 58:13; Jeremiah 17:21-27; and Ezekiel 20:12-24. This rite was established before the giving of the Law at Sinai (Exod. 31:13-17), but Moses predicted that neglect of sabbatical laws would result in exile from a land given no “rest” (Lev. 26:34-35).

Following the exile, Nehemiah led God’s people in a time of restoration. Knowing Israel’s historical record, he was concerned that God’s people – and outsiders – carefully observe the Sabbath in the land (Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22; cf. 9:14).

After reading the Old Testament passages noted above, explore the ways Christians should observe the Sabbath today.

1) First, use your concordance to list all of the episodes in the Gospels that highlight Jesus’ view of the Sabbath. Then summarize Jesus’ understanding of the Sabbath in a paragraph or two.


3) Finally, describe what you believe to be the proper observance of Sabbath today.
Assignment 8: Post-exilic/Restoration prophets (Persian period)
For your final assignment, we will end this term as we began. Choose a verse or passage in the final set of prophetic books (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). It can be a passage of interest, a familiar or favorite verse, or simply a text that you want to learn more about. Keep your selection to no more than a paragraph. Once you have chosen your text, interpret it based on the three-step approach used in the class lectures:

1) Discuss what is “in the text” (literary structure, themes, genre, images/symbols, word meanings, etc.).
2) Give background details on issues “behind the text” (historical, geographical, cultural, archaeological contexts, ANE parallels, etc.).
3) “In front of the text”: (the theological and practical applications that arise from the text) Remember that these issues can only “bridge the gap” once you have a correct historical understanding of the text.

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