

Hebrew Bible Topics: The Song of Songs (BIBHB604-A)

Fridays 9:00-12:00 Central Time AND WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH (MAKE-UP DAY)

Fall 2023 (September 5 - December 13)

Instructor: Dr. G. Brooke Lester (Associate Professor of Hebrew Scriptures; he/him/his)

Revision: March 29, 2023

Contact Information:

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Dr. Lester may be reached by email. He checks email twice/day and will respond within 36 hours. (See "Emergencies" in this syllabus.)

Office location: Shaffer 731. Office hours by appointment, in-person or via Teams.

Course Description and Objectives:

This course will introduce the learner to the Song of Songs. We will focus primarily on the Song's content in its ancient West Asian context, its place among other ancient love literature, and the roles that such love literature may have played in the lives of ancient Israel.

Secondarily, we will engage the "post-biblical" life of the Song: the ways that the Song has been "received" by communities, from antiquity to today.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop substantive historical understanding about the Song of Songs, its composition, and its relation to its ancient West Asian contexts.
- Students will gain acquaintance with interpretations of the Song of Songs from multiple perspectives.
- Students will further develop their skills in exegesis of Hebrew-Bible texts through their exegetical engagement with the Song.
- Students will further develop their skills in expressing and contextualizing what they have learned to broader audiences.

Required Textbooks:

- Exum, Cheryl. *Song of Songs*. Old Testament Library Series. Westminster John Knox reprint edition, 2005. ISBN-10: 0664238416. ISBN-13 : 978-0664238414. Amazon paperback cost \$32.54 (as of 2021-04-22).
- Keel, Othmar. *Song of Songs*. Continental Commentary Series. Fortress Press, 1994. ISBN-10: 0800695070. ISBN-13 : 978-0800695071. Amazon hardcover cost \$32.72 (as of 2021-04-16).
- Pardes, Ilana. *Song of Songs: A Biography*. Lives of Great Religious Books series. Princeton University, 2019. ISBN-10: 0691146063. ISBN-13: 978-0691146065. Amazon hardcover cost \$10.20 (as of 2021-04-16).
- Any major NRSV or CEB Study Bible, such as used in an introductory Hebrew-Bible course. Contact instructor with questions.

Delivery:

- This course meets face-to-face for a three-hour weekly block of time.
- There is no provision for videoconferencing in to this in-person class.
- Learners should expect to spend at least 9-12 hours/week of their time outside of class on this course. If you find that you are spending 9-12 hours/week and are not getting the results you want, the instructor is happy to meet with you to discuss and "troubleshoot" your preparation habits.

Assignments:

These will include

- Weekly preparation, including reading, writing, and research;
- In-class presentations;
- A final exegesis paper, accomplished in stages that include peer review.

Evaluation rubrics will be available on course Moodle site when the semester begins.

Grading:

Evidence of weekly preparation: 40%

Presentation: 20%

Final paper: 40%

Some syllabus details may change before the semester begins on September 5.

Schedule (EVERY FRIDAY, PLUS WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 13TH):

Week One, 09/08

We will do at least one read-through (aloud) of the Song; perhaps more than one. Be Prepared to read the CEB or NRSV Study Bible in class. Bring Pardes for reference. Beginning with Week Two, bring all three required books.

Week Two, 09/15

Song of Songs and Its Afterlives

Read: Pardes 1-135.

Choose a passage for exegesis paper.

Week Three, 09/22

Afterlives Continued, and Beginnings of Exegetical Introduction

Read: Pardes 136-230; Exum 1-27.

Week Four, 09/29

Exegetical Introduction Continued

Read: Exum 28-86; Keel 1-37.
Have a Thesis Statement for peer review.

Week Five, 10/06

Song 1:1–2:7 and Presentations
Read: Exum 89-119; Keel 38-94; article(s) TBD

Week Six, 10/13

Song 2:8–3:11 and Presentations
Read: Exum 119-151; Keel 95-137; article(s) TBD

Week Seven, 10/20

Song 4:1–5:1 and Presentations
Read: Exum 151-183; Keel 138-184; article(s) TBD
Complete Draft of exegesis paper due by class time.

10/26: Reading Days

Week Eight, 11/03

Song 5:2–6:3 and Presentations
Read: Exum 183-210; Keel 185-210; article(s) TBD

Week Nine, 11/10

Song 6:4–7:13 and Presentations
Read: Exum 210-242; Keel 211-255; article(s) TBD
Peer Reviews due by class time.

Week Ten, 11/17

Song 8:1-14 and Presentations
Read: Exum 242-263; Keel 256-285; article(s) TBD

Thanksgiving Break

Week Eleven, 12/01

Song Topics TBD (and Presentations?)
Read: TBD

Week Twelve, 12/08

Song Topics TBD (and Presentations?)
Read: TBD
Final Paper due by class time.

“Make-Up Week for Reading Days,” Wednesday, 12/13
Song Topics TBD (and Presentations?)
Read: TBD

Institutional Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- Academic integrity and plagiarism: (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching- learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.
- Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19- 20 Handbook, 20)