

OT 5100 ENGLISH BIBLE: RUTH
TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL
MADISON, WI EXTENSION
FALL SEMESTER 2011 (SEPT. 9-10; OCT. 28-29; DEC. 2-3)
F 6:30-9:30 P.M.; S 8:30 A.M.-4:30 P.M.
DR. DENNIS R. MAGARY

N.B. This advance copy of the syllabus is *provisional* and *preliminary* and *subject to change*.
The final and official version of the syllabus will be available at the first class session.

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the book of Ruth designed to acquaint the student with the literary, historical, and theological content of this narrative. Attention will be given to matters of form and structure (looking at how the story is being told) and to the historical, geographical, cultural, and theological content (looking at what story is being told) with a view to understanding the distinctive meaning and message of this book for the people of God today.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: The student will gain an understanding of the formal structures, literary conventions, and compositional techniques of Old Testament narrative text.

OBJECTIVE: By discussing in class at the very outset of the course the nature of biblical narrative as a form of representation and communication.

OBJECTIVE: By considering throughout the course the concept of meaning and the ways in which it is determined in the poetic text of the prophets.

OBJECTIVE: By close reading and rereading in translation the book of Ruth.

GOAL 2: The student will gain a working knowledge of the literary structure and historical and theological content of the book of Ruth.

OBJECTIVE: By observing the distinctive structure and content of these books in daily reading and study.

OBJECTIVE: By discussing matters of content and structure as a vital part of each class period and lecture.

OBJECTIVE: By applying all acquired interpretative skills and methodologies to the careful analysis and exegesis of the English text of these books.

OBJECTIVE: By carefully reading and assimilating the assigned introductory and expositional sections of the commentaries required for the course.

GOAL 3: The student will interact with key exegetical, historical, theological, and hermeneutical issues in the narrative presentation of this book.

OBJECTIVE: By making note of textual and interpretative problems encountered in close reading and study of the biblical text.

OBJECTIVE: By working through selected problematic portions in class.

OBJECTIVE: By interacting with the positions and presuppositions of the professor and assigned readings.

OBJECTIVE: By considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of opposing positions and the significant difficulties precipitated by “easy” answers.

GOAL 4: The student will understand the place and contribution of the book of Ruth in the progress of revelation.

OBJECTIVE: By considering the meaning and message of this book in light of available and relevant historical, cultural, linguistic, literary, and theological evidence.

OBJECTIVE: By discussing throughout the course New Testament use of the book of Ruth.

GOAL 5: The student will apply the concrete teaching and principles provided by the book of Ruth to the pressing needs and concerns of the believer (and non-believer) today.

OBJECTIVE: By allowing the biblical text to set the agenda and define the parameters of our quest for meaning and significance in the book of Ruth.

OBJECTIVE: By devoting yourself wholeheartedly to the diligent study of this early word and work of God.

OBJECTIVE: By asking the God of this revelation to give you an inquiring mind and a receptive heart and to enable you to see the profound relevance of this Scripture to your life; and then, by His grace, to live out the truth of this life-altering, God-breathed word.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

REQUIRED

Hubbard, Robert L., Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1988.

James, Carolyn Custis. *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

RECOMMENDED

Campbell, Edward F., Jr. *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible, vol. 7. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ASSIGNED READINGS 30%

The following materials have been selected for required course reading because they provide a rich and necessary foundation for what we will be doing in class. These readings are of fundamental importance to the textual study of the book of Ruth this semester. Read the pages or portions indicated in each of the following works. N.B. All assigned readings have been scheduled into the COURSE CALENDAR. If you follow the reading guide provided in the COURSE CALENDAR, not only will you be prepared for class discussion of the scheduled portion of text, but by the end of the semester, all assigned readings for the course will have been read.

a) BIBLICAL TEXT

During the course of this semester the student will read in translation the book of Ruth completely through at least thirty (30) times. Each assigned reading of the biblical text is to be done at one sitting, if at all possible. The benefit here is that the student will constantly see the book as a whole. It is this holistic and total view that, while always open to revision in light of the merest detail, must always have the final word in interpretation. In our quest for the meaning and significance of texts, the meaning and message, purpose and function of the work as a whole will be our ultimate ambition. We must attempt to understand how the parts fit together, how the parts succeed in producing the whole, and how the whole is supported by the parts. If we are successfully to avoid an atomistic and wholly arbitrary interpretation which focuses more on how much can be gotten out of or read into a passage than on interpreting and understanding what is there, then the primary object of our interpretative scrutiny must be the whole in the articulation of its parts and in its manifold variety. If some parts seem hard to reconcile with other parts, we need not jump to the conclusion that the book is fundamentally at cross purposes with itself or, in light of the difficulty, does not (or could not) really mean what it says. We must seek rather to understand what a book so seemingly at variance with itself would mean and signify when taken as a whole. Unless one moves constantly between the parts and the whole, between the particular and the general, what appears to be a worthily thorough and detailed interpretation may, in fact, be a steadfast and systematic refusal to confront the primary questions of meaning. So, we will read, read, and read the book of Ruth this semester.

- (1) Determine which version you are going to use for study. The following English versions are recommended study versions: *New International Version*, *New American Standard Bible*, *English Standard Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*.
- (2) Read the book of Ruth completely through at one sitting two times each week: one time in your chosen study version, and one time in an assigned English version. Designated English versions for the assigned readings of the biblical text have been scheduled into the COURSE CALENDAR. Photocopies of the book of Ruth in the assigned English versions are posted in PDF form on the class Moodle page.

b) COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Hubbard, Robert L., Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

James, Carolyn Custis. *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

At the end of the semester the student will submit a reading report. The instructor will provide a form on which the student will indicate those readings which have been read in their entirety, or in part, or not at all. The percentage of readings completed will determine the amount of credit to be received for fulfillment or partial fulfillment of this course requirement. The Report of Assigned Readings form is available on the class Moodle page. The form is downloadable and will be submitted electronically.

N.B. The assigned readings report is due no later than 11:00 P.M. on Thursday, December 15. Assigned reading reports will not be accepted after 11:00 P.M. on Thursday, December 15.

2. STUDY GUIDES 60%

To assist the student in the study of the book of Ruth, and to give direction to the student's inductive exploration of the text, study guides will be provided for each chapter of Ruth. The study guides are designed to help the student further develop skills of observation and interpretation of the English text. The student will make use of selected study tools and will interact with the secondary literature on Ruth. The study guide will be submitted at the end of the semester. The study guide will be evaluated on the basis of completeness, thoroughness, and level of interaction with each question.

3. CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION 10%

a) PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

The student is expected to come to class prepared to interact with all interpretive dimensions of the biblical text. Students will be expected to respond when called upon and, as a result of personal preparation and study in the text, to offer pertinent observations and proposals on the relevant questions of textual and interpretive study.

b) FORUM (THREADED DISCUSSION)

At designated intervals in the semester, each student will interact with a topic or issue put forward on the course Forum in Moodle. The student will interact with the professor and with fellow students in a dialogue that will span the monthly class sessions. N.B. Participation in each forum is required. Credit is given for meaningful participation. Lack of participation in a forum will adversely affect credit for this course requirement.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1.	ASSIGNED READINGS	30%
2.	STUDY GUIDES	60%
3.	CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION	10%

COURSE GRADING:

SCALE %	GRADE		POINTS	(TEDS 2011-2012 Online Catalog, p. 64-65)
100 – 95.0	A	A	4.0	outstanding work
94.9 – 93.0	A-		3.7	<i>superior</i> achievement of course goals
92.9 – 91.0	B+		3.3	good work
90.9 – 85.0	B	B	3.0	<i>commendable</i> achievement of course goals
84.9 – 83.0	B-		2.7	clearly above average performance
82.9 – 81.0	C+		2.3	acceptable work
80.9 – 75.0	C	C 2.0		<i>satisfactory</i> achievement of course goals
74.9 – 73.0	C-		1.7	average performance
72.9 – 71.0	D+		1.3	minimal work
70.9 – 65.0	D	D 1.0		<i>marginal</i> achievement of course goals
64.9 – 63.0	D-		0.7	below average performance
62.9 -	F		0.0	failure <i>unacceptable</i> work

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar will be provided in the final draft of the syllabus distributed at the first class session.

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