



On-Campus Course Syllabus

OTS 315/715 L00.A

Old Testament Language and Imagery

Spring 2019

Class Information

Day and Time: Monday 8:00-10:30 am

Room Number: E209

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Joel A. Reemtsma, Ph.D.

Instructor Email: jreemtsma@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 907-690-1423

Instructor Office Hours: No regular office hours, but students may schedule meetings on Monday/Tuesday.

Course Description and Prerequisites

A study of the language and imagery of the Old Testament which explores the creative choices made by its human authors in crafting their inspired message with the goal of improving the student's ability to interpret and apply the Word of God. We will explore a variety of contexts that must be brought to bear in this task.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course you should be able to:

1. Know basic concepts and key terms associated with the relationship between words and meaning;
2. Know the exegetical challenges involved with interpreting biblical imagery;
3. Integrate background knowledge about Israelite life and thought into interpretation;
4. Identify and correct common errors of interpretation resulting from a misunderstanding of the way that scriptural authors used language and imagery;
5. Interpret biblical texts by offering likely explanations about why authors made the choices they did.

Required Textbooks

The Holy Bible. Use any version as long as it is a translation, not a paraphrase.

Caird, G. B. *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980.

Sandy, D. Brent. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002.

Course Requirements and Assignments

A. Reading (20%)

You are responsible to read both required textbooks (Caird and Sandy) through twice each. The first reading of both books is due at our second meeting on Monday, February 4th. This first reading only needs to be a skim. Look at each page for a few seconds to familiarize yourself with its contents—spend no more than one hour total on the first read. The second reading will be completed according to the course schedule given below. You will also be responsible to read the biblical books of Job, Proverbs, and Isaiah as well as selected Psalms according to the course schedule. You get full credit for completing the assigned reading by its due date, but only half credit if it is completed later. Reading will be reported along with the two exams.

B. Discussion Groups (10%)

On four separate occasions throughout the semester, students will gather in groups of 3–5 (no more, no less) to discuss what they are learning. Students are responsible to form their own groups, which cannot be the same every time. Each discussion will center on a specific question chosen from a list provided by the professor. Discussion must last at least 30 minutes, and must take place on different dates. Each discussion is worth 2.5% of a student's overall grade, and they are pass/fail assignments. Students will report the completion of discussions along with the date and time they took place, the names of people present, and the question discussed. Discussions must take place in person, not via device.

C. Exegetical Assignments (20%)

These assignments will be handed out in class weekly, and they will be due the following week. A total of 12 such assignments will be given. **Undergraduate (315) students are required to do 7 of the 12 assignments, and graduate (715) students must do all 12.** However, the lowest two scores for both groups of students will be dropped. In these studies, students will be asked a series of questions about selected passages of Scripture designed to help them integrate their understanding of Israelite thought with what they are learning about language and theory in general. These assignments will be graded in class as we work through the selected passages together.

D. Exams (30%)

There will be two exams: a Mid-Term and a Final. They will cover both course lectures and the reading. All exam questions drawn from the reading will be distributed beforehand in a study guide provided by the professor. The dates of the exams are as follows:

Mid-Term Exam	March 4
Final Exam	May 13

E. Papers (20%)

Undergraduate students will only be required to write one paper, which will be worth 20% of their overall grade. Students will be required to identify an OT passage which they feel is frequently misunderstood among evangelical Christians due to a lack of sensitivity to the author's use of language

and/or imagery. In 7–10 double-spaced pages, they must explain the reason for the misunderstanding, offer an alternative interpretation, and defend their interpretation as the correct one. All paper topics must be approved by the professor. The proposed topic of this paper is due March 4th (though students are encouraged to submit proposals prior to this), and the actual paper is due April 8th. Further instructions and a rubric for grading these papers will be provided by the professor.

In addition to this first paper, graduate students will be required to write an additional paper. Each paper will be worth 10% of their grade, respectively. The second paper also allows students their choice of topics, which also must be approved by the professor by March 18. For this assignment, students must identify within course readings or course lectures a substantial claim with which they disagree. In 7–10 double-spaced pages, they must explain the nature of the disagreement, offer a competing claim, and defend this claim. This paper is due April 29, and a grading rubric will be provided by the professor.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Professors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual professors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

Grading Scale

A	97-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	93-96	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	91-92	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	88-90	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	86-87	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	83-85	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	80-82	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	78-79	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	75-77	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	72-74	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	70-71	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-69	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their professors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the grade was assigned, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

In order to ensure full class participation, any student with a disabling condition requiring special accommodations (e.g., tape recorders, special adaptive equipment, special note-taking or test-taking needs) is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor at the beginning of the course, or if a student has a learning disability, please inform the professor so assistance can be provided.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the professor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Resources and Support

Canvas and CAMS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and CAMS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with CAMS should contact the Campus Software Manager at bstifle@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. Pastoral and certified counseling services are also available to Criswell students. Appointments are scheduled through the Dean of Students Jeff Campbell, at jcampbell@criswell.edu.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, go to the library website, or email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu.

Writing Center: Students are encouraged to consult with writing tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence by practicing techniques of clear and effective writing. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Writing Center located on the first floor near the Computer Lab, or they can schedule an appointment by emailing writingcenter@criswell.edu or calling 214.818.1373.

Course Outline/Calendar

Date	Topic/Event	Caird/Sandy Chapter(s)
Jan 28	Introduction to the Course; Words and Images as Choices	
Feb 4	Uses and Abuses of Language; OT Backgrounds	C: Intro + Ch. 1; Job 1–28
Feb 11	Meaning and How it Works; Linguistic Fallacies	C: Chs. 2–3; Job 29–42
Feb 18	Hebrew Thought and Style; Israelite Wisdom	C: Chs. 4–5; Proverbs 1–15
Feb 25	Literary Devices: Modern and Ancient	C: Chs. 7–9; Proverbs 16–31
Mar 4	Mid-Term Exam (Papers #1 Proposal Due)	
	MARCH 11-15, SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS	
Mar 18	Talking About God (Paper #2 Proposal Due*)	C: Chs. 10–11
Mar 25	The Limits of Language	C: Chs. 12–14
Apr 1	The Purpose and Power of Prophecy	S: Chs. 1–2; Isa 1–39
Apr 8	Prophetic Contingency (Paper #1 Due)	S: Ch. 3
Apr 15	Image and Metaphor in the Prophets	S: Ch. 4; Isa 40–66
Apr 22	Image and Metaphor in the Psalms	S: Ch. 5
Apr 29	Special Topics (Paper #2 Due*)	S: Ch. 6
May 6	Course Summation	S: Ch. 7
May 13	Final Exam (All Late Reading Due)	

Please note that this course schedule is a plan, not a prophecy. Or, if it is a prophecy, it is contingent upon our progress! Any adjustments that are made will be to the benefit of the students; i.e. due dates may be pushed back, but not forward.

Suggested Reading

- Chisholm, Robert B. Jr. *Handbook on the Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Fokkelman, J. P. *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.*
- Gibson, J. C. L. *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998.
- Gower, Ralph. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*. Chicago: Moody, 1987.*
- Hoerth, Alfred J., Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds. *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999.*
- Keel, Othmar. *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Translated by Timothy J. Hallet. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns: 1997.
- King, Philip J. and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Oswalt, John N. *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Perdue, Leo G. *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 112. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991.
- Petersen, David L. and Kent Harold Richards. *Interpreting Biblical Poetry*. Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. Gene M. Tucker. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.*
- Sandy, D. Brent. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002.
- Sawyer, John F. A. *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.*