

OT807 Writings Book Study: Daniel and Esther

Fall 2019, Tuesdays 9:30 – 12:15 (Hatfield)
September 10 – December 10

Last revised: *9 July 2019.*

This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the term and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement, and make changes as course needs arise.

PROFESSOR

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Office hours by appointment. Office is in the MacRae House. Straight in, upstairs, turn right.

MISSIO'S MISSION

To prepare missional leaders who incarnate the story of Jesus with humility and authenticity and who communicate the story with fidelity to Scripture, appreciation of the Christian tradition, and sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of postmodern culture.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The books of Daniel and Esther include well-loved stories, often the subjects of Sunday school curriculum and Vacation Bible school programs. However, the lessons these books teach about God and God's people are not just for children. In this class, we'll learn about how God speaks through dreams, and visions, through nature, through friends, family and foreigners. We'll also talk about idolatry, leadership, God's sovereignty, and hearing from God even when he seems to be silent.

Why Daniel and Esther together? Great question. I'll say more about this question in the "Personal Note" (next section), but the main reason to combine them is that they appear together in the Bible. In our English Bibles, Daniel appears among the Prophetic Literature (between Ezekiel and Amos) and Esther appears among the Historical books (between Nehemiah and Job). However, in the Hebrew Bible, Daniel and Esther are both part of the Writings, where they appear as neighbors after Lamentations and before Ezra. In this course we'll discuss the role these books play in the Writings, in the story of God's people in the Old Testament, and how they point toward the New Testament, specifically how they anticipate the coming of Jesus.

PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE PROFESSOR

At first glance, the books of Daniel and Esther appear quite similar. Both tell the tale of a young Israelite who is stranded after the exile in a foreign capital, trying to do what is right, and risking their life in the process. And both have been made into Veggie Tales!

But as we look deeper, the differences emerge. Moving beyond the obvious (a male protagonist in one, a female protagonist in the other), in one book God is front and center, in the other God

appears to be absent. Both are short narrative books, but the second half of Daniel is dominated by apocalyptic dreams and visions. Like the rest of the Old Testament, Esther is all Hebrew, but curiously Daniel includes a long middle section in Aramaic.

And despite these differences, and the lack of an explicit divine reference in one, the sovereignty of God comes through clearly in both. As we study, and discuss these two books, observing similarities and differences, we'll gain a deeper appreciation for the biblical text and the God that inspired it.

COURSE GOALS

My primary goal for this course is to deepen your understanding of, and appreciation for, the books of Daniel and Esther, which will allow you not only to grow in your appreciation for all of God's word, but also to teach powerfully from Old Testament Narrative.

PROGRAM GOALS AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

PROGRAM GOALS	COURSE OBJECTIVES
<i>Goal 1: Students will cultivate grace-based missional lives increasingly characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, and love for God and others.</i>	<i>At the successful completion of the course, you should be able to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on spiritual lessons from the books of Daniel and Esther, and apply them both personally and corporately. 2. Teach from Old Testament Narrative and Apocalyptic in a manner that engages contemporary audiences and challenges them to be involved in all aspects of God's mission to bring all people into relationship with him.
<i>Goal 3: Students will cultivate knowledge of the Bible and ability to humbly interpret & apply it in light of history, culture & genre.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Translate Hebrew with greater proficiency. 4. Passionately study narrative and apocalyptic literature, and interpret them missionally and Christotelically. 5. Articulate the major themes of Daniel and Esther, and discuss their relationship to the rest of Scripture.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

ASSIGNMENT OR ASSESSMENT	RELATED OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF GRADE	ESTIMATED TIME (HOURS)
1. Attendance and participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5%	2
2. Hebrew Quiz	2, 3	5%	3
3. Reading the Writings and required texts	1, 2, 4, 5	15%	30
4. Book Review	1, 2, 4, 5	10%	15
5. Exegetical paper	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30%	30
6. Teaching series	1, 2, 4, 5	15%	15
7. Final exam	2, 4, 5	20%	10
TOTALS		100%	105 hours
8. Discussion forum (Instructor-moderated)	1, 3, 4, 5		2*
*These required assignments involve instruction comparable to what occurs in the classroom (lectures, presentations, and instructor-led activities such as discussions, debates, and collaborative work.			

Note: All assignments must be submitted by the due date listed in the syllabus and no later than the final due date for the course listed in this syllabus. After the final due date, faculty cannot grant students permission to submit late work. See “Completion of Course Work” below.

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

Note: Hyperlinks to Amazon.com are placed here for your convenience. However, please be aware that there may be other websites that may sell the same item for cheaper prices. In addition, some sites offer e-book rental prices for a limited number of weeks. However, be sure to buy the right edition and recognize some of the smaller sellers may not deliver books in a timely fashion.

Boda, M. and **McConville, J. G.** (2011). [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets](#) (= *DOTPr*). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Longman, T. and **Enns, P.** (2008). [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings](#) (= *DOTW*). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Matthews, Victor H. and **Don C. Benjamin.** (2006). [Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East](#). 3rd edition. Paulist Press. (= *OTP*)

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

You do not need to purchase these references, but you will find them helpful:

1) Daniel

- a) **Baldwin, J. G.** (1978). [Daniel](#). (Tyndale) InterVarsity. DTL (= in [the Dig. Theol. Lib.](#))
- b) **Collins, J. J.** (1993). [Daniel](#). (Hermeneia). Fortress. DTL.
- c) **Goldingay, J.** (1989). [Daniel](#). (Word). Nelson.
- d) **Longman III, T.** (1999). [Daniel](#) (NIVAC) Zondervan. DTL.
- e) **Lucas, E. C.** (2002). [Daniel](#). (Apollos) InterVarsity.
- f) **Widder, W.** (2017). [Daniel](#) (Story of God) Zondervan.

2) Esther

- a) **Baldwin, J. G.** (1984). [Esther](#). (Tyndale) InterVarsity.
- b) **Berlin, A.** (2001). [Esther](#). Jewish Publication Society.
- c) **Jobes, K. H.** (1999). [Esther](#). (NIVAC) Zondervan. DTL.
- d) **Bush, F. W.** (1996). [Ruth/Esther](#) (Word) Nelson. DTL.
- e) **Reid, D.** (2008). [Esther](#) (Tyndale) InterVarsity. DTL.

COURSE SCHEDULE WITH TOPIC, ASSIGNMENTS, SUBMISSION METHOD, & DUE DATES

Class	Date (Mon)	Topic	Text	Assignment to be finished	Reading to be finished
1	Sept 10	Introduction to the Writings	Dan. 1:1-4		
2	Sept 17	Daniel 1	Dan. 2:1-4	7. Blog initial post	Daniel. <i>DOTPr</i> Required
3	Sept 24	Daniel 2-3	Dan. 8:1-4	7. Blog 3 responses	<i>DOTPr</i> Additional <i>OTP</i> 329-356
4	Oct 1	Daniel 4-5	Dan. 10:1-4	3. Book Review	Psalms
5	Oct 8	Daniel 6	Dan. 6:19-28	1. Hebrew quiz	Proverbs, Job

6	Oct 15	Daniel 7-8	Dan. 7:1-14		Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations
7	Oct 22	Daniel 9-10	Dan. 9:1-19		Esther <i>DOTW</i> Required
8	Oct 29	Daniel 11-12	Dan. 12:1-13		<i>DOTW</i> Additional
9	Nov 5	Esther 1-2	Est. 1:1-12	4. Exegetical paper	Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Nehemiah
10	Nov 12	Esther 3-5	Est. 4:4-17		1, 2 Chronicles
11	Nov 19	Esther 6-7	Est. 6:1-14	5. Teaching series	
	Nov 26	No class	Thanksgiving		
12	Dec 3	Esther 8-10	Est. 9:18-32	1. Notes. 2. Reading chart	
	Dec 10	Final Exam			

COURSE PROCEDURES & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) **Attendance and participation.** Attend class and participate in discussions as a class and in small groups. For classes 1-12, you will need to prepare a biblical text for the class discussion during the next session. We will study texts in Hebrew (classes 1-4; see #2) and English (classes 5-12). The texts are available as a MS Word file you can download from E-Campus (entitled “Discussion texts”). As you study the text in this way, I am confident that God will honor your efforts and speak to you directly through his word.
 - a) **For the English texts** (classes 5-12), write comments either on a hardcopy of the Word file or into a saved copy of the Word file on your computer. Write in the margins, between the lines, wherever it fits. If using the MS Word file, you can use text boxes or the review feature. Sample passages will be available on the course website. Include comments, observations and questions. Make a note of repeated words, phrases and themes. Note anything unusual, striking and interesting. Be creative. Use colored markers, pens or pencils to highlight important words or trace important ideas (or the highlight feature in MS Word).

- 2) **Hebrew quiz.**
 - a) **For the Hebrew texts** (classes 1-4; **bolded** on Schedule), translate the text into literal English. Portions of these texts will be on the Hebrew quiz (**5th class**). You can use Bible software, but don’t become dependent upon it (no software for the quiz).

- 3) **Reading.** In addition to the required textbooks (*OTP*, *DOTPr* and *DOTW*), read the Writings or *Ketuvim* (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1, 2 Chronicles) for the class and the required readings. I realize that it is difficult to remember details after reading large portions of Scripture, but this type of approach to the biblical text is essential to broaden our understanding of God’s purpose and mission. I will provide you with a chart for you to tick off the completion of your reading assignments (on course website). Turn in reading chart at the last class.
 - a) From ***Old Testament Parallels (OTP)***, read pages 329-356.
 - b) For the reading from ***DOTPr***, there are two types, Required and Additional:

- i) Read all five **Required** articles:
 - (1) Daniel, Book of / Daniel, History of Interpretation / Apocalypticism, Apocalyptic Literature / Word of God / Babylon.
- ii) Read five **Additional** articles selected from among the following articles:
 - (1) Angels, Messengers, Heavenly Beings / Animal Imagery / Aramaic Language / Eschatology / Exile / God / Idols, Idolatry, Gods / Israelite History / Messiah / Prayer / Prophecy and Eschatology in Christian Thought / Visions, Prophetic / Worship / Wrath.
- c) For the reading from *DOTW*, there are two types, Required and Additional:
 - i) Read all five **Required** articles:
 - (1) Esther 1: Book of / Esther 2: Extrabiblical Background / Esther 3: History of Interpretation / Esther 6: Person / Susa.
 - ii) Read five **Additional** articles selected from among the following articles:
 - (1) Ahasuerus / Feminist Interpretation / God / Hermeneutics / Marriage and Sex / Mordecai / Novella, Story, Narrative / Vashti / Women.
- d) If possible, select articles from the additional lists **relevant** to your exegetical paper and then **include** them in your bibliography. List the articles you chose in your Reading Chart.
- e) Fill out the Reading Chart (**due by the 12th class**) as you finish your reading assignments for each class.

For all submitted papers in this course (assignments 3, 4, 5):

- a) **Look over** the assignment **rubric** on E-Campus, which explains the grading.
 - i) **Print out** a copy of the rubric and attach it to the end of your assignment.
 - b) **Submit** hard-copies in class by the due date.
 - i) Assignments submitted electronically will lose 2%.
 - ii) Late assignments will lose 1% per day late.
 - c) **Don't include** a title page. Put name, date and the class on the top of the first page.
 - d) **Use** 12-point font, double-spaced lines and 1" to 1.25" margins on all 4 sides.
 - e) **Include** page numbers and print double-sided if possible.
 - f) **State** the word count at the **beginning** of the paper.
- 4) **Book Review.** Write a book review (800-1000 words) on a **monograph** (over 150 pages) on either Daniel or Esther. For ideas for monographs to write about see the bibliographies (under "Studies") in the articles "Daniel, Book of" (*DOTPr*) or "Esther 1: Book of" (*DOTW*). Many of these books won't be in the Missio library, but you should be able to get them from other libraries (Westminster, Princeton, U. of Pennsylvania), or in the Missio E-Book collection.
- a) I would suggest selecting a book relevant to your exegetical paper.
 - b) State the title & author in your first paragraph. Give bibliographic information in a footnote.
 - c) Summarize the structure and main points of the book.
 - d) Refer to the author by last name frequently (e.g., "Lamb states...").
 - e) Discuss how well the book engages the biblical text.
 - f) Critically analyze the book, discussing strengths and weaknesses. Support your perspective with Scripture, scholars, or other arguments.
 - g) Engage with other relevant scholarship as appropriate.
 - h) **Turn in** your paper in hard copy by **the 4th class**.

- 5) **Exegetical paper.** For this paper (**3500-4000 words**) choose a passage (10-20 verses) within the books of Daniel and Esther. This paper will help you gain important exegetical skills which will prove invaluable whenever you teach from the Bible.
- a) **Writing suggestions:**
- i) **Make** an outline and follow it. For a paper of this length, an outline with 6-10 main points should suffice. Each main point could become a paragraph. Submit your outline with your paper at the beginning.
 - ii) **Use** topic sentences for your paragraphs. The first sentence typically explains the main point of the paragraph and then the following sentences of the paragraph support the topic sentence.
 - iii) **Avoid** “I think”, “I feel”, “I believe”, but rather state what you think without qualifiers. Compare: In my opinion I think it is best to avoid “I think”, “I feel”, “I believe”, since I believe you should state what you think without qualifiers.
 - iv) **Avoid** “weasel words”. See [this Wikipedia article](#).
 - v) **Limit** yourself to one exclamation point and one usage of the word “very” per essay! For some of you, this will be very painful, but in this case, pain is very good!
 - vi) **Don’t** use contractions (e.g., isn’t, can’t, I’d, don’t, I’ll), but within parenthetical comments I’ll allow you to use e.g. (= for example) and i.e. (= that is).
- b) **Guidelines for an exegetical paper:**
- i) **Give** your paper an interesting and relevant title. Include reference at the end.
 (1) For example, “Daniel’s Dangerous Dream (Daniel 7:1-8).”
 - ii) **Start** by explaining what the passage is and why it is significant.
 - iii) **Analyze** the structure of the passage. How does it fit together? How does it flow?
 - iv) **Explain** how the text fits into the larger context of the sections before and after as well as the entire book.
 - v) **Focus** on the text. Note repeated words/themes, significant observations and questions that arise from your study of the text. Observe narrative or poetic forms. Frequently refer to the passage and always cite specific references.
 - vi) **Draw** out what you think the main point of the passage is. Allude to this point in the title of your paper (do not call it, “Exegetical Paper on X passage”).
 - vii) **Tell** the reader where you are going. It is often helpful in your introduction to explain your plan or outline. This does not need to be boring or formulaic, but it will clarify the flow and direction of your paper. Here is an example from my book (*Righteous Jehu*):
 (1) Before looking specifically at violence within Jehu’s narrative (2.5.1.3), a brief discussion of relevant texts from the ANE (2.5.1.1) and elsewhere in the DH (2.5.1.2) will show that, while shedding innocent blood is condemned, bloodshed in judicial and military contexts is viewed positively, particularly when divinely sanctioned. Hosea’s condemnation of Jehu’s bloodshed will then be examined (2.5.1.4), followed by an analysis of the views of two scholars (Olyan and White) on Jehu’s ascension (2.5.1.5).
 - viii) **Utilize** 4-5 commentaries or other references in a critical manner (study Bibles do not count). Include your opinion and evaluate the views of scholars, showing why you agree or disagree. Move beyond mere summary and description to evaluation and critique. Although a statement like “I think Mays is correct...” is evaluative, it can be improved: “Mays’ theory of X is compelling (or “attractive”, “valid”) because of Y and Z”. Give reasons and support your arguments.

- ix) **Use at least 3** commentaries that focus exclusively upon the book you have chosen (i.e., that are **not** 1-volume OT or entire Bible commentaries) and were written in the last 30-40 years (i.e., **not** Calvin, Clarke or Henry). You can use these resources, but you need to use others as well, which will probably involve a trip to the library. Good commentary series to use: Word, Tyndale/IVP, NICOT, Interpretation, Anchor, OT Library.
 - x) **Use at least 2** articles from either DOTPr/DOTW. Here's a sample bibliography entry: (1) Hess, R. S., "Adam." Pages 18-21 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander, and David W. Baker. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
 - xi) **Use at least 2** academic articles that you found using [the DTL](#).
 - xii) **Avoid** including long quotations from secondary literature. Simply summarize scholarly views briefly.
 - xiii) **Argue** for your perspective on what is the main point of the passage.
 - xiv) **Conclude** with an application based on the message of the text. Make it culturally relevant and missional.
- c) **References:**
- i) **Include** a bibliography at the end of your paper on a separate page listing all the sources that were used, alphabetized by **last** name of author. Here's a sample entry: (1) Lamb, David T. *Righteous Jehu and his Evil Heirs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
 - ii) For references, I recommend using the author-date system. In the body of your paper, simply say, "As Murphy concludes (2002: 54) ..." Then in your bibliography give the full reference to Murphy. (Murphy was published in 2002 and the 54 is the page number in Murphy that you are referring to). Or you could say, "As a variety of scholars have argued (e.g., Murphy 2002: 54; deClaissé-Walford 2004: 98)..."
- d) **Turn in** your paper in hard copy by **the 9th class**.
- 6) **Teaching series.** Arrange a series of 4 teaching sessions from either Daniel or Esther. Select a theme to unify your series and include a provocative title. For each session focus on a different text from the book. I recommend making one of your 4 passages the text upon which you wrote your exegetical paper. This assignment will bring together all of what we have discussed in this course into a series that you can use in your ministries.
- a) Give your series and each session a creative title.
 - b) In your **introduction** (less than a page):
 - i) **State** which book (not books) you have selected and why.
 - ii) **Explain** what type of teaching it will be (sermon, Bible study, seeker-friendly discussion, children's Sunday school class, etc.).
 - iii) **Describe** who the audience is.
 - iv) **Discuss** how the series of sessions fits together. What is the progression? How have you organized it and why?
 - c) For each of the **4 sessions** (a page or less per session, detailed outlines are acceptable):
 - i) For this assignment, you don't need to double-space. But make each page look good.
 - ii) **State** the passage the session will focus on (but don't include the passage in your notes, since that would take up most of the page). Limit the text to a reasonable size (5-25 verses).
 - iii) **Give** the main point and explain how you will emphasize it.

- (1) Which questions you will use? For discussions, avoid Yes/No questions (“Do you ever speak to God like Moses did?”). Use more open-ended questions.
 - (2) What sub-points you will make?
 - (3) What stories you will tell?
 - iv) **Use** creative means (media, visual aids, music, etc.) to get your point across.
 - v) **Make** a missional application. Address questions along the following lines:
 - (1) How does this passage speak to (affirm or confront) your cultural context?
 - (2) How are you encouraging your audience to reach out and be involved in ministry based on this text?
 - (3) What types of people might be particularly encouraged by this text?
 - (4) How does the session challenge people’s perceptions of God?
 - (5) What concrete steps would you exhort people to take?
 - d) **Turn in** your assignment in hard copy form by **the 11th class**.
- 7) **Final Exam.** The multiple-choice final exam (closed Bible, notes and books) will taken on E-Campus by midnight **Tues, Dec. 10**. To study, review the readings, but focus on class notes.
- 8) **Blog post**
- a) **Write a blog** about a passage from Daniel or Esther (300-400 words by **class #2**). For examples, check out my blog ([DavidTLamb](#)), particularly under Judges (under “Past Posts”).
 - i) Select a passage that is interesting, weird, or confusing.
 - ii) Study the passage, and then write up your observations, interpretations and applications in a word processing program (e.g., MS Word).
 - iii) Title your blog something interesting or provocative.
 - iv) Conclude your post with an open-ended **question** that flows from your discussion.
 - v) Cut and paste your posts into the course website online forum.
 - b) **Comment on three blog posts** of your classmates (100-120 words by **class #3**).
 - i) Respond to their question with your thoughts, ideas and a question of your own.
 - c) **Posting directions:** 1) Go to the E-Campus site, 2) Click on “Blogging forum”, 3) Click “add a new discussion topic”, 4) Type a subject, paste your response from MS Word, 5) Click “Post to forum”. For your replies repeat the process, except read over someone’s initial post, then click on “Reply”.
 - d) Don’t spend more than 2 hours on this assignment.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY AND ACADEMIC POLICIES

1. **Academic Policies:** Students are fully responsible to know and follow all seminary rules, regulations, and deadlines published in the Academic Catalog (on E-Campus) and all requirements concerning their degree programs.
2. **Course Syllabus:** Students are fully responsible to know and fulfill the requirements stated in the course syllabus. Students should email the professor about issues related to course work and deadlines during the course. See the Academic Catalog (on E-Campus) for policies on course extensions.
3. **E-campus Course Site:** Students are fully responsible for course content and materials that are posted on the course site. Students are encouraged to check the course site frequently

during the course. Students who experience difficulty accessing or using the E-campus should email helpdesk@missio.edu and include their student ID# in their correspondence.

4. **Academic and General Integrity:** As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to integrity and Christ-likeness in all areas of life. What this means in the academic realm is that the completion of all assignments and assessments are to reflect your own work. Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive a grade of zero on the assessment and will follow the process outlined in the Academic Catalog. See the Academic Catalog (on E-Campus) for more information on plagiarism and policies related to cheating and plagiarism.
5. **Attendance Policy and Grades.** Students are expected to login to the E-campus course site regularly and participate in the course activities in a timely manner. If you miss more than one class session your participation grade will be lowered.
6. **Completion of Course Work.** All course work is to be completed by the last day of classes for the term or by the date posted in the course syllabus. Extensions to this time limit will be made only by the academic affairs committee. The individual faculty member does not have the authority to grant any extensions of time beyond the last class of the term. Requests for extensions must be made in writing to the committee at least one week prior to the last day of classes. Variance forms for this purpose are available in the academic office or on Missio's website. All requests should specify the reasons for the extension and the length of the extension desired. Requests are not automatically granted.
7. **Student Course Evaluations.** Student course evaluations are an important part of Missio's commitment to continuous improvement. Students are required to complete the course evaluation within one week of the final due date of the course. See Missio's Catalog for more information.

GRADING SYSTEM

To remain in good academic standing, a student must maintain the grade point average designated for his or her program (see Missio's Catalog for details).

MISSIO SEMINARY GRADING SYSTEM			
A	4.00	93.0 -100	Superior
A-	3.67	90.0 – 92.9	
B+	3.33	87.0 – 89.9	
B	3.00	83.0 – 86.9	Good
B-	2.67	80.0 – 82.9	
C+	2.33	77.0 – 79.9	
C	2.00	73.0 – 76.9	Fair
C-	1.70	70.0 – 72.9	
D+	1.30	67.0 – 69.9	Poor
D	1.00	63.0 – 66.9	
D-	.70	60.0 – 62.9	
F	0.00	00. - 59.9	Failing