

Ecclesiastes Seminar
 Instructor: R. V. McCabe, Th.D.
 Course Outline

Central Baptist Theological Seminary
 Spring Semester
 2009

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A seminar on the background, exegetical content and theology of the book of Ecclesiastes within the broader context of wisdom literature and Scripture as a whole.

OBJECTIVES:

In this seminar the student will

1. translate the entire book of Ecclesiastes,
2. become more precise at identifying grammatical and syntactical forms,
3. demonstrate an awareness of key introductory issues in this book,
4. cultivate skill in treating exegetical and theological issues in Ecclesiastes,
5. become familiar with germane literature associated with Ecclesiastes,
6. gain greater precision in doing independent research, and
7. be able to communicate the results of his research in lucid, scholarly written form.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Reading Requirement—5% of grade

The overall reading requirement for this seminar is 4672 pages. This is divided into two segments: the preliminary reading (3672 pages) and the final reading requirements (1000 pages).

a. Preliminary Reading (3672 pages)

Before the first meeting of the seminar, each participant must read and be conversant with the following sources (the Course Bibliography is on pp. 6–7; if you want a more complete bibliography on Ecclesiastes, go to <http://www.oldtestamentstudies.org/my-papers/current-writing-project/>). The reading report attached to this course outline will initially be submitted on Wednesday, January 14. After the reading is officially recorded, the report will be returned to the student so that he can use it to complete the remainder of his reading.

- Bartholomew (1998), pp. 237–54
- Bartholomew (1999), pp. 4–20
- Caneday, pp. 21–56
- Christianson, pp. 17–86, 87–98, 247–55
- Eaton, pp. 9–159
- Ellul, pp. 1–303
- Estes, pp. 271–392
- Fox (1999), pp. ix–377
- Fredericks (1988), pp. 1–278
- Fredericks (1993), pp. 11–97
- Garrett, pp. 253–345
- Glenn, pp. 975–1007
- Hubbard (1991), pp. 15–255
- Johnston, pp. 24–28
- Kidner, pp. 13–110

Krüger, pp. 1–215
 Longman, pp. 1–40, 106–7, 118–21, 230–31
 McCabe (1996), pp. 85–112
 Miller, pp. 53–156
 Murphy, pp. xix–155
 Ogden, pp. 11–239
 Perdue, pp. 194–205
 Reitman, pp. 297–317
 Rudman, pp. 11–206
 Ryken (1987), pp. 268–80
 Seow, pp. ix–396
 Shead, pp. 24–37
 Waltke, pp. 946–69
 Whybray, pp. 87–98
 Wilson, pp. 9–125
 Wright, A. G., pp. 313–34
 Wright, J. S., pp. 133–50

b. Final Reading (1000 pages)

With the student's final three assignments, he is required to do an additional 1000 pages of additional reading. He should keep track of it on his reading report and submit it to the instructor on Monday, April 13.

c. Reading Grade

If the seminar participant completes all the assigned reading in accordance with the reading schedule, he will receive a grade of 100%. If the student does not complete the assignment on schedule, he will have 1% subtracted from 100% for every 50 pages that he is short of the total 4672 pages.

A reading report with the preliminary 3672 pages will be submitted to the instructor on Wednesday, January 14, and a report with the final 1000 pages on Monday, April 13.

2. Translation Requirements—**20% of grade**

The grade for the translation requirement is based on two items: the student compiling a translation notebook and his being able to orally translate and interact with the assigned portions of Ecclesiastes.

In reference to a translation notebook, every student must translate all twelve chapters of the Hebrew text for Ecclesiastes with the prescribed commentaries and to make a translation notebook. With his translation notebook, each seminar participant will not only write out a translation of Ecclesiastes but he must also record the more difficult verbs that need to be parsed, unusual grammatical forms identified, and be cross referenced with the commentaries that he is required to read, though he does not need to limit himself to the required sources. Part of your translation grade is determined by whether or not you have kept, according to my specifications, a translation notebook. The notebooks will be reviewed on Wednesday, January 14.

About the oral translation work, it will not be necessary for each seminar participant to translate on sight all twelve chapters. **Since there are two seminar participants, each one will orally translate, with no notes to assist, six chapters of Ecclesiastes. Here is how this will break down on a day-by-day basis. On Wednesday, January 14, Gelu Pacurar will translate Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:26 and Tim Little Eccl 3:1–4:17. On Thursday, Jan 15, Tim Little will translate Eccl 5:1–6:19 and Gelu Pacurar Eccl 7:1–8:17. On Friday, Jan 16, Gelu Pacurar will translate Eccl 9:1–10:20 and Tim Little Eccl 11:1–12:14. For example, when a student is called on to translate, he must be ready to orally translate on sight the material assigned to him. When a student is not called on to translate, he may follow along with his translation notebook and Hebrew Bible.**

If you do not feel comfortable with your knowledge of Hebrew, I would highly recommend that you procure *A Reader's Hebrew Bible* by A. Philip Brown and Bryan W. Smith to use for the translation requirements.

3. Papers on Introductory and Interpretative Issues—**10% of grade**

One of the objectives of this seminar is to make the student aware of key introductory and interpretative issues in Qohelet studies. Another objective is for the student to be familiar with the scholarly literature pertaining to these issues. The intent of this assignment is to advance these two objectives. Each seminar participant will be prepared for the following assignments by reading the assigned material in advance of the scheduled assignment and by being prepared to orally interact on each assigned reading. In addition, at least one student will be assigned the task of leading each discussion. The group leader(s) for each assignment will prepare a **two to three** page paper that summarizes and evaluates the assigned reading. The schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, January 14

- 1) History of the Interpretation of Ecclesiastes—the discussion will be lead by **Tim Little**.
Read Christianson, pp. 17–86; Bartholomew (1999), pp. 4–13
- 2) Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes—the discussion will be lead by **Gelu Pacurar**.
Read Christianson, pp. 87–98; **Eaton**, pp. 17–24; Longman (1998), pp. 2–11; Garrett, pp. 254–67
- 3) Genre of Ecclesiastes—the discussion will be lead by **Tim Little**.
Read Perdue, pp. 194–205; Fox (1999), pp. 153–55; Krüger, pp. 8–14; Longman (1998), pp. 15–20; Bartholomew (1999), pp. 13–16

Thursday, January 15

- 4) Structure of Ecclesiastes—the discussion will be lead by **Gelu Pacurar**.
Read Seow, pp. 43–47; Kaiser, pp. 19–24; Krüger, pp. 5–8; Reitman, pp. 297–317; A. G. Wright (1968), pp. 313–34
- 5) Function of the Postscript in Ecclesiastes 12:9–14—the discussion will be lead by **Tim Little**.
Read Christianson, pp. 247–55; Murphy, pp. 126–30; Seow, pp. 382–96; Shead, pp. 24–37

Friday, January 16

- 6) Use of *Hebel* in Ecclesiastes—the discussion of *hebel* is divided into two parts. the discussion of Fredericks and Ogden will be lead by **Gelu Pacurar**; and the discussion of Miller by **Tim Little**.

(1) Read Fredericks (1993), pp. 11–32; Ogden, pp. 21–26; (2) Miller (2002), pp. 53–156;

- 7) Significance of Carpe Diem Motifs for the Interpretation of Ecclesiastes—the discussion will be lead by **Gelu Pacurar**.

Read Longman’s discussions of the carpe diem passages at three junctures pp. 106–7 (introduction to 2:24–26), 118–21 (at 3:11), pp. 230–31 (at 9:9), J. S. Wright (1972), pp. 133–50; Johnston, pp. 14–28; Ryken, pp. 268–80; Whybray, pp. 87–98; Bartholomew (1998), pp. 237–54 (Bartholomew’s work is currently out-of-print; if Central’s library does not have a copy, you should email me and I will send you a .pdf of these pages).

4. Seminar Research Paper—**40% of grade**

The research paper is the student’s major contribution to the seminar. Each paper must develop a thesis that uses an exegetical treatment and thorough research to support this thesis. The paper must not be a report but must provide a significant contribution to our understanding of Ecclesiastes. The body of the paper must not exceed 20 pages. If it exceeds 20 pages, the grade will be penalized. The paper must be in each seminar participant’s hands **one full week** before Monday, April 13.

On Monday, April 13, and Tuesday, April 14, each student will defend his paper. The seminar participant’s defense of his paper is also factored into the final grade for his paper. The maximum allotted time for the defense is **30 minutes**. The breakdown for the grade is this.

Content and argument, use of sources	75%
Form and mechanics	10%
<u>Paper’s defense</u>	<u>15%</u>
Overall percentile grade	100%

In collaboration with the instructor, the student should choose a passage, perhaps a series of passages, where he can use an exegetical methodology to establish a significant thesis. There are a number of places that need work in Ecclesiastes. Here are a few examples.

The Extent of Determinism in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8

The Good that God Seeks (3:15) in Ecclesiastes 3:9–15

What Does the Allegory in Ecclesiastes 12:1–7 Describe?

As the student translates the book of Ecclesiastes and reads the various sources, he should formulate a hypothesis about where he can make an exegetical and theological contribution.

5. Response to a Colleague’s Research Paper—**10% of grade**

Each seminar participant will respond to the paper of another student for a maximum of **30 minutes**. The respondent should provide a three to five page response for each of the seminar's participant. Each student should follow these guidelines:

- a. The response should explicitly identify the writer's thesis and focus on the paper's content and argument.
 - b. Criticism should be made about those places where the writer is uninformed, misinformed, inconsistent, incomplete in his research, or misinterprets through faulty assumptions or procedures.
 - c. **Questions should not be directed to the writer.** If the writer has not been clear, this should be presented as a criticism. Questions can be asked when the writer defends his paper.
 - d. The evaluation should be presented in a logical, topical format. Do not go seriatim through the paper pointing out criticisms. If a problem recurs, the criticism should focus on examples and not every occurrence.
 - e. When a significant contribution has been made, the response should be positive.
 - f. The response should also include an overall evaluation of the paper.
6. Critical Book Review—**10%**.

An asterisk (*) has been placed before nine books in the following "Course Bibliography." In collaboration with the instructor, the student is to choose one of the nine books to critique, though it is possible to suggest another significant book related to Ecclesiastes. The student's choice of a book must be approved by the instructor no later than Friday, January 16, 2009.

Each seminar participant will write a five to ten page critique and make copies of his book review available for each of the seminar's participants. The critiques will be presented on Monday, April 13, and Tuesday, April 14 and allotted **30 minutes** for each critique followed by a time for the other students to interact.

Here are some guidelines for writing a book critique.

- a. A critique, in its most basic form, is an examination of the content of a specific chapter, article, or book and an evaluation of the effectiveness of this material so that the reviewer's audience can make an objective assessment of the source's value (for details on this type of critique, a good starting point is a decent high school or college grammar book that includes a section on writing book reviews should be consulted). Items that this critique should include are these:
 - 1) an identification of the type and subject of this chapter;
 - 2) a description of the author's background in order to provide relevant information concerning the author's presuppositions undergirding his work (background information may be drawn from areas such as specific, *yet pertinent*, vocational information, memberships in societies, accessible lectures, articles, reviews, books [if drawn from internet, which should be checked, include internet addresses]);
 - 3) a condensation of the author's thesis into one or two sentences;
 - 4) an accurate presentation of the author's view with the most significant argument(s) to support his case;

- 5) an objective evaluation of the author's conclusion(s) and the argumentation used to support this (such as inconsistencies in author's logic, logical inconsistencies with scientific data, prejudicial use of sources, etc.);
 - 6) an identification of the theological perspective of the author and a critical interaction with this perspective;
 - 7) a reflection of being conversant with any other germane literature dealing with the subject addressed in the article (yes, footnotes must be used); and
 - 8) a brief, concluding assessment of the book and a statement about the audience to whom this chapter is applicable; the assessment should be either a commendation or denunciation of the book, or, as is true in most cases, an assessment somewhere between these two extremes; with this assessment, the most significant reason for the assessment should be explained.
- b. In order to reduce some of the ambiguity associated with a critical review, the following five critiques illustrate the type of work that I desire.

DeYoung, Donald B. Review of *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, by Davis A. Young. *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (Fall 1983): 297–301.

Gaffin, Richard B., Jr. Review of *A New Paradigm in Theology*, by Gordon J. Spykman. *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (Fall 1994): 379–90.

Jones, Brian. Review of *Darwin's Black Box*, by Michael J. Behe. *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 2000): 125–34.

Schreiner, Thomas R. Review of *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, by Stanley J. Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo. *Trinity Journal* 17 (Spring 1996): 115–24.

Southwell, Andrew. Review of *The History of the Christ*, by Adolf Schlatter. *Trinity Journal* 20 (Spring 1999): 91–95.

7. Seminar Participation—5% of grade

Each student will be assigned a grade for his participation or lack of participation in the seminar, as well as his interaction in a Qohelet web group. This is primarily based on the quality of the student's participation, not necessarily the quantity. The web group is at <http://groups.google.com/group/qohelet09>. It is primarily through this web group that we will stay in contact about this seminar. To become a member of this group, send me an email at rmccabe@dbts.edu and I will register you.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Estes, Daniel J. *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
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- _____. *Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*. The Communicator's Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1991.
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CENTRAL BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PhD Reading Report

Due Dates: Wed, Jan 14, 2009 & Mon, Apr 13, 2009

Course Ecclesiastes Seminar

Name _____

Author	Title	Req Pages	Total	Tot Read	Date Comp
Bartholomew	"Qoheleth in the Canon?!"	4-20	17		
Bartholomew	<i>Reading Ecclesiastes</i>	237-54	18		
Caneday	"Qoheleth: Enigmatic Pessimist...?"	21-56	36		
Christianson	<i>Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries</i>	17-86	70		
Christianson	<i>Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries</i>	87-98	12		
Christianson	<i>Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries</i>	247-55	8		
Eaton	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	9-159	151		
Ellul	<i>Reason for Being: A Meditation on Eccl</i>	1-303	303		
Estes	<i>Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms</i>	271-392	122		
Fox	<i>A Time to Tear Down & A Time to Build Up</i>	ix-377	386		
Fredericks	<i>Qohelet's Language</i>	1-278	278		
Fredericks	<i>Coping with Transience</i>	11-97	87		
Garrett	<i>Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs</i>	253-345	93		
Glenn	"Ecclesiastes"	975-1007	33		
Hubbard	<i>Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon</i>	15-255	241		
Johnston	"Confessions of a Workaholic"	14-28	15		
Kidner	<i>The Message of Ecclesiastes</i>	13-110	98		
Krüger	<i>Qoheleth</i>	1-215	215		
Longman	<i>The Book of Ecclesiastes</i>	1-40	40		
Longman	<i>The Book of Ecclesiastes</i>	106-7	2		
Longman	<i>The Book of Ecclesiastes</i>	118-21	4		
Longman	<i>The Book of Ecclesiastes</i>	230-31	2		
McCabe	"The Message of Ecclesiastes"	85-112	28		
Miller	<i>Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes</i>	53-156	104		
Murphy	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	xix-155	225		
Ogden	<i>Qoheleth</i>	11-239	229		
Perdue	<i>Wisdom and Creation</i>	194-205	8		
Reitman	"The Structure and Unity of Ecclesiastes."	297-317	19		

