



Ketuvim: The Feminine Books of Hebrew Scriptures
RELS 4000-002, 5000-002; WGST 4050-005, WGST 5050-004 Denny 102
Instructor: Dr. Barbara Thiede
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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

You agree to abide by the provisions of this syllabus when you enroll in this course.

Course Description: The Book of Ruth, the Book of Esther, Song of Songs, and the Book of Lamentations present the reader with powerful female characters and archetypes. We'll explore the historical context, literary themes, and theological assumptions of these texts while interrogating their representation of female characters, especially in regard to issues of gender, power, and identity.

Course Goals:

- *What I hope for:* You come out of this course with enough knowledge about the “female” books of the Hebrew Bible to avoid facile and general statements about the text. You are able to demonstrate that the text, where women is concerned, is multivalent.
- *What you can achieve (and I can measure):* The extent to which you attain and produce the top-notch work of student-scholars: Coming to supportable conclusions and generating original ways to think and argue about the material.
- *My job is:* To help make the material accessible for you, to clarify arguments, to encourage discussion, and to provide feedback on your work.

Ten Rules for Classroom Engagement

1. **On religious views:** Some of us profess a religion or claim a particular faith. Some of us don't. But this class is not a forum for the expression of religious views. Among other things, we will read, analyze, and deconstruct religious texts in their historical context. Explaining texts with personal beliefs about divine will and intention would be perfectly fine in a seminary setting where people are learning to be religious leaders – not so for the university classroom, however. You must be prepared to leave your personal religious beliefs at the door and think about the material as a scholar and an academic.
2. **On keeping on top of developments:** Come to class prepared. Check your email at least once every day.
3. **Literacy is fundamental:** Homework assignments must be typed. Correct spelling, punctuation, comprehensible grammar, complete sentences, fully developed paragraphs with specific examples, and the like are essential skills. I'll supply some resources to help with writing skills, but please be aware that work which does not conform to academic literary standards cannot receive a passing grade.
4. **Class discussion** is encouraged, of course. Before each class, make sure you have done the reading and thought about it so you can participate with clarity, honesty, and intelligence. Such things are highly valued by your instructor. Please remember that students come from many backgrounds and may have different opinions: *If you cannot be respectful during discussions, you will be asked to leave.*
5. **Respect the Instructor and your classmates:** The instructor of this course is to be addressed in communications as “Dr. Thiede” or “Prof. Thiede.” Please address your fellow students by the name they prefer in class.
6. **Respect the instructor's time:** Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert will hunt an antelope by running it to death, chasing after it until it literally collapses from heat exhaustion. Please let this amazing show of perseverance inspire you when *you* go hunting for information. For example, before you send an email

asking for an exam time, what pages were assigned, or the like, please check course documents like the syllabus first. I answer necessary emails with enthusiasm. ☺

7. **You are entitled to the grade you earn:** Higher education is not, alas, free. But paying for the course is not paying for a grade. To receive a passing grade you must produce passing work. What you put into the course is exactly what you will get out of it. To that end, the standards for extra credit work are high in this class: While students are free to choose any topic they wish, it must be of sufficient quality to win the author a nomination for the Nobel Prize in Religious Studies. Any extra credit work without proof of nomination will be rejected out of hand.¹ ☹
8. **Respect your classmates, who deserve their privacy.** Do not give fellow students personal information or email addresses to outsiders who are not a part of this class. Class lists may not be used to advertise your particular affiliations, student groups, and the like. This constitutes spamming other students. The Student Organization Handbook explicitly states that “Student organizations may not disclose or collect information in e-mails that they are privileged to access because of their position at the University.” Class time and student emails are not to be used to promote personal viewpoints, agendas, or organizations you might belong to.
9. **We like guests, but....** Any guests may attend this class *only with the written permission of the instructor.*
10. **Respect yourself!** If you have any issues that might compromise your ability to perform well in this class, please inform the instructor **as soon as the issue is relevant.** Think of this class as a nice residential home. If you had a serious problem with the house, such as an infestation of Australian killer wombats, you would want to do something about it as soon as possible. You would not want to wait until the last moment, for instance, when the wombats have eaten all your gardenias, and are about to construct an ICBM to demolish your house for good. Similarly, you should inform the instructor of any issues early, when something can still be done. Please.

Attendance Policies: Policies below are from the *UNCC Faculty Handbook* and the UNC-system handbook:

1. Students are expected to attend **punctually all** scheduled sessions in the courses for which they are registered and are responsible for completing the work from all class sessions.
2. Students who miss class are responsible for the work missed.
3. Instructors are not required to give make-up tests except in the case of religious observance (see below).
4. You must be **on time** to be counted as present. If you are not on time, ***you will be marked absent for that day.***
5. Students **may not** miss more than two classes without seriously affecting their grade.

Absence Policy:

- **1 absence:** You miss the benefit of any class announcements about changes or expectations, you will miss critical lecture material and class discussion. **It is your responsibility** to acquire notes and information from other students. If you miss class, we will not repeat lectures, quizzes, or exams given in that class. (See 2 & 3 above.)
- **2 absences:** the “benefit of the doubt” will be lost when calculating final grades.
- **3 absences:** ½ letter grade will be deducted from the final grade for the course.
- **4 absences:** 1 letter grade will be deducted from the final grade for the course.
- **5 and more:** student will receive an automatic “F” for the course.

¹ Please remember that the Nobel Committee only releases the list of nominees fifty years after their candidacy. Therefore, you should consider getting your work done well in advance.

All assignments are due at their announced dates and times. In other words (and please note well), there will be **NO MAKEUP OPPORTUNITIES** scheduled except in the case of a **documented emergency**. Completing work on time is mandatory.

Please note: Documented emergencies do **NOT** include:

- Having to seek medical care for routine illnesses or scheduling medical appointments during class hours.
- Your car breaking down.
- Similar unforeseen issues.

Plan for emergencies. Assume that you are likely to *have to miss class for some unforeseen reason*. You have one day to do exactly that without penalty. Attend class all the time so you have one day in reserve to have at the ready for unforeseen circumstances.

Religious Observance: Students may take two absences for religious observance *per academic year*. Students must fill out the “Request for Accommodation for Religious Observance” form and turn it in prior to the census day (August 30) to be granted such an absence. See (<http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-134.html>) and (<http://legal.uncc.edu/sites/legal.uncc.edu/files/media/policies/ps-134-AccommodationForm.pdf>).

Course Syllabus: The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by email notice. If you miss class, be sure to ask other students (not me) if there were important announcements you should note.

Instructor’s absence or tardiness: You must wait a full 15 minutes after the start of class before you may leave without being counted absent, or follow any written instructions about anticipated tardiness.

Disability accommodations: Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Preferred Gender Pronoun

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than the one indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Grading (Undergraduate students):

Class participation:	5 pts.
In-class quizzes:	15 pts.
Two short essays (1000-1200 words each):	25 pts. each, 50 pts total.
Final paper (1500-1650 words):	30 pts.

Grading (Graduate students):

Class participation:	5 pts.
In-class quizzes:	15 pts.
2 article reviews (1000-1200 words each):	25 pts each, 50 pts total.
Final research paper (3,000-3,200 words):	30 pts.

Required books:

Most of your reading is on our Canvas site. But you will need your own copies of the following books.

- *The Jewish Study Bible*, second edition (Oxford UP: 2014) ISBN-10: 0199978468 / ISBN-13: 978-0199978465
- Timothy Beal, *The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther* (London: Routledge, 1997). ISBN-10: 0415167795 / ISBN-13: 978-0415167796

Writing: Please read this carefully; if you feel unable to meet the standards of the course, you may want to reconsider your decision.

I can't overemphasize the importance your writing will have for assessing your work in this course. This is a senior-level undergraduate course / graduate level course. At this point in your academic career, you should be able to produce an essay that is well-organized, free of spelling and grammatical mistakes, and with accurate and adequate citations. If your reader (that's me!) is distracted by a plethora of errors, your effectiveness suffers – and so does your grade. At least 25% of your grade on any writing assignment will focus on cleanliness and clarity in your copy. This means that the following elements will be graded and their weight when the total points you earn add up will be significant:

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Syntax
- Punctuation
- Citations (in appropriate Turabian form)

I will keep track of the kind of errors I find in your work and if these reappear on later papers, there will be an effect on your grade. In other words, improvement counts and ignoring issues will cost you.

Some general advice:

- Make sure you keep every paper or essay you write narrowly focused; the more you generalize, the less effective you will be.
- Aim for clarity and accuracy; while I appreciate originality, clarity and accuracy are what I most hope for.
- Do not hesitate to see me about any writing assignment – I'll be glad to try and make my own expectations as clear as I can.

You should familiarize yourself with, and conform your conduct to, the University's Code of Student Academic Integrity (legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407). Plagiarism on any assignment will result, at a minimum, in a failing grade for the course.

The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

90 – 100	A	=	demonstrable mastery of material; can creatively synthesize
80 – 89	B	=	some demonstrable proficiency in control of material & analysis
70 – 79	C	=	satisfactory performance of assignments; little or no analysis
60 – 69	D	=	inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material
0 – 59	F	=	unacceptable work

Assigned readings are listed on the day they are due to be completed.

Module 1 – Theoretical Concerns and Data from the Field	
Aug. 20	<p>Introduction to the Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting course parameters, creating community, Reviewing the syllabus, learning active reading.
Aug. 22	<p>What is Hebrew Bible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hebrew Bible – Talmud (Written and Oral Torah) Chart Richard Friedman, “Collection of Evidence.” Tod Linafelt, “Narrative and Poetic Art in the Book of Ruth,” <i>Interpretation</i>, 63 (April 2010), read from pp. 117-122 (though you can read the rest if you like...).
Aug. 27	<p>Patriarchy – Overused and Misunderstood?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carol Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?” <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> 133, no. 1 (2014), pp. 9-27.
Aug. 29	<p>Women in Ancient Israel – Learning from the Archeological Record <i>Census Day August 30.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carol Meyers, “In the Household and Beyond: The Social World of Israelite Women,” in <i>Studia Theologica</i> 63 (2009), pp. 19-41. Carol Meyers, “‘Women of the Neighborhood’ (Ruth 4.17): Informal Female Networks in Ancient Israel,” in <i>Ruth and Esther: A Feminist Companion to the Bible</i>, second series, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 110-127.
Module 2 – The Book of Ruth	
Sept. 3	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Book of Ruth (Jewish Study Bible), pp. 1573-1580. Read both the introduction and the commentary! Carol Meyers, “‘To her mother's house’: considering a counterpart to the Israelite "bêt 'ab," <i>The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis</i> 1991), pp. 39-51.
Sept. 5	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nehama Aschkenasy, “Language and Empowerment in Ruth” in <i>Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story</i>, eds. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), pp.111-124.
Sept. 10	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, “‘A Son is Born to Naomi!’ Literary Allusions and Interpretation in the Book of Ruth” <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> 13, no. 40 (February 1988), pp. 99-108. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, “‘Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth” <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> 45 (October 1989), pp. 45-59.
Sept. 12	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Shepherd, “Violence in the Fields? Translating, Reading, and Revising in Ruth 2,” <i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> 63 (2001), pp. 444-463.
Sept. 17	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judith E. McKinlay, "A Son is Born to Naomi: A Harvest for Israel," pp. 151-157. Laura E. Donaldson, “The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth through Native Eyes” in <i>The Postcolonial Biblical Reader</i> (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 150-157. Athalya Brenner, “Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy,” in <i>Ruth and Esther: A Feminist Companion to the Bible</i>, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 158-162.

Module 3 – The Book of Lamentations

Sept. 19	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Book of Lamentations, <i>Jewish Study Bible</i>, pp. 1581-1597. Read both the introduction and the commentary! • Barbara Bakke Kaiser, “Poet as ‘Female Impersonator’: The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering,” <i>The Journal of Religion</i> 67, no. 2 (April 1987), pp. 164-182.
Sept. 24 Essay 1 due 9 p.m.	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tod Linafelt, “Margins of Lamentations, Or, The Unbearable Whiteness of Being,” in <i>Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book</i>, eds. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 219-231. • Amy Kalmanofsky, “Their Heart Cried Out to God: Gender and Prayer in the Book of Lamentation,” in <i>A Question of Sex: Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond</i>, ed. Deborah W. Rooke (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 53-65.
Sept. 26	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carleen R. Mandolfo, “Daughter Zion Finds Her Voice,” in <i>Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations</i> (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), pp. 79-102.
Oct. 1	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathleen O’Connor, “The Abusing God,” ch. 9 of <i>Lamentations and the Tears of the World</i> (New York: Orbis, 2002), pp. 110-123.

Module 4 – Song of Songs

Oct. 3	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Song of Songs, <i>Jewish Study Bible</i>, pp. 1559-1572. Read both the introduction and the commentary! • Robert Alter, “Afterward,” in <i>The Song of Songs</i> (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), pp. 119-131.
Oct. 7-8	Fall Break – no classes
Oct. 10	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jannie H. Hunter, “The Song of Protest: Reassessing the Song of Songs,” <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> 90 (2000), pp. 109-124.
Oct. 15	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathryn Harding, “‘I sought him but I did not find him’: The Elusive Lover in the Song of Songs,” in <i>Biblical Interpretations</i> 16 (2008), pp. 43-59.
Oct. 17	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Cheryl Exum, “Ten Things Every Feminist Should Know about the Song of Songs,” in <i>The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible</i>, eds. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24-35.
Oct. 22	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David J.A. Clines, “Why is There a Song of Songs and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?” pp. 1-28. (If you need the citation from his book for any paper, let me know.)

Module 5 – The Book of Esther

Oct. 24 Essay 2 due 9 p.m.	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Book of Esther, <i>Jewish Study Bible</i>, pp. 1619-1634. Read both the introduction and the commentary! • Adele Berlin, “The Book of Esther and Ancient Storytelling,” <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> 120, no. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 3-14.
Oct. 29	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-14.
Oct. 31	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 15-28.
Nov. 5	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 29-39.
Nov. 7	Student-Teacher Conferences
Nov. 12	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 40-59.
Nov. 14	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 60-74.
Nov. 19	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 75-84.
Nov. 21	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 85-106.
Nov. 26	<p>Assigned Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy Beal, <i>The Book of Hiding: Gender, Ethnicity, Annihilation, and Esther</i> (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 107-124.
Dec. 3	Final Considerations

FINAL PAPERS DUE 5 p.m. DEC. 7!