BIBL 7190 (3 hours) January 4-8, 2010
Nyvall TBD 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Instructor Email: rhubbard@northpark.edu
Office: Nyvall 36A (third floor) 773-244-6246

THE BOOKS OF RUTH AND ESTHER

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The books of Ruth and Esther have long delighted Bible readers. They report the stories of two remarkable women whose significant stories ancient Israel deemed worthy of retelling and incorporation in Israel's scriptural canon. This course surveys the contents of both books, especially their cultural and historical background, literary nature, main themes, and message. Outside reading prepares the student for inductive study of sample passages from the books in class and for discussion of their implications for Christian life and ministry today. A term paper in which the student presents an in-depth study of a passage from either Ruth or Esther or an important topic is also required.

TEXTBOOKS

Berlin, Adele. *Esther*. JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001. ISBN 0827606990
Hubbard, Robert L., Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. ISBN 0802823580
Larkin, Katrina J.A. *Ruth and Esther*. Old Testament Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996. ISBN 1850757550
The Books of Ruth and Esther in *The Holy Bible* (any modern version).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Completion of the above assigned readings and the Required Readings listed below. Students will be required to report completion of the reading in writing at the time the final paper or exam is submitted (on which see below).

2. Completion of the following written assignments:

   a. A 5-7 page response paper to <u>at least one</u> of the books on the Recommended Books list (150 pages minimum) to be provided. The response should summarize the book's main thesis and/or contents, interact critically with it (i.e., review its strengths/weaknesses), and draw an implications for ministry that occur to you. **Due**: January 4th. **No late papers will be accepted**.

   b. Either a 12-15 page term paper <u>or</u> a written final examination. Both must be

submitted no later than February 7th at 5:00 p.m. **No late papers/exams will be accepted**.

3. Participation in discussion of assigned texts during class meetings (see below).

GRADES

The completion of the required reading and the response paper are worth 50 points, the term paper or final exam 100 points. The student=s final grade will be determined by the percentage of the total points possible which the student earns when measured against the following scale:

A = 93% B = 86% C = 78% D = 70%

REQUIRED READING

The student is expected to read the above textbooks.
In addition, each is required to read the Books of Ruth and Esther through at least 3 times.

General Works

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1982, pp. 47-62 ("Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention").

Ruth

Berlin, Adele, *Poetics and the Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983, pp. 83-110 ("Poetics in the Book of Ruth").

Bertman, Stephen. "Symmetrical Design in the Book of Ruth." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965) 167-68.

Black, James. "Ruth in the Dark: Folktale, Law and Creative Ambiguity in the Old Testament." *Literature and Theology* 5 (1991) 20-35.

Fisch, Harold. "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982) 425-37.

Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978, pp. 166-99 ("A Human Comedy").

Esther

Bickerman, Elias J. *Four Strange Books of the Bible*. New York: Schocken Books, 1967 (on the chapter on Esther).

Cohen, Abraham D. "Hu Ha-goral': The Religious Significance of Esther." *Judaism* 23 (1974) 87-94.

Gordis, Robert. "Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther. A New Solution to an Ancient Crux," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981) 358-88.

Humphries, W. Lee. "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel."

Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (1973) 211-23.
Webb, Barry. "Reading Esther as Holy Scripture," *Reformed Theological Review* 52 (1993), pp. 23-35.

All the readings listed in connection with specific passages or topics below. **It is <u>strongly suggested</u> that all readings, including biblical texts, be completed prior to the beginning of class on January 4th.**

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Berg, Sandra B. *The Book of Esther*. SBLDS 44. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979.
Clines, David J.A. *The Esther Scroll*. The Story of the Story. JSOTSup 30. Sheffield: JSOT Press, l984.
Brenner, Athalya, ed. *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
_____. *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
Craig, Kenneth. *Reading Esther*. A Case for Literary Carnivalesque. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.
Day, Linda. *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther*. JSOTSup 186. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
Dorothy, Charles V. *The Books of Esther: Structure, Genre and Textual Integrity*. JSOTSup 187. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
Fewell, Danna N. and Gunn, David M. *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*. Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990.
Fox, Michael V. *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
_____. *The Redaction of the Books of Esther*. SBLMS 40. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
Gow, Murray D. *The Book of Ruth: Its Structure, Theme and Purpose*. Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1992.
Hals, Ronald M. *The Theology of the Book of Ruth*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.
Hubbard, Robert L. Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
_____. "Ruth iv. 17: A New Solution." *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 293-301.
_____. "Theological Reflections on Naomi's Shrewdness." *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989) 1-17.
Jobes, Karen. *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text*. SBLDS 153. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
Kates, Judith A. and Reimer, Gail Twersky. *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.
Lacocque, André. *Ruth*. Continental Commentaries. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
Laniak, Timothy S. *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*. SBLDS 165. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.
Moore, Carey A., ed. *Studies in the Book of Esther*. New York: Ktav, 1982 (student may select various articles whose page total satisfies the requirement).

_____. "Esther, Book of." *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2:633-43.
Sasson, Jack M. *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: COMMENTARIES

Ruth

Bush, Frederic W. *Ruth, Esther*. Word Biblical Commentary 9. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.
Campbell, Edward F., Jr. *Ruth*. Anchor Bible 7. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.
Cundall, Arthur E. and Morris, Leon, *Judges and Ruth*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1971.
Hubbard, Robert L. Jr. *The Book of Ruth*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
Lacocque, André. *Ruth*. Continental Commentaries. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
Levenson, Jon D. *Esther*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
Linafelt, Tod and Beal, Timothy K. *Ruth, Esther*. Berit Olam. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.
Nielsen, Kirsten. *Ruth: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
Sasson, Jack M. *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989.

Esther

Baldwin, Joyce G. *Esther*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984
Bechtel, Carol M. *Esther*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
Bush, Frederic W. *Ruth, Esther*. Word Biblical Commentary 9. Dallas: Word Books, 1996.
Clines, David J.A. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
Gordis, Robert. *Megillat Esther*. New York: Ktav, 1974.
Linafelt, Tod and Beal, Timothy K. *Ruth, Esther*. Berit Olam. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.
Moore, Carey A. *Esther*. Anchor Bible 7B. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971.
Paton, Lewis B. *The Book of Esther*. ICC 20. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908.

THE TERM PAPER: INSTRUCTIONS

The subjects may include:

a. Studies of historical, critical, literary, or theological issues related to the books of Ruth and/or Esther. For example:

1) The purpose of either the Book of Ruth or the Book of Esther
2) The literary function of the genealogy in Ruth
3) The date and historical background of Ruth: a critical evaluation of

options
4) The historicity and the Book of Ruth or Esther
5) The “books” of Esther and their relationship
6) The theology of providence in either the Book of Ruth or Esther
7) The literary structure of either Ruth or Esther
8) The historical background of Haman
9) The literary use of key words in Ruth or Esther

b. An intensive study of one particular passage within the book not covered in class. This should cover:

1) Introductory matters: the text's ...

a) literary structure
b) literary genre
c) historical setting
d) setting within the book
e) intention

2) A section-by-section interpretation of the text employing exegetical observations, word studies, cultural background, etc. when useful.

3) A summary of the text's theological implications.

4) Brief discussion of the text's application(s) for Christian living.

c. An alternative project worked out with the professor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Tuesday	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**
8:00-9:00a	Course Intro Intro to Ruth (1)	Ruth 3	Intro to Esther	Esther 4	Esther 8
9:00-9:45a	Intro to Ruth (2) Historical Setting	Ruth 3	Historical Setting: Persia	Esther 4	Esther 8
9:45-10:00a	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:00-11:00a	Ruth 1	Ruth 3 Conclusion	Esther 1	Esther 5	Esther 9
11:00-12:00a	Ruth 1	Ruth 4 Intro	Esther 1	Esther 5	Esther 9
12:00-1:00p	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00-2:00p	Ruth 1	Ruth 4:1-16	Esther 2	Esther 6	Esther 10
2:00-2:45p	Ruth 2	Ruth 4:17-22	Esther 2	Esther 6	Esther 10
2:45-3:00p	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
3:00-3:45p	Ruth 2	Conclusions (1)	Esther 3	Esther 7	Conclusions (1)
3:45-4:30p	Ruth 2	Conclusions (2)	Esther 3	Esther 7	Conclusions (2)