

**Seminar in Biblical Literature: Ezekiel  
(BIB 495)**

Point Loma Nazarene University  
Fall 2015  
Monday 2:45-5:30pm

**Professor:** Dr. Brad E. Kelle  
Office: Smee Hall  
(619)849-2314  
[bradkelle@pointloma.edu](mailto:bradkelle@pointloma.edu)  
Office Hours: posted on door

“Ah Lord Yahweh! They are saying of me, ‘Is he not always talking metaphors?’” (Ezek 20:49 [Eng.]).

“There is much in this book which is very mysterious, especially in the beginning and latter end of it”  
–John Wesley (*Explanatory Notes*, 2281).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION (see also PLNU catalogue)**

This course engages the student in the study of the book of Ezekiel in English translation. Primary attention will be given to reading Ezekiel from various interpretive angles, examining the book section by section and considering major themes and motifs that run through the book, as well as specific exegetical issues. Instruction will be based upon English translations, although students who have studied Hebrew will be encouraged to make use of their skills.

**COURSE FOCUS**

The focus of this course is to provide a broad exegetical engagement with the book of Ezekiel. This engagement will involve study of the phenomenon of prophecy, the general background of Ezekiel the prophet and book, the literary and theological dynamics of the book, and the major interpretive issues in the study of Ezekiel. The aim of the course is to work specifically with the biblical text in light of the historical, social, and religious situation of the sixth century B.C.E. It will also explore, however, the meaning and significance of the literature within Christian proclamation as well as the diverse literary, theological, and methodological issues connected with these texts. The class will primarily consist of group reading or “exegesis” of Ezekiel with an eye to the various historical, literary, and theological dimensions.

**SIGNIFICANCE FOR LIFE AND MINISTRY**

In Western Christian churches during the past century and a half, few books of the Old Testament have been fought over more and preached upon less meaningfully than the book of Ezekiel. The book’s bizarre imagery, problematic violence, and troubling gender portrayals raise many difficulties in interpretation and preaching and have often fueled apocalyptic and futuristic popular readings. In this course we will seek to engage the book of Ezekiel from the perspective of its own historical, literary, and theological dynamics, to formulate mature theological responses to problems that have been posed, and to embrace new questions that may challenge us to more faithful hearing and doing.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students successfully completing the course will have demonstrated that they: (1) have a knowledge and understanding of the book of Ezekiel and its interpretive issues; (2) are able to interpret this portion of the Bible through reading and critical interaction via historical, cultural, literary, and other methods; (3) are able to read the Bible theologically in view of their contexts, as well as other contexts that reflect cultural and social diversity; (4) have articulated an understanding of the nature of the Bible as both human words and holy scripture.

### **REQUIRED READING/TEXTBOOKS**

1. Brad E. Kelle, *Ezekiel* (New Beacon Bible Commentary; Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 2013) ISBN: 978-0834129450.
2. Margaret S. Odell, *Ezekiel: Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2005). ISBN: 978-1573120739.
3. Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005). ISBN: 978-0687008445.
4. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). ISBN: 978-0800619251.
5. Additional photocopied readings (provided in class) covering especially issues related to feminist criticism and gender analysis of Ezekiel: 1) Mary E. Shields, "An Abusive God? Identity and Power/Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23," in *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible—A Reader* (ed. A. K. A. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 129-151; 2) Corrine L. Patton, "Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?" A Response to Feminist Critiques of Ezekiel 23," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. M. S. Odell and J. T. Strong; SBLSym 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 221-239.
6. A Bible of the student's choice. This should be a modern translation (NRSV or NIV preferred) and not KJV or a paraphrase (Living Bible, The Message, etc.)

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Attendance and Class Preparation/Participation (50 pts): This will be assessed through attendance taken in class, as well as the student's participation in in-class small group discussions and presentations.
2. Book Review of Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* (50 pts): The student will read the *Hopeful Imagination* book and prepare a critical review of it. The paper should be **5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides**. The paper must be turned in in-person, hard-copy during the class. *The*

*paper should follow the instructions given in this syllabus. The paper is due at the start of class on **Monday September 21, 2015.***

3. Response Paper on Shields and Patton Articles Provided in Class (50 pts): After reading the articles by Shields and Patton (provided in class), the student should type a reflection paper dealing with the articles and their treatment of issues related to gender in the book of Ezekiel. **The paper should be 4-5 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides.** *The reflection should address the issues given in the instructions for the assignment in this syllabus. The paper is due at the start of class on **Monday October 19, 2015.***
4. Final Exegetical Paper (100 pts): As the culminating project of the course, the student will prepare a major exegetical paper on a text of his or her choosing from the book of Ezekiel. Throughout the process, *the student should use the attached guides for researching and writing the exegetical paper.* The paper should be **12-14 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1-inch margins on all sides.** **The paper is due on **Monday December 14, 2015.****

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES**

#### 1. Course Grading:

<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
50	Class Attendance and Participation
50	Brueggemann Book Review
50	Response Paper to Articles
100	Exegetical Paper
<b>*Total: Undergraduate Students: 250 (possible points)</b>	

2. Attendance: Attendance is a necessity. Excessive absences will have a direct effect on the final grade. Late work will only be accepted under the terms of the Late Work Policy (see below). All attendance policies of the institution apply. *THREE (3) unexcused absences will result in de-enrollment from the class.* Please note that it is the student's responsibility to obtain notes, etc. from other students for any missed classes.

3. Late Work Policy: In order not to be considered "late," all assignments must be submitted **in person, in hard copy, in class** on the day listed as the due date. *NO assignment may be submitted electronically (by email, etc.) for more than half credit.* If the student "forgets" an assignment, he or she may submit it late (either electronically or in hard copy) for no more than half credit. No assignment will be accepted for credit of any kind more than one week after the original due date.

4. Inclusivity: The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. This course will strive to practice sensitivity toward and

foster respect for issues of inclusivity in matters of language and conduct. Each student should seek to enrich this inclusive atmosphere in both their class contributions and personal interactions.

5. Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Such acts include plagiarism, copying of class assignments, and copying or other fraudulent behavior on examinations. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course.

6. Academic Accommodations: While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. This policy assists the university in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### ***1. Tuesday Sept. 1 (special Monday schedule on Tuesday)***

A. Starting Points for Ezekiel and First Impressions

B. Locating Ezekiel *Canonically*

\**Readings*: none

\**Due*: none

**\*MON. SEPT. 7: NO CLASS (Labor Day)**

### ***2. Monday Sept. 14***

A. Refresher: What Are/Is Prophets/Prophecy?

B. Locating Ezekiel *Historically*: Exile, Prophet, and Trauma

\**Readings*: 1) Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature* chs. 1 & 2; 2) the complete Introduction section in Kelle, *Ezekiel*

\**Due*: none

**3. Monday Sept. 21**

- A. Putting Ezekiel in His Place: Ezekiel among the Responses to the Exile  
(Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* discussion)
- B. Ezekiel as a Response to Trauma (Pt.1): Introduction to the Book and Its Outline  
\*Readings: 1) Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* (whole book); 2) the complete Introduction section in Odell, *Ezekiel*  
\*Due: 1) Book Review of Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*

**4. Monday Sept. 28**

- A. Ezekiel 1—3
- B. Locating Ezekiel *Theologically*: the Book, the Theology of Holiness, and the Priestly Response to Trauma and Exile  
\*Readings: 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 1—3 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Commentary sections on Ezek 1—3 in Odell, *Ezekiel*  
\*Due: none

**5. Monday Oct. 5**

- A. Ezekiel 4—7
- B. Ezekiel 8—11  
\*Readings: 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 4—7 and 8—11 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) read as much as possible of commentary sections on Ezek 4—7 and 8—11 in Odell, *Ezekiel*  
\*Due: none

**6. Monday Oct. 12 (shortened session due to Wiley Lecture event- end at 4:45pm)**

- A. Ezekiel 12—15  
\*Readings: 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 12—15 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*, ch. 5; 3) SKIM only commentary sections on Ezek 12—15 in Odell, *Ezekiel*  
\*Due: none

**7. Monday Oct. 19**

A. Ezekiel 16 & 23 and the Issues of Gender in Ezekiel (discussion of Shields and Patton articles)

B. (if time) Begin Ezekiel 17—24

*\*Readings:*

- 1) Mary E. Shields, “An Abusive God? Identity and Power/Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23,” in *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible—A Reader* (ed. A. K. A. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 129-151. (provided in class)
- 2) Corrine L. Patton, “‘Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?’ A Response to Feminist Critiques of Ezekiel 23,” in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. M. S. Odell and J. T. Strong; SBLSyms 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 221-239. (provided in class)
- 3) Commentary sections on Ezek 16 & 23 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*
- 4) SKIM commentary sections on Ezek 16 & 23 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

*\*Due:* 1) Response Paper on Shields and Patton Articles

**8. Monday Oct. 26**

A. Finish Ezekiel 17—24

*\*Readings:* 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 17—24 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Read as much as possible of commentary sections on Ezek 17—24 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

*\*Due:* none

**9. Monday Nov. 2**

A. Ezekiel 25—32

*\*Readings:* 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 25—32 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Read as much as possible of commentary sections on Ezek 25—32 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

*\*Due: Submit passage chosen for final exegetical paper*

**10. Monday Nov. 9**

A. Ezekiel 33—37

*\*Readings:* 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 33—37 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Commentary sections on Ezek 33—37 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

*\*Due:* none

**11. Monday Nov. 16**

A. Ezekiel 38—39

*\*Readings:* 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 38—39 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) Commentary sections on Ezek 38—39 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

*\*Due:* none

**\*MONDAY NOV. 23: NO CLASS (Society of Biblical Literature Conference)**

**12. Monday Nov. 30**

## A. Ezekiel 40—48

\**Readings*: 1) Commentary sections on Ezek 40—48 in Kelle, *Ezekiel*; 2) SKIM only commentary sections on Ezek 40—48 in Odell, *Ezekiel*

\**Due*: none

**13. Monday Dec. 7**

## A. Conclusion- Reflecting on the Whole: Ezekiel, Holiness, and Trauma

## B. Exegetical Papers Discussion

\**Readings*: none

\**Due*: 1) Final exegetical paper should be nearing completion!

**\*\*FINAL EXEGETICAL PAPER: Final version due no later than 5:00pm on Monday December 14, 2015**

**Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* Book Review Paper  
INSTRUCTIONS**

- a. Give a brief overview of the book: Central ideas? Major themes and how they were developed? (don't let this get too long).
- b. Discuss the comparison among Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah that Brueggemann sets out in the book. How do they represent different responses to exile? In other words, identify Ezekiel's similarities and distinctives in the context of the prophetic literature related to the exile.
- c. Interact with the overall "thrust" of the book:
  - What parts of the book were most valuable or most opened new insights for or stirred you?
  - What parts would you challenge in some way and how? (ex: does he work with certain assumptions/presuppositions, etc.?)

**Response Paper on Shields and Patton Articles  
INSTRUCTIONS**

- a. Give a brief summary of each article
- b. Compare and contrast the two articles concerning how they approach issues raised by the portrayals of women and gender in Ezekiel
- c. Provide your response to the two articles and the issues in Ezekiel that they discuss.



## EXEGETICAL PAPER GUIDE PART ONE

### Instructions for Researching the Paper

\*For the research part of your paper, work through the following steps.

#### STEP 1: ENGAGING THE TEXT

Initial questions on which to make some notes:

- a. What drew you to this text for an exegetical paper? What interests you about it?
- b. What do commentaries and your other sources say about why this text is significant?

#### STEP 2: TRANSLATE YOUR TEXT

Read and compare at least four different translations (e.g. NIV, NRSV, NAB, etc.) of your text. Note any textual problems in margins or footnotes. Note words that seem significant or problematic.

#### STEP 3: OUTLINE YOUR TEXT

Divide your text into main units and subunits based on content. Make an outline of the text using your division (note: you will organize the body of your paper by offering exegetical analysis of each section [as you have divided the text] in turn)

#### STEP 4: PUTTING THE TEXT IN LITERARY CONTEXT

- a. Formulate a summary of the unit or section that *immediately precedes* your text.
- b. Formulate a summary of the unit or section that *immediately follows* your text.
- c. Make notes on how your text fits and functions in this literary context (e.g., is it a transitional passage? Is it the climax? Is it the beginning? Etc.)

#### STEP 5: PUTTING THE TEXT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Using outside resources such as commentaries and histories of Israel, compile notes on the following:
- a. what is the historical context of this passage? That is, what is the context in which it was composed? What historical background does the text presume? How do you see that in the text itself?
  - b. what *type* of literature (“genre”) is your text (ex: is it a narrative? sermon? poem? speech? prayer? etc.)? What technical genre, if any, do commentaries suggest for this text? How does knowing the genre change the way you understand the text?

#### STEP 6: ANALYZE YOUR TEXT

- a. Within the text itself, what literary artistry do you see? What rhetorical devices are used? How do these devices affect the meaning of the text? Look for and note:

Repetition	Anaphora (repeated use of initial word)
Hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)	Irony
Simile (one thing likened to another)	Rhetorical Questions
Metaphor (implied comparison)	Dialogue Between Characters

- b. Note key words, names, and places which seem significant. Use Bible Dictionaries and Concordances to explore the significance of these words.

- c. Address the theological issues in the text: What appears to be the major theological affirmations in this text? What is being said about God? about humanity? about salvation?

#### STEP 7: RESEARCH YOUR TEXT

At this point you should work through a number of commentaries and other outside sources to supplement the initial notes you have taken on each of the steps above. From the commentaries, pull out additional items on the elements above, grab some quotations to use, look for insights or especially technical items that you missed, etc. You should find things to plug into each of the research categories above.

\*\*Specifically: Research your text using at least **five scholarly commentaries**. Highly recommended are the following series: a. Word Biblical Commentary, b. The New Century Bible Commentary, c. New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, d. Anchor Bible Commentary, e. International Critical Commentary, f. Old Testament Library, g. The Interpreter’s Bible, h. Hermeneia, i. Continental Commentary, j. Berit Olam,

k. New International Commentary on the OT (NICOT), l. Tyndale OT Commentaries, m. The Cambridge Bible Commentary.

**STEP 8: FORMULATE A THESIS FOR YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT**

Now that you have completed your research, come up with a single thesis statement that succinctly states *your reading/interpretation* of the text at hand (that is, a statement that says what this passage is in your view).

[\*Example: “Hosea 2 is a metaphorical and theological commentary on the events in Samaria at the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic War (ca. 731 BCE).”]

**STEP 9: APPLY YOUR TEXT**

How could you bring this text to bear on human need? How could you apply this text in a setting of preaching, teaching, etc.? What would a sermon or lesson based on your exegesis of this text look like?

## EXEGETICAL PAPER GUIDE PART TWO

### Instructions for Writing the Paper

**\*\*Your main goal is to write your research from the research instructions. In order to do that, follow these guidelines in putting together your final paper:**

1. Turn in your final paper TYPED, DOUBLED SPACED, WITH 12 PT. FONT AND 1-INCH MARGINS ON ALL SIDES.
2. Make sure to reference any authors that you cite, including the book, page number, etc. in a consistent form throughout the paper.
3. The final paper should be ca. 12-14 pages in length.

#### **Format for the Paper**

*\*think of your paper as a guided tour through your passage, where you are the tour guide who is leading an informed, yet not expert, reader through a critical interpretation of your chosen text*

1. Opening/ Introductory paragraphs- Give a general introduction to your text:
  - a. Give a basic summary of what happens in your text (brief!)
  - b. Explain why you and others find this text significant in general
  - c. Provide your thesis for what this text is/is doing/is saying, etc.
2. Give the outline of your text that you have devised (major units, subunits)—this should be in regular outline form

*\*\*the following sections (##3-6) should be thought of as background to orient your reader to the unit-by-unit analyses that will form the body of the paper. Here you are providing the orienting information to set up your reading of the passage:*

3. Note and discuss any significant textual and translation issues that arise from your comparison of different English translations.
4. Describe what comes before and after your text and how your text fits and functions in that context (literary context).
5. Describe the form or type (genre) of material that your text is and how this impacts its interpretation.
6. Discuss the specific historical background of the text and how the text fits and functions within that historical context.

*\*\*The following section (#7) should constitute the body of the paper. Here, organize the paper according to your outline (in other words, discuss the text by going sequentially through the major units as you have defined them). In the discussion of each unit, you should bring together the relevant insights you gained in your research especially from Step 6, letters a & b on the research guide. You should also bring in the supplemental insights you gained from commentaries and other sources for each unit. So:*

7. Walk through the passage unit by unit (following your outline of it) discussing the major literary devices found in the text, significant words, and any insights from commentaries (note: this is the primary part of the exegetical paper).

*\*The final sections of your paper should be thought of as the conclusion of your guided tour:*

8. Discuss the major theological affirmations in the text (from Step 6 letter c on the research guide)

9. Drawing upon your work from Step 9 on the research guide, conclude your paper by proposing a specific way to apply this text. Include a sermon outline (with introduction and conclusion), an outline for a Sunday School lesson, etc., or some other concrete (but brief) example of application.