



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

OT1006 Old Testament Studies II (Histories, Joshua–Esther) Syllabus

Semester:	Spring 2026	Course:	OT1006 Old Testament Studies II
Day & Time:	Mondays, 7:30–9:30pm VC	Credits:	2
Professor:	Prof. Kuna Griggs	E-mail:	kunagriggs@yahoo.com

Course Description:

This course surveys the historical books of the Old Testament, from Joshua through Esther, examining their narrative coherence, theological significance, and covenantal context. Students will explore each narrative's literary features, the theological message conveyed through each historical narrative, and the dynamics of Israel's obedience and apostasy within a covenantal context. This course emphasizes a kingdom of God approach, situating these books within the broader biblical story and highlighting their enduring relevance for the church today.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1) Summarize the narrative coherence each book.
- 2) Identify the literary features of each book.
- 3) Discuss the theological significance of each book.
- 4) Examine each book within its immediate covenantal context.
- 5) Explain the enduring relevance of each book in shaping and living out a kingdom of God worldview.

Required Texts (680 estimated pages for reading):

Holy Bible. Class discussions will highlight details of the biblical text. Therefore students will need a translation that is more word-for-word than thought-for-thought. Paraphrase type Bibles will not be useful for this course.

Howard, David M., Jr. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0802441553

Schnittjer, Gary E. *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. ISBN-13: 978-0310571100

Collateral or Recommended Texts:

Dempster, Stephen G. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*.

Dumbrell, William J. *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*.

Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Historical Books*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Course Requirements and Assessments:

- **Signature Page:** Complete the **Signature Page** (p. 10), acknowledging that you have carefully read this syllabus, understand it, and willingly accept the responsibilities associated with successfully completing this course. The signed Signature page is **due February 2nd**.
- **Covenantal Context Exercises:** Students are to submit **two** exercises examining a historical book within its covenantal context and explain what that means in relation to the kingdom of God. Each exercise must be in Turabian format and **3–5 pages** in length (not including the Title Page and Bibliography). **Exercise 1** must be on one of the following topics:

- a) The Book of Joshua and the Abrahamic Covenant
- b) The Book of Judges and the Mosaic Covenant
- c) The Book of Samuel and the Davidic Covenant
- d) The Book of Kings and the Mosaic Covenant
- e) The Book of Kings and the Davidic Covenant

Exercise 2 must be on one of the following topics:

- a) The Book of Ruth and the Mosaic Covenant
- b) The Book of Ruth and the Davidic Covenant
- c) The Book of Esther and the Mosaic Covenant
- d) The Book of Esther and the Davidic Covenant
- e) The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Mosaic Covenant
- f) The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Davidic Covenant
- g) The Book of Chronicles and the Davidic Covenant

Covenantal Context Exercise 1 is **due February 9th**. Covenantal Context Exercise 2 is **due March 16th**.

- **Research Papers:** Students are to submit **two** research papers discussing literary features and the theological significance of a historical book. Papers must be in Turabian format, **5–7 pages** in length (not including the Title Page and Bibliography) and have at least two main sections: **1)** “Phrasal Repetition in the Book of ...” and **2)** “The Theological Significance of the Book of” *Theological Significance* means theology that the Scriptures would be light on **without** the book. Students must select one of four book options for their paper topics as follows:

- a) Paper 1: Phrasal Repetition and the Theological Significance of (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, or Kings)
- b) Paper 2: Phrasal Repetition and the Theological Significance of (Ruth, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, or Chronicles)

Paper 1 is **due March 2nd**. Paper 2 is **due March 30th**.

- **Reading Completion Record:** A Reading Completion Record (p. 9) will be used to verify and give credit for reading assignment completion. This Record is due **April 6th**.
- **Final Exam:** The date of the Final Exam is **April 13th**. A Study Guide will be provided.
- **Requirement and Assessment Submission:** Coursework must be emailed no later than 11:59pm on its due date to kunagriggs@yahoo.com. Class participants will receive a confirmation reply of “Received.” Late submissions will incur -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date.

Grading Weight & Comments

Course Requirement	Grade Weight	Comments
Two (2) Exercises	24% of final grade	Exercise 1 is 9%; Exercise 2 is 15%
Two (2) Research Papers	46% of final grade	Each Research Paper is 23%
Reading Completion Record	6% of final grade	Attached to Syllabus (p. 9)
Final Exam	24% of final grade	During Class time (1.5 hours)

BTS Format, Style, And Writing Standards:

All written requirements and assessments must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and double-spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>. In addition, the Writing Center runs 2–3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

Grading Criteria and Assessment Rubric

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Many errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's Manual for Writers	Paper does not conform to Turabian's Manual for Writers

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule:

Day	Date	Agenda & Assignments
Monday	Jan 26	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review: Syllabus Discuss: English Bible & Hebrew Bible books and book order Discuss: The Kingdom of God & the Historical Books <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Introduction (pp. xvii–xlvi) Read: Howard, Chapter 1: Introduction to Historical Narrative Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 6: Joshua
Monday	Feb 02	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Joshua Due: Signature Page <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Howard, Chapter 2: Joshua Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 7: Judges Read: Howard, Chapter 3: Judges
Monday	Feb 09	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Judges Due: Covenantal Context Exercise 1 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 8: Samuel Read: Howard, Chapter 5: 1 & 2 Samuel Read: Howard, Chapter 6: 1 & 2 Kings
Monday	Feb 16	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Class: President's Day
Monday	Feb 23	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Class: Spring Break
Monday	Mar 02	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Samuel Due: Paper 1 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 9: Kings Read: Howard, Chapter 7: Historical and Cultural Context for 1 & 2 Kings Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 28: Ruth Read: Howard, Chapter 4: Ruth
Monday	Mar 09	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Kings <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 32: Esther Read: Howard, Chapter 10: Esther Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 34: Ezra-Nehemiah

Day	Date	Agenda & Assignments
Monday	Mar 16	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Ruth Due: Covenantal Context Exercise 2 Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Howard, Chapter 9: Ezra-Nehemiah Read: Howard, Chapter 8: 1 & 2 Chronicles
Monday	Mar 23	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Esther Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 35: Chronicles (pp. 693–773)
Monday	Mar 30	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: Ezra-Nehemiah Due: Paper 2 Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read: Schnittjer, Chapter 35: Chronicles (pp. 774–846)
Monday	Apr 06	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss: The book of Chronicles Due: Reading Completion Record
Monday	Apr 13	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due: Final Exam

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity. [NOTE: Standard BTS Attendance Policy is that students may not miss any more than three classes without a course penalty. Given the reality of distance-based students and video conference options, if students **clearly identify at the beginning of the semester that they will primarily be asynchronous students (depending on the digital recording of class because of a conflict with their schedule)**, then the student may attend without incurring a penalty for their “absences,” providing they are turning in all their work on time. Please see the BTS Faculty Handbook for more information on synchronous and asynchronous video conference students and policies and the commitments a faculty member agrees to when they teach a video conference or a live hybrid class]

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.
- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Alexander, Desmond, Brian Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. There are more than 100 contributors to this book, coming from the ranks of prominent evangelical scholars in the English-speaking world. It is divided into three parts: 1) Introduction, treating of such basic topics as biblical theology, its definition and history; canon; unity and diversity of Scripture; the relationship between the Testaments, and so on; 2) Biblical corpora [e.g., wisdom, prophets] and books; and 3) Biblical themes (Abraham, Adam and Eve, Adoption, and on to Word, Worship). The general tenor of the entries is theologically conservative.

Dempster, Stephen G. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003. As part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, this volume offers a study of the Hebrew Bible in its final canonical form—as Jesus and the early church likely had it. Dempster argues that, despite its literary diversity, the Hebrew Bible is a structural and conceptual unity with various genres and books contributing to a larger narrative framework, which ranges from Adam to the coming Davidic king.

Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: a Commentary on Genesis–Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991. Dorsey posits the author’s emphases and central point of each book of the Hebrew Bible based on his observations of its literary structure. There are three measures underlying Dorsey’s conclusions: identifying each book’s constituent units, describing each book’s arrangement, and examining how overall structure contributes to the overall meaning of each book. Dorsey states that he has “sacrificed depth for breadth of coverage” in examining each book, rather than limiting his focus to select, larger passages.

Dumbrell, William J. *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. Insights are offered as to the purpose of the canon and how the individual units contribute to the canon overall. This book focuses on the theological purpose of the books of the Hebrew canon in an attempt to highlight the “defined objectives” biblical authors had in mind. Dumbrell concludes that in some books the purpose of the writer is easily discerned and in others, themes, rather than a consistent single emphasis, are to be found.

Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. This Dictionary explains the progressive theological message and key themes of both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Its contributors base their articles on Greek and Hebrew texts, but comprehending their conclusions does not require knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. Bibliographies, indexes, and cross-references are provided following each entry.

Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. This is a careful exposition of how the biblical covenants unfold and relate to one another. Gentry and Wellum discuss the implications of their work for Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and hermeneutics and offer a viable alternative to both covenant theology and dispensationalism.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Historical Books*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. Issues of historicity are not Hamilton's primary focus but rather rhetorical criticism and inductive Bible study, the historicity of the texts being taken for granted. The tools of rhetorical criticism and inductive Bible study are used to "uncover the thrust and message of these books of Scripture" (14). Hamilton offers a rhetorical analysis of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as Esther, outlines each book, and argues that they are more coherent than earlier literary critics believed.

Howard, David M. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody, 2007. This volume is designed to provide an Orientation to the books Joshua–Esther for beginning but also more advanced Bible readers. It opens with an extended "Introduction to Historical Narrative" which treats the genre in question under the headings of Prose, History and Literature. Howard employs more or less the same format for each of the individual Historical Books; topics treated include: the book's authorship and date of composition, purpose, historical and cultural context, place in the canon, special issues (e.g., the problem of the extermination of the Canaanites as described in Joshua), theology, and outline of the book. It also contains a variety of maps, charts, and drawings.

Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. The original edition of this work appeared in 1987, offering a detailed account of ancient Israelite history from the patriarchs through the prophet Malachi. It reflected a commitment to the historical reliability of the biblical record and God's role in world events. This edition adds footnote references to and engagements with scholarly developments since 1987 (e.g., the maximalist versus minimalist controversy). It also comes with a variety of maps and charts, plus a final bibliography, Scripture index, and subject index.

Schnittjer, Gary E. *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. Schnittjer surveys the hundreds of Old Testament allusions within the Hebrew Scriptures, providing a list of Scripture allusions for each book and an interpretive profile of how that book uses passages from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Specific criteria are applied to each allusion, providing readers with evaluation of the significance of each interpretive allusion. Minor allusions caused by style, figures of speech, and other minor elements are not included.

Williamson, H. G. M. and Arnold, Bill T., eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005. This dictionary is a continuation of the InterVarsity series of dictionaries on the Bible, and the second on the Hebrew Canon. The volume's entries were chosen by the editors to reflect their judgment of topics that needed extended discussion. Thus, there are no entries for some biblical books, such as Ruth or Esther. Articles are subdivided by numbered headings and contain maps, charts or other graphic presentations. Each article ends with a select bibliography. Front matter includes the transliteration scheme used for representing Hebrew words and a list of contributors. Back matter includes a table of Archaeological Periods in the ancient Near East, and reference maps of Palestine and the ancient Near East.

BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Rank for each outcome on a scale of 1–5

1: this outcome is not covered in this class

2: this outcome is only touched on in this class

3: this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material

4: this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)

5: this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. **Scripture:** Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. **Reformed Theology:** Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. **Local Church:** Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church.
4. **Wisdom:** Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. **Discipleship:** Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. **Communication:** Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. **Worldview:** Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. **Leadership:** Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture	5	This course emphasizes the historical validity and narrative coherence of the biblical text.
Reformed Theology	4	This course explores the biblical narrative's progression of God's kingdom plan in relation to the covenants.
Local Church	2	This course offers some guidance in understanding how each book is relevant for contemporary applied ministry.
Wisdom	4	Assignments and lectures entail discussions of the relevance of each book in living out a kingdom of God worldview.
Discipleship	3	This course stresses the theological significance and current practical implications of the historical books.
Communication	3	This course offers exercise in explaining each book within its immediate covenantal context.
Worldview	4	Assignments and lectures entail discussions of the relevance of each book in living out a kingdom of God worldview.
Leadership	3	This course discusses how the historical books present wise and unwise leadership and their collateral kingdom effect.

READING RECORD

Spring 2026

OT1006 Old Testament Studies II (Histories, Joshua-Esther)

Print Name: _____

DUE DATE	READING ASSIGNMENT	% DONE
Feb 02	Schnittjer, Introduction (pp. xvii–xlvi)	
Feb 02	Howard, Chapter 1: Introduction to Historical Narrative	
Feb 02	Schnittjer, Chapter 6: Joshua	
Feb 09	Howard, Chapter 2: Joshua	
Feb 09	Schnittjer, Chapter 7: Judges	
Feb 09	Howard, Chapter 3: Judges	
Mar 02	Schnittjer, Chapter 8: Samuel	
Mar 02	Howard, Chapter 5: 1 & 2 Samuel	
Mar 02	Howard, Chapter 6: 1 & 2 Kings	
Mar 09	Schnittjer, Chapter 9: Kings	
Mar 09	Howard, Chapter 7: Historical and Cultural Context for 1 & 2 Kings	
Mar 09	Schnittjer, Chapter 28: Ruth	
Mar 09	Howard, Chapter 4: Ruth	
Mar 16	Schnittjer, Chapter 32: Esther	
Mar 16	Howard, Chapter 10: Esther	
Mar 16	Schnittjer, Chapter 34: Ezra-Nehemiah	
Mar 23	Howard, Chapter 9: Ezra-Nehemiah	
Mar 23	Howard, Chapter 8: 1 & 2 Chronicles	
Mar 30	Schnittjer, Chapter 35: Chronicles (pp. 693–773)	
Apr 06	Schnittjer, Chapter 35: Chronicles (pp. 774–846)	



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Credits: 2

Professor: Prof. Kuna Griggs

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STUDENT SIGNATURE

Your signature below indicates that you have read this syllabus, understand it, and willing accept the requirements and responsibilities for successfully completing this course.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____