

BIBHB 604A: JONAH & RUTH
Spring 2022/Mondays 6: 30-9:30
Instructor: Julie Duncan

Description/Goals

- 1) To gain familiarity with these two short stories, their theological themes, and the major critical issues posed.
- 2) To develop skills in close reading.
- 3) To become better acquainted with features of Hebrew narrative style.
- 4) To gain proficiency in reading and assessing scholarly positions on critical issues, and to gain confidence in dialoguing with the “experts.”
- 5) To reinforce knowledge acquired in the introductory Hebrew Bible course (major theological themes, genres, etc.).
- 6) To become aware of how critical issues may be intertwined with theological questions, and to work on seeing the ramifications.

Finally, it is hoped that you will leave the course feeling a greater appreciation for the beauty and complexity of Ruth and Jonah, as well as some degree of confidence about teaching and preaching these two stories.

Format

Text assignments should be prepared using the commentaries as an orientation point, along with the secondary resources listed on the daily schedule.

REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) One exegesis paper, 11-13 pages in length (2,750 to 3,250 words) from either Ruth or Jonah (*due 5/16**). (35 %)
- 2) Participation includes the following:
 - a) Thoughtful participation in class discussions, reflecting familiarity with the biblical text and assigned reading, including your preparation of the weekly study guide (distributed in advance). (35%)
 - b) Two reports on an essay, commentator perspective, or designated segment of the study questions, one from Ruth and one from Jonah. These should be 20-30 minutes in length, depending on the material; allow an additional 15 minutes for discussion. (15 % each). (*Guidelines for reports will be posted on course site.*)

* Senior papers due Monday May 2nd by 1:30 pm. Early submissions appreciated.

Additional Notes:

- 1) Required Readings that are not in the required textbooks will be available on the course site.
- 2) Alternative projects (such as a thematic paper or Bible study) may be proposed in lieu of an exegetical paper. Please see instructor to make arrangements.

BOOKS FOR RUTH

Required:

Katherine Sakenfeld. *Ruth*. Interpretation Series. Louisville; Westminster, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0-8042-3149-7. Price: 15.10 at Amazon.com.

Hardcover (recommended) available for 26.29 at Amazon.com.

Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

ISBN: 978-0-8006-0464-6. Price: \$24.06 at Amazon.com

Additional Resources for Ruth:

Frederick Bush. *Ruth, Esther*. Word Biblical Commentary. Word Books, 1996.

Judy Fentress-Williams. *Ruth*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012.

Dana Fewell and D. Gunn. *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990.

R. L. Hubbard, *Ruth*. New International Commentary. Eerdmans, 1988.

Andre LaCoque. *Ruth*. Continental Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Todd Linafelt and Timothy Beal. *Ruth and Esther*. Liturgical Press, 1999.

James McKeown. *Ruth*. The Two Horizons Commentary. 2015.

Jeremy Schipper. *Ruth*. Anchor Yale Bible. Yale University, 2016.

Katherine Sakenfeld. *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*. Westminster, 2003.

Mona West, "Ruth" in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, edited by Deryn Guest et al. London: SCM Press, 2006.

BOOKS FOR JONAH

Required:

James Limburg. *Jonah*. Old Testament Library. Westminster/John Knox, 1993.
ISBN: 0-664-21296-4. Price: \$33.56 at Amazon.com

Supplementary commentary for Jonah (if budget allows):

Philip P. Jenson. *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary*. T & T Clark, 2008. ISBN: 567-04222-7. Price (used) 93.00 at Amazon.com

OR:

Uriel Simon. *Jonah*. The JPS Bible Commentary. Jewish Publication Society, 1999.
ISBN: 0-8276-0672-9. Price (used) \$26.00 – 29.00 at Amazon.com

Additional Resources for Jonah:

Leslie Allen. *Joel Obadiah Micah and Jonah*. Eerdmans, 1975.

Amy Erickson. *Jonah: Introduction and Commentary*. Illuminations Series. Eerdmans, 2021.

Friedemann Golka. *Revelation of God: A Commentary on the Books of Song of Songs and Jonah*. International Theological Commentary. Eerdmans, 1988.

Eugene Roop. *Ruth, Jonah, Esther*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Herald Press, 2003.

Frank Spina. *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*. Eerdmans, 2005.

Hans Wolff. *Obadiah and Jonah*. Augsburg Press, 1986.

Schedule of Readings – Ruth

Note: Reports and student-led discussions are marked in boldface or by an asterisk.

Mon 1/31 Introduction/Orientation.
(Please read all four chapters of Ruth before Feb. 7)

Mon 2/7 Text: Ruth 1 and Genesis 38

Phyllis Tribble, "A Human Comedy" in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 166-175.

K. Sakenfeld, 17–36.

D. Fewell, and D. Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*, 69-76. (Available on course site.)

Reading on narrative: Eric Barreto and Michael Chan, *Exploring the Bible* (c. 13) "How Do We Read Narratives?" (pp.87-94). Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

- Dana Nolan Fewell, "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism," in S. McKenzie and S. Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*.
- Angela Wai Ching Wong, "History, Identity and a Community of Hese: A Biblical Reflection on Ruth 1:1-17." *Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1999) 3-13.
- James Howell, "Ruth 1:1-18" *Interpretation* Vol. 51 no. 3 (2001) 281-284.
- D. F. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth" *JBL* 89 (1970) 27-37.
- Dana Fewell and D. Gunn, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 1-12.

Mon 2/14 Text: Ruth 2

- Sakenfeld, 1-16 (Introduction).
Sakenfeld, 37-50.
Trible, "Human Comedy," 176-181.

Report: Timothy Stone, "Six Measures of Barley: Seed Symbolism in Ruth," *JSOT* 38.2 (2013) 189-199. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

- Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 34-45.
- Dalila Nayap-Pot, "Life in the Midst of Death: Naomi, Ruth and the Plight of Indigenous Women" in *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah, 52-65. Sheffield Press, 1999.
- Michael Moore, "Ruth the Moabite and the Blessings of Foreigners," *CBQ* 60 (2001) 203-217.

Mon 2/21 Text: Ruth 3

- Sakenfeld, 51-66.
Trible, 181-187.
Eunny Lee, "Ruth" in *Women's Bible Commentary* (Third Edition, 2012) 141-149 (esp. 147-148). Available on course site.

Report: Dana Fewell, David Gunn, "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* 45 (1989) 45-54. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

- James Black, "Ruth in the Dark: Folktale, Law and Creative Ambiguity in the Old Testament" *Journal of Literature and Theology* 5 (1991) 20-35.
- Anna May Say Pa, "Reading Ruth 3:1-5 from an Asian Woman's Perspective," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. L. Day and C. Pressler, 89-101. Louisville, 2006.
- Kirsten Nielsen, *Ruth: A Commentary*, 66-76.

Mon 2/28 Text: Ruth 4 **Student led discussion based on Study Guide.*

- Sakenfeld, 67-88.
- Trible, 188-196.
- (Review) D. Fewell, D. Gunn, "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* 45 (1989) 45-54, especially pages 50-54.

Supplementary Resource (available on course site; commentary on reserve):

- Tamara Eshkenazi and Tikva Frymer Kenski, *Ruth* (JPS Bible Commentary) 69-92 (Ruth 4).¹

Supplementary Bibliography:

- Barbara Green, "The Plot of the Biblical Story of Ruth," *JSOT* 23 (1982) 55-68.
- Eunny Lee, "Ruth" in *Women's Bible Commentary* (Third Edition, 2012) 142-149. Available on course site
- J. A. Loader, "A Woman Praised by Women is Better than a Woman Praised by Seven Men," *Theological Studies* Vol. 60 (2009) 687-710. On course site
- Madipoane Masenya. "Ngwetsi (Bride): The Naomi-Ruth Story from an African-South African Woman's Perspective." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14 (1998) 81-90. Available on course site
- Victor Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity in the Story of Ruth," *The Family in Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel*, ed. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 17-27. Available on course site
- Mona West, "Ruth," *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest, 190-194. SCM Press, 2006. Available on course site

¹ Focus on their summary sections: 69-70 (*Redemption and Restoration*); 86 (*Betrothal, Birth, and Blessings*); 92-94 (*Reweaving the Web of Life – The Concluding Genealogy*).

Mon 3/7 Overview – Approaches/Interpretations- Ruth

Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 86 -88 (“Hermeneutical and Theological Postscript”).

Reports may be chosen from the following: (Available on course site.)

Yolanda Norton, “Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life in Death in the Book of Ruth,” *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith, 266-280. Wipf and Stock, 2015.

Katherine Sakenfeld, “Ruth and Naomi: Economic Survival and Family Values,” in *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*.

Eunny Lee, “Ruth the Moabite: Identity, Kinship, and Otherness,” in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. L. Day and C. Pressler, 89-101. Louisville, 2006.

Fokkelen Van Dijk-Hemmes, “Ruth: A Product of Women’s Culture?” *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (First Series; 1993) ed. A. Brenner, 134-139.

Ilana Pardes, “The Book of Ruth: Idyllic Revisionism,” in *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, 98-117. Harvard University Press, 1992.

Supplementary Bibliography: ²

Athalya Brenner, *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (First Series, 1993) 9-16 (Introduction).

Jennifer Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives*.
University of South Carolina, 2011.

Peter Lau and Jione Havea, eds. *Reading Ruth in Asia*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015.

Julie Li-Chuan. “Returning Home: The Inspiration of the Role Redifferentiation in the Book of Ruth for Taiwanese Women.” *Semeia* 78 (1997) 47-53.

*J. A. Loader, “A Woman Praised by Women is Better than a Woman Praised by Seven Men.” *Theological Studies*, Vol. 60, Issue 3, 2009 (687-701). Available on course site.

*Victor Matthews, “The Determination of Social Identity in the Story of Ruth,” in *The Family in Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel*, ed. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 17-27. T&T Clark, 2009. Available on course site.

² Entries marked with an asterisk are additional possibilities for oral reports.

Carol Meyers, “ ‘Women of the Neighborhood’ (Ruth 4:17): Informal Female Networks in Ancient Israel,” *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther* (Second Series, 1999), ed. A. Brenner, 110-127.

Sarojini Nadar, “A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth,” in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa Dube, 159-175. Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

Ilana Pardes, “Rachel’s Dream: The Female Subplot” in *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, 98-117. Harvard University, 1992.

K. Sakenfeld, “The Story of Ruth: Economic Survival,” *Realia Dei: Essays in Archeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. P. H. Williams and T. Hiebert.

Renita Weems, “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds (Naomi and Ruth),” *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women’s Relationships in the Bible*, 23-38. New York; Warner, 2005.

Mona West, “Ruth,” in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest et al., 190-194. SCM Press, 2006. Available on course site.

Gale Yee, “Ruth the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority,” in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. R. Bailey, T. Liew, F. Segovia, 119-134. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

Mon 3/14

Reading/Research Day

Mon 3/21

Spring Recess

Schedule of Readings: Jonah

Mon 3/28 Introduction:
Limburg, 19-36.

Texts: Jonah 1 and 2 Kings 14:23-27
Jonah 4:10-11

Limburg, 37-59.

P. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah Micah*, 41-57 (Jonah 1). Available on course site

J. Holbert, "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh: Satire in the Book of Jonah," *JSOT* 21(1981) 59-74 (read up to page 70). Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

Nan Jou Chen, "Jonah," in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte et al., 291-294. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004. Available on course site

P. Jenson, *Obadiah Jonah, Micah*, 31-35 (*The Genre of the Book*). On course site

Mon 4/4 Text: Jonah 2

Limburg, 60-72.

J. Holbert (*cont.*), "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh," read 70-74.

J. Ackerman, "Satire and Symbolism in the Song of Jonah," in *Traditions in Transformation*, ed. B. Halpern (1981) read pages 213-217. (Available on course site.)

Report: J. Holbert "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh: Satire in the Book of Jonah," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 59-74.

Supplementary Bibliography:

J. Ackerman, "Satire and Symbolism in the Song of Jonah," in *Traditions in Transformation*, ed. B. Halpern (1981) 213-246.

Phyllis Tribble, *Jonah 2, New Interpreters Bible*, Vol. VII.

J. Magonet, "Jonah" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

G. Landes, "The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah" *Interpretation* 21 (1967) 3-31.

Mon 4/11 Text: Jonah 3

Limburg, 74-88.

Johanna van Wijk-Bos, "The Overturning of Nineveh in the Third Chapter of Jonah," *On the Way to Nineveh*, 218-236. Available on course site

Additional Resources:

Uriel Simon, *Jonah 3* (JPS Commentary) 25-34. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

R.W.L. Moberly, "Preaching for a Response? Jonah's Message to the Ninevites Reconsidered." *Vetus Testamentum* 53 (2003) 156-168.

Shimon Bakon, "Jonah: The Conscientious Objector," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37 (2009) 95-102.

J. Magonet, "Jonah" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

Mon 4/18

[Jonah] is a peculiar combination of life force and death wish.
Elie Wiesel, Five Biblical Portraits.

Text: Jonah 4

***Student led discussion based on study guide.**

Limburg, 88-98.

Review: J. Ackerman, *Satire and Symbolism*, 217 (his compact summary of the story) and 245 (for his summation of the primary issue).

Available on course site

Uriel Simon, *Jonah 4* (JPS Commentary) 34-48. Available on course site.

Supplement with his introductory remarks on pp. xii-xiii.

Supplementary Bibliography:

Philip Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 80-93 (Jonah 4).

Frank Spina, "Jonah: Prophet Among, To, and Against Outsiders" in *Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*

Uriel Simon, *Jonah 4* (JPS Commentary) 34-48 (supplement with introductory remarks on pp. xii-xiii). Available on course site

Mon 4/25 Overview – Approaches/ Interpretations –Jonah

Reread Jonah 4:9-11.

Review: Limburg, 33-36 (Theological Themes in Jonah).

Maya Bernstein, “Why Do We Read Jonah During the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur?” September, 2009. (Available on course site.)

Film clip: “Retelling Jonah.”

Reports may be chosen from the following: (Available on course site)

Yael Shemesh, “ ‘And Many Beasts’ (Jonah 4:11): The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah.” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 10/6 (2010) 2-25.

Barbara Green, “Beyond Messages: How Meaning Emerges from our Reading of Jonah,” *Word and World* 27 (2), Spring 2007 (149-156).

*The role of Jonah in Jewish liturgical tradition: The reading of Jonah on Yom Kippur. (*see resources listed below*):

Jonah and Yom Kippur – Resources

Phyllis Tribble, “Jonah,” NIB VII (p. 528). Available on course site
(A compact but informative summary on reading of Jonah at *Yom Kippur*.)

Nahum Sarna, “Why the Book of Jonah is Read on *Yom Kippur*.” *Biblical Review* 6 (1990) 24. Available on course site

Maya Bernstein, “Why Do We Read Jonah During the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur?” September, 2009. Available on course site

David P. Wright, “Day of Atonement.” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol 2 (72-76) Available on course site.

Supplementary Bibliography:

- Chesung, Justin Ryu. "Silence as Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of the Silence of Jonah in Jonah 4:1-11," *JSOT* 34 (2009) 195-218.
- De La Torre, Miguel. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethics of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007.
- Frahm, Eckart. "Of Doves, Fish, and Goddesses: Reflections on the Literary, Religious, and Historical Background of the Book of Jonah," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, edited by Joel Baden et al., 432-450. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Gaines, Janet. *Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Jenson, Philip. "Interpreting Jonah's God," in *The God of Israel*, edited by R.P. Gordon, 229-245. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Magonet, Jonathan. *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah*. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976.
- Murphy, Kelly. "Jonah" in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Third Edition. Edited by Carol Newsom et al., 321-325. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- Person, Raymond. "The Role of Non-Human Characters in Jonah," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, edited by N. Habel and P. Trudinger, 85-90. Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
- Perry, T.A. *The Honeymoon is Over: Jonah's Argument with God*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2006.
- Sherwood, Yvonne. *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Sherwood, Yvonne. "Cross-currents in the Book of Jonah: Some Jewish and Cultural Midrashim on a Traditional Text." *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998) 49-79.
- Smith-Christopher, D.L. "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, 117-142 (1996).
- *Van Heerden, Willie. "Ecological Interpretations of the Jonah Narrative – Have They Succeeded in Overcoming Anthropocentrism?" *Journal for Semitics* 23 (2014)114-34.
- *Whedbee, J.W. "Jonah as Joke: A Comedy of Contradiction, Caricature, and Compassion," in *The Bible and the Comic Vision*, 191-220. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- *White, Marsha. "Jonah" in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Expanded Edition. Edited by Carol Newsom et al., 321-325. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

Mon 5/2 **Research/Writing Day/ Senior papers due by 2 pm.**

Mon 5/16 *Jonah and Ruth Papers due for all other students*