

*Erskine Theological Seminary*

**OT 746 CO: THE BOOKS OF THE RESTORATION:**

**EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER**

(Syllabus revised December 29, 2008)

January Term 2009

Columbia Campus, Saturday, January 10, 17, 24, 31, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Professor: Max Rogland

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**OFFICE HOURS FOR JANUARY 2009:**

I will typically be available in my office in Columbia between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, though it is always advisable to call or email for an appointment first. Other times may be available.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the history of Israel under Persian rule as described in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Students consider the significance of the return from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple, the preservation of the covenant people, and the social and religious reforms of the post-exilic community by means of a detailed study of the Biblical text. The course also examines the books' contribution to Messianic expectations in the Second Temple period and in the New Testament era.

*Prerequisite: In order to receive exegesis credit for this course, students must have successfully completed BI 502 Principles of Exegesis (and, where applicable, Hebrew I & II) prior to taking this class. Exegesis/elective. Three hours.*

**COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:**

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to “educate persons for service in the Christian Church.” To achieve this mission, the ability to understand the Bible in various contexts must be taught. These contexts include the Bible’s ancient Near Eastern cultural setting, the immediate context of the literary unit in question, the context of the book of the Bible at issue or the OT as a whole, its canonical context admitting the light of the NT that points to Christ, and the context of the whole counsel of God that includes the implications of the Word today. This course will seek to raise the students’ awareness of how to read the book of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther in these various contexts. Specifically, by the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a mastery of the general outline and content of the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther and a familiarity with critical issues related to the study of these books.

2. Demonstrate a competent knowledge of the history of ancient Israel during the Persian period and of these books' significance for the development of Second Temple Judaism.
3. Provide a responsible literary and exegetical analysis of key passages.
4. Reflect on the theological significance of important themes in these books such as the return from exile, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and of the Temple, and the institution of the Festival of Purim.
5. Discuss the books' contribution to Messianic expectations in the Second Temple period.
6. Reflect on the relevance of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther for the contemporary Church.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:**

**NOTE: Textbooks are available from the Erskine Theological Seminary Virtual Bookstore at [www.ecampus.com/erskine](http://www.ecampus.com/erskine).**

Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*. Baker Publishing Group.

Karen Jobes, *Esther* (NIV Application Commentary), Zondervan.

Leslie Allen / Timothy Laniak, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (New International Biblical Commentary). Hendricksen

W. Grudem (ed.), *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

The assignments for the course are being revised, and full details will be provided at the first class session. For the moment, note the following:

- A. An exegetical paper will be required (due on or before **February 23**). Guidelines pertaining to the paper will be provided at the first class session. See below for important deadlines pertaining to the paper.
- B. Other factors affecting your grade:
  - a. **Attendance is mandatory at all class sessions.** Missing a session of an all-day class will result in a 10% reduction in your course grade. You cannot afford to miss class. If you are aware of any conflicts that will prevent you from attending one of the class sessions, you should register for a different section or take the course at another time.
  - b. In this class, as in many seminary-level classes, assignments frequently involve a substantial writing component. To do well in this class, therefore, it is essential that you have excellent writing skills. Students whose writing skills are weak are *strongly* encouraged to take PM 090 Writing for Ministry before taking this course. **Students who have passed PM 090 or who are taking it concurrently with this course and who complete it successfully will receive 5% extra credit.**

### **OVERALL GRADING SCALE:**

100-95	A	85-84	C+	71-70	D-
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94-93	A-	83-80	C		
92-91	B+	79-78	C-	69-0	F
90-88	B	77-76	D+		
87-86	B-	75-72	D		

### **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS and SEMINARY POLICIES:**

**Registration:** Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

**Official Seminary Class Attendance Policy:** Class participation is considered an important part of the total educational experience at Erskine Seminary. Students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis and are responsible for the mastery of all materials required in the course. In general, students are allowed up to three hours of unexcused absence without penalty. Students taking a class that meets four times over a semester/term must attend the first meeting of the class. Students who cannot attend the first course meeting should not register for the course or, if already registered, should drop the course and complete the drop/add form. (If the drop/add form is not completed and turned in to the Registrar, the student will still be charged for the course and will receive an “F” grade.) If students have to be absent for part or all of another class meeting day, they are still responsible for all work missed and all work due. A student who misses as much as one full class day or its equivalent in late arrival or early departure should consult with the professor to see whether it is still possible to pass the course. NOTE: missing a session of an all-day course will result in an automatic 10 percentage point reduction in your overall grade. If you are aware of any conflicts that will prevent you from attending one of the class sessions, you should register for a different section or take the course at another time.

**Late and/or Incomplete Work:** Any work not submitted by the due date will be assessed a late penalty. Students should review the Seminary policy on “Incompletes” in the Seminary catalog. The grade of “I” or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of “I” is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An “I” in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incom-

pletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become “F.”

**Plagiarism:** Any student who commits plagiarism is in violation of Seminary policy and is liable for dismissal. See the academic section of the Catalog for complete information.

**Language about God and Humanity:** The Bible and the Church’s historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

**Conduct in Theological Discussions:** Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

**Taping Class Lectures:** To tape a lecture the student must complete an “Audio Recording Request” form, which can be downloaded from the Seminary website at:

[http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics\\_Files/PdfDownloads.html](http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics_Files/PdfDownloads.html)

### **IMPORTANT DATES AND READING SCHEDULE:**

Note the following important dates and deadlines:

- Deadlines pertaining to the exegesis paper:
  - On or before the final class session on **January 31** you must have the instructor’s approval for your choice of passage, and a preliminary bibliography and a basic outline of your paper (consisting of your thesis statement and supporting points) must be submitted for feedback and approval by the instructor.
  - The final version of the paper is due on or before **February 23**. I am willing to read one early draft of your paper and suggest improvements and corrections for your final draft if it is submitted on or before **February 12**. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this exceedingly generous offer.
- Reading schedule: TBA