



The Psalms: A Bible in Miniature

Hilary 2025

Term Dates: January 13—March 22, 2025
Department: Theology
Difficulty: Introductory
Instructor: Dr. Alastair Roberts <a.roberts@davenantinstitute.org>
Meeting Time: Fridays at 3:00 pm-5:00 pm (Eastern Time)
Zoom Link: [Populi](#) > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

Course Description

In his introduction to his lectures on the Psalms, Martin Luther described the Psalter as “a little Bible,” declaring that “in it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible.” For nearly three millennia, the psalms have been at the heart of the worship of the people of God. This course will consider the place of the Psalter within the scriptural canon and the life of the Church and its members. It will equip students to read and, more importantly, to sing with greater understanding and benefit. While deepening students’ appreciation of individual psalms, this course aims to give students a firmer theological grasp upon the role and use of the Psalter as a whole, its ordering to Christ, and the ways it can transform our relationship to Holy Scripture more generally.

Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) giving student a theological purchase on the book of Psalms and its place in the canon; (2) equipping students to engage with the literary features of the book and of specific psalms; (3) helping students to wrestle with some of the difficulties posed by the book and its contents.

Course Texts

- John D. Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction & Guide to Resources*
- Peter Leithart, *From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution*
- Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms*
- Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*

Course Format

The format of the course will blend lectures and guided discussion of the assigned texts. Students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selections for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute. On a typical week, students will be expected to read between 50 and 100 pages for the class, which will include selected passages of Scripture and secondary literature.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.

- **Zoom** links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- **Discord** may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation (20%)

Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. Students may have two excused absences.

2. Weekly Synopsis (50%)

Students will submit a weekly written piece, of at least 500 words in length, with a brief synopsis and critical reflection on one of the readings set for the week.

3. Oral Exam (30%)

At the conclusion of the course, I will schedule a 15-30-minute Zoom session to assess you on your mastery of the relevant concepts and material from the course.

Course Calendar

| Week | Dates | Topics, Readings, & Assignments |
|------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Jan 17 | Song in Scripture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peter Leithart, <i>From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution</i> ● Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32; Judges 5; 1 Samuel 2; 2 Samuel 22-23 |
| 2 | Jan 24 | Introduction to the Psalter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gordon J. Wenham, <i>The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms</i>, 13-55 ● William P. Holladay, <i>The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses</i>, 17-91 ● Psalms 1 and 2 |
| 3 | Jan 31 | The Poetry of the Psalms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Robert Alter, <i>The Art of Biblical Poetry</i>, 3-26, 111-136 ● William P. Brown, <i>Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor</i>, 55-79 ● Psalms 90, 111-112 |
| 4 | Feb 7 | The Structure of the Psalter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● James M. Hamilton Jr., <i>Psalms (Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary)—Volume I: Psalms 1-72</i>, 1-88 |

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|----|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● David Emanuel, <i>An Intertextual Commentary to the Psalter: Juxtaposition and Allusion in Book 1</i>, 1-34 ● Psalms 148-150 |
| 5 | Feb 14 | Psalms, Law, and Wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gordon J. Wenham, <i>Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically</i>, 57-166 ● Psalms 19, 119 |
| 6 | Feb 21 | Genres of Psalms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trevor Laurence, <i>Cursing with God: The Imprecatory Psalms and the Ethics of Christian Prayer</i>, 117-195 ● Psalms 35, 69, 137 |
| 7 | Feb 28 | The Psalms and the Canon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gordon J. Wenham, <i>The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms</i>, 57-79 ● Christopher Ash, <i>The Psalms: A Christ-Centred Commentary</i>, 27-102 ● Psalms 104-106 |
| 8 | Mar 7 | The Songs of the Anointed One <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bruce K. Waltke & Fred G. Zaspel, <i>How to Read & Understand the Psalms</i>, 33-81 ● Gordon J. Wenham, <i>The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms</i>, 81-101 ● Psalms 22, 45, 72, 89, 110 |
| 9 | Mar 14 | The Use of the Psalms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● John D. Witvliet, <i>The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction & Guide to Resources</i> ● Psalms 37, 42 |
| 10 | Mar 21 | Psalms in the History of the Church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Susan Gillingham, <i>Psalms Through the Centuries: Volume One</i>, 131-191, 242-312 ● Psalms 120-134 |

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenant will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 93 | 90 | 87 | 83 | 80 | 77 | 73 | 70 | 67 | 63 | 60 | |

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com