I. Course Description

As a guided exposition of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs with emphasis on the historical/cultural and literary contexts, the literary structure and possible purpose statement will be explored as a part of the process of interpreting and communicating the message of specific passages.

II. Objectives

1) To enable each student to learn the basic characteristics of Hebrew poetry as the foundation for a proper study of two Poetic Books—- Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Song of Solomon).

2) To discern the literary structure (natural basic outline) of the Books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) and to suggest a purpose statement for each book. This has a two-fold intent to assist each student:
   (a) to acquire an over-all view of both Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs;
   (b) to master the subject matter of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (namely, knowledge of the contents of each chapter or natural division).

3) To help the student to learn a proper method of interpreting individual passages in the text of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in light of two important contexts: the historical-cultural background and the overall structure and purpose of the book.

4) To demonstrate the proper hermeneutical approach to Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs—understanding the text in light of both historical/cultural and Biblical contexts. Each Master’s student must be able:
   a) To identify precise hermeneutical guidelines for each Book to promote an accurate interpretation of each text.
   b) To utilize them in Bible study.
   c) To utilize them in preaching/teaching from both Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.
   d) To explore how to teach this proper approach to others in one’s church or academy.

5) To analyze the proper "homiletical" approaches to Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in order to make valid and relevant application(s) to life situations in the 21st century in teaching, preaching and counseling. Each Master’s student must be able:
   a) To discuss homiletical guidelines for each Book to encourage maximum communication of God's truths.
   b) To formulate timeless principles from the Books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs which are true to the original context and yet relevant to our modern society.
   c) To utilize these guidelines and principles for preaching/teaching from both Ecclesiastes

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1 This syllabus (1-06-2011) is tentative and may be revised, if needed.
2 My e-mail is gwpbmats@juno.com. Office phone: 903-586-2501, ext. 224.
and the Song of Songs.
d) To explore using the Song of Songs for weddings and/or marriage counseling.

6) To create an awareness of various views concerning the authorship, date, and possible historical setting of Ecclesiastes and of the Song of Songs.

III. Requirements

A. Use of textbooks


Recommended supplemental books include Duane A. Garrett, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs (Nashville: Broadman, 1993); David Hubbard, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (Dallas: Word, 1991); and Roy B. Zuck, ed. Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). Finally the brief but excellent commentaries on Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon by Donald Glenn and Jack Deere in Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck are noteworthy.

Reports on required reading assignments (including portions read from various sections in Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs) must be recorded and turned in weekly on standardized reading slips obtainable from the seminary office. Students are responsible for a quiz at any time.

B. Term papers and report

Each Master's student is responsible for two term papers of about 8 to 12 typewritten pages consisting of an exegetical summary of some passage in Ecclesiastes and another in Song of Songs followed by an expository sermon or lesson. An oral report of about 30 minutes emphasizing the exposition of the text and its valid application will be presented (normally on the day the Bible passage is scheduled for class discussion). The paper should exhibit a proper balance between doctrine (being true to the historical/cultural background and the literary context of Ecclesiastes or Song of Songs and the other Poetic Books and practical exhortation (being validated in light of the rest of the Old Testament and of the New Testament). The student must consult with the instructor before proceeding with a sermon passage.

Each paper should include at least the following aspects: (1) The student must summarize the passage and trace the argument (i.e., the flow of thought) in light of the whole Book of Ecclesiastes or Song of Solomon and its historical/cultural context. Be certain to utilize the three textbooks as well as at least three other commentaries throughout the paper (see bibliography). (2) There ought to be an exegetical or expository outline (summarizing in complete sentences the exact
thought of the Bible text) with a brief commentary on each verse which expresses your research into the text. (3) The sermonic portion of the paper should bring out the biblical teaching and timeless principles which find valid application for today. It is very important to consider subsequent Old Testament evidence as well as New Testament quotations or allusions in discerning timeless principles. The student should show how the doctrine (or theology) of the text may impact our modern society. In the written and oral presentation, each master’s student must seek to model this for his classmates as he/she would for his/her church or academy.

Notes: Be sure to observe the following rules: (a) To follow the suggested guidelines for interpreting Old Testament poetry and the specific Poetical Book involved; (b) To discuss (in the last part of the paper) how the doctrine (or theology) of the text impacts our modern society; (c) To document your research by author’s last name and the page number placed within parentheses in the text (or by footnotes if you prefer) with a bibliography at the end.

The term paper will normally be due on the same day on which that section of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs dealt with in the paper is scheduled for class discussion. [Be sure to turn in a finished copy of the term paper to the professor before the oral report is given.]

C. Exams

Two exams will be given during the semester (see the class schedule below). Emphasis is normally placed on the literary structure (outline) plus other items discussed in the lectures. However the precise nature of these tests will be explained later.

D. Tentative grading guidelines (Master's students.)

Exams 20% each; term papers--20% each; daily grade 20% (including 12% for weekly exercises & reading [as well as any "pop" quizzes over daily reading] documented on reading slips; 1% each for each oral report on term papers; and 3% each for class participation, and class attendance).

IV. Class Schedule (Master's)

Jan.25 Brief look at course syllabus. Possible brief introduction to Old Testament poetry?

Introduction to the puzzle called Ecclesiastes: (a) Problems of authorship, date, & historical setting. (b) Emphasis on problem of a literary structure & suggested purpose. Assignment: read all of Ecclesiastes twice (preferably at one sitting) in a modern translation such as the NIV, NASB, or NKJV. Read Brown, v, vii-viii, x-xii, 1-18; Bartholomew, 9-11, 13-99;

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3 See Ross, Creation and Blessing (especially pp. 42-44) for the concept and examples of an exegetical outline.

4 Also see Ross, ibid., especially pp. 46-48 for the concept of an expository outline and timeless principles. Furthermore consult Walter Kaiser's Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981) especially chapter 7 for tips on gleaning timeless principles from the text.

5 Be sure to give credit to sources you use in coming up with an exegetical and/or expository outlines. It is best to rework what others have done (or start out on your own and consult others to polish up your efforts) rather than copying someone verbatim. However it is still necessary to document the source(s) you utilized or revised.

6 The student's grade will be penalized for failure to turn in a finished report or for going beyond the time framework without prior permission.
and Fredericks, 17-62. *For extra credit:* read Zuck, *Reflecting with Solomon* chap. 1 (17-30); chap. 3 (45-65); chap. 5 (81-114) or chap. 8 (149-157).


Feb. 8 Study of Ecclesiastes chaps. 2 and 3. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Ecclesiastes. Read Brown, 32-47; Bartholomew, 128-182; & Fredericks, 84b-126.

15 Study of Ecclesiastes chaps. 4-6. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Ecclesiastes. Read Brown, 48-70; Bartholomew, 183-243; & Fredericks, 127-160a, 162-165.

22 Study of Ecclesiastes chaps. 7 and 8. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Ecclesiastes. Read Brown, 71-90; Bartholomew, 244-295; and Fredericks, 161, 166-200.

March 1 Study of Ecclesiastes chaps. 9-10. **Assignment:** read specific text of Ecclesiastes. Read Brown, 91-101a; Bartholomew, 296-333; and Fredericks, 201-228.

March 8 Study of Ecclesiastes 11-12. Review for exam. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Ecclesiastes. Read Brown, 101b-120; Bartholomew, 334-373a; and Fredericks, 229-252.

March 15 **MID-TERM EXAM**

22 Introduction to Song of Songs. **Assignment:** Read all of Song of Songs at least two times (preferably each time at one sitting) in a modern translation such as the NIV, NASB, or NKJV. Read Greg W. Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Utilizing the Song of Songs" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (Oct.-Dec. 1999):399-422; Estes, 267-274, 287-300; Longman, 1-20a, 55-70; Gledhill, 13-15, 19-39, 43-49.

March 29 Suggested hermeneutical and (possibly) homiletical guidelines for Song of Songs. Study of Song of Songs chap. 1. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Song of Songs. Re-read Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Utilizing the Song of Songs" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (Oct. 1999): only 399-405. Also Estes 275-286; 301-317; Longman, 20b-54, 87-108; Gledhill, 50-88, 91-121.

April 5 Study of Song of Songs chaps. 2 and 3. **Assignment:** read the specific text of Song of Songs. Read Estes, 318-345; Longman, 109-139; Gledhill, 122-152.
April 12  NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK (BMAA meeting)

April 19  Study of Song of Songs 4:1—6:3. Assignment: read the specific biblical text. Read Estes, 346-379; Longman, 140-176; Gledhill, 153-189.

April 26  Study of Song of Songs 6:4—-7:13. Assignment: read the specific biblical text. Read Estes, 380-401; Longman, 177-202; Gledhill,190-213.


May 10  FINAL EXAM

VI. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introductions or Commentaries on Ecclesiastes or Song of Songs


**Devotional, Homiletical or Practical Works on Ecclesiastes or Song of Songs**


An excellent resource for a couple's Sunday school class or small group study of the book.


