PLACE: Saint Louis University.
TIME: Spring Semester, 2007; Thursday, 3:45-6:15 P.M
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Bernhard A. Asen. Theology Digest, Humanities 248. Office Phone: 977-2857; Home phone: 314-862-1423. Email: Asen @ SLU. EDU

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE
To survey the literary, historical, social, and political background of the Psalms; their literary forms, main themes, structure, theology, and relevance to modern times. The course objective is to help the student toward a greater appreciation and understanding of the Psalms as poetry, and their place in the worship life of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

METHODOLOGY
By the end of the semester students will have major portions of the Psalter, as well as the textbook listed below, and certain assigned readings. Class periods will consist of lecture and discussion. Your participation in the discussions will be very important to our mutual growth and learning.

TEXTS
The Holy Bible. Any version is acceptable, but the New Revised Standard version (Catholic edition) is preferred. Be sure the bible you use contains both Testaments. Please bring your bible to every class period.

Bullock, C. Hassell, Encountering the Book of Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Company, 2001)

ATTENDANCE POLICY
If you cannot be in class, please call me at my home or office. Unexcused absences are unacceptable. More than two unexcused absences will drop your grade one level (A becomes B, etc.).

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS
Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course—as outlined in the syllabus, due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Disabilities Services. Please telephone the office at 314-977-2930, or visit Room 131 in the Academic Resources Center, 3840 Lindell Blvd. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct is, in its judgment,
detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information on examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the university.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. There will be four (4) synthesis papers required: February 1, February 22, March 29, and April 19, 2007. The papers should be one typed page and include your questions, probings, and reactions to the material presented and discussed in the intervening classes. I will read them and return them with some brief comments. The papers are a course requirement, but will not be graded as such.

2. Each undergraduate student will submit (2) two 3-5 page book or periodical reports on some aspect of the Psalter. Each graduate student will submit reports on four (4) periodical articles or two (2) books. Consult the attached bibliography, Elenchus, OT Abstracts, The Index of Religious Periodicals, The Catholic Periodical Index, et al., for things that interest you or that may be helpful for number 4 below. Time permitting, at least one of these reports will be given in class and take a maximum of 10 minutes, plus time for questions and comments. Final written reports due April 26, 2007.

3. All students are to submit a final synthesis paper (3-5 pages). Due April 26, 2007.

4. A research paper or project on some aspect of the Psalms is required of all students. For undergraduates the paper should be approximately 5-6 pages and for graduate students approximately 15-20 pages and conform to standard research and writing procedures. Due April 26, 2007.

5. Undergraduates will have a take-home Mid-term examination. It will be distributed on March 1, 2007 and is to be returned March 8, 2007.

6. At least once during the course (more if you wish) each student is invited to visit me in my office.

7. All students are encouraged to complete the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester. The time when it will be available on-line will be announced in class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES*

January 18
Old Paths and New Possibilities: Psalm study today. Read for next class: Bullock, pp. 21-82.

January 25
The Form, Structure and Categories of the Psalms. Read for next class: Bullock’s section on Hebrew Poetry, pp. 36-43.

February 1
The Psalms and Hebrew Poetry. Read for next class: Bullock, pp. 135-150.
Synthesis paper due.

February 8

February 15
Wintry and Summery Spirituality (cont.). Read for next class: Bullock, pp. 227-238.

February 22
So You Say You Have No Enemies? The Imprecatory Psalms. Form and Structure: Pss 12, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 83, 109, 137, 140.
Synthesis paper due.

March 1
Like a Passing Shadow: Life and Death in the Psalter. Pss 69, 88, 89, 30, 86, 103.
Distribution of Mid-term exam to undergraduates.

March 8
Undergraduate Mid-term exam to be returned.

March 15
No Class. Spring Break.

March 22

March 29
April 5
No Class. Holy Thursday.

April 12
When the Sea Looked and Fled: The Exodus theme in the Psalter. Read: Pss 114, 135.

April 19
The Psalter, translations, and inclusive language. **Synthesis paper due.**

April 26
The Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament. **Final papers and projects due.**

May 3
Summary and conclusion.

* I say "tentative" because we will stress understanding, comprehension and dialogue rather than speed. It may be necessary here and there to abbreviate certain sections and lengthen others. If at any time you have questions, comments, problems, or you just want to talk, please feel free to drop by my office.

**About the Papers**

1. The research paper for **undergraduate** students should be approximately five (5) to six (6) pages in length, and for graduate students approximately fifteen (15) to twenty (20) pages. You may use any standard style sheet (e.g., Turabian, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.). I am willing to read outlines, rough drafts, or help with the selection of a topic. You may choose your own topic or select one from the list below. For example, you might pick a psalm theme (creation, exodus, kingship, social justice, etc.) and show how that theme is present in the psalter generally or in select psalms. It will be helpful to consult the many psalm commentaries available in Pius Library as well as the attached select bibliography of the Psalms.

2. The project could be any of the following:
   a) compose your own psalm or psalms according to the various categories (hymn, lament, thanksgiving, etc.) using the poetic forms and structure (lament, thanksgiving, etc.) that we will discuss in class.
   b) compose a musical setting for your favorite psalm or a psalm that you write;
   c) compile a photographic or artistic interpretation of a psalm, including a written explanation of the project and how it demonstrates the ideas present in the psalm. Creativity is encouraged.

Some possible topics might be:

- The Use of the Psalms in the Christian Liturgy
- Creation in the Psalter
- The Psalms and ecology
- The Use of the Psalms in the New Testament
The Psalms as Prayer
The Exodus Theme in the Psalter
An Exegetical paper on a specific or favorite Psalm
A Module for Teaching the Psalms to Grade School, High School, Adult Learners, et. al.
The Psalms and Social Justice
The Psalms in the Qumran Scrolls
The Psalms in Contemporary Judaism
The Use of the Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours
The Idea of the Enemies in the Psalter
The Psalms as Used and Interpreted by a certain individual in a certain historical period (e.g., early church, Medieval, Reformation, etc.)
The Davidic Monarchy and the Psalter
The Royal Psalms and the Messiah
Wisdom and the Psalter
The Psalms as Torah (instruction)
The Cursing Psalms and Christian Prayer
How the Psalms have been used in art or contemporary music
The Use of the Psalms in the Septuagint
The Use of the Psalms of Lament in pastoral practice
Poetry and the Psalter
Mythology and the Psalms
The Psalms as used in a specific Christian denomination

The periodical and book reports should contain the following elements: 1) a brief review of the major thrust of the article; 2) comment on the audience for whom the article is written (i.e., scholars, lay people); 3) an evaluation of the usefulness of the article and whether the author accomplished his/her stated purpose.

The final synthesis paper should be approximately three (3) pages long. It is not meant to be a repetition of the course, but a summary of a few ideas, themes, etc. that you found interesting and worthwhile.

Grading Scale for Mid Term Exam

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>67-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>61-0</td>
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The following are general principles of the Department of Theological Studies concerning grading standards and criteria:
A range = *Superior, exceptional, outstanding* with evidence of critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that deepens their understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student demonstrates depth of insight beyond what is normally expected. Carefully nuanced reasoning and writing, free from material, structural and grammatical error are presupposed in this grade.

B range = *Good*, ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that deepens their understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors.

C range = *Acceptable*, satisfactory ability to describe overall picture and essential concepts. This means the student has completed the assignment in a manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated.

D range = *Below normal expectation*. Reasoning is neither carefully nuanced nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

F = *Unsatisfactory*. The student failed to respond to the assignment: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort, 4) plagiarism or cheating involved.