

Advanced Exegesis of Isaiah (OT 2033)
Spring, 2009 – Monday, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. -- Schlegel 121
Patricia K. Tull

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

This course is designed to introduce students to strategies for reading and interpreting prophetic books through study of Isaiah. We will divide our time in class each week among three general activities: reading and translating sections of the book, exploring major issues in the overall content and interpretation of Isaiah; and walking through the book section by section through exegetical study. Goals for this course are:

1. Theologically and pastorally useful knowledge of the message, contents, and contexts of Isaiah.
2. Practice in translation and exegesis of Isaiah, and practice bringing exegetical method to bear on preaching, teaching, and worship.
3. Development of awareness of major issues and disputes, historically and today, in the interpretation of Isaiah, and ability to articulate a coherent position on such issues.

Bibliography

Our primary texts will be the book of Isaiah itself as found in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* Hebrew text, an NRSV study Bible (*HarperCollins, New Oxford, or New Interpreter's Study Bible*) and other translations of the Bible. We will also read extensively in the following:

- Barton, John. *Isaiah 1-39*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Leclerc, Thomas L. *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.
- O'Brien, Julia M. *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- Ward, James M. *Thus Says the Lord: The Message of the Prophets*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Willey, Patricia Tull. *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*. SBLDS. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.

We will use monographs and articles on reserve in the library, including the following:

- Articles in *As Those Who Are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL*, ed. C. McGinnis and P. Tull. Atlanta: SBL, 2006.
- Collins, John. *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- Tull, Patricia K. "Isaiah 'Twas Foretold It: Helping the Church Interpret the Prophets." In *Strange Fire: Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Holocaust*, ed. Tod Linafelt. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Tull, Patricia K. Manuscript of chapters from *Isaiah*. Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, forthcoming.

Here is a list of major recent commentaries on Isaiah that you will find useful, available in the library:

- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Isaiah 1-39; Isaiah 40-55; Isaiah 56-66*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2000-2003.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Isaiah 1-39; Isaiah 40-66*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Clifford, Richard J. *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah*. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Goldingay, John and David Payne, *Isaiah 40-55*, vols. 1 and 2. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 2006.
- Hanson, P.D. *Isaiah 40-66 Interpretation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.

- Seitz, Christopher R. "The Book of Isaiah 40-66." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 6, 307-552. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Seitz, Christopher R. *Isaiah 1-39*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
- Tucker, Gene M. "The Book of Isaiah 1-39." In *The New Interpreter's Bible* vol 6, 25-306. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Wildberger, Hans. *Isaiah 1-12; 13-27; 28-39*. Translated from German. Nashville: Fortress, 1991-2002.
- Williamson, H.G.M. *Isaiah 1-5*. International Critical Commentary. London, T&T Clark, 2006.

Requirements and Evaluation

- 20% class preparation and participation
- 20% Hebrew reading/English Bible comparisons and commentary reading*
- 30% Reading journals
- 30% final Bible study and sermon

*It is expected that some students will translate from Hebrew, while others will be working in English only. Please let me know your intentions as the class begins.

Attendance

Because a significant part of the grade is based on activities that can only be carried out in class, attendance is crucial. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify me prior to the class session. Two or more absences may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Reading Journal and Class Presentation

Each week's preparation includes written reflections on selected Isaiah passages and on the secondary reading. Please be sure to do these week by week as assigned as they will be the basis for your part of the class discussion. Reading journals will be turned in electronically by class time on **April 13**.

Bible Studies and Sermons

By **March 30**, please turn in a note to me stating what passage you will be working on, first offering a Bible study on the passage and then, normally the following week, a sermon in class. List three important interpretive questions that interest you about this passage. They must be substantive theological questions and preferably involve some deliberation on the meaning and significance of prophecy in ancient Israel. They may involve the history of the passage's development, its history of interpretation, or some other important aspect. On this note also write your first and second choices of dates for your Bible study presentation (April 13, 20, or 27). I will work out a schedule and send it to you as soon as possible.

My Isaiah Commentary and Translation Manuscripts

As many of you know, I am writing a commentary for Smyth & Helwys on the book of Isaiah. You are not required to read it. However, I will put a copy of all the chapters that are completed (roughly the first half of the book at this time) on reserve in the library. Please read what you would like to of it and *please* feel free to write responses, comments, and questions in the margins (be sure to initial them so I know who you are). Your feedback will help me as I complete the commentary.

I am also writing a translation of Isaiah for the United Methodist Publishing House. Whatever chapters are complete I will also put on reserve, and will add to them as I complete more. As above, please feel free to write comments, questions, etc., in the margins.

Academic Honesty and Inclusive Language

Every paper turned in is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks as appropriate and proper footnoting. Failure properly to document sources of information in written work will result in the paper's being returned ungraded. Any plagiarism that is discovered is subject to failure and a report to the dean's office. If you are uncertain whether or not adoption of information from a source constitutes plagiarism, just ask me. All written work in M.Div. courses will use the Turabian style of documentation: that is, footnotes with full bibliography rather than parenthetical citations.

Language that is inclusive of all humans is expected in all written and oral work. The discussions of God's nature in Isaiah provide an ideal opportunity to ponder the issue of language for God and to experiment with pronouns and nouns to describe the God in whose image all humans are made.

Schedule

Feb 9 **Introduction to the Course and to the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah's structure and composition. Judah in the time of Isaiah.**

Preparation:

- Read Ward, *Thus Says the Lord*, chapters 1-2; Barton, *Isaiah 1-39*, intro and chapter 1. For each chapter you read, write a brief paragraph in your reading journal stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand Isaiah.
- Using the attached outline and notes from an NRSV Study Bible or commentary to help guide you, **read Isaiah in its entirety** to get a feel for the book. As you read, jot down two themes found in Isaiah that you think are important for people of faith today, and two major interpretive questions concerning Isaiah that you hope to address this semester.

Feb 16 **Review of exegetical method. Common interpretive issues in Isaiah. Begin discussion of Isaiah 1-12. First Hebrew reading.**

Preparation:

- Read and outline Isaiah 1-12. Notice especially the emphasis on justice in the first chapter and pay attention to how the same themes unfold in the remaining chapters.
- Read Leclerc, *YHWH Is Exalted in Justice*, introduction and chapters 1-2; O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor*, introduction and chapters 1-2; Barton, chapter 3. For each chapter you read, write a brief paragraph in your reading journal stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 1-12.
- Translate from Hebrew Isa 1:10-17. You need not write out a translation, but take enough notes to help you translate it in class. Try to understand the grammar as well as possible, but to spend no more than 2 hours on the translation work. If you are not taking the course in Hebrew, compare multiple translations of the passage and read at least two commentaries on it, and be prepared to discuss its poetry and significance.

Feb 23 **Continue discussion of Isaiah 1-12: Isaiah, Ahaz, and Complex Redaction.**

Preparation:

- Reread Isaiah 1-12. Pay particular attention to passages that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Leclerc, pp. 29-70; Barton, chapter 2; O'Brien, chapters 3, 5, Ward, chapter 3. For each chapter, write a brief paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 1-12.
- Translate from Hebrew Isa 7:4-16. If you are not taking the course in Hebrew, compare multiple translations of the passage and read at least two commentaries on it, and be prepared to discuss its poetry and significance.

Mar 2 **Isaiah 28-39: Isaiah, Hezekiah, and Assyria**

Preparation:

- Read and outline Isaiah 28-39. Pay particular attention to passages that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Leclerc pp. 70-91, Barton chapter 4, Ward, chapter 4. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that

help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 28-39.

- Translate from Hebrew Isa 30:1-7.

Mar 9 Isaiah 13-27: Isaiah's Tradition.

Preparation:

- Read and outline Isaiah 13-27 and note how it fits into the book as a whole. Pay particular attention to passages that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Barton, chapters 5 and 6, O'Brien chapter 6. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 13-27.
- Translate from Hebrew Isa 25:1-9.

Mar 16 Isaiah 40-48 and the recollection of prophecy. Instructions for final Bible Study and Sermon.

Preparation:

- Read Jeremiah 7, 9, 28, 30, 31; Read and outline Isaiah 40-48. Pay particular attention to passages from Isaiah 40-48 that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage from Isaiah on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Ward, chapter 5; Leclerc, pp. 92-113; O'Brien, chapter 7. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 40-48.
- Translate from Hebrew Isa 43:1-7.

Mar 23 No Class—Research and Study Week

- Read Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, Introduction. Skim chapter 1, reading the conclusion carefully. Read chapter 2.

Mar 30 Isaiah 49-55 and the Meaning of Jerusalem

Preparation:

- Read Lamentations; Read and outline Isaiah 49-55. Pay particular attention to passages from Isaiah 49-55 that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage from Isaiah on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Willey, chapters 3, 4, and 5; O'Brien, chapter 4. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 49-55.
- Translate from Hebrew Isa 52:1-12.
- **Turn in your passage for your final Bible study and sermons**

Apr 6 Isaiah 56-66 and the Complex Book of Isaiah

Preparation:

- Read Ezra 1; Read and outline Isaiah 56-66. Pay particular attention to passages from Isaiah 56-66 that are found in the lectionary and their context in Isaiah. Choose a passage from Isaiah on which to write a ½- to 1-page reflection for your reading journal.
- Read Ward, chapter 6; Leclerc, chapters 5 and 6; O'Brien, chapter 8 and Conclusion. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah 56-66.
- Translate from Hebrew: Isa 58:1-12.

Apr 13 Messianism, the New Testament, and Christian Interpretation of Isaiah

Preparation:

- Read Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, chapters 1-3, 9; Tull, “Isaiah ‘Twas Foretold It.” We will divvy up several chapters from *As Those Who Are Taught* to read and report on. For each chapter you read, write a paragraph stating the most important information or perspectives you found that help you better understand what you are reading in Isaiah. Be ready to share the contents of these chapters with your classmates.
- **Turn in your entire reading journal as an email attachment by class time on April 13.**
- **Student-led Bible studies 1 & 2**

Apr 20 Sermons 1& 2; Bible studies 3 & 4

Apr 27 Sermon 3; Bible studies 5, 6, & 7

May 4 Sermons 4, 5, 6 & 7

Outline of Isaiah (adapted from Ward, Tucker, Seitz)

- I. Isaiah 1-39
 - a. Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1-12)
 - i. Superscription and introductory oracles (chap. 1)
 - ii. Oracles of restoration and judgment (2-5)
 - iii. A booklet on divine and Davidic kingship (6:1-9:7)
 - iv. Judgments and Announcements of Salvation (9:8-12:6)
 - b. Oracles of judgment concerning individual nations (13-23)
 - i. Babylon, Assyria, Philistia (13-14)
 - ii. Moab, Damascus and Ephraim, Ethiopia, Egypt (15-20)
 - iii. Babylon, Dumah, Arabia, Judah and Judean officials, Tyre (21-23)
 - c. An eschatological prophecy of judgment and redemption (24-27)
 - d. Prophecies of judgment and redemption for Judah and Jerusalem (29-32)
 - e. Prophecies of judgment for the nations and redemption for Zion (33-35)
 - f. Narrative conclusion to First Isaiah (36-39)
- II. Isaiah 40-66
 - a. Preamble (40)
 - b. Draw near for judgment (41-48)
 - i. A victor from the east (41)
 - ii. Here is my servant (42)
 - iii. A new exodus (43)
 - iv. I formed you (44)
 - v. I have aroused Cyrus (45)
 - vi. Idols cannot save Babylon (46)
 - vii. Babylon's humiliation (47)
 - viii. The former things I declared long ago (48)
 - c. The Servant, Daughter Zion, and the Community of God (49-55)
 - i. Servant and Zion (49)
 - ii. The one who is taught (50)
 - iii. Depart, depart (51-52:12)
 - iv. Despised and rejected (52:13-53:12)
 - v. The servants of the Lord (54)
 - vi. You shall go out in joy (55)
 - d. The righteous community of God (56-66)
 - i. Gathered to the holy mountain (56:1-8)
 - ii. No peace for the wicked (56:9-57:21)
 - iii. Is not this the fast I choose (58-59)
 - iv. Arise, shine, for your light has come (60-62)
 - v. Grapes of wrath and confession (63-64)
 - vi. No more the sound of weeping (65-66)