Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential to the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at http://support.nts.edu.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose and Master of Divinity Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and MOODLE support information
- NTS Student Handbook, which includes statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- A Handbook for Inclusive Language

Instructor Information

Professor: Joseph Coleson, Ph.D.  
Email: jecoleson@nts.edu
Office: (816) 268-5482
Office Hours: By appointment

Catalog Description

A thematic course focusing on various aspects of the multiple cultural settings of both the Old and the New Testaments. Its purpose is to provide students insight into the cultural conditions and conditioning of the biblical text.

Course Narrative & Rationale

All Christians view the Bible as instructional and authoritative, especially in matters of faith and living by faith. However, a complicating factor arises in our efforts to interpret and appropriate the instruction of the Bible to the modern life of faith. The Bible in its various parts was written in (and originally for) at least three other cultural settings, namely, ancient Israel/Judah of the Divided Monarchy, the Exilic/Post-Exilic Jewish community, and the early decades of the church’s existence as it established itself in the Greco-Roman/Jewish world of the first century.

How do we understand these vastly different cultural worlds and their impact on the content and message of the Bible? How do we “translate” these into the several cultural milieus in which we live and serve? These and related questions provide the rationale for offering, and taking, a course in cultural backgrounds. In addition, the study of cultures is fun and interesting because, in the end,
cultures are about people, created in the image of God and the objects of God’s infinite love and redemptive purposes. As C. S. Lewis said in another context, there is serious joy here!

Degree Program Objectives
This course addresses particularly the following NTS Degree Program Objectives:

- MDiv Objective 2: Articulation of the knowledge of God through prayerful, scholarly study and a deepening understanding of the Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
- MDiv Objective 5: Understanding of local and global [and temporal] diversity through the investigation of cultural contexts, to enable the church to proclaim effectively and to embody the mission of God
- MACFD Objective 1: A deep personal commitment to God and God’s Church and a passionate, vital, and redemptive ministry formed through an ecclesial understanding of the Word of God, the heritage of the faith, the doctrines of the church, and through participation in the life of the church
- MAICS Objective 1: Knowledge of the Christian faith understood in its biblical foundations, historical developments, and theological expressions
- MAICS Objective 2: Articulation of the biblical-theological understandings of the missio Dei in ways that assist the church’s response to God’s call to participate in that mission
- MA(TS) General Academic/Research Tracks Objective 1: Skill in academic research and writing
- MA(TS) General Academic/Research Tracks Objective 2: Knowledge of the major theological disciplines and their interrelationships
- MA(TS) General Academic/Research Tracks Objective 3: Ability to use the theological disciplines to reflect and engage the world as informed, thinking, Christian persons
- MA(TS) Research Track Objective 4: Ability to do theological research, critical theological reflection, and graduate-level academic writing.

Course Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Recognize items of cultural significance in the biblical text
   (Accomplished by reading; class attendance/participation; written assignments 1, 2)
2. Express a general understanding of the features of the various biblical cultures
   (Accomplished by reading; class attendance/participation; written assignments 1, 2)
3. Use an expanding array of the many resources available for cultural understanding
   (Accomplished by reading; class attendance/participation; written assignments 1, 2)
4. Begin to interpret effectively, to today’s cultures, the various biblical cultures
   (Accomplished by reading; class attendance/participation; written assignments 1, 2).

Required Texts
**Course Outline**

Feb 5 — Course Introduction; syllabus; the book of Ruth, explored culturally
  12 — King and Stager, chapters 1-2
  19 — King and Stager, chapters 3-4
  26 — King and Stager, chapters 5-6, and “Epilogue”

Mar 5 — Meyers, chapters 1-6
  12 — Video/CD presentation: “Honor/Shame” culture
  19 — Reading and Research Week; no class session
  26 — Meyers, chapters 7-10, and “Epilogue”

Apr 2 — Jeffers, chapters 1-3
  9 — Jeffers, chapters 4-6
  16 — Jeffers, chapters 7-9
  23 — Jeffers, chapters 10-13
  30 — Final paper presentations

May 7 — Final paper presentations

**Course Written Assignments**

1. Seven 600-word expositions constitute seventy percent (70%) of the course grade. Subjects will be proposed weekly; seven will factor into the course grade. Expositions are to be submitted through the course MOODLE site, and are due at class time (6:00 p.m.) each week. (Course Outcomes: Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, variously throughout the course)

N.B.: An important purpose of these short-essay assignments is to give students sustained opportunities to improve both the content and the mechanics of their writing. This is the major reason for the allotment of three hours of writing time per paper in the “Distribution of Student Learning Hours” in the chart below. Each student should schedule time for multiple proof-readings and, potentially, revision(s) of each of these short essays, before posting to Moodle. With respect both to content and to quality of writing, the bar purposely is set quite high. Fewer and shorter written assignments, with an emphasis on quality of writing, will make you a better writer--as longer assignments, often produced with less attention to quality of writing, usually cannot do.

2. A final paper and presentation constitutes thirty percent (30%) of the course grade. A 3,500-4,000-word research/expositional/exegetical paper, with in-class presentation, is the culminating course assignment. Each student’s desired issue/theme/topic is to be ready for brief discussion during the class session of February 26. The paper is to be submitted through the course MOODLE site, and is due at class time on the day of presentation, either April 30 or May 7. (Course Outcomes: Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4)

**Distribution of Student Learning Hours**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Hours</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
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Submitting Assignments; Posting Grades
All assignments are to be submitted in the “Assignments” section(s) of our Moodle course. All grades will be posted as letter grades in the “Grades” section of our Moodle course. Grade descriptions are included in the NTS Student Handbook.

Form and Style Expectations
All written work is to exhibit best practices for graduate-level academic writing. The NTS faculty have adopted Turabian as the Seminary standard; each student should own a copy of the latest edition of Turabian, and should use it conscientiously. A convenient summary of some of the more common issues of concern is included in our Moodle resource entitled, “Better Academic Writing.”

Inclusive Language
NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people often have used language to imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in writing. All written work presented to meet requirements of this course will use gender-inclusive language.

Policy Regarding Late Work
In justice to all students, no written work submitted late can earn an A grade. Weekly essays and the final paper are due at class time on their respective due dates.

Additional Costs
The professor does not anticipate additional costs for this course, beyond NTS tuition and fees, and the cost of textbooks.

Course Grading
Written work for the course is set forth in the section, “Course Written Assignments.” In addition, class attendance can affect the course grade, as noted below in the section, “Class Attendance.”

Reasonable Modifications
In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly, NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodation(s) should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs, and adaptive strategies that have been beneficial in the past.

Class Attendance
Class attendance is essential for realizing maximum benefit from this educational experience. If a student is absent for more than the equivalent of two full class sessions, the course grade will be
lowered. Absences totaling more than the equivalent of three full class sessions may cause a student to fail the course. Prior notification of the professor for any absence is expected, when possible; the professor is to be notified of the reasons for/circumstances of all absences as soon as possible.

Attendance records must be reported for those obtaining Veterans Administration and/or Department of Education benefits. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the professor if attendance is to be reported.

**Course Calendar**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No written assignment due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from K/S, chs 1-2; see assignment in Moodle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from K/S, chs 3-4; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from K/S, chs 5-6; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Meyers, chs 1-6; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from final paper; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reading and Research Week; no written assignment due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Meyers, chs 7-10; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Jeffers, chs 1-3; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Jeffers, chs 4-6; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Jeffers, chs 7-9; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Essay/exposition from Jeffers, chs 10-13; see assignment in Moodle</td>
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<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Final paper presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course evaluations to be released by Dean’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Final paper presentations</td>
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