

OT5350 Isaiah–Malachi

3 Hours – Fall 2026

Professor Dr. William A. Ross (wross@rts.edu)

Class Time Wednesday, 8:30AM – 12PM



“History without the intervention of the prophet is a pretty steady funeral march. It is the vocation of the prophet to stop this otherwise inevitable movement toward death.”
– Patrick Henry Reardon¹

“I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets
and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”
– Moses, במדבר יא כט

A. פֶּשֶׁר (Explanation)

COURSE GOALS

1. To understand textual, historical, exegetical, and biblical-theological aspects of the books of Isaiah through Malachi in the broader context of the Old Testament, particularly in connection with redemptive history and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
2. To appreciate and discuss the relevance of these biblical books for the Church and the world today.
3. To deepen our love for and understanding of the Word of God in Scripture.

PREREQUISITES

None. However, Hebrew I and II are strongly encouraged in order to get the most out of this course as possible, particularly the paper.

B. מְשֻׁמְרֵת (Obligations)

REQUIRED READING

- a) Alan S. Bandy and Benjamin L. Merkle, *Understanding Prophecy: A Biblical-Theological Approach* (Kregel Academic, 2015), pp. 9–264. [255 pages]
- b) O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets* (abridged ed. P&R, 2008), pp. 1–378. [378 pages]
- c) O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (P&R, 2000), pp. 1–196. [195 pages]
- d) Miles Van Pelt, ed., *A Biblical Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised* (Crossway, 2016), pp. 23–42, 247–339, 495–513, 543–550. [136 pages]
- e) Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. *Perspectives on Pentecost* (P&R, 1979), pp. 9–122 [113 pages]
- f) Bible (read the books of Isaiah through Malachi in your native language)

¹ *Touchstone Magazine*, Jan/Feb. 2025, 3–4.

ASSIGNED ISAIAH READING (PROVIDED ON CANVAS)

- g) Gregory K. Beale, “A Specific Problem Confronting the Authority of the Bible: Should the New Testament’s Claim That the Prophet Isaiah Wrote the Whole Book of Isaiah Be Taken at Face Value?” in *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Crossway, 2008), pp. 123–159.
- h) John N. Oswalt, “The Implications of an Evangelical View of Scripture for the Authorship of the Book of Isaiah,” in Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz, eds., *Bind Up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah* (Hendrickson, 2015), pp. 273–291.
- i) Richard L. Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter?: Prophetic Inspiration in Recent Evangelical Scholarship,” in Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguélez, and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics* (InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 150–170.
- j) Richard L. Schultz, “Isaiah, Isaiahs, and Current Scholarship,” in James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary, eds., *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture* (Crossway, 2012), pp. 243–261.
- k) Christopher R. Seitz, “Isaiah 1–66: Making Sense of the Whole,” in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (Fortress, 1988), pp. 105–126.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Assessment (10%)

A significant portion of your grade is based upon your completion of the assigned reading. There is a total of ~1,000 pages of reading for this course, not including Bible reading or paper research. You are required to complete a Reading Assessment on Canvas any time prior to midnight on the date in the schedule below. The assessment requires you to:

1. Specify what percentage of each assignment (items *a–e* above) you completed. Be ready to provide an accurate number and not an estimate.
2. Describe your reading process for each assignment (items *a–e* above). This may look slightly different for each assignment.

A reading process that reflects a lack of attentiveness or critical engagement may affect your score for a given assignment in the assessment. The point value of each reading assignment is weighted based on the total page number required. Note that Bible reading is not included in this Assessment, but will be accounted for in the final exam (for a decent chunk of points that you will want). Here is my personal reading process, to give you an idea of what I am looking for:

- *Familiarize the Book:* Read the book description on the back or inside flap, then look over the table of contents and get a sense for how the content is structured. Determine who the author(s) or editor(s) is/are and consider what presuppositions or worldview commitments they might have.

- *Internalize the Book:* Have a good quality pencil at hand.² Read at a pace that allows you to track the argument and consider its implications. Underline important statements or developments, writing your own comments or markings [e.g., → * ☺ ? ✓] in the margins as you go.
- *A Note on Bible Reading:* For the record, you are allowed to underline in your Bible! If you are hesitant to do this for some reason, buy another Bible strictly for this purpose and get cracking. For this course, I strongly recommend that you use a study Bible and read all the relevant introductions, notes, and articles as well. Consider the ESV Study Bible, the Reformation Study Bible, or the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

As a final word: **Speed reading is a myth.** Cognitive science has shown that if you cannot ‘hear’ yourself read in your head (known as ‘sub-vocalization’), your reading comprehension drops precipitously. [Read this article for some useful tips.](#)

Passage Defense (5%) and Isaiah Paper (30%)

The paper must be written on a passage from the book of Isaiah. I strongly recommend that your passage not be longer than twelve verses. Whatever passage you choose – and you will have to defend your choice – it must *include* (but does not have to be *identical to*) one of the following texts:³

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| • 40:3–5, 6–9, 13 | • 55:3 |
| • 42:1–4 | • 56:7 |
| • 45:23 | • 59:7–8, 20–21 |
| • 49:6, 8 | • 61:1–2 |
| • 52:7, 11, 15 | • 62:11 |
| • 53:1, 4, 7–8 | • 65:1–2 |
| • 54:1, 13 | • 66:1–2 |

All of the passages above come from so-called “Second” Isaiah and all of them are cited by the authors of New Testament, who quote the book of Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book except the Psalms. Some of the Isaiah texts listed above are cited more than once in different New Testament books, sometimes from a single chapter (e.g., Isaiah 28 vv. 11–12 appear in 1 Cor. 14:21, while v. 16 appears in Rom. 10:11).

Part of completing your paper is the Passage Defense assignment, which is due on the date specified in the course schedule below. Further details and instructions for this assignment will be uploaded to Canvas.

² The pen is utterly overrated and should be avoided. I recommend the very affordable and excellent quality Pentel Graph Gear 1000 or – if you have a few more pennies to spend – the fantastic rOtring Rapid PRO or the rOtring 600. If you use 0.7mm HB lead, then you will earn a heavenly reward (actually, that’s not true but it is still the best lead size and weight). See my Amazon List here: <https://tinyurl.com/58vf7xek>.

³ Anything separated by a comma is considered a separate text. For example, “Isa. 8:14, 17–18” is two texts, the first 8:14 and the second 8:17–18. Your passage might include both but it does not have to (and probably shouldn’t).

You are also encouraged, but not required, to complete one or both of the following preparatory steps to writing the final paper itself:

- (1) Prepare a comparative and annotated synopsis of your passage using four English translations;
- (2) Produce your own English translation and defense.

I will provide guides for both these steps on Canvas, should you wish to use them. **Your final paper you must accomplish three tasks in this order:**

- A. Discuss your view of the composition of the book of Isaiah
- B. Exposit your chosen Isaiah passage within the context of the book as a whole
- C. Examine how your Isaiah passage is used in the New Testament

In order to help you achieve (A.), we will spend a full week of class lecture discussing the composition of Isaiah. You must also read and interact with the articles listed in the Assigned Isaiah Reading section above.⁴ Note that I do not want a mere summary in (A.). I want *your* synthesis and statement of the history of scholarship on the composition of Isaiah, as well as its implications for understanding and interpreting the book for the Church. These implications will then guide you when you do your exposition in part (B.), where you must not only explain the meaning of the Isaiah passage you chose but also how it coheres with the broader structure, themes, and theology of the book of Isaiah as a whole. The final part of the paper in (C.) must be at least 1,000 words and will discuss both *why* and *how* the New Testament author used your passage. **N.B.**, the way the New Testament author uses your Isaiah passage *probably* has something to do with the meaning of the passage itself and should therefore inform your thesis statement.

The final paper must be between 5,000–6,000 words *excluding* footnotes and bibliography. You must double space, justify the text (Ctrl + J), and use Times New Roman font. Please use the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.) for citation of primary and secondary sources.

You are expected to do actual research for this paper and to demonstrate its results. To that end, you are required to use at least eight secondary sources (either books or articles), *in addition* to the texts and reading assigned in this course. Sources prior to 1970, shady internet stuff, and Bible dictionaries do not count towards this requirement. Moreover, if you have taken Hebrew I and II, it must show in your paper.

Your paper should also be enjoyable to read, which at a minimum requires graduate-level use of English punctuation, grammar, style, and rhetoric.⁵ It should also balance pastoral application with academic rigor, which is much harder than it sounds. On the one hand, you must avoid writing tacky or meaningless spiritual nonsense suitable only for an airport minimart. On the other hand, you must avoid writing something

⁴ You are expected to go beyond these sources in your research.

⁵ By “rhetoric” I mean, at a minimum, the use of an introduction with a clear thesis, logical flow of argument throughout the body, and a persuasive conclusion.

that only appears intellectual but is in fact only dead tree pulp decorated with irrelevant footnotes.

You must turn in the Passage Defense and the Isaiah Paper in PDF format via Canvas by midnight on their respective due dates. Late assignments will be penalized by half a letter grade per calendar day. Papers will be graded according to the following general rubric:

- *Argument* (30%): Is the paper arguing a clear, coherent thesis throughout?
- *Scholarship* (40%): Has the paper handled the biblical text responsibly? Has the paper made careful and discerning use of secondary sources, including honest engagement with viewpoints with which the author disagrees?
- *Quality* (25%): Is the paper well-structured, logical, and cohesive? Is it well-written for its target audience? Is it clear and easy to read?
- *Style* (5%): Does it meet the required style guidelines? Are footnotes and bibliography composed correctly?

Midterm Exam (15%)

The midterm exam must be taken outside of class, on Canvas, with a proctor, using the LockDown Browser, at any time prior to midnight on the deadline in the schedule below. The midterm has two parts. Part one covers important dates, figures, and events covered in the course. Part two covers book overview statements. Questions will be formatted as multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, and short answer.

Final Exam (40%)

The final exam must be taken outside of class, on Canvas, with a proctor, at any time during the dates on the schedule below, using the LockDown Browser. The exam will consist of long essays, focused primarily on lecture content. You will be asked how much of the assigned Bible reading you have completed on the final exam. I will provide further details and a study guide.

C. חקות (Statutes)

GRADING SCALE

5%	Passage Defense	A	100–97	C	82–80
30%	Isaiah Paper	A-	96–94	C-	79–78
15%	Midterm Exam	B+	93–91	D+	77–75
10%	Reading Assessment	B	90–88	D	74–72
40%	Final Exam	B-	87–86	D-	71–70
		C+	85–83	F	69–0

COURSE SCHEDULE

*All parts of this syllabus are subject to change.
Any changes will be communicated in advance in writing.*

<i>Date</i>		<i>Lecture Topic</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
A	26 th	Introduction to Prophetic Literature	
Sept	2 nd	[<i>Video Lecture: Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern History</i>] ⁶	
	9 th	Jonah, Amos	
	16 th	Hosea, Micah	
	23 rd	Isaiah Part 1	Passage Defense Due
	30 th	Isaiah Part 2	
Oct	7 th	[<i>Fall Break: No Class</i>]	
	14 th	Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk	
	21 st	Jeremiah	Midterm Exam Deadline
	28 th	Ezekiel	
Nov	4 th	Daniel, Obadiah	
	11 th	Haggai, Zechariah	
	18 th	Joel, Malachi, History of the Intertestamental Period	
	25 th	[<i>SBL Conference: No Class</i>]	
Dec	2 nd	[<i>Paper Writing Bye-Week: No Class</i>]	
	9 th	[<i>Final Exam Period: No Class</i>]	Reading Assessment Due Isaiah Paper Due

POLICIES, RESOURCES, AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION*Policy for Extensions & Lateness*

Assignments are due by midnight on the dates indicated in the schedule below. In order to receive an extension without penalty, you must submit a request to me by email at least forty-eight hours prior to the due date, stating the reason for your request. Extensions are granted only for significant emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, and a grade penalty may be applied. If granted, an extension will be up to one week. Requests for extensions of more than one week must be submitted to the registrar for consideration by the academic dean in consultation with the professor. Late submission of assignments will result in reduction by half a letter grade for each calendar day beyond the due date.

⁶ I will be out of the country this week but will provide a video of this lecture.

Attendance & Class Participation

I will not take attendance and do not award points for it, but consistent absence or lateness may affect your final grade unless you have discussed it with me in advance.

You are expected to be at full focus in class and to participate by responding to my questions and asking your own. *Do not waste* your investment in seminary education by allowing The Screen – whether phone or laptop – to rule your attention in class. **Please note that you are not permitted to record lectures (video or audio) or allow Artificial Intelligence to take notes for you.** I will provide lecture outlines (.pdf and .doc) and other handouts to annotate in class. These are available on Canvas. See the Classroom Technology Policy below for further information.

Classroom Technology Policy

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class. In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

Note further that the RTS Artificial Intelligence policy applies in this course.

RTS Charlotte Student Instructions for Exams with LockDown Browser

1. Install the LockDown Browser application on the computer you intend to use for exams, prior to sitting for the exam, using this link:
<https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=998253613>
 - a. This link is ONLY for RTS students and covers Mac and Windows applications.
 - b. Be sure that you are able to log in to your Canvas account from the LockDown Browser before the day of the exam.
 - c. If you use internet filtering software (for example, Covenant Eyes) you may need to disable it before beginning an exam with LockDown Browser. Some types of filtering software can block your computer's connection to Canvas. Also, please be sure to add an exception for our Canvas URL: <https://rts.instructure.com>
2. The exam proctor should not be a current RTS student (current = taken a class within the past year but not yet graduated) or a member of the library staff.
3. The proctor must observe the student taking the exam and ensure that there are no devices or resources available other than the computer being used for the exam.
4. Access the exam during the date window specified for that exam.
 - a. Sign in with the proctor.
 - b. Start the LockDown Browser application using a wired or known reliable Wi-Fi connection. We do not recommend using restaurant or coffee shop Wi-Fi to take exams.
 - c. Have your student ID number and proctor details available to input into the exam.
 - d. Log in to your Canvas account.
 - e. Navigate to the exam. You will not be able to access the exam with a standard web browser. For additional details on using LockDown Browser, review this [Student Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#).
 - f. The time clock will begin once you open the exam.
 - g. The exam must be completed in one sitting. You may not exit and return to the exam later.
 - h. The exam will contain questions regarding an honor pledge, and certification that your proctor was present during the entire exam period.
 - i. Sign out with the proctor.
5. Proctors may be contacted to verify information regarding exam administration.
6. In the rare case of a technical issue (for example, if power goes out during exam) the proctor will document the date and time when the issue was reported. Once you open the exam using the LockDown Browser, you will not be able to access other programs on your computer.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: OT5350 Isaiah to Malachi

Campus: Charlotte

Professor: Ross

Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Skills and concepts taught in class lectures for application in the exegetical paper. Stresses clear writing, cogent thought, and concision.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Skills taught for reading, understanding, and interpreting Scripture through the use of academic tools and, where appropriate, the use of Hebrew.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Scripture engaged from a unified, redemptive historical perspective.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Class opened with prayer. The study of the text of scripture is part of sanctification.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	The study of the text of scripture leads to application to all of life.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	Careful and respectful interaction with other scholarship is part of class lectures, assigned reading, and writing.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	Equips students with foundational skills for exegesis, focusing on scripture as God's revealed word to facilitate proper worship and application to the Church. Focus on understanding parts of scripture in light of the whole helps communicate its message.