

A Biblical Theology of the Sexes

Davenant Hall Biblical Theology

Spring Term 2023

Teacher: Dr Alastair Roberts (a.roberts@davenantinstitute.org)

Course Description

Within the Scriptures there are extensive underexplored resources for a Christian understanding of the sexes: narratives, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, symbol, and letters. This course is an investigation of the scope of the scriptural witness on these matters, demonstrating the diverse ways that it can inform our thought and practice. Escaping the narrow orbit of a few didactic texts, the prominence and importance of the symbolism of male and female throughout the canon will be examined. The course will consider how these broader scriptural witnesses can be integrated into a richer account of the sexes and how such an account might change the complexion of pressing questions in our contemporary cultural and ecclesial contexts. In addition to strengthening students' grasp of the substantive teaching of the scriptures on the issue of the sexes, this course will equip students to be more adept in their use of the breadth of the scriptures as a theological source.

Course Format

The format of the course will blend short lectures and guided discussion of the assigned texts. Students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selections for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute. On a typical week, students will be expected to read between 50 and 100 pages for the class, which will include selected passages of Scripture and secondary literature.

Classes will meet on Zoom for two hours weekly and will be recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class). Additional student participation and instructor interaction will take place on our Discord channel, which students will be given

access to before the course. Google Classroom will be used for assignment submissions, grades, and announcements.

Course Objectives:

Objectives for this course include: (1) to explore a variety of biblical portrayals of male and female; (2) to increase knowledge of the breadth of the biblical text's teaching on the sexes; (3) to improve capacity to handle diverse texts as scripture.

Course Requirements for degree-seeking students:

Class Participation (20%): Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

Oral examination (30%): At the conclusion of the course, I will schedule a 15-30-minute Zoom session to assess you on your mastery of the relevant concepts and material from the course.

Writing (50%): Students will submit a weekly written piece, of at least 500 words in length, with a brief synopsis and critical reflection on one of the readings set for the week.

Course Requirements for other for-credit students:

Class Participation (20%): Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

Writing (80%): A 4,000 word term paper, involving significant engagement with course readings as well as substantive research in outside sources, due two weeks after the conclusion of the term.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	

Auditing

Auditors are not required to attend class live or submit assignments, but may participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or to another course. See the drop/switch policy on the [Course Catalog](#) or [M.Litt. FAQ](#). Students are entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them. Please email Lynette Hughes at registrar@davenantinstitute.org with any changes, requests, or questions.

Course Texts

Excerpts provided digitally

James Jordan, *Trees and Thorns*

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*

Richard Whitekettle, 'Levitical Thought and the Female Reproductive Cycle: Wombs, Wellsprings, and the Primeval World'

E.T.A. Davidson, *Intricacy, Design, & Cunning in the Book of Judges*

J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs*

Sebastian Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book of Revelation*

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*

Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*

Warren Gage, *St John's Vision of the Heavenly City*

Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Primary Source Reading	Background Reading
1		In the Beginning	James Jordan, <i>Trees and Thorns</i> , chapters 9-13, 21-24	Genesis 1-5
2		Patriarchal Narratives	Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, <i>The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism</i> , chapters 5 and 6	Genesis 17-19, 24, 29-31
3		The Exodus	Richard Whitekettle, 'Levitical Thought and the Female Reproductive Cycle: Wombs, Wellsprings, and the Primeval World'	Exodus 1-2, 4, 13, 15; Leviticus 12, 15, 18; Numbers 5; Deuteronomy 22-23
4		Judges and Kings	E.T.A. Davidson, <i>Intricacy, Design, & Cunning in the Book of Judges</i> , chapter 1	Judges 19; 1 Samuel 1, 9; 2 Samuel 11-13; 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 4
5		The Wisdom Literature	J. Cheryl Exum, <i>Song of Songs</i> , 1-28	Psalms 45; Proverbs 7-9, 31; Song of Songs
6		The Prophets and the Empires	Sebastian Smolarz, <i>Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book</i>	Isaiah 66; Jeremiah 3; Lamentations 1; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1-3; Esther

			<i>of Revelation,</i> chapter 3	
7		The Gospels and Acts	Richard Bauckham, <i>Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels</i> , chapters 2 & 3	Matthew 1-2, 19, 22; Luke 1-2, 23-24
8		The Epistles	Anthony Thiselton, <i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , 800-848	1 Corinthians 5-7, 11; Galatians 4; Ephesians 5; 1 Timothy 2, 5; 1 Peter 3
9		John and Revelation	Warren Gage, <i>St John's Vision of the Heavenly City</i> , 86-165	John 2, 4, 12-13, 19-20; Revelation 1, 12, 17, 21-22
10		Putting Pieces Together	Stephen B. Clark, <i>Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences</i> , chapters 14-15, 20	Genesis 1-3