focal question: How do human beings, clearly physical while claiming more, relate with what extends beyond our own selves, including a deity and the dead—who seem to exist in some way differently than we do? How do we ourselves do it (we as moderns and our actual, individual selves)? How have others in the past—notably biblical humans, specifically Ezekiel and John but their peers as well—visualized this aspect of ourselves, and how have they spoken of it? With what interpretive systems and keys will we join their conversation responsibly and fruitfully, and yet how will we make our insights productive for our own existence?

outcomes: Within and by the end of the course the student will have demonstrated in seminar discussion and in production of the written course assignment:

• adequate familiarity with the several frameworks that enable us to explore our question;

• competence in the study of Ezekiel, notably in his sense of access to the divine/intangible, by speaking of it usefully in course discussions and situating it appropriately in written work;

• competence in the study of the Gospel of John, notably in his sense of access to God, by speaking of it usefully in course discussions and situating it appropriately in written work;

• adequate understanding of the Priestly purity system that undergirds Ezekiel and some of John, by evidencing it in oral and written work;

• adequate familiarity with Paul Ricoeur’s textual hermeneutics, including a sense of where it evolved from, by using effectively it in oral and written work;

• deepening awareness of some contemporary link to the human effort to see ourselves in relation to the transcendent by organizing it and presenting it effectively for others in the course;

• capacity to organize and lead seminar sessions that invite practical engagement and to participate helpfully for all in sessions led by others;

• capacity to present, in clear, correct, and “Turabianized” form, a written summative project for the course; it’s great to have a complete Turabian (the one in force when you began studies [7th, 8th]), but lacking that, try a digest:  
  http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

shape of course: Since this course comprises unusual components, it is useful to think of its parts as follows: We need background on ancient Near Eastern/Hebrew Bible sacred space, on Ezekiel, John, and on the thought of Paul Ricoeur and the hermeneutics it comes from and the spirituality it shapes; we need to zero in on the ritual and worship aspects of Ezekiel and John and on the
specifics of Ricoeur’s interpretative processes; and we each need a current and analogous worship issue to work with (perhaps our own, or possibly of interest to some other group [e.g., the cosmos as powerfully revelatory of God]); as indicated below, we will get up to speed on background as quickly as we can do and then spend the rest of our time on the most helpful texts and interpretive processes, proceeding in seminar style and sharing the responsibility for designing and leading (or participating responsibly in) seminar sessions that advance both common interests and moving in on our particular interests. These sessions will culminate in the individual student projects, which will be presented orally and in writing. (If anyone needs to write a term paper, that is possible as well, but it is not the default assignment.)

course requirements: Please assume consistent, careful, prepared, and audible participation in the course sessions; seminar leadership will be expected at least two and possibly three times; a written project (assume about twelve pages) will be presented by the end of the semester (incompletes not envisioned). The first seminar leadership needs to occur before Reading Week and to be closely co-ordinated with the instructor, who will be the main leader (make an appointment asap to clarify how time and topic will be divided); the second opportunity to lead the seminar will offer you greater scope for your own choice and creativity, and likely more time. We will have one written assignment to be sure that there is an common understanding of what comprises writing at the graduate level.

required material: Required means that you can easily and regularly access it, not necessarily own it. All of these books are on library reserve for this course; the reader is not, since it is such a bargain. For the ones you most likely need to buy, note *.


*course reader, called by the course name and number, from Instant Copying and Laser Printing, 2138 University Ave. (510 704-9700);
grading policy:

seminar leadership: 1/3; general and seminar participation: 1/3;
course project (presented orally and in writing): 1/3.

course communication:
I am generally available for appointments Mondays through Thursdays in DSPT office 207, (883-2076) or email (bgreen@dspt.edu); drop-ins and quick pre- or post-class session consultations are possible but appointments are best. Early planning also works best. A list of class names and contact information will be available once you have all agreed to release the information.

other relevant policies

• Students are expected to attend every class, prepared and participating helpfully for the whole group; if you need to miss a session, please inform the instructor by e-mail either before or shortly thereafter; no notification will be construed as an un-excused absence. When you miss a session, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and get any handouts that were available; you might have a “buddy” that will do automatically this for you/you for him or her.

• Since the official syllabus needs to be finalized at least by the time the course begins, expect that you will be provided with a syllabus supplement that updates and specifies relevant matters; start with the general syllabus and then consult the more recent supplement for the day.

• Assignments need to be completed and turned in on time and will be graded down if they are late; assume no revision option. Exceptions to deadlines are sometimes possible but rare and gained ahead of time. Please plan to turn in hard copies of your assignments.

• Be sure you know, understand, and follow the policies on academic honesty that are pertinent to GTU, DSPT and your own school.

• The GTU and DSPT policies relating to disability pertain and are available on websites.

course schedule:

class #1 February 3 getting oriented to the component questions
read: syllabus; Green, “This Old Text” and Green, “On Hermeneutics” (both attached via e-mail to those who register); from the course reader: Schneiders, both articles

focus: getting the big picture about what is envisioned, expected; reviewing chronology and methodology; familiarizing ourselves with graded or hierarchical thinking; getting some background for biblical hermeneutics and spirituality;

anticipate in general: discussion of the intersection between the human and the divine and the perceived challenge of maintaining a “precarious divine presence”; see syllabus supplement (attached) for specifics of the session;
be ready for: to offer a possible “situated scenario” that might work well in this course; see specifics of syllabus supplement

class # 2 February 10  OVERVIEW OF THE PRIESTLY WORLDVIEW
read:  Exodus 25-31 and 35-40; look at Leviticus; reader: Hundley

focus: grasping the world-view of the Hebrew Bible’s Priestly writings, both appreciatively and critically

anticipate in general: explanations of the hierarchical world of P

be ready for: see specifics of syllabus supplement for the day

class # 3 February 17  GETTING UP TO SPEED IN EZEKIEL
read: Ezekiel 1-39 (omitting, if you wish, the OANs of chs. 25-32); consult Blenkinsopp and/or Carvalho, Question by Question as useful for key chapters (e.g., 1-3, 8-11, 24, 33, 34-39); reader: Albertz, Patton;

focus: in order to appreciate the reality and function of Ezekiel’s temple, we need to understand where he was coming from, literally, as we arrive at the temple chapters

anticipate in general: a presentation but with seminar participation expected; see specifics of syllabus supplement

class # 4 February 24 ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS AND RICOEUR
read:  Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory

focus: what does Ricoeur offer biblical interpreters, and how to understand his challenging work

anticipate in general: rigorous engagement with Ricoeur; see specifics of syllabus supplement

class # 5 March 3  ORIENTATION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (continue Ricoeur as needed)
read:  Gospel of John, especially consult Schneiders, Written as needed;

focus: much as we did with Ezekiel, we need to know enough about FG to be able to appreciate its temple/community-related aspects
anticipate in general: see specifics of syllabus supplement

be ready for: short writing assignment due: Since the likelihood is that John’s Gospel (Fourth Gospel/FG) will be more familiar to you than the preceding topics, be ready to hand in at the start of the class session a 3-page assignment on the following: (part of the rationale is to be sure that we are sharing expectations about writing): Reflecting on either the analogy of game-playing or on that of environmental relationships, discuss the value of a system like the Hebrew Bible’s purity system/graded space as meaningful (or at least understandable), while noting its shortcomings as well. Note that this is a huge topic for 3 pages, so start with your best question and focus appropriately.

class # 6 March 10  EZEKIEL’S TEMPLE
read:  Ezekiel 40-48; reader: Blenkinsopp, Odell, Carvalho; Milgrom with Block as your interest engages

focus: What is suggested here, how does it suit P, and what does it offer?

anticipate in general: see specifics of syllabus supplement

class # 7 March 17 JOHN’S TEMPLE/HOUSEHOLD
read:  Coloe, God Dwells with Us; reader: Coloe

focus: how is FG shaped in relationship to the temple’s function in Judaism?

anticipate in general: see specifics of syllabus supplement

class # 8 March 31  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS:
For these next classes, we will re-shape the material more closely to the interests of participants; much of what we have read will be useful, as are other reader articles on the cosmos as God’s dwelling and the material on ritual. Syllabus supplements will direct us specifically.

read:
focus:
anticipate in general:
be ready for:

class # 9 April 7  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS
read:
focus:
anticipate in general:
be ready for:
class # 10 April 14  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS
read:  
focus:  
anticipate in general:  
be ready for:  

class # 11 April 21  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS
read:  
focus:  
anticipate in general:  
be ready for:  

class # 12 April 28  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS
read:  
focus:  
anticipate in general:  
be ready for:  

class # 13 May 5  CONVERGENCE AND CUSTOMIZATION OF SOME OF THESE TOPICS
read:  
focus:  
anticipate in general:  
be ready for:  

class # 14 May 12 PRESENTATION OF PROJECTS

class # 15 May 19 PRESENTATION OF PROJECTS
other useful information:

• reminder about how to access additional material:
  • GTU library:

  • exegesis shelf:
    various commentaries (including Blenkinsopp)

  • closed reserve:
    required or recommended books:
    Carvalho, Corrine. *The Book of Ezekiel*
    Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*
    Hundley, Michael. *Keeping Heaven on Earth*: (as listed in reader)
    Milgrom with Block, *Ezekiel’s Hope*
    Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*
    Schneiders, *Written;*

  • non-circulating reference material

• reader:


**syllabus supplement template:** when any of us is responsible for seminar leadership, here is the basic template you will do well to use, as it will help us get into and maintain good habits; the challenge, at base, is to facilitate with all of us useful discussion.

The **syllabus supplement** allows for specification of the general course syllabus, which needs to be finished (or close) much sooner than the classes actually develop. This small genre also allows for seminar leaders to communicate their plans, again, as they develop while we are in the semester. The form will be standard, so copy the first couple led by the instructor as you prepare for your own time of leading the seminar:

* start with a question you pose and a reason for it,
* situate what you are specifically doing within our general course contexts;
* indicate the desired outcomes, i.e., what we will have accomplished by the end of your allotted time;
* suggest how you think we can best prepare to participate actively,
* inform us of the plan for the class session,
* specify what you expect us to bring ready for active participation;
* name an evaluative focus for all participants (for us, for yourself).

This syllabus supplement sheet and any handouts needs to be in our hands ideally at the end of the previous class session and in any case several days before the class it guides.

**Seminar leadership** is your managing the above responsibilities to help us, together, accomplish the learning you have in mind for us. Design and preparation are key.
Seminar participation is what we all do if we aren’t leading. The expectation is that you need to speak aloud, responding to the plans of the leader and contributing usefully for the group; in a seminar, not speaking is not acceptable. We need everyone, and everyone needs to talk, often. You will always be given a grade for your participation (when you are not the leader; ask me if you want to know what these assessments are; else I’ll provide them at the end of the course).

Seminar Leadership: pre- RW (topics as indicated in the syllabus schedule):

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Seminar Leadership: post- RW (topics as designed to integrate course topics/other interests):

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• project specifications: We can specify these details as we go, but in general your project will pose a question, name a thesis, design a process and a methodology for discussing it, situate it within your over-arching interests, and demonstrate it. These are meant to be focused and specific, addressing particulars rather than big questions. You need, explicitly, to engage Ezekiel’s temple, John’s new dwelling, and Ricoeur’s thought. The length should be about 10-12 pages. Anticipate a special handout to guide your presentation of it to us. I am open to consultation on the projects, providing it is done before noon on April 28. The final projects are due by Friday, May 22, noon (if you need more time, request an Inc by bringing the appropriate form to the instructor).