

Reading the Psalms as Poetry

How they affect us today

Course #	20FRP
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	Gene Fisher
Date and Time:	Thursday, 9:30-11:30 10 weeks, starting September 24
Location:	Smith College, Lilly Hall, 308
Maximum number of participants:	16
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: This seminar seeks to develop an appreciation of the poetry and the existential meaning of the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible applied to the problems and conflicts of our time.

Description: Psalms will be grouped by type (e.g., lament, imprecation, trust, praise). Members will select a group and lead a discussion of one or more of the psalms in the chosen group. The discussion of each Psalm will focus on its poetic features (parallelism, meter, etc.) and the Psalm's application to problems and conflicts in our own lives and times.

Role of participants: Members will prepare for each session by reading Psalms in the group they chose. They will use, primarily, Robert Alter's translation and commentary but may consult other translations and commentaries as well. Discussants will prepare one or two pages of comments to pass out at the discussion session they lead.

Resources: Required: Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. Several other books on the psalms are helpful for interpretation, but cannot substitute for Alter's translation when reciting the psalms at the different sessions. Supplemental books include C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*; Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*.

About the Moderator: I am a professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, have been a member of LIR for three years, and have moderated three seminars on Islamic terrorism, the Imperial Presidency, and the Constitution.