



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

5060 Wisdom Literature Syllabus

Fall 2017, Mondays 6:00-8:45

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“Let the wise man hear and add learning, and let one who has understanding acquire guidance, in order to understand proverbs and epigrams, the words of the wise and their enigmas.”

Proverbs 1:5-6

COURSE GOALS

We will devote ourselves to the study of wisdom in the biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

1. To read and interpret biblical Wisdom literature in light of its ancient Near Eastern and canonical contexts.
2. To develop exegetical skills for interpreting Hebrew poetry.
3. To identify the central themes and theological perspectives of Wisdom literature and to understand what “wisdom” means in various literary settings.
4. To promote the integration of Wisdom teachings into one’s life, to encourage students to draw upon Wisdom literature for character formation, and to prepare students for teaching/leading others in this pursuit.

READINGS

Required Texts

Enns, Peter. *Ecclesiastes*. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs 1-9*. Anchor Bible 18A. New York: Doubleday, 2000. (You may skip the small font portions in the commentary sections. These sections contain many valuable insights, but they are generally more technical.)

Habel, Norman C. *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster. (In the commentary sections, you are only assigned to read Habel’s translations, comparing them

with your English version, and the “Message in Context” sections. There are many wonderful insights in the “Design” sections, so if you wish to dig deeper, I suggest them to you.)

An English translation of the Bible. Your assigned reading begins with the biblical text itself. You should read each Wisdom book in its entirety in the course of our semester. I will be working from the NRSV and supplement our discussion with observations from the Hebrew text. Feel free to use a different major committee based translation that you would like. Ask me if you are unsure about your translation. You will be responsible for pointing out important differences in translation in the course of our discussions. Hebrew is not required for this course.

Required Articles and Essays

Berlin, Adele. “Introduction to Hebrew Poetry.” In *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4, ed. Leander E. Keck, 301-315. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

Bland, Dave. *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. (chapters 4 and 6, 65-90, 105-121)

Fox, Michael V. “God’s Answer and Job’s Response.” *Biblica* 94 (2013): 1-23.

_____. “Reading the Tale of Job.” In *A Critical Engagement: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of J. Cheryl Exum*, ed. David J. A. Clines and E. J. van Wolde, 145-162. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011.

Jones, Scott C. “The Values and Limits of Qohelet’s Sub-Celestial Economy.” *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 21-33.

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. (chapters 8 and 9, 111-149).

Pidcock-Lester, Karen. “‘Earth Has No Sorrow That Earth Cannot Heal’: Job 38-41.” In *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr., 125-132. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Seitz, Christopher R. “Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation.” *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 5-17.

Sneed, Mark R. “Is the ‘Wisdom Tradition’ a Tradition?” *CBQ* 73 (2011): 50-71.

ANE Readings

All in: Hallo, William W. *The Context of Scripture*. Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Amenemope, 115-122

The Babylonian Theodicy, 492-495

Dialogue between a Man and His God, 485-486

Dialogue of Pessimism, 495-496

The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, 486-492

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Job Journal (10% due in class on Oct 16) – Read the book of Job in one sitting, taking breaks after chapters 2, 3, 14, 28, 31, 37, 41, 42 to *briefly* answer questions outlined below. Reading the book of Job straight through takes roughly three hours, so allow sufficient time for both reading and writing. Your journal should be no longer than eight pages long when complete (double spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman). This paper is a reflection on your personal experience as a reader, so I am not concerned with continuity of argument or standards of citation (there should not be any). Nevertheless, you should present your reflections with proper grammar and style. Here are the questions:
 - a. What stands out to you about the rhetoric of the book and how it influences you as a reader?
 - b. Based only on what you have read so far, what is the theological point of the book of Job?
 - c. How have the characters changed in perspective and attitude? Are Job and his friends pious?
2. Research Paper (30%; due in class on December 1) – Choose your own adventure. The paper is an opportunity for students to explore a theological theme or critical issue in a particular Wisdom text. You may choose to write an exegetical paper that seeks to expose the contextual/intended meaning of a short text (e.g., a literary analysis of Proverbs 9:7-12 and its function within the chapter) or a paper that addresses a theme in a series of texts (e.g., Determinism and Free will in Ecclesiastes). You must consult with me about your topic and get my approval prior to Sept 22. I encourage you to get an early start. The paper is to be 12-14 pages not including bibliography, written in 12 pt Times New Roman and according to the standards of Turabian's *Manual for Writers* and HST's Supplement to Turabian. Late papers will be downgraded one point per day.
3. Midterm Exam (30%) – We will have our midterm in the first half of our class on Sept 25. It will cover all class material (lectures and readings) on Proverbs.
4. Final Exam (30%) – The final will cover all class material pertaining to Ecclesiastes and the book of Job.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Accessibility/Communication

HST professors are accessible to local and distance students. Please use the following to arrange appointments with me (in person or by phone):

Email: lhawley2@harding.edu

Cell Phone Number: (901) 275-0468; Office: (901) 432-7729

The best way to communicate with me is by email. I check it often and expect you to check it as well for class announcements and additional documents. Feel free to contact me with your questions any time. I will use Canvas and your Harding University email address, so please make sure to check it regularly.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact Steve McLeod, the Associate Dean, at 901-761-1353.

Credit Hour Workload

For every course credit hour, the typical student should expect to spend at least three clock hours per week of concentrated attention on course-related work, including but not limited to time attending class, as well as out-of-class time spent reading, reviewing, organizing notes, preparing for upcoming exams, problem solving, developing and completing projects, and other activities that enhance learning. Thus, for a three-hour course, a typical student should expect to spend at least nine hours per week dedicated to the course.

Library Resources

If you have not taken 5990 (Advanced Theological Research) or 5770 (Research in Counseling), or took either class more than a year ago, go to the HST Web site (www.hst.edu) for information concerning library services to students. Under the “library” tab you will find a link to and instructions for searching the HST online catalog. There are also instructions for using the following databases available through the library: OCLC FirstSearch, EBSCOhost, Infotrac, PsycINFO, and Religious and Theological Abstracts. Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990 and 5770. These annotated bibliographies list basic tools you will find helpful in your research.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty in all its forms is inconsistent with Christian faith and practice, and will result in penalties which could include a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, dismissal from the course, and even dismissal from the school.

GRADING SCALE

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = < 60

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

All readings are to be completed *prior* to class. See notes above about Fox and Habel commentary readings. The **bold** numbers are page counts for each week.

August 21 – Introduction to Wisdom and her biblical literature (From Proverbs to Wisdom of Solomon).

- a. Wisdom in its ancient Near Eastern Context
- b. The social setting of Wisdom literature in Israel
- c. Introduction to Hebrew poetry

Readings – Berlin 301-315; Fox 3-27; Sneed 50-71 (**60**)

August 28 – Proverbs 1-3

Readings – Fox 53-161 (**108**)

September 4 – Proverbs 5-7

Readings – Fox 189-262 (**73**)

September 11 – Proverbs 8-9; Introduction to Proverbs 10-31

Readings – Murphy 111-149 (chs. 8-9); Fox 263-318 (**92**)

Recommended: Fox 331-346; Brown, “‘Rejoicing in His Inhabited World’: Wisdom’s Playhouse in Proverbs,” *Ethos of the Cosmos*, 271-316

September 18 – Proverbs 10-31

Readings – Bland 65-90, 105-121, Amenemope (**51**)

September 25 – Midterm

October 2 - Ecclesiastes 1-3; Theology of Qohelet

Readings – Dialogue of Pessimism; Enns 1-29, 117-135; Jones 21-33 (**58**)

October 9 – Ecclesiastes 11-12; Qohelet and Biblical Theology

Readings – Enns 136-219 (**83**)

October 16 – Introduction to the book of Job and Job 1-2

Job Journal due

Readings – Habel 21-69, 75-98; Fox “Reading the Tale of Job” 145-162 (**85**)

October 23 – Job 3-5 and ANE critical wisdom literature

Readings – Habel 98-137; Babylonian Theodicy; Poem of the Righteous Sufferer **(46)**

October 30 – Job 6-14

Readings – Habel 137-244 **(68)**

November 6 – Job 15-27

Readings – Habel 245-309; Seitz 5-17 **(45)**

Assignment – Skim Habel 351-387 for his explanation of who is saying what in chs. 24-27. Come to class prepared to outline and explain his view and his primary evidence. More of this will be in his “Design” sections and also the introduction to the book.

November 13 – Job 28-37

Readings – Habel 388-486 [Read the “Design” sections for chs. 28, 29, 32] **(62)**

November 20 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

November 27 – Job 38-42

Readings – Habel 517-586 [Read “Design” for first divine speech, 526-535]; Fox, “God’s Answer,” 1-23; Pidcock-Lester 125-132 **(100)**

Papers are due

December 4 – Final