



# HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

## 5060 Wisdom Literature Syllabus

Summer 2024, June 10-14

8:00-10:55 AM

1:00-4:00 PM

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Let the wise 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. Our goals pertain to the following intended degree outcomes for the M.Div., M.A.C.M., and the M.A. degrees

*Demonstrate knowledge of the basic content of the English Bible*

*Demonstrate exegetical skills in the interpretation of scripture*

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.

*Evidence a love for God and others and a personal commitment to spiritual formation*

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

Bland, Dave. *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.

Dell, Katherine J. *The Lord by Wisdom Founded the Earth: Creation and Covenant in Old Testament Theology*. Waco: Baylor, 2023.

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.)

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 of your choice (e.g., NIV, ESV, Jewish Study Bible, NAS). Ask me if you are unsure about your translation. **You should choose a Bible in which you feel good about writing notes.** 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.

Dempster, Stephen G. "Ecclesiastes and the Canon." In *The Words of the Wise are like Goads: Engaging Qohelet in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Mark Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian Rata, 387-400. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013.

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.

Greenstein, Edward L. "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind." In *Text, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. Michael V. Fox, et al., 241-258. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sages with a Sense of Humor: The Babylonian Dialogue between a Master and his Servant and the Book of Qohelet." In *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed., Richard J. Clifford, 55-65. Atlanta: SBL, 2007.

Habel, Norman C. "'Only the Jackal is My Friend' On Friends and Redeemers in Job." *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 227-236.

- Hawley, Lance. "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139 (2020): 459-478.
- Kynes, Will. "The 'Wisdom Literature' Category: An Obituary." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 69 (2018): 1-24.
- 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.
- Provan, Ian. "Fresh Perspectives on Ecclesiastes: 'Qohelet for Today.'" In *The Words of the Wise are like Goads: Engaging Qohelet in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Mark Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian Rata, 401-416. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- Seitz, Christopher R. "Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation." *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 5-17.
- Shveka, Avi, and Pierre Van Hecke. "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 90 (2014): 99-119.
- 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 Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, 486-492
- The Babylonian Theodicy, 492-495
- Dialogue of Pessimism, 495-496

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Job Journal (20% due via Canvas by June 10) – **Prior to doing other assigned readings on Job**, 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 about 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. Your grade will go down three points for every day it is late. 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. Final Exam (35% June 24-28) – The final will be comprehensive covering all of the readings and class lectures. Students must set aside a two to three hour block to take the exam. It will be short answer and essay. The exam will be administered on Canvas using Proctorio.
3. Exegesis Paper (25%; due via Canvas by Thursday, July 11) – Select a short passage (1-4 verses) of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Job, which is difficult or about which scholars disagree. You must detail scholarly views and argue for the interpretation that is most compelling. You must submit a written proposal to me prior to the end of the intensive week (June 15). The proposal should be about one paragraph and include the question that you are attempting to answer, your thesis, and your plan of research. You should also include a list of ten resources (commentaries and scholarly articles) that you intend to use for your research. The paper is to be 5-6 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 three points per day. I will not accept papers turned in after July 19.**
4. Wisdom Journal (20%; due via Canvas July 22) – This portion of your grade is based on a good faith effort. You are required to journal (encouraged to handwrite in a journal) the following assignments. You will scan your journal and turn it in on Canvas. **Late journals will be downgraded three points per day. I will not accept this assignment after July 28.**
  - a. Pray for Wisdom

- i. Compose at least three prayers for wisdom virtues. Use virtues and biblical texts in Bland’s book (lists on pgs 45-46, 49-50, 54-55, 87) as a spring board.
  - ii. Form a breath prayer from a wisdom text. Pray it 50 times a day for a week and report the effect. For example, memorize Qoh 1:2 and speak it with each exhale.
- b. Conversations – Interview experts in wise living, who have formed good habits and insights with regard to a particular area of life (money, relationships, friendship, service, food, suffering, time management). Write a short reflection after the conversation.
- c. Retreat, Observe, and Compose – Bring a question for God or topic about life to the wilderness. On three different occasions, take at least one hour outside in silence to observe how God’s wisdom is expressed in creation. How is God answering or *not* answering your question? Compose three proverbs based on your observations. Consider using the “better than” proverbial form.
- d. Practice and Reflect. Write a wisdom reflection on one or more of the following:
  - i. Make “to do” lists (daily, weekly, monthly)
  - ii. Build/Create something (house project, art project)
  - iii. Clean and organize a closet, garage, office, etc.
  - iv. Take a break from social media
  - v. Attend a funeral

## **SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

**June 9** – Complete all assigned reading and be prepared to discuss books and articles  
(See schedule below for assigned reading pages)

**June 10-15** Class Meeting

**June 10** Job Journal

**June 14** Paper Prospectus

**June 24-28** Final Exam

**July 11** Research Paper

**July 22** Wisdom Journal

## **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](mailto: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.

### **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 quizzes/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.

### **Textbooks**

Textbooks can now be ordered through a link on the [HST website](#). The Textbooks tab can be viewed on the navigation bar on any page of the website. Check the book list provided under the Textbooks tab (<http://hst.edu/students/textbook-services/>) for correct ISBN's and editions to insure correct ordering. A link provided there will take you to Amazon where you will only need to enter the ISBN to order your books.

### **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.

### **Library Resources**

If you have not taken 5990 (Advanced Theological Research) or took it more than a year ago, go to the HST Web site ([www.hst.edu](http://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, and [Religious and Theological Abstracts](#). Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990. 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.

## Canvas Online Learning System

This course uses Harding's *Canvas Online Learning System*, which is accessed at <http://elearning.harding.edu>. If you have problems gaining access to Canvas, contact HU technical support (501) 279-4545. You will need your HST username and your password to log into Harding Pipeline. These are the same credentials you use to register for classes via Pipeline.

When you need to contact your professor via email, you may use the email system contained in the Canvas learning management system, although it is best to email directly to [lhawley2@harding.edu](mailto:lhawley2@harding.edu).

Harding University gives each student an email address that also utilizes your user name. Many students use other email addresses as their preferred address. You can set your Harding G-mail account to forward messages to an alternative email address if you want; however, it is your responsibility to check your Harding email account regularly because this is the official Harding email address to which all Harding-related email will be sent

## GRADING SCALE

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

## COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

It's for possession (NOT "It's roof was on fire," BUT "Its roof was on fire")

NOT "Ancient Near East," BUT "ancient Near East" or ANE

How to cite a biblical text:

. . . Proverbs 1 (only chapter number)

. . . Prov 1:3 (including verse number)

Proverbs 1:3 says that . . . (when at beginning of sentence)

Comma and period should be *before* quotation mark

"in regard to" NOT "in regards to"

Do not use contractions (e.g., "don't")

Tips for a good paper:

Tell me not only what you are arguing for, but also what you are arguing against. Be critical.

Citing scholarly views that you disagree with, even slightly, will clarify your positive argument.

## **PROPOSED SCHEDULE**

All readings are to be completed *prior* to class. See notes above about Fox commentary readings.

### **June 10 AM** – Introduction to “Wisdom Literature” and Hebrew Poetry

Readings – Berlin 301-315; Fox 3-27, Sneed 50-71, Kynes 1-24; Dell 1-206 (291 pages)

### **June 10 PM** – Proverbs 1-3

Readings – Fox 53-161 (108 pages)

### **June 11 AM** – Proverbs 5-9

Readings – Fox 189-318 (130 pages)

### **June 11 PM** – Proverbs 10-31

Readings – Amenemope 115-122; Bland 41-90, 105-161 (113 pages)

### **June 12 AM** –Introduction to Ecclesiastes; Ecclesiastes 1-4

Readings – Dialogue of Pessimism 495-496  
Greenstein, “Sages with a Sense of Humor,” 55-65 (12 pages)

### **June 12 PM** – Ecclesiastes 7-9, 12

Readings – Dempster, 387-400; Provan, 401-416 (28)

### **June 13 AM** – Job 1-3

Discussion of Job Journal  
Readings – Fox, “Reading the Tale of Job,” 145-162 (17 pages)

### **June 13 PM** – Job 4-19

Readings – Babylonian Theodicy, 492-495; The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, 486-492; Habel, 227-236; Hawley, 143-157 (33)

### **June 14 AM** – Job 20-37

Readings – Seitz, 5-17 (12 pages)

### **June 14 PM** – Job 38-42

Readings – Fox, “God’s Answer,” 1-23; Pidcock-Lester 125-132; Greenstein, “Forensic Understanding,” 241-258; Shveka and Van Hecke, 99-119 (67 pages)



## EXPLANATION OF OLD TESTAMENT CURRICULUM AT HST

The Old Testament curriculum is designed so that students have opportunities to study most of the Hebrew Bible in the M.Div. and M.A. in OT degrees.

M.Div. students will graduate with *at least*:

- a comprehensive understanding of OT content (OT Survey or proficiency exam)
- an awareness and appreciation for critical and theological approaches to reading the OT (Adv Intro to OT)
- having studied the Pentateuch (Adv Intro to OT)
- having studied either the writings in Wisdom Literature or the prophets in Isaiah
- a useful ability in reading the bible in Hebrew (Hebrew I and II)

In addition, the M.Div. curriculum includes elective hours for students to:

- take the other English based text class (Isaiah or Wisdom Literature) not already taken for the OT text requirement
- take a third semester of Hebrew (Hebrew Readings), which qualifies students for Hebrew Poetry
- take Hebrew Poetry, the climactic course in the Old Testament offerings
- take Old Testament World or Old Testament Theology as a general elective

### 5000 Survey of the Old Testament

This class is designed to familiarize students with the general content of the Old Testament Scriptures and significant themes of each Old Testament book. Successful completion of this class meets the requirement for the English Bible exam.

Students should take this class if they want a graduate overview of the entire Old Testament. The majority of the reading is the Old Testament. Some critical issues will be introduced, but the focus is on the content and theology of each of the biblical books. Compare this description with Advanced Intro to OT.

### 5001 Advanced Introduction to the Old Testament

This course introduces critical and theological approaches to the Old Testament through the study of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Pentateuch or Torah. The class involves readings and discussion of critical issues, such as the formation of the Hebrew Bible, biblical historiography, and ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, and theological themes, such as creation, covenant, and holiness. This broader focus on the message of the Hebrew Bible is grounded in close readings of particular Pentateuchal texts.

If you want a class that will cover the entire Old Testament and will require you to read the Old Testament itself at length, please take Survey of the Old Testament.

### 5010 Old Testament World

A selective study of history, cultures, languages, literatures, and religions of the ancient Near East from 3000 B.C. to the time of Alexander that provides background for understanding ancient Israel and emergent Judaism as well as for interpreting biblical text.

### 5030 Old Testament Theology

A study of current approaches to understanding the message of the Old Testament. Selected themes and passages will be considered in light of their contribution to the theology of the Old Testament and its meaning for the modern world.

### 5060 Wisdom Literature

A study of biblical Wisdom literature — Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job — in light of its ancient Near Eastern and canonical contexts. The course seeks to identify the central themes and theological perspectives of Wisdom literature and to understand what “wisdom” means in various literary settings.

### 5082 Isaiah

A study of the text, background, and message of Isaiah. The class also engages the issues of prophecy, scribalism, and the religious use of the book of Isaiah in ancient Israel.

### 5090, 5091 Beginning Hebrew I and II

These two courses introduce the vocabulary and grammar of biblical Hebrew. Students who pass this class should be prepared to read narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible with supplementary use of the Hebrew lexicon.

### 5100 Readings in the Hebrew Old Testament

This course offers the opportunity to read narrative portions of the Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible), expand Hebrew vocabulary, and learn the nuances of Hebrew syntax. Texts covered include Ruth, Exodus 32-34, and 1 Kings 16-19.

### 5130 Hebrew Poetry

A study of the poetry of the Hebrew Bible, with special attention to Psalms. In addition to a focus on the form and function of biblical verse, the class addresses the historical background and theological themes of particular Hebrew poems. This class requires 5100 Readings in the Hebrew OT. It counts as a text class.