



NIPAWIN BIBLE COLLEGE
BT251 WISDOM LITERATURE
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2017

Instructor: David J. Smith M.A.

Class times/dates: Wed., Oct. 11 thru Wed., Dec. 20 (11:20-12:20)

Class credit hours: 2

RATIONALE

As human beings, we have all faced and wrestled with the complexities of living in our world. We all know, or will eventually know, what it means to grapple with the problems of suffering, practical ethics, morality and the meaning of life and love. As Derek Kidner reminds us, where much of the Old Testament summons us to obey and believe, wisdom literature invites us to think hard and humbly; to open our eyes, to engage our conscience and invoke our common sense when faced with the difficult and perplexing issues of life.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introductory study of Hebrew poetry and the part it played in Old Testament life and literature. In this course, emphasis will also be given to the theology, as well as the major themes, in Old Testament Wisdom Literature.

OBJECTIVES

What factors from the Bible's Wisdom Literature inform and shape a Christian's capacity to confidently and wisely face the "difficult and perplexing issues of life"?

1. Be familiar with the fundamentals of Hebrew poetry;
2. Articulate the contemporary relevance of Old Testament Wisdom Literature;
3. Grasp the historical context behind wisdom thought and writings;
4. Understand major theological themes in biblical Wisdom Literature;
5. Appreciate the beauty and wonder of God's Word as it comes to us in this engaging genre while enjoying a deeper understanding of who God is and how He relates to us.

TEXTBOOKS

The Bible. (Use a recognized translation, not a paraphrase) Please bring this to class.

Lucas, Ernest C. *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

REQUIREMENTS

All written assignments are to be word-processed on a computer in accordance with the prescribed requirements in the *NBC Student Handbook*. Assignments will be graded on the basis of content, clarity, grammar, spelling and the student's ability to follow instructions. Times New Roman font is required. Pagination is a must. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be submitted to the *Receptionist* by 5:00 PM on the day specified.

1. **Reading (40%)** The required readings for this course will be done in two parts.

A. Textbook (20%) Due: Wed., Oct. 25. Students are required to read the course text, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Psalms and Wisdom Literature*, by Ernest C. Lucas in its entirety. Having done so, in 3 full pages provide a summary and evaluation of the book. Be aware that this critique is not about the author's style, whether you liked or didn't like the book, or decided it was a "good read". Rather, you are being asked to assess the book's value as a resource in understanding biblical wisdom literature within the cultural, social, political and religious milieu in which it was birthed. Please note that students are expected to exercise a good measure of Christian **and** academic charity and respect when disagreeing with scholars. An excellent critique will include the following components:

- Begin by providing the basic bibliographic data (in proper format) as well as the total number of pages (not percentage) you have read.
- Your first paragraph needs to identify the author and give their credentials for writing the book. This need not be extensive.
- Then, state the subject of the book as well as the intended audience. This can be done in one well-written sentence.
- Next, provide a *brief* (but adequate) summary of the material covered in your reading.
- Finally, carefully evaluate the clarity and organization of the book. In doing so, consider questions such as: Does the author write in such a way as to explain concepts, principles or facts clearly? Is the material well organized, balanced and comprehensive? Does the author provide insightful analysis? How have your presuppositions been affirmed or challenged? How has the material shaped your worldview? What is one significant aspect of biblical wisdom literature that this author has helped you to see and understand which you did not previously grasp? And, would you recommend this book as a serious resource on the subject of biblical wisdom literature? Why, or why not?
- A title page.

B. Bible (20%) Due: Mon. Nov. 13. In addition to your textbook, read *Psalms* in its entirety along with two (2) others from *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, or *Song of Songs*. On the prescribed day, *at the beginning of class*, you will be required to indicate which biblical books you have completed reading.

The textbook reading is designed to give you some basic literary and interpretive understanding into each of the biblical books that make up Old Testament Wisdom Literature. Similarly, the reading of Scripture is intended to place you into the biblical literature and experience first hand the dynamic of Hebrew poetry and the revelation of God in a compelling genre. To get the most out of your reading experience you will want to begin early. Avoid “cramming”. Read reflectively.

2. Individual Creative Project (20%) Due: Fri., Dec. 1. Choose a biblical passage from the list provided below and produce an artistic presentation (eg. painting, ink sketch, song [lyrics/music – not simply random chording], monologue, poetry, or sculpture). The meaning must be clearly evident! Please be aware that where a song or monologue is created, it will be demonstrated; other contributions will have their significance explained to the instructor.

The object of this assignment is to *creatively* apply what you are learning in the classroom to your life and potentially, ministry. Where written work is submitted, a title page is not necessary. But with **all** submissions, *be sure to provide the pertinent information (your name, instructor’s name, course title and assignment title).*

3. Midterm Exam (20%): The midterm exam will be based on the material pertaining to Hebrew poetry and the book of Psalms. It will come from the textbook reading and/or the lecture material covered in class. A missed exam will not be rescheduled. The midterm is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 2.

4. Final Exam (20%): The final exam will be based on the material pertaining to the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Like the midterm, it will come directly from the textbook reading and/or lecture material. A missed exam will not be rescheduled. The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 20.

SUGGESTED TOPICS/BIBLICAL PASSAGES

The following biblical passages are to be used for the individual creative project.

- Psalm 44 *or* 88 (lament)
- Psalm 92 (thanksgiving)
- Psalm 37 *or* 119 (didactic)
- Psalm 126 (assent)
- Psalm 146 (Hallel)
- Psalm 109 (imprecatory)
- Psalm 22 *or* 110 (Messianic)
- Psalm 51 (penitential)
- Psalm 23 (trust)
- Job 1: 6-12
- Job 3: 1-26
- Job 19: 23-27
- Job 38: 1-41
- Proverbs 3: 13-26

- Proverbs 4: 1-27
- Proverbs 31: 1-31
- Ecclesiastes 3: 1-11
- Ecclesiastes 7: 1-14
- Ecclesiastes 12: 1-14
- Song of Songs 2: 1-7
- Song of Songs 3: 6-11

EXTENSION, ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE POLICIES

For an explanation of these important policies please refer to the *Student Handbook*. Please be aware that electronic technology (laptops, tablets, cell phones etc.) is not to be used to play games, web browse, email or text messages during class time. Since technology can be used to enhance learning, discretion is left to the individual faculty whether they allow devices in the classroom. If such devices become a distraction the student may be marked absent from class and/or no longer permitted to bring their electronic device to class.

One further important word. If you are hindered in any way because of a learning disability please speak with the course instructor as soon as possible. It is their desire to develop strategies that accommodate your need and make your learning experience as rewarding as possible.

CALENDAR OF LECTURES/ASSIGNMENTS

Wed. Oct. 11 Syllabus/Questions

Thurs. Oct. 12 The Ethics of Biblical Wisdom: An Introduction

Wed. Oct. 18 Wisdom Literature: It's Place in the Canon and ANE Culture

Thurs. Oct. 19 Introduction to Hebrew Poetry: A Study in Parallelism

Fri. Oct. 20 Introduction to the Psalms

Wed. Oct. 25 Consider the Psalms Thematically (pt. 1)

Due: Textbook Reading

Thurs. Oct. 26 Consider the Psalms Thematically (pt. 2)

Wed. Nov. 1 The Theology of Psalms

Thurs. Nov. 2 **Midterm** (based on Psalms)

Mon. Nov. 13 Introduction/Themes of Job

Due: Bible Reading

Fri. Nov. 17 The Theology of Job

Thurs. Nov. 30 Introduction/Themes of Proverbs

Fri. Dec. 1 The Theology of Proverbs

Due: Creative Project

Wed. Dec. 6 Song of Songs: A Biblical Portrait of Marital Sexuality

Thurs. Dec. 7 Song of Songs cont.

Wed. Dec. 13 Ecclesiastes: Living Life Outside the Garden

Thurs. Dec. 14 Ecclesiastes cont.

Fri. Dec. 15 TBD

Wed. Dec. 20 **Final Exam**