

Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature

ECOS 421

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor

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Email

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GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

This course examines God's Word as expressed through Israel's prophets, selected Psalms, and selected passages from Wisdom literature. Proceeding canonically through the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), Hebrew Bible II examines the narrative of the ancient Israelites from its origins through the Fall of Jerusalem as detailed in the Hebrew Bible. Particular attention is given to a) the socio-historical context out of which the biblical text most probably emerged, b) select methods and tools of biblical scholarship, and c) the engagement of modern users with the biblical text. Attention is given to the earliest covenants, the Exodus, laws, codes and ritual, the rise of the monarchy, and (in a vein anticipatory of Hebrew Bible IV) specific pre-exilic prophets.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to introduce some major aspects of the study of the Hebrew Bible. These aspects include:

1. The historical context of the biblical material
2. The methods and tools of biblical scholarship
3. The use of biblical scholarship in modern ministerial settings

Student Learning Goals

As a result of participating in this course, individuals should be able to:

1. Articulate a history of ancient Israel up to the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (not simply the narrative in the text, but the "history behind the text").
2. Identify the geographic location of ancient nations and cities relevant for the study of the Hebrew Bible.
3. Discuss various exegetical methods used for the study of the Hebrew Bible.
4. Identify various tools for the study of the Hebrew Bible.
5. Prepare a ministry tool (sermon, age-appropriate study, interactive experience, workshop, etc.).

Required Resources

Crenshaw, James. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010. ISBN: 978-0664234591

Stulman, Louis and Hyun Chul Paul Kim. *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature*. Nashville: Abington, 2010. ISBN: 978-0687465651

Gafney, Wilda. *Daughters of Miriam: Women Prophets in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008.

McConville, J. Gordon. *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets. Vol 4* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.

An NRSV Bible

Other resources available via Moodle

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

As this is a participatory-intense course students must: 1) come prepared to discuss all assigned material in an informed, intelligent, critical (wrestling with author's views) manner and 2) take an active role in all group work and communal engagement activities. Class discussions and assignments will focus on the textbooks and other readings/resources as assigned by the instructor. During discussions, we will treat one another's ideas with respect.

Pre-Residential Assignments (50%)

All pre-residential assignments should be submitted to the instructor *as one large PDF file* at krussaw@cts.edu and copy coshomework@garrett.edu by **June 15, 2019**.

This hybrid course requires students to complete some assignments asynchronously before participating in the on-site sessions. These assignments are designed to acquaint students with foundational understandings of the subject matter as well as provide them with opportunities to "test out" different applications of the material. Pre-residential assignments will include creating maps relevant for the study of the Torah and Historical Books, and short essays responding to prompt questions based upon readings and other learning resources.

Personalities and Space Assignment (10 points)- see handout

Knowledge of the social and historical context of the Hebrew Bible is important for preaching and teaching. This assignment requires students to create charts and maps for their future use.

Short Essay Assignments (40 points; 10 points/essay)

This assignment requires students to submit short essays based upon required readings and review of other resources provided on Moodle. Students should attend to page limits for each of these essays.

Essay 1 - The Psalms (2-3 pages)

Activity: Read Ps 25:1-10; Watch The Psalms Project's "Psalm 25" and Jason Silver's "Psalm 25:1-20" YouTube videos (links on Moodle); Read Goldengay and Goldengay, "The Sting of the Psalms, Part 1"; Read Sailors, "Psalms in a Time of Violence"

Respond to the prompts or questions:

- 1. Ps 25 is commonly designated an individual lament, though the tone of the language suggests a more appropriate description as a prayer of confidence. While its original setting is disputed, many scholars argue this psalm (in its later form) was employed in communal worship. Compare and contrast interpretive choices made in the two YouTube videos. How do these creative interpretations of Ps 25.1-10 align with your interpretation of the text?*
- 2. J. Goldengay suggests the psalms are performative and may be used to reset our moral compasses. Pick one psalm and reflect upon how it may be used in your church context to reflect upon modern issues of foreign and domestic terrorism.*

Essay 2 - Prophets and Prophecy (3-5 pages)

Activity: Read Gafney chapter 1, 2 and 3 "Overview of Biblical Prophets and Related Roles" and "Female Prophecy around Biblical Israel" and "Female Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures"; Read McConville chapters 1, 2 and 4 "Isaiah," "Jeremiah" and "Ezekiel"; Read Stulman and Kim chapters 1, 9, and 10 "Reading the Prophets ..." "An Anthology of Dispersion and Diagnosis" and "An Anthology of Debate and Rebuilding"

Respond to the prompts or questions:

- 1. Gafney examines the role of female prophets in the biblical world. When read alongside McConville (and perhaps earlier exposure to the biblical prophets), are her arguments compelling? If so, how might you read the biblical text differently now that you are aware of the presence of female prophets? If you do not think Gafney's argument is compelling, where might she have strengthened her argument for the role and presence of female prophets?*
- 2. The 66 chapters of the Book of Isaiah form a 'cohesive' unit in the Jewish and Christian canons, but internal indications of diversity have led critical scholarship to distinguish three major works of literature in the Book of Isaiah. First Isaiah (chaps. 1-39), Second Isaiah (chaps. 40-55), and Third Isaiah (chaps. 56-66) are now generally treated as separate writings or collections with distinct authors.*

First Isaiah is viewed by some as accurately depicting the historical and political events during the lifetime (and from the perspective of) the 8th-century prophet Isaiah. First Isaiah contains a hodge-podge of oracles, narratives and post-exilic

additions arranged in no clear or consistent chronology. Nevertheless, McConville points to Isaiah 35 as the centerpiece of the Book of Isaiah (McConville, 21).

When you consider its themes and position in the book, do you think Isa 35 is the centerpiece or most important portion of the Book of Isaiah? Why? Why not?

Essay 3 - Wisdom Literature (5-8 pages)

Activity: Read Crenshaw chapters 1, 2, 3, and 9 “The World of Wisdom” “The Sapiential Tradition” “The Pursuit of Knowledge” and “Egyptian and Mesopotamian Wisdom Literature; Read “Instruction of Any” “A Man and His Ba” (on Moodle); Read Russaw, “Wisdom in the Garden” (on Moodle); Read Genesis 3.

Respond to the prompts or questions:

1. *Crenshaw states, “Israel’s ceaseless search for knowledge, divine presence, meaning, and survival was part of a larger quest in the ancient Near East”¹ Many of the writings found in the Hebrew Bible therefore have ‘echoes’ of ANE material. Review the Egyptian “Instruction of Any” and the Babylonian “Dialogue Between a Man and His God,” connect the Egyptian and Babylonian texts to a HB Wisdom Literature text/book, and comment on similarities and differences including probable intended audience, major themes, and the portrayal of the deity/deities.*
2. *Read Russaw closely and offer a critique of her argument(s) What is Russaw’s thesis? How does she support her argument(s)? How would her piece have been made better? What is missing from her argument?*

Essay 4 - Looking Forward (1 page)

Having completing these assignments, what is there about the Hebrew Bible that you have not had the opportunity to address? What questions have been raised for you but not yet resolved satisfactorily?

NOTE: Students should submit all pre-residential assignments to the instructor and copy coshomework@garrett.edu.

Quizzes (20%)

Students will demonstrate fluency with the Prophets and Writings material via two (2) 100-point tests. Tests will cover reading material as well as in class lectures and assignments. These tests will be given at the beginning of class during the residential portion of the course. There will be no makeup tests.

¹ James L Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 205.

Ministry Tool Presentation (20%)

The Ministry Tool Presentation assignment is an opportunity for students to practice using Book of Jeremiah learnings and to learn from each other.

The Assignment

Young people around the world seem engaged in prophetic activity. The acts of students from Parkland High School in Florida, which prompted a nationwide school walkout, point to the idea that prophetic witness is not limited to the aged/aging.

Students will prepare a short (8-10 minutes) presentation in which they model for their classmates how they might use the story of Jeremiah or material from the Book of Jeremiah to engage youth (high school students) and/or young adults. Students will also prepare a handout to help participants follow the presentation. The handout should include at least three scholarly sources/resources for the subject matter. The in-class presentation includes two parts: the presentation AND the handout.

This assignment will be assessed based upon 1) a peer assessment of their work and 2) their assessment of their classmates' presentations. Each student will submit an anonymous assessment for each of their colleagues' presentations (50% of assignment grade) in addition to presenting their own ministry tool (50% of assignment grade based upon peer review).

GRADING

Final Grade Calculation

Final grades will follow Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Course of Study grading standards and be calculated thusly:

Grade Calculation		COS Grading Standards	
Assignment	Final Grade	A	Exceeds expectations
Attendance and Participation	10%	B	Expected Quality
Quizzes	20%	C	Passing Work
Ministry Tool Presentation	20%	D	Unacceptable (no credit)
Pre-Residential Assignments	50%	F	Fail

NB (*Nota Bene*, "Note Well")

All course requirements must be completed to successfully complete the course. Additionally, all assignments must be submitted on the date specified. Requests for extensions are strongly discouraged.

Keep in mind, most conferences require a letter grade of C or better to pass the course.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inclusive Language

In 1986 the AAR (American Academy of Religion) Publications Committee prepared and approved an Inclusive Language Policy. For the purposes of this policy, exclusive language is defined as a consistent pattern of English usage where the male is taken to be the normative human person; i.e., the word "man" connotes both the male and the human being as such.

Sensitivity to issues of inclusive language is required for all written and oral work related to the course. Students are expected to use inclusive language for God. For example, avoid using only gender specific language for God.

Additionally, this course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Amendments

The professor reserves the right to amend or change this syllabus.

In-Residence Course Schedule

	Focus/Activity
Monday	(Re)Introduction to the Course “Prophets as Critics” Lecture-Discussion Prophets and Wealth Discussion HOMEWORK: Study for Quiz 1
Tuesday	Quiz 1 (Prophets) Psalms Ecclesiastes
Wednesday	Job Court Exercise Tools for Study HOMEWORK: Study for Quiz 2 (Writings) Prepare Ministry Tool presentations
Thursday	Quiz 2 Ministry Tool presentations (part I)
Friday	Ministry Tool presentations (part II) Looking Forward Course Evaluations