



TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

Course Syllabus **WINTER 2013**

WISDOM LITERATURE OLDT 0513

TUESDAYS 1:00 – 3:50 PM

INSTRUCTOR: BARBARA LEUNG LAI PhD

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:00 – 5:00 PM

(Other times by appointment; 2-week in advance sign-up sheet on office door)

To access your course material, please go to <http://mytyndale.ca>

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a literary and theological study of the Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes) with special focus on the place of Wisdom in Old Testament theology, reading and interpretive strategies, wisdom genres, and theological message of each book. The overall objective is to appropriate the collective message of the Wisdom books to our contemporary social and ecclesiastical context.

Prerequisite: BIBL 501

Recommended: OLDT 511

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through lectures, class interaction, scheduled presentations, group discussion, reading assignments and the term project, upon completion of the course, students will:

- Be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the current state of inquiry of Wisdom research in Biblical Studies.
- Be able to grasp the key interpretive issues, theology, and distinctive literary structure/ characteristics (wisdom genres) of each book as well as the collective message of Wisdom Literature (=Wisdom theology).

- Be able to exercise employing different reading strategies to the same book competently.
- Be able to comprehend the depth, complexity and ambiguity of Wisdom Literature and to appropriate its collective message to the contemporary human and ecclesiastical life.

III. REQUIRED TEXT

Perdue, L.G. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

IV. RECOMMENDED READING

These will be on 2-hr. reserve in the library.

[Alter, Robert. *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.](#)

Brown, William P. [*Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament.*](#) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. **R**

Clifford, Richard J. *The Wisdom Literature.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1998. **R**

Crenshaw, James L. [*Urgent Advice and Probing Questions.*](#) Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995. **R**

Kidner, Derek. *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes.* Downers Grove: IVP, 1985. **R**

Melchert, Charles F. [*Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry.*](#) Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998. **R**

Perdue, Leo G. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. **R**

Perdue, Leo G. et al. (eds.). [*In Search of Wisdom.*](#) Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. **R**

Perdue, Leo G. [*The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empire.*](#) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. **R**

V. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

A. Class Participation: **10%**

This includes attendance and participation in class discussion. All class sessions will be conducted in an interactive fashion. Knowledgeable participation in class is expected after you have fulfilled your reading and reflection assignments.

Due to the scope of this course, the “Recommended Reading” for each section/topic will be provided together with the detailed lecture outline.

“Selected Reading” (SR) folders for this course is available in the library on 2-hour reserve.

A Master Bibliography for each Wisdom Book in the Old Testament will be provided at the beginning of the course. (**Legends:** SR=selected reading, hard copies on 2-hr. reserve; e-R =online resource, links will be provided; R=books on 2-hr. reserve).

B. Presentations: 40% (20% each) Date: TBC (see below)

Two presentations will be scheduled in February and March (**subject to the class size**). Presentation schedules and topics will be finalized before the 3rd week of class.

C. Research Paper OR Appropriation Project: 50% Due: April 9

Submission of Topic Proposal: By Tues. March 5

A general procedural guideline is provided below. You need to choose only one among the four options (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2).

(1) Research Paper (25-30 pages double-spaced, type-written paper)

(1.1) Thematic/Theological: Define the limits of your topic as well as that of your approach; then explore exhaustively within your confined area. Present the result of your research including: (i) the history/context/issues/ importance of your selected topic; (ii) the basis/data of your research; (iii) the options and your evaluation; (iv) the result/resolution from your research and the support (at this level, the results need not be original, if you accept or slightly modify someone’s view, the reasoning, etc. will be the fruit of your research); and (v) bibliography.

(1.2) Exegetical: Hebrew is usually required if you undertake an exegetical project. Choose either one or a number of “well-coordinated” passages for exegesis. The logic of “coordination” has to be established by you as part of your research. Note that the logic and/or coordination may evolve as your research progresses. Go through the standard steps of exegetical study; whenever deviation from the standard steps are deemed necessary, justify this thoroughly with an introductory paragraph or an extended footnote(s).

(2) Appropriation/Application Project

(2.1) Preaching: Choose a topic of your interest for a series of three to four sermons. Have a specific setting in mind (thus, describe the audience, the setting, the style of worship, the length and place of the sermons, etc.).

The second part of this project includes: (i) a statement on the “purpose” of the sermon (i.e. Robinson’s “homiletical idea”), a title, an outline, a brief introduction, and a brief conclusion for each of the sermons in the series; (ii) a general introduction to the series that you will give to the congregation (which will be more appealing but less detailed than the one you give to the worship-team); and (iii) a general conclusion or wrap-up to the whole series.

The third part of this project will be either (i) a detailed outline of one of the sermons plus designs of other parts of the worship to enhance the stated effect of the sermon (e.g. introductory/response liturgy/hymn, drama, etc.); or (ii) a full script of one of the sermons.

(2.2) Teaching: Choose a topic. Define a teaching occasion (e.g., a lecture, a discussion-type Bible study, a discipleship workshop, etc.). Imagine that your responsibility is not only to teach but also to coach some disciples to teach. So what you need to prepare are: (i) your own teaching materials on the subject selected; and (ii) teaching manuals (e.g., an adult Sunday school teacher’s manual) for your disciples on the same subject.

The first part of this project is the teaching content of a series of three to four teaching occasions (as defined by you) in a detailed outline form.

The second part is an outline of the corresponding teacher’s manual that includes: (i) the rationale of the series; (ii) a general introduction to the series (e.g., a broader perspective on the topic, the importance/relevance of the topic); (iii) the connection/flow from one session to the next; (iv) pointer, cautions and possible areas of expansion, introductory/concluding activities, and others whenever applicable.

The third part is either (i) a full script of one of your sessions, or (ii) a detailed outline of one session of the teacher’s manual.

N.B. Integrative papers/projects* and those that focus on interpretive strategies** are encouraged.

* E.g., Job and Christian Counseling; Parenting and the Book of Proverbs

** E.g., The nature of Job’s suffering; The “I”- voice in the book of Ecclesiastes

D. General Guidelines for the Submission of Written Work

Literature consulted in your paper or application project must be properly footnoted. Otherwise, it is considered as plagiarism. Citations and bibliographical data are to be formatted according to Patrick H. Alexander, et al. (ed.), *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Hendrickson, 1999). This is available in the bookstore and library.

Samples of “A” grade research paper and application project are available for your reference upon request.

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students should consult the current Academic Calendar for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at <http://tyndale.ca/registrar>.

E. Summary of Assignment and Grading

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Class Participation	10%
Two Presentations	40%
Research Paper <u>or</u> Appropriation Project	50%
Total Grade	100%

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE AND CONTENT

This is a general outline. A detailed lecture outline will be provided for each class session with the recommended and the required reading assignment.

A. INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

- A.1 The Wisdom Books: Humanity Speaking/Reaching out to God
- A.2 What Is Wisdom? Who Are the Sages?
- A.3 Basic Wisdom Genres
- A.4 Wisdom in the Ancient Near East
- A.5 Currents in Wisdom Research: An Overview

B. The Place of Wisdom in Old Testament Theology

- B.1 Proposed Centers
- B.2 Where Is Wisdom to be Placed?
- B.3 Existing Tensions within the Wisdom Corpus

C. Wisdom Theology

- C.1 Wisdom and Creation
- C.2 The Understanding of Reality

- C.3 Wisdom as a Search for Order
- C.4 Human Experience as God's Means of Revelation
- C.5 Knowledge and Fear of God
- C.6 Overall Theological Framework: A Proposal

D. Proverbs: Modulating Power with Wisdom and Compassion

- D.1 Introduction
- D.2 Genre and Literary Forms
- D.3 Content: The Wisdom of Words
- D.4 An Interpretive Strategy: Proposed Guidelines for Interpretation and Proclamation
- D.5 Theology of Proverbs
- D.6 Proclaiming the Book's Message to the Postmodern Generation

E. Job: The Steadfast

- E.1 Introduction
- E.2 Basic Genres and Literary Forms
- E.3 Content: The Suffering of the Innocent and the Search for Order
- E.4 Nature of Job's Suffering
- E.5 Reading Job: Toward an Interpretive Strategy
- E.6 Proclaiming the Book's Message to the Suffering Faith Community

F. Ecclesiastes: The "Thinking-Out-Loud"

- E.1 Introduction
- E.2 Genre and Literary Forms
- E.3 Content: Human Experience under the Sun
- E.4 Reading Ecclesiastes: Toward an Interpretive Strategy
- E.5 Appropriating the Book's Message to the Collective Experience of Humanity and Christian Pilgrimage: Faith Seeking Understanding

G. Wisdom Psalms: Humanity Reaching Out to God

- E.1 Introduction: The Criteria and Limit
- E.2 Wisdom Psalms and the Echoes of Wisdom's Voice
- E.3 Theology of Wisdom Psalms: Prominent Wisdom Themes