

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study
Summer Intensive Term 1 | July 11 – 21, 2016

CS-421 Bible 4: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature
Faculty: Dr. Rebecca Abts Wright
rwright@wesleyseminary.edu

Please read this study guide *carefully*. We have split the previous pre-course work up into two parts. **Everyone will have one assignment due by June 1 submitted via Blackboard and one assignment due the first day of class, also submitted via Blackboard.**

Please schedule time each week to work on your pre-course work. If you are able to do this you will have the opportunity to come to DC next summer and enjoy some Sabbath time with us. Please let Sara Sheppard or Doug Powe know if we can help you with this in any way.

Objective:

This course examines God’s Word as expressed through Israel’s prophets, selected Psalms, and selected passages from Wisdom literature.

Goals:

1. Understand the origin, history, and use of these forms of biblical literature among God’s people.
2. Exegete these forms of biblical literature.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

Textbooks: To obtain textbooks or view the list go to **My Wesley** on the website (<https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/MyWesley>) and click on the button that says “Textbooks” From there select your program (Course of Study Summer Intensive), then select your course number. You may order books on-line directly from our e-store.

You may also order your books from Cokesbury or any other bookseller or borrow from friends.

Required:

Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*

Louis Stulman & Hyun Paul Kim, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature*
Richard Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*

Reference:

Bruce Birch, Walter Brueggemann, Terrence Frietham, David Petersen, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd Edition**
Holy Bible, NRSV suggested

Assignment: Part 1 Due June 1, 2016 posted to Blackboard

Write all of your answers as if you were talking to adults in your parish. That is, do not assume the kindergarten Sunday School class needs to be able to understand them, nor that you are speaking to people with absolutely no knowledge of church and the Bible. Neither do you have to try to impress anyone with all the big words you know!

As you are working on the paper, keep a list of questions that come up for you. That is, do not get to question 5 and try to remember all your questions. Write them down when you first think of them.

1. Biblically speaking, what is a prophet? Our culture tends to think of prophets either as people who can predict the future or as people who are grim and usually scolding. After reading the introductory material for the prophets in your study Bible, and after reading some of the prophets themselves, write a two-page description of who a biblical prophet is and what he (or in a few instances she) is called by God to do.
2. Biblically speaking, what is wisdom? Making use of the introductory materials in your study Bibles, write a two-page introduction to wisdom literature as if you are starting a 4-week adult Sunday School class in your church. List two or three texts that are representative of the wisdom tradition. List two or three ways this material can be useful for Christians today.
3. What is the organizational principal of Hebrew poetry? Using Psalm 1 as your model, give one example each of synonymous parallelism, antithetic parallelism, and synthetic parallelism. Describe how recognizing parallel features can deepen our understanding of the poetry.
4. There are several sorts of Psalms. Choose one example of praise, one example of an individual lament, and one example of a communal lament. Describe how each kind of Psalm is or is not appropriate for reciting in public worship.
5. What are the questions that have come to your mind while working on this paper? They may be very general (“Why do we have to study these books since they’re in the Old Testament and not the New Testament?”) or quite specific (“What

does this word mean?"). I will try to address as many of these as possible during our time together.

Part 2 Due the first day of class: posted to Blackboard

1. In Jeremiah 7 God gives the prophet instructions for what he is to say at the Temple in Jerusalem. In chapter 26 we read of what happens when he delivers that oracle.

- What does the prophet mean when he says the words "Temple of the LORD" are "deceptive" or "lying words?" (Jer. 7:4)

- What does he say is the besetting sin of the people? What examples does he give?

- What is the reaction of the crowd to his words? Does everyone have the same opinion of Jeremiah and his words?

- In Jer. 26:17-19 his defenders bring up the case of a previous prophet.

Where else in the Bible can we read about him?

- Paying particular attention to Jer. 26:1, 20-23, how would you assess the danger to Jeremiah?

2. Read Isaiah 7 and answer these questions. What is the situation in Jerusalem and Judah? What is the king afraid of? What is he trying to do about it? What is God's message to him through the prophet Isaiah? Note: I do NOT believe the message to King Ahaz is about Jesus. If Isaiah were speaking only about Jesus, then God would be saying, in effect, "Too bad, Ahaz. You were born about 700 years too early to see what I am going to do."

Now explain as you would to an adult Bible study group in your church why Isaiah is not talking about the Virgin Mary and the birth of Jesus. If, however, you do believe that is Isaiah's message, then explain what King Ahaz is supposed to do after hearing Isaiah's words. How can King Ahaz be faithful to God if the word from God will not come to pass for seven centuries?

3. What are "prophetic sign acts?" List one each from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Why did the prophets do such seemingly strange and even outlandish things? (No, "Because God told them to" is not a sufficient answer, true though it may be.)

4. The book of Job wrestles with issues of faithfulness in a fallen world. Given a world in which there is innocent suffering, Job wonders whether God knows or cares what is going on, whether one can remain faithful, and whether trying to be faithful even matters. His friends have very clear ideas and are not shy about sharing them. Describe the positions of Job, Satan, and Job's friends in the beginning of the book. Have any of them changed by chapter 42? What is God's opinion of the friends' positions? (See especially 42:7.) What is Job's final position in the book?

5. Much of the book of Proverbs seems to be about how to behave in court so as to get along and even get ahead. Since our situations are far different from ancient

court life, what might God be saying to us through this book? Write five proverbs of your own that would apply to your congregation(s).

Grading:

The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.

A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.

An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.

An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.

A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A “D” means the individual needs to see me.

An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.

Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and a full letter grade for any assignments 24 hours past due.

Assignments over 48 hours past due will be lowered two letter grades. We need to talk if an assignment is over 72 hours past due. Please note only two unexcused absences are allowed before grade is lowered one step.

Final course grades are mailed to the student, GBHEM in Nashville and the student’s conference representative by September 30. Grades are not posted on-line.

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty member have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another students paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination
- Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688.