

**Syllabus
Winter, 2015**

RS 338: Seeking Wisdom in the Bible

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Office hours: by appointment - I am generally available Tues. before class; Thurs. may work as well. E-mail me and I would be happy to set up a time.

I. Introduction

A. Course Description

This course will explore wisdom and wisdom literature in the Bible, with particular emphasis on Proverbs and Job. We will make some reference to other Ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions, will briefly consider how wisdom continues to be significant in the New Testament, and will also consider how the “wisdom mode” much of this material reflects may be helpful for conceptualizing the contemporary world. As a 300-level course some prior experience in Biblical studies will be helpful. This said, *no religious conviction or prior exposure to this particular material is assumed.*

B. Student Objectives

During the course students will:

- identify various types of and approaches to wisdom reflected in the Bible and where they can be found;
- explore the relationship of wisdom to the social settings and traditions of some other Ancient Near Eastern civilizations;
- recognize some of the difficulties of describing wisdom and related topics, including the role of Solomon in relation to various biblical books;
- consider the relationship between a wisdom mode of understanding and how it relates to the particularities within Jewish and Christian religious traditions (wisdom and Torah/law; wisdom and Gospel);
- consider how this exploration of wisdom may contribute to current discussions concerning science, human rights, ecology, restorative justice, etc.

II. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks

The following materials are required.

1. The **Bible (primarily Old Testament/Tanakh --- Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical and NT material for a few weeks)**

This is *the most important textbook in the course*. Students must each have their own copy, which they are expected to bring it to class. No one version is required — in fact, having a diversity present can enrich class discussion enormously. However, paraphrases and Bibles which use a ‘dynamic equivalence’ approach to translation will not be appropriate for this course (the Message,

Good News Bible, etc.). In this course we will be doing some work in *Apocryphal or Deutero-canonical books* as well as some *New Testament* material, so students will need to have access to these materials and are encouraged to purchase Bibles with this in mind. Students are welcome to choose from among:

- *Tanakh* (JPS - Jewish Publication society)
- *Common English Bible* (CEB)
- *New American Bible* (NAB)
- *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) or the older *American Standard Version* (ASV)
- *New Jerusalem Bible* (NJB) or the older *Jerusalem Bible* (JB)
- *21st Century New King James Version*, or the *New King James Version* (NKJV), or the venerable *Authorized or King James Version* (AV or KJV)
- *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) or the older *Revised Standard Version* (RSV)
- *Revised English Bible* (REB) or the older *New English Bible* (NEB)
- *Today's New International Version* (TNIV) or the older *New International Version* (NIV)
- *Net Bible* (available free on-line at <http://www.bible.org>). This can be used for comparison, but students will be expected to bring Bibles to class so this will not be sufficient as the only version.

**Note: If you consider yourself an experienced reader with one version, consider purchasing and reading a different version. This often proves helpful for hearing material in a new light.

2. Anthony R. Ceresko, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999).
Required and available at the campus bookstore.
3. *Course Reader*
Required and available at the campus bookstore.
4. Michael Harvey, *The Nuts & Bolts of College Writing* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 2003).
This is an excellent resource to use throughout your university program that provides a guide to the style, grammar, writing and formatting of academic papers.

B. *Student Evaluation*

<i>Participation/Attendance</i>	10%
<i>Job Simulation</i>	
Preparatory Paper (DUE: Feb. 5)	20%
<i>Article Comparison</i> (DUE: Mar. 5)	10%
<i>Final Project</i>	
Proposal (DUE: Feb. 24)	5%
Paper (DUE: Apr. 2)	25%
<i>Final Exam</i> (TBA)	30%

1. *Assignments*

The following provide brief descriptions of the assignments required for the course; more detailed information will be forthcoming. ***Late assignments will be docked 3% per school day.*** *Since the first two assignments (Simulation Preparation and Article Comparison) will provide the basis for class discussion on the day they are due, late assignments will automatically be docked 10% in addition to the above penalty.*

Participation/Attendance

Class sessions will assume and build upon both Bible and secondary readings. The exam will cover this material as well as items discussed in class. ***Consistent attendance will be crucial for success in this class.***

Job Simulation

We will recreate the lively debate between Job and his friends. Students will research the perspective of one character involved, write a brief piece that outlines his perspective, and create a 1-page ‘talking point’ sheet for the debate in class.

Article Comparison

This assignment will consist of a short paper (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words) that contrasts the Brueggemann article with the relevant section from one chapter of Crenshaw’s book, both cited below and available in the Course Reader.

Final Project

In consultation with the Professor, students will propose and complete a final project that can take one of many forms. For instance, students may write an exegetical paper exploring a specific passage(s) related to wisdom found in the Bible. Students may also develop a project along a more thematic line, such as one that compares a view of economics or politics from a specific biblical passage or book alongside a contemporary scholar or work. Alternatively, students may compare and contrast a particular character or book with a film or novel. In whatever case, projects will require students to consult several reference works related to the Bible (commentaries, bible dictionaries, etc.). *Other ideas are welcome; please consult directly with the Professor about your project.*

Students will also submit a 1-page paper proposal that outlines **their topic, methodology, and the passage(s) being explored and questions being pursued, as well as a short but properly formatted bibliography.** The paper itself will be 8-10 pp. (2400-3000 words).

2. *Final Exam*

The Final exam will be held during the Exam period, and its structure will be provided in advance.

III. Further Instructions

A. *Faculty of Arts info*

Cross-listed course:

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Other sources of information for students:

Academic Integrity website (Arts) Academic Integrity Office (UWaterloo)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

B. *Additional Instructions for Assignments*

All assignments submitted for this course will comply with **the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style**. See the “Religious Studies Research Guide” through the course website for valuable advice and information. In addition to usual rules of citation, etc., Biblical Studies has certain conventions that should also be followed.

When citing biblical documents.

- Unless written within the flow of the paper, **use abbreviations consisting of the first three letters of biblical books**. Thus: “At the beginning of Genesis...” within a sentence, but (Gen. 1:1-6) as a reference following a sentence.
- **Chapters and verses should be separated by a colon**, with both **chapters and verses written with numbers rather than words**. Verses within the same chapter should be listed with a hyphen when describing a section (Pro. 1:1-7) or separated by commas when speaking of specific verses (Gen. 5:14, 17). Verses from different chapters in the same book should be separated by a semi-colon (Job 2:1-4; 42:1-6).
- Unlike other citations, **Bible references should generally be made in (parentheses) within the document itself**, and *precede ending punctuation*. During discussions within a specific chapter, abbreviations for verse and verses are v. and vv. If you provide a list of references (for instance, several other places where the same term is found), these can be placed in a footnote at the bottom of the page.

***All papers with citations will be required to use bottom-of-the-page footnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) demonstrated in the Appendix in the Harvey textbook.*

*** All submitted written material MUST provide both a word count and signed copy of the ‘Academic Integrity Statement’ (found on the LEARN web-site for this course) on the title page. Assignments without either of these features will be returned to the student for resubmission.*

C. *On-line Questionnaire for Learning Styles*

I encourage students to take a short quiz in order to better understand their own learning style(s), especially at the beginning of their university career. I have found VARK to be particularly valuable in this regard. After a brief questionnaire, this tool provides very concrete suggestions for how to build upon your strengths in order to set up notes, study for tests, and proceed with research. It is available on-line at: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>.

IV. **Class Schedule**

[Square brackets] indicate the assigned readings for each class. Particularly relevant sections for biblical reading will be announced via Reading Guides on LEARN. *Make sure that you update your email account information and check this site regularly.*

A. **Introduction**

Jan. 6 - What is ‘wisdom’? And what qualifies as ‘wisdom literature’?

- what is ‘wisdom’?
- different terms related to wisdom...
- modes of inquiry - questions and answers...

Jan. 8 - Examples of Wisdom in narrative material [*Ceresko*, ch.1-4]

- Joseph story
- Craftsmen

- Wise woman of Tekoa
- Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

B. “Optimistic” Wisdom

Proverbs

Jan. 13 - Context(s), Forms, and Features of Wisdom material
[Ceresko, ch.5-6; Alter¹]

Jan. 15 - Overview and Introduction (Prov. 1-9) [Fontaine²]

****Come prepared to be assigned a ‘character’ and chapter for the Job simulation**

- ‘Prologue’ and the shape of the book
- Instruction and personification (Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly)...

Jan. 20 - Proverbs and Egyptian Wisdom (the Instruction of Amenemope)
[Pritchard³]

Jan. 22 - Possible ‘Additions’ and Implications for the Book as a Whole [Ceresko, ch.7-8]

Wisdom Psalms

Jan. 27 - Wisdom in the Psalms (Ps. 1, 72, 73, 127)

C. Questioning Wisdom

Job

Jan. 29 - Overview and Narrative ‘Frame’ [Ceresko, ch. 9]

- The ‘Set-up’ (Job 1-2)
- What are we to make of Job’s final response? (Job 42)

Feb. 3 - Intro to Dialogues, and Preparation for simulation

- the language of ‘lament’
- Preparation

Feb. 5 - Job Simulation

****Preparation DUE**

¹Robert Alter. “Dynamics of Parallelism” in *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. 3-26.

²Carole R. Fontaine, “The Sage in Family and Tribe,” *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 155–64.

³James Bennett Pritchard, “The Instruction of Amen-Em-Opet,” *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton UP, 1978) 421–24.

Feb. 10 - Job and Elihu; Divine Speeches [Burrell]

- Job's concluding comments
- Elihu: Does he add anything? if so, what?
- Re-envisioning Creation from God's perspective (Job 38-41; Gen. 1-2; Ps. 104; Ps. 19)

Feb. 12 - Job 42 and Overview: What is this book about? In what way(s) could/should it be read? [*Ceresko*, ch. 10]

***Feb. 16-20: Reading Week*

Ecclesiastes

Feb. 24 - Ecclesiastes

[*Ceresko*, ch.11; Miller]

****Paper Proposal DUE**

Feb. 26 - Eccl. (con.) [*Ceresko*, ch.12; Miller]

Mar. 3 - Song of Songs [Neusner/Greeley, on course reserves]

D. Wisdom: Solomon, Law and Jesus

Mar. 5 - Solomon and Wisdom: Is there (still) a connection?

[*Ceresko*, ch. 17]

****Article Comparison DUE** [Miller; Crenshaw, ch. 2; Brueggemann⁴; Sheppard]

Mar. 10 - Biblical 'authorship' reconsidered: Wisdom after von Rad [Foucault⁵]

Mar. 12 - Wisdom and Law/Torah (Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon) [*Ceresko*, ch. 13, 15]

Mar. 17 - Wisdom and Gospel: Spotting Wisdom in the New Testament (Tom Yoder-Neufeld??) [*Ceresko*, ch.18]

Mar. 19 - Wisdom and Gospel: Spotting Wisdom in the New Testament (con.) [*Ceresko*, ch. 19]

⁴Walter A. Brueggemann, "The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom," *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 117–32.

⁵Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101–20.

E. **‘Wisdom’ Then... and Now?**

Mar. 24 - Wisdom as an International and Pan-Religious Phenomenon in the Ancient Near East---and today? Interpretive Potential within its Limits...

[Suderman⁶, “In Search of Divine Wisdom: A Proposed Framework for Envisioning MCC’s Role in Church and World” (to be distributed)]

Mar. 26 - Wisdom: Contemporary Case Study #1

Mar. 31 - Wisdom: Contemporary Case Study #1

Apr. 2 - Reconsidering Wisdom; Exam Review

****Final Project DUE**

⁶W. Derek Suderman, “In Search of Divine Wisdom: Perspectives on the Church and MCC from Old Testament Wisdom,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 71–89.