

THEO 712
Wisdom Literature

Winter Term, Monday 2:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Instructor: Greg Davidson

Theological Hall, Room 209

Office Hours: Mondays 1-2 p.m.

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom; and whatever you get, get insight.
- Proverbs 4:7

Learning Outputs

By the conclusion of the course students will have demonstrated:

- a knowledge of the content and message of canonical Wisdom Literature;
- an ability to think and write critically about significant aspects of this literature;
- an understanding of wisdom's ancient Near Eastern context.

Learning Outcomes

Students will develop an appreciation of the value of ancient wisdom.

Students will find their thinking and own inner resources of wisdom renewed.

Students will live more wisely.

Course Texts

An modern version of the Bible that includes the Apocrypha. The New Oxford Annotated Bible is a good choice.

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. **3rd ed.**
Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002. Abbreviated to *TOF*.

Course Outline

1. January 9 - Introduction to wisdom and its literature (*TOF 1-13, 192, 231-233*)
2. January 16 - Get Wisdom: Proverbs (*Proverbs 1-31; TOF 15-29, 135-139, 193-200, ANET* 421-424*)
3. January 23 - Wisdom and Suffering: Job (*Job 1-31; TOF 33-41; ANET 589-591*)
4. January 30 - Wisdom and God's Presence: Job (*Job 32-42; TOF 42-46, 202-208, 241-247*)
5. February 6 - Wisdom and the Meaning of Life: Ecclesiastes (*Ecclesiastes 1-12; TOF 49-60, 209-212, 248-257; ANET 438*)
6. February 13 - Wisdom and Liturgy: selected Psalms (*Psalms 1, 14, 19, 25, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 49, 51, 53, 62, 73, 78, 90, 94, 104-106, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133; TOF 97-104; K. Dell, "Wisdom Psalms," Get Wisdom, Get Insight, 64-76.*)
7. February 20 - READING WEEK. NO CLASSES.
8. February 27 - COMPOSED WISDOM **due** and presented. SMALL GROUP discussions on Major Essay with instructor.

9. March 5 - Wisdom, Sexuality, and Divine Longing: Song of Songs (*Song of Songs 1-8*; **M. Falk, *The Song of Songs: a new translation and interpretation*, 1990. Read introduction, then choose 3 corresponding chapters; *ANET 467-468, 645 left col.*)

10. March 12 - Wisdom Widens: The Wisdom of Solomon & Ben Sira (*Wisdom of Solomon 1-11; Ben Sira; TOF 83-94, 65-79*)

11. March 19 - Wisdom and its Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Context (*TOF 151-179; ANET xix-xx*)

12. March 26 - Wisdom, Qumran and Jesus (Matthew 5: 1-12; Luke 9: 57-62; Luke 17:37; Mark 2: 27-28; Mark 9: 43-47; John 12: 23-25; K. Dell, "Wisdom in Qumran and the Sayings of Jesus," *Get Wisdom, Get Insight*, 151-165.)

MAJOR ESSAY due.

13. April 2 - FINAL EXAM: based on assigned readings and discussions throughout the course, looking for general understanding of content and background of wisdom literature books and terms, as well as ability to express an informed opinion through a choice of short essay questions. 2 hours.

Evaluation

Weekly Essay (20%) - 300-350 words, not more than 1.5 pages double spaced. This is a real *essai* (from *essayer*, "to try"). Give your opinion on one aspect of the Scripture reading assigned, including interaction with an aspect of the assigned or other reading. No footnotes. No bibliography. Some of your thoughts clearly expressed. **Due** each week at the beginning of each class. **Note:** Week 8 (February 27) weekly essay is a one page preparation for discussion on Major Essay, including some outline of project and bibliography. **Note 2:** No weekly essay due class 1, 7, or 13.

Seminar Discussion (10%) - effort at real interaction with material and others in the group, with evidence of preparedness for discussion.

Composed Wisdom (10%) - a song, poem, set of proverbs or short story of your creation that reflects ancient wisdom in a modern context. To be presented to the class **week 8** (February 27).

Major Essay (40%) - 2,500-3,000 words total: *Argue for the meaning and significance of one aspect of wisdom in one or more of the scriptural books discussed in class.* Must have clear thesis statement, clarity of arguments, developed ideas, a strong conclusion, properly documented footnotes and bibliography, attention to and interaction with other scholarly work, good grammar and spelling, and be easy to read (see below, "On how to write"). **Due week 12.**

Final Exam (20%) - based on assigned readings and discussions throughout the course, looking for general understanding of content and background of wisdom literature books and terms, as well as ability to express an informed opinion through a choice of basic essay questions. 2 hours. **Week 13.**

On How to Write

How we write matters. Style is not unconnected to thought, opinion and content. Short sentences are easier to read than long ones but harder to write. Too many adverbs and adjectives tire the reader. Expressing points clearly helps us think about them more. If not

already in your possession, a copy of William Strunk and E.B. White's, *Elements of Style*, is recommended to you. Read, mark and inwardly digest.

For how to properly document your Major Essay please use the sixth edition of Kate L. Turabain's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Grading Format

Grades will be given in number format on each assignment. Your final transcript will show the corresponding letter grade, according to the table found on page 11 of Student Handbook (<http://www.queensu.ca/religion/theology/grad/resources/studenthandbook/theostudenthandbook201112.pdf>).

Late Agreement

Weekly Essays (2% each) will be received before or at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Late or non-existent Weekly Essays will receive no credit. The Composed Wisdom project and Major Essay are due at the beginning of class 8 and 12, respectively. They will not be received late or given credit without a doctor's note stating a current, extended incapacitation or a notice of a major life interruption. Even in these cases, full credit may not be given.

Submitting Work

Please print your work on paper and hand it to the instructor.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/default/files/Academic%20Regulations.pdf>), and from the instructor of this course.

Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Copyright of Course Materials

This material is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in THEO 712. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in THEO 712. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate's Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Select Bibliography on Wisdom Literature

Camp, Claudia V. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. (England: Almond) Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985.

Ceresko, Anthony R. *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.

Clifford, Richard J. *The Wisdom Literature*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998.

Crenshaw, James. "In Search of Divine Presence: Some Remarks Preliminary to a Theology of Wisdom." *Review and Expositor* 74 (1977): 353-69.

_____. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* 3rd ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

Day, John; Gordon, Robert P.; Williamson, H. G. M. (Eds), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel. Essays in honour of J. A. Emerton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995.

Dell, Katharine. *Get Wisdom, Get Insight: An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature*. Macon, GA: Smith and Helwys, 2000.

**Falk, Marcia. *The Song of Songs: a new translation and interpretation*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1990.

Newsom, C.A. and S.H. Ringe eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

V. H. Matthews and D. C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels* 3rd ed. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.

Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002. Abbreviated to TOF.

_____. *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The Forms of Old Testament Literature. Vol. 13. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981.*

Perdue, Leo G., Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman, eds. *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

*J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Von Rad, Gerhard. *Wisdom in Israel*. London, SCM Press, 1972.

* and ** are on reserve in the Stauffer Library.