



McMaster Divinity  
College



Where can

Wisdom be

Found?

Old Testament Wisdom

Literature and Job

**OT 3XW3**

**Fall 2018 Tuesdays 9:00am–10:50pm**

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**Course Description:**

This course is a study of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament with a special focus on the book of Job as inner biblical wisdom dialogue. We will survey the wisdom books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, taking into account the milieu of ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature. Particular attention will be given to the various genres included within the wisdom books, and the way in which they have been and should be interpreted and applied for the church and society today. The course will also undertake a thorough study of the book of Job taking into account critical matters & methodologies, ancient Near Eastern parallels, and the canonical context of the book. The course focuses on several questions related to the interpretation of Job such as: What is the appropriate way to talk about God while suffering? What is the role of Satan in human suffering? What answers to the problem of suffering does the book of Job give? How is the theology of Job's friends still prevalent in Christian circles today? We will examine the literary structure, authorial purpose(s), and interpretation of the book of Job in its historical context, with an effort to discover the continuing relevance of the book of Job for the Church and society today.

**Specializations:** Biblical Studies and Pastoral Studies

**Course Objectives:**

**Knowing**

- To know the place of wisdom in OT theology
- To know the content, historical contexts, and theological message of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
- To gain an introductory knowledge of relevant Ancient Near Eastern Literature: One will read an English translation of the most important extra-biblical documents for a proper understanding of wisdom within its ancient Near Eastern context.
- To have a thorough knowledge of the contents and message of the book of Job and its role in inner biblical wisdom dialogue

**Being**

- To embrace the contemporary relevance of Old Testament Wisdom Literature for the Church today
- To grow closer to God through study of the wisdom literature

**Doing**

- To be able to discuss the relation of the book of Job to discussions of theodicy and modern liberation theologies
- To be able to interpret Wisdom literature in its original contexts
- To be able to apply Wisdom literature to contemporary audiences
- To be able to apply Wisdom literature to our own lives

**Required Texts:**

- Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan O'Dowd. *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*. Downers Grove, Illinois /Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2011.
- Walton, John H., and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino. *Job. The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

**Recommended Texts:**

- James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., Westminster John Knox, 2010
- Norman Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985.

**Textbook Purchase:**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the

first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

### **Course Evaluation**

*The assignments and their weights are as follows:*

**10% - Readings:** Students are required to read the textbooks and other assigned readings in full and report on them via an email to the professor by Dec 12, 2018

**25% - Assignment on Proverbs (6–8 pages).** Due Oct 16, 2018.

The bibliography for this paper must contain at least 6 items of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books) including *at least 1* article from peer reviewed / refereed journals. *By way of supplement* to these 8 sources, a student may use a *maximum* of 2 internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of the sources chosen. These secondary sources do not include primary sources Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc.

#### **A. Biblical Studies Specializations:**

##### *Research Paper on Proverbs*

For this assignment students with a biblical studies specialization will choose a topic related to the book of Proverbs and write a research paper. Paper Topic must be approved by your professor.

#### **B. Pastoral Specializations:**

##### *Exegetical Paper on Proverbs passage*

For this assignment students with a pastoral specialization will choose a portion of the book of Proverbs and write an expositional essay explaining the meaning of the passage and applying it to the contemporary situation. See “Paper Evaluation” below. Chosen passage must be approved by your professor.

**25% - Assignment on the end of Ecclesiastes (6–8 pages)** Due Nov 13, 2018.

The bibliography for this paper must contain at least 6 items of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books). *By way of supplement* to these 6 sources, a student may use a *maximum* of 2 internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of the sources chosen. These secondary sources do not include primary sources Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc.

#### **Both Specializations:**

Beginning with the article by Martin Shields, “Ecclesiastes and the End of Wisdom” (*Tyndale Bulletin* 50 (1999):117–139) in this paper students will discuss

interpretive possibilities for understanding the end of Ecclesiastes and articulate their own view (informed by their own further research).

**40% - Major Assignment on Job (12–15 pages) Due Nov 13, 2018.**

The bibliography for this paper must contain at least 12 items of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books) including *at least 2* article from peer reviewed / refereed journals. *By way of supplement* to these 12 sources, a student may use a *maximum* of 2 internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of the sources chosen. These secondary sources do not include primary sources Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc.

**A. Biblical Studies Specializations:**

*Research Paper on Job*

For this assignment students with a biblical studies specialization will choose a topic related to the book of Proverbs and write a research paper. Research Topic must be approved by your professor.

**B. Pastoral Specializations:**

There are three (3) options for the major assignment for Pastoral Studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

**1. Exegetical Paper: 12 pages**

For this assignment students will write an exegetical paper on a chosen text from the book of Job explaining the meaning of the passage and applying it to the contemporary situation. Chosen passage must be approved by your professor.

**2. Sermon on a passage from Job (oral presentation). 20-25 minute video-taped sermon** submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive.

Beginning with the text of Job this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be delivered orally but include a written paper with an outline. The paper may be a combination of sentence, bullets/point form, paragraphs (it need not be a complete essay of the words you preach). This paper should be grammatically correct and include appropriate citation of sources employed. Chosen passage must be approved by your professor.

**3. Sermon on a passage from Job (written). 10 pages double-spaced.**

Beginning with the text of Job this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline. The sermon must be written as

it would be spoken and must *not* be in point form etc. but be a full written manuscript. It is expected it will conform to MDC style guide and be grammatically correct and acknowledge its sources appropriately.  
*Chosen passage must be approved by your professor.*

### **College Style for Submission of Written Work**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and

Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! Email to pevans@mcmaster.ca. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., evans.researchpaper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received before the end of the calendar day on which they are due (i.e., before midnight Eastern Standard Time).

### **Policy concerning late papers**

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, holidays, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by **Dec 12** in order to avoid a failing grade in the class.

### **Academic Honesty.**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

### **Gender Inclusive language:**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**Disclaimer**

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

***Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.***

**Research Paper Evaluation**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

I. The next items are rated according to this scale: 1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1	2	3	4	5
Range and Use of Sources	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity in Defining Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Strength of Argument	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions	1	2	3	4	5
Analysis /Critical Thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Thesis (focus)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/coherence of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

**II. The following need attention if so indicated**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language  | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay   | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention          | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide                          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

**Bibliography**

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