



McMaster Divinity
College



Where can

Wisdom be

Found?

Old Testament Wisdom

Literature and Its Relevance

for Christian Life and

Practice

OT 3XW3

This course begins online on April 21

Class meets in person: Thursday May 9: 9:00am-5:00pm; Friday May 10 9:00am-1:30pm

Course continues online until conclusion on June 8

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Course Description:

Where can Christian wisdom for living in modern society be found? What is wisdom and how can Christians learn it? This course explores these questions through a study of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Job. This course will examine these three biblical books as involved an inner biblical wisdom dialogue, but also as texts that seeks to draw its (modern and postmodern) readers into a dialogue about the way of wisdom. Important themes will be explored such as: the fear of the Lord; loving God for God's sake; theology as wisdom; and the wisdom of worship and prayer in Christian life and ministry today. This course will facilitate critical reflection and examination of worldviews, professional practices, and missional

activities and their potential for transformation through attention to Christian wisdom and its foundational role in human flourishing.

Specializations: Biblical Studies and Pastoral Studies

Course Objectives:

Knowing

- To know the place of wisdom in OT theology
- To gain an introductory knowledge of relevant Ancient Near Eastern Literature
- To know the content, historical contexts, and theological message of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
- To have a thorough knowledge of the contents and message of the book of Job and its role in inner biblical wisdom dialogue

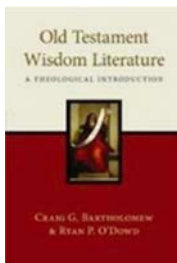
Being

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

Doing

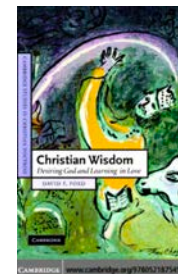
- To be able to discuss the relation of the book of Job to discussions of theodicy and modern liberation theologies
- To be able to interpret Wisdom literature in its original contexts
- To be able to draw on Wisdom literature in service of critical reflection and examination of professional practices
- To be able to bring out the relevance of Wisdom literature for contemporary audiences

Required Texts:



Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd. *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011.

Ford, David F. *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; 16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



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. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

1. Pre-class Discussions (April 21 – May 4): Online

Due to this being a hybrid course, much of the class discussion will occur online on the Avenue to Learn course website. Students must actively participate in the online discussion and post minimum **two** discussion topics at the beginning of a week (Sun-Tues). Student posts must be in regard to the posted lectures / assigned readings that week. As well, to further the online discussion all students must respond to minimum **two posts** every week. Since initial posts will be online in the first part of the week, there will adequate time for all students to respond to posts in a timely manner. Instructions on how to participate in the online classroom will be sent to each student via email before the course begins.

Participation in online discussion is an assumed foundation for this course (like class attendance) if a student fails to participate every week their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

2. 25% - Comparative Assignment: Due: May 4: Length: 6-8 pages

The ancient search for wisdom continues today in various facets, one of which is the proliferation of popular modern-day wisdom manuals (e.g., *Life's Little Instruction Book*) or self-help books (e.g., *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* and *Life Strategies: Doing What Works, Doing What Matters*) which often present wisdom as principles that can be applied to one's life to ensure accomplishment, health and prosperity—and often/usually this is done without God. Conversely, Old Testament wisdom grounds wisdom in the fear of God and also resists the presentation of ideas in an absolute way that guarantees success as the canonical dialogue between the books reveals that biblical wisdom subverts itself and is aware of human limitations.

In this assignment, students will take one such modern example of a 'wisdom manual' and compare it with Old Testament wisdom and answer the following questions: What similarities are there between the two? Are they seeking to answer similar questions? Are they dealing with similar topics? What are the main differences between modern 'wisdom' and biblical wisdom? What is the source of wisdom? In what sense is the modern analogue useful for a believer? In what sense are they lacking? What is a biblical response to the modern search for wisdom? In what way can OT wisdom critique modern analogues?

3. In-Class Component (April 9–10): At McMaster Divinity College

The on-campus Modules will consist of some in-class lectures, Q&A, presentations, and student presentations. Attendance is mandatory.

4. 25% - Student Led discussion:

As part of the on-campus modules, each student will lead the class in a 30-minute discussion of an assigned research topic. In preparation for the discussion the student will conduct independent research including the textbooks and other sources.

*A 2–3 page report showing your research and discussion notes must be handed in following the seminar.

5. Post-Class Component (May 12–June 8): Online**A. Online Discussion**

In the post-class component students must continue to actively participate in the online discussion but now only need to post one discussion topic at the beginning of a week (Sun-Tues) and respond to one other post each week.

Participation in online discussion is an assumed foundation for this course (like class attendance) if a student fails to participate every week their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

6. 10% - Statement and Annotated Bibliography. Due May 25.

In preparation for the major assignment students will write a one-paragraph statement of their chosen topic, along with an annotated bibliography of at least 12 bibliographic items of secondary sources. These secondary sources do not include primary sources (the Bible, Josephus, Qumran). 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 these Internet resources.

Annotated Bibliography Instructions

A) List the sources you select in proper bibliographic format as outlined in the MDC style guide (in alphabetical order by author's last name).

B) After each item listed include an annotation.

C) Annotations should be approximately 100-200 words explaining the author's thesis and what evidence or arguments used to support it. Annotations should show that you have read and understood the article or book and assess the relevance of the item for your own research for your major assignment.

7. 40% - Major Assignment. Due June 8.

All major assignment papers must follow the MDC Style Guide. Papers should be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes should be single-spaced and 10pt). The major assignment will be based upon the research represented in your annotated bibliography and draw on (and explicitly cite) all 12 sources within the paper. See “Major Assignment Evaluation Guidelines” below

A. Major Assignment for Biblical Studies Specializations:

i. Research paper: 12-15 pages double-spaced. This is especially recommended if you are planning to go on to a research degree or write a thesis (or if you have a particular topic in mind that you wish to write on). The topic of this research must be related to OT Wisdom and approved by the professor.

B. Major Assignment for Pastoral Specializations:

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

i. Exegetical Paper: 12 pages

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

ii. Sermon on a passage from Job (oral presentation). 20-25 minute video-taped sermon uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo.

Beginning with the biblical text (of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or 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.

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

Beginning with the biblical text (of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or 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/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/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 **June 8** 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 of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

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.

Major Assignment Evaluation Guidelines

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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |
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Bibliography

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