



McMaster Divinity
College

Biblical Wisdom

OT 5XW5

This course runs January 4–April 9

Class meets synchronously online via Zoom:

- Monday January 4: 7:00pm–8:00pm EST
- Monday April 5: 7:00pm–8:00pm EST

Class meets asynchronously via Avenue to Learn Jan 5–Feb 27

Class meets asynchronously via Avenue to Learn March 7–April 9

Class meets in person:

- Monday March 1: 9:00am–5:30pm;
- Tuesday March 2 9:00am–1:00pm

Professor. Dr. Paul S. Evans **E-mail.** pevans@mcmaster.ca

Course Description:

This course is an exploration of biblical wisdom literature with an emphasis on the important role it plays in the Old Testament. The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Job will be studied in the context of the ancient Near East, with its influence upon later Second Temple literature and the New Testament also explored. The course will examine the role of wisdom literature in Old Testament theology and consider wisdom as both a practical & ethical category with a view to appropriating wisdom literature into contemporary contexts. This course will facilitate critical reflection and examination of worldviews and professional practices and their potential for transformation through attention to biblical 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.

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

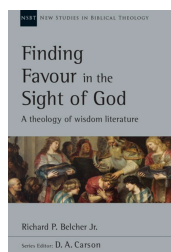
Required Texts:



Tremper Longman. *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel*. Baker Books, 2017.

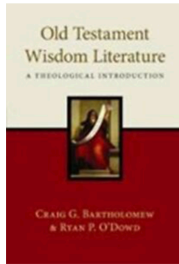


Ford, David F. *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; 16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



Richard P. Belcher. *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature*. NSBT 46: Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011.

Recommended Texts



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

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 Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Requirements

1. Introductions and Class Orientation (Jan 4 at 7:00-8:00pm)

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. Our time together will include introductions and an overview of the class.

***A link to participate via Zoom will be posted in an announcement on Avenue to Learn.

2. Pre-class Discussions (Jan 4 – Feb 27): 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-).

3. 25% - Annotated Bibliography: Due Feb 22

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the student's topic (related to wisdom) and write a 100-150 word annotation for each one. The required texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. **This assignment will be approximately 2,000 words.**

4. In-Class Component (March 1–2): At McMaster Divinity College

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

Student Led discussion:

As part of the on-campus modules, each DPT student will lead the class in a 30-minute discussion of their research topic based upon their annotated bibliography. Students will introduce the topic to the class and give some of the contours of previous research, commenting on key texts and studies

5. 25% - Critical Literature Review Assignment. Due Mar 27

A formal paper will be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of *the student's topic*. **The paper will be approximately 3,000 words.**

6. Post-Class Component (March 7–April 9): 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-).

7. 40% - Major Assignment. Due April 9. Approximately 8,000 words.

The paper should include four key sections. First a brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach, second an exploration of the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. why does this ministry practice need to be addressed? What are the problems that you want to identify?) Third, a consideration of a foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration in this course and a deep consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area. Fourth some reflection on the application of these ideas to the student's own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church).

8. 10% - Class Presentation. Due April 2.

The student will offer a class presentation of their final paper and its findings to the class. Presentations may take one of the following formats:

- i. Video presentation (posted to YouTube or Vimeo)

- ii. PowerPoint along with pdf handout which will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and read.

****Class presentations will form the basis for the online discussion for the final week of classes (April 4–9).**

9. Synchronous Reflective Discussion (April 5 at 7:00–8:00pm)

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. In our time together we will share our reflections on course materials

***A link to participate via Zoom will be posted in an announcement on Avenue to Learn.

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 **April 9** 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.

READING SCHEDULE

BOOK	Longman	Belcher	Ford	Assignment due
Jan 4–9	pp. 1–25	Ch. 1	Introduction	
Jan 10–16	pp. 26–42	Ch. 2	Ch. 1	
Jan 17–23	pp. 43–62		Ch. 2	
Jan 24–30	pp. 63–77	Ch. 3	Ch. 3	
Jan 31–Feb 6	pp. 78–93	Ch. 4	Ch. 4	
Feb 7–13	pp. 94–108	Ch. 5	Ch. 5	
Feb 14–20	pp. 109–126	Ch. 6	Ch. 6	*Annotated Bibliography due Feb 22
Feb 21–27	pp. 127–146	Ch. 7	Ch. 7	
Feb 28–Mar 6	No Readings	Face to Face Component Mar 1–2	No Readings	* Lead 30 minute discussion of research during face to face meetings (Mar 1–2)
Mar 7–13	pp.147–162	Ch. 8	Ch. 8	
Mar 14–20	pp. 163–176	Ch. 9	Ch. 9	
Mar 21–27	pp. 177–199	Ch. 10	Ch. 10	*Critical Literature Review due Mar 27
Mar 28–Apr 3	pp. 215–243	Ch. 11	Conclusion	*Class Presentation due April 2
Apr 4–9	Appendices pp. 257–276			* Major Assignment due April 9

Bibliography

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New and revised ed. New York: Basic, 2011.
- Balentine, Samuel E., *Have You Considered My Servant Job?: Understanding the Biblical Archetype of Patience*. Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2015.
- Bartholomew, Craig G. *Ecclesiastes*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Bass, Dorothy C., Kathleen A. Cahalan, Bonnie J. Miller-McLenmore, James R. Nieman, and Christian B. Scharen, *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Ben Zvi, Ehud. "When Yhwh Tests People: General Considerations and Particular Observations Regarding the Books of Chronicles and Job." In *Far from Minimal: Celebrating the Work and Influence of Philip R. Davies*, edited by Duncan Burns and John Rogerson. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2014.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*. Rev. ed., Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Ceresko, Anthony R., *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.
- Clifford, Richard J. ed. *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.
- Clifford, Richard J., *The Wisdom Literature*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Clines, David. J. A. "Worth of Animals in the Divine Speeches of the Book of Job." In *The Ox Knows Its Master*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013.
- _____. *Job 1–20*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1989.
- _____. *Job 21–37*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006.
- _____. *Job 38–42*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2011.
- Fiddes, Paul S., *Seeing the World and Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom and Christian Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Firth, David G., *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017.
- Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Textual Commentary*. The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition. Atlanta: SBL, 2015.
- Gray, John. *The Book of Job*. Edited by David Clines. The Text of the Hebrew Bible. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010.
- Greenwood, Kyle R. "Debating Wisdom: The Role of Voice in Ecclesiastes." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74 (2012): 476-491.
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987.
- Habel, Norman C. *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.
- Hartley, John E. *The Book of Job*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Holmstedt, Robert D. "Word Order in the Book of Proverbs." In *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, edited by Kelvin G. Friebel, Ronald L. Troxel and Dennis Robert Magary, 135–54. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005.
- Horne, Milton P., *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*. Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA.: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.
- Kidner, Derek. *The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance*. Bible Speaks Today. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1976.
- _____. *The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1975.
- _____. *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes: An Introduction to Wisdom Literature*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985.
- Koptak, Paul E. *Proverbs: From Biblical Text— to Contemporary Life*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003.
- Longman, Tremper. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998.
- _____. *Proverbs*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.

- Murphy, Roland E. *Ecclesiastes*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000.
- _____. *Proverbs*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- _____. *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*. The Forms of the Old Testament Literature. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981.
- Murphy, Roland E., and Elizabeth Huwiler. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. Understanding the Bible Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2012.
- Murphy, Roland E., *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*. The Forms of the Old Testament Literature ; v. 13. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981.
- Newsom, Carol. "The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text." *JSOT* 97 (2002): 87–108.
- Niccolls, Thomas. "Job: On Death and Dying." *Omega* 8 (1977): 59–64.
- O'Dowd, Ryan, *Proverbs*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 2017.
- Perdue, Leo G., and W. Clark Gilpin. *The Voice from the Whirlwind : Interpreting the Book of Job*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1992.
- Shields, Martin A. "Ecclesiastes and the End of Wisdom." *Tyndale Bulletin* 50 (1999): 117-139.
- Waltke, Bruce K. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- _____. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2005.
- Walton, John H., and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity, 2015.
- Wharton, James A. *Job*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- Whybray, R. N. *Job*. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008.