

# Attention!

This is a representative syllabus. The syllabus for the course you are enrolled in will likely be different.

Please refer to your instructor's syllabus for more information on specific requirements for a given semester.

Fall 2016

***Biblical and Post-Biblical Wisdom Literature***

Hebrew 2708 / Jewish Studies 2708

Meeting Time/Location

Instructor:

Email:

Office:

Office Hours:

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to provide the student with some fundamental insights into the Hebrew Bible within the context of its social, cultural, and historical milieu, as well as the common near eastern setting. One of the main objectives is to explore the searching spirit of ancient man for ultimate issues, such as the purpose of existence, the destiny of man, the problem of evil, how to navigate life successfully, and related topics. While this course stresses that the Hebrew Bible cannot be understood, and still less appreciated, without its larger cultural setting, it also strives to point out the distinctive features of these texts. Insights from post-biblical Hebrew traditions (Talmud, Midrash, etc.) as well as contributions from a great many academic disciplines are utilized to provide a variety of perspectives on the Hebrew Bible.

Students in the course will read (in English translation) the biblical texts that are identified with wisdom genres, specifically focusing on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, selected Psalms, and Ben Sira among others. The course will stress the indivisible unity of the secular, religious, and ethical aspects of biblical wisdom. It will also explore the universal aspects of wisdom and its search for regularity within the diversity of the phenomena of the world. Because proper comprehension of biblical wisdom depends upon an understanding of related texts in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the course will address the striking similarities, in thought and form, between biblical wisdom on the one hand and Egyptian wisdom (Wisdom of Amenemope, Instructions of Merikare, Ptahhotep, etc.), and Babylonian Wisdom (Babylonian Theodicy, Dialogue of Pessimism, etc.) on the other. Only by means of such comparison will the distinctive features of Israelite wisdom come to prominence. Insights from Rabbinic wisdom (e.g., Pirquei Avot) will also be provided.

**General Education**

This course can fulfill the University's General Education ("GE") requirement for both "Literature" and "Diversity: Global Studies." Below are the university-defined "goals" and "expected learning outcomes" for each.

*Literature*

Goals: Students evaluate significant texts in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; and critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students analyze, interpret, and critique significant literary works.
2. Through reading, discussing, and writing about literature, students appraise and evaluate the personal and social values of their own and other cultures.

*Diversity: Global Studies*

Goals: Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Enjoy a study of the Hebrew Bible.
2. Initiate sensitivity to the non-Western culture in which the text originates, developing an appreciation for some of its literary expressions.
3. Introduce and evaluate the history of ideas associated with human life-choices and ethics as found in texts from the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible.

### **Achieving the Objectives**

1. Classroom interaction
2. Daily readings from the Hebrew Bible and related texts
3. Memorization of select biblical passages
4. Daily written assignments in response to assigned readings

### **Measuring Achievement of the Objectives**

- 25%—Daily assignments and quizzes
- 25%—Midterm I (Tuesday, September 20)
- 25%—Midterm II (Tuesday, October 25)
- 25%—Final Exam (Monday, Dec 12 2:00-3:45)

### **Homework**

Guides to the assigned readings and questions on these readings will be posted for each class period on Carmen or via email. Both guides and questions are designed to make assigned reading more rewarding and more focused. Before coming to class each day, students are expected to:

1. Read the assignment listed for that date.
2. Read the supplementary notes and materials as posted on Carmen or via email.
3. Answer the reading questions on Carmen or email, and have the answers ready to turn in at the start of class. Since a large portion of the midterms and final exams are taken directly from these assignments, it is in each student's best interest to answer all the reading questions carefully.
4. If a quiz has been announced for the next class, be prepared to take a quiz at the beginning of class.

### **Quizzes**

There may be a quiz on occasion, and the material that the quiz will cover will be made explicit in advance. They are designed neither to be picky nor to focus on minor details. Rather, the purpose of any quizzes is to motivate the student to consistently keep up with the material. Quizzes will be graded on a 10-point scale (10 = A, 9 = B, 8 = C, 7 = D).

Many passages in the Bible are pivotal not only for biblical literature but also for literary, cultural, and religious developments after the closing of the biblical canon. Because of their significance and in order to bridge the cultural gap between the world of the Bible and our own, a handful of these texts will be memorized during the course of the semester. Each week there will be a quiz over the

short selection assigned for that week (e.g., Prov. 1:7-9 will be the first passage memorized, with a quiz on its successful memorization taking place on Tuesday, Aug 30).

### **Exams**

Exams (midterms and final) are not cumulative, for the most part. Each exam will derive a sizeable portion of its content from the daily reading guides and questions, in addition to class discussions. The final exam has been set by the university for Monday, Dec 12 2:00-3:45. *If a student is unable to take the final exam at the specified time, he or she must make other arrangements the first week of class, if possible, or drop the class.*

### **Absences**

The student is responsible for all information, materials, and class discussions that occur, even in his or her absence. The absent student must make arrangements with other class members to obtain notes or to be apprised of class developments or changes when absent.

No late assignments will be accepted and no quizzes may be retaken if missed. In order to accommodate inevitable emergencies that are beyond the student's control, the lowest 10% of all assignments and quizzes will be dropped. Those students who take all quizzes will have the lowest 10% of their quiz and assignment grades dropped.

### **Required Texts**

A Bible is required for use in class. Most versions are acceptable, for example, the Revised English Bible, the New English Bible, the [New] Jerusalem Bible, the New International, the [New] Jewish Publication Society (Tanakh), the [New] Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, the [New] King James Version, or the English Standard Version. Paraphrastic versions, such as the New Living Translation, the Message, the Common English Version, and the Good News Bible, are unacceptable for the purposes of this course. Hopefully there will be a sufficient variety in the class so that the different features of various translations will become apparent during the course of the semester. For those who do not own a Bible, or who are unfamiliar with the options available, note that Bibles are readily available at used bookstores and that a number of websites can provide brief introductions to the distinctive features of available options, such as <http://www.bible-researcher.com/versions.html>.

All other texts that will be required for the course can be accessed either on-line or will be made available on Carmen.

### **Audio-Recording**

Lectures are not permitted to be recorded on any device.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Plagiarism is not tolerated. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors are required to report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc>).

## **Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Ave; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>; 614-292-330.

## **Schedule**

The following tentative schedule is designed to provide an overview of the course, specifying the dates that specific reading assignments are due and the general subjects targeted for discussion each day (the date listed is the day on which each assignment IS DUE). It is likely that time constraints and student questions will modify the sequence and timing of some of these subjects. However, the dates on which assignments and readings are due should remain as printed below unless otherwise modified by the professor.

Week One – The Egyptian Tradition

Aug 23 Orientation

Aug 25 Due: readings from Ptahhotep

Week Two The Egyptian Tradition (continued)

Aug 30 Due: readings from Merikare

Sep 1 Due: readings from Amenemope

Week Three – The Biblical Book of Proverbs

Sep 6 Due: readings from Proverbs 1-9

Sep 8 Due: readings from Proverbs 10-15

Week Four - The Biblical Book of Proverbs (continued)

Sep 13 Due: readings from Proverbs 22:17-25:28

Sep 15 Due: readings from Proverbs 30-31

Week Five - Ahiqar

Sep 20 Midterm #1

Sep 22 Due: readings from Ahiqar

Week Six – Theodicy: The Babylonian Tradition

Sep 27 Due: readings from the Babylonian Theodicy

Sep 29 Due: readings from Ludlul

Week Seven – Theodicy: The Book of Job

Oct 4 Due: readings from Job 1-11

Oct 6 Due: readings from Job 12-21

Week Eight – Theodicy: The Book of Job (continued)

Oct 11 Due: readings from Job 23-31

Oct 13 No class – break

Week Nine – Theodicy: Job and the Book of Psalms

Oct 18 Due: readings from Job 32-42

Oct 20 Due: readings from selected Psalms

Week Ten - Skeptical Literature: Babylonian and Egyptian Contexts

Oct 25 Midterm #2

Oct 27 Due: readings from Babylonian material (Dialogue of Pessimism)

Week Eleven - Ecclesiastes

Nov 1 Due: readings from Egyptian material (Dispute of Man with his Ba, Harpers' Songs)

Nov 3 Due: readings from Ecclesiastes 1-3

Week Twelve – Ecclesiastes (continued)

Nov 8 Due: readings from Ecclesiastes 4-6

Nov 10 Due: readings from Ecclesiastes 7-9

Week Thirteen – Ben Sira

Nov 15 Due: readings from Ecclesiastes 11-12

Nov 17 Due: readings from Ben Sira 1-12

Week Fourteen – Ben Sira (continued)

Nov 22 Due: readings from Ben Sira 13-24

Nov 24 No class - Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen

Nov 29 Due: readings from Ben Sira 25-36

Dec 1 Due: readings from Ben Sira 37-51

Week Sixteen

Dec 6 Due: Readings from Rabbinic wisdom