

**126.615 Wisdom Literature**  
**Course Assessment and Delivery Outline**

NQF Level: 6  
Credit Value: 15

Campus: Auckland  
Lecturer: Tim Meadowcroft

Semester 1, 2015

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Making choices and taking charge; enjoying the good life; wrestling with tragedy; addressing the sinful tendencies of human nature. This is the biblical quest for wisdom. It is found sharply focused in the texts of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. This course explores the distinctive features of Old Testament wisdom and her texts, her key concerns, and her place in the life of faith, work and learning, ultimately to find that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** At the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the content of the main Old Testament wisdom texts.
2. Describe key concepts relating to the structure and formation of Old Testament wisdom texts.
3. Show awareness of the literary and cultural contexts of biblical wisdom literature.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of exegetical procedure, especially as it applies to the interpretation of Old Testament wisdom literature.
5. Reflect on contemporary life and ministry in the light of a reading of Old Testament wisdom texts.
6. [Hebrew option: demonstrate ability in reading and translating Biblical Hebrew wisdom texts.]
7. Show awareness of key themes in a biblical theology of wisdom.

**CONTENT OVERVIEW:**

- Historical, literary and environmental background to Hebrew wisdom literature.
- The book of Proverbs (NRSV).
- The book of Job (NRSV).
- The book of Ecclesiastes (NRSV).
- Song of Songs (NRSV) and the place of wisdom in the context of the biblical story.
- Wisdom and contemporary life and ministry.
- Theological response to wisdom.

- Wisdom and/in Scripture
- [Hebrew option: translation of Ecclesiastes 1-8]

## ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES (ENGLISH OPTION):

**Contextual Reflection:** 20%, due 10 March (posting 1); 31 March (posting 2); 5 May (posting 3); 26 May (posting 4)

Learning outcomes: 1, 5

Using the Forum function on Moodle, students will write four postings, due as indicated above, that link their reading of wisdom material currently being covered in class with events, public or private, that are going on in the world around them or being experienced directly by them.

These postings should include insights from wider reading of news, current events and opinion pieces, and insights from wider reading about biblical wisdom. Students will also write a response to at least two of their classmates' entries. Forum entries are read by the whole class; while personal responses to events and experiences are welcome, no self-disclosure beyond a level that is appropriate and comfortable is required. Correspondingly, all entries should be treated with respect and held in confidence within the class group. It is anticipated that 1500 words will be written in total. Assessment criteria:

- Pre-reading passages read on time.
- Evidence of insights from wider reading on wisdom.
- Evidence of awareness of current events and opinions.
- Ability to discern the spiritual/theological significance of contemporary events.
- Depth of capacity to bring Scripture to bear on such events.

**Exegetical Essay:** 35%, due 12 May

Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4

A 2000 word exegetical essay on the NRSV text of one of the following three passages:

- Proverbs 30.1-14.
- Ecclesiastes 11.
- Job 28.12-28.

As well as giving attention to key words and phrases, significant grammatical and syntactical constructions, and (where applicable) important textual or translational points, your exegesis of the passage should identify the setting, main literary features, and key aspects of the study of wisdom literature. Assessment criteria:

- Textual: are key issues of translation and textual variation identified?
- Literary: are the methods by which meaning is conveyed discerned?
- Context: is the passage understood in terms of its literary and historical context?
- Critical discernment: are the major exegetical issues selected and discussed?
- Significance: is the contribution of the passage towards a wider message perceived?
- Integration and reading: are the insights of scholars integrated into the treatment?
- Style and organisation: is the argument illumined by a clear structure and accurate and fluent use of English? Are appropriate footnote and bibliographic conventions used?

**Exam:** 45%, due as scheduled in exam week

Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 7

One two hour exam, primarily covering literary, cultural, historical and theological issues around the study of biblical wisdom literature, as well as some exegesis.

## ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES (HEBREW OPTION):

**Hebrew Translation:** 25%, due 9 June

Learning outcome: 6

Students will attend a weekly 60 minute translation tutorial during which all or most of Ecclesiastes 1-8 will be read through. Students should be prepared to read and translate the set texts for the day in class. Students will also write a critical translation of three passages from Ecclesiastes 1-8 of approximately 20 lines each in the BHS text. The translations should represent the semantic and lexical characteristics of the passage in question as far as possible within the bounds of acceptable English usage. Where there is a tension between these two requirements, this should be reflected in a footnote. The translations should also include footnotes, explaining the choices where it is needed and where there are textual variants or issues. Failure to attend 80% of the tutorials and/or to attend but be unprepared will result in a 20% mark penalty. Assessment criteria:

- Accuracy of lexical selection.
- Accuracy of semantic reflection.
- Discretion shown in translation choices.
- Awareness of textual issues.

**Exegetical Essay:** 35%, due 28 April

Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4

A 2000 word exegetical essay on the Masoretic Text of one of the passages chosen from Ecclesiastes 1-8 for critical translation. The essay should assume that translation. As well as giving attention to key words and phrases, significant grammatical and syntactical constructions, and (where applicable) important textual or translational points, your exegesis of the passage should identify the setting, main literary features, and key aspects of the study of wisdom literature. Assessment criteria:

- Textual: are key issues of translation and textual variation identified?
- Literary: are the methods by which meaning is conveyed discerned.
- Context: is the passage understood in terms of its literary and historical context?
- Critical discernment: are the major exegetical issues selected and discussed?
- Significance: is the contribution of the passage towards a wider message perceived?
- Integration and reading: are the insights of scholars integrated into the treatment?
- Style and organisation: is the argument illumined by a clear structure and accurate and fluent use of English? Are appropriate footnote and bibliographic conventions used?

**Exam:** 40%, due as scheduled in exam week

Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 7

One two hour exam, primarily covering literary, cultural, historical and theological issues around the study of biblical wisdom literature, as well as some exegesis.

## LEARNING HOURS (ENGLISH OPTION):

- Attendance at lectures: 36 hours.
- Contextual reflection: 32 hours.

- Exegetical essay: 39 hours.
- Exam preparation: 43 hours.
- TOTAL: 150 hours.

### LEARNING HOURS (HEBREW OPTION):

- Attendance at lectures: 36 hours.
- Translation and tutorials: 33 hours.
- Exegetical essay: 38 hours.
- Exam preparation: 43 hours.
- TOTAL: 150 hours.

### LECTURE SCHEDULE

26 Feb: Course introduction; Background issues; Reading prolegomena

5 Mar: Introduction to Proverbs; Proverbs 1-9

*[10 Mar: posting 1 due]*

12 Mar: Proverbs 10-20; Contextual response

19 Mar: Proverbs 25-31; Theological response; [research report 1]

26 Mar: Introduction to Ecclesiastes; Ecclesiastes 1-4; Exegesis workshop

*[31 Mar: posting 2 due]*

Apr 2: Ecclesiastes 5-8; Ecclesiastes 9-11; Contextual response

*[28 Apr: Hebrew option exegetical essay due]*

Apr 30: Introduction to Job; Job 1-2; Theological response

*[5 May: posting 3 due]*

May 7: Job 4-13; Job 27-38; Job 40-42; [research report 2]

*[12 May: English option exegetical essay due]*

May 14: Introduction to Song of Songs; Song of Songs 1-4; Contextual response

May 21: Song of Songs 5-8; Theological response

*[26 May: posting 4 due]*

May 28: Wisdom in Scripture; Wisdom in James

Jun 4: Wisdom and Jesus; Summary of biblical wisdom; Concluding comments

[9 Jun: Hebrew option translation test]

[TBA: exam]

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (\* = desk copy, += short loan)

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