

Course Requirements:

1. Participation. Students will be expected to actively engage in all class sessions. Participation includes attendance, punctuality, adequate preparation, involvement in class activities, and intelligent contribution to class discussions.
2. Reading. Course readings will derive primarily from the Hebrew Bible itself. These will be supplemented by the readings in course textbooks. It is assumed that the student will have completed all the assigned readings before coming to class. The course requires a large amount of reading, so please set up a reading plan through the summer.
3. Written Assignments:
 - **Exegesis Paper:** Using the “Guidelines for the Writing the Exegesis Paper” found in Appendix 1, students will write a five-page exegesis paper on a prophetic text. This paper is due on **Friday, September 10.**
 - **Book Review:** Students will write a four-page critical book review on Brueggemann’s *Spirituality of the Psalms*. The paper should clearly summarize the contents of the book in your own words and include your own critical interaction, evaluation, and reflections on the book. See “Guidelines for the Critical Book Review” in Appendix 2. This paper is due **Friday, October 15.**
 - **Sermon:** Students will write a sermon manuscript of 1,500-2,000 words on one Psalm of their choice. The sermon should include an analysis of the type of psalm, the psalm’s context or implied situation, key words and images in the psalm, and its flow of thought. The sermon should include applications of relevance for your ministry context. The sermon manuscript is due on **Friday, November 12.**
 - **Praxis Project:** Students will engage in a project that applies the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible to their pastoral context. This written assignment of at least six pages will take a different form for each student, but it must do two things: (1) it must relate to a concrete area of pastoral ministry in your context; and (2) it must draw on the resources of the Hebrew Bible’s Wisdom Literature to illuminate and inform pastoral praxis. See “Guidelines for the Praxis Project” in Appendix 3. The project is due on **Sunday, December 5.**

Tentative Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Weekend 1: September 17-19

<u>Class Session:</u>	<u>Topics:</u>	<u>Required Reading:</u>
Friday Evening	Introduction to the Prophets Isaiah	SK, Introduction and Chapters 1-3; Isa. 1-3; 5-7; 9-11; 28-33; 40-43; 53-55; 60-62; 65-66
Saturday Morning	Jeremiah	SK, Chapters 4-6; Jer. 1-2; 7; 9-11; 16; 18-19; 29; 31-33; 37-38; 52
Saturday Afternoon	Ezekiel	SK, Chapters 7-8; Ezek. 1-5; 10-12; 16; 23; 33-34; 36-37; 47-48

Sunday Morning	The Book of the Twelve	SK, Chapters 9-10; Hosea 1-11; Joel 1-3; Amos 1-9; Obadiah 1; Jonah 1-4; Micah 1-8; Nahum 1-3; Habakkuk 1-3; Zephaniah 1-3; Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1-12; Malachi 1-4
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Weekend 2: November 19-21

<u>Class Session:</u> Friday Evening	<u>Topics:</u> Introduction to Hebrew Poetry Psalms	<u>Required Reading:</u> B, Chapters 1-5; Psalm 1; 2; 8; 13; 22; 23; 24; 27; 29; 30; 34; 42-43; 46; 61; 63; 66; 85; 90; 91; 98; 100; 103; 104; 107; 110; 118; 121; 126; 130; 137; 146; 148; 150
Saturday Morning	Introduction to Wisdom Literature Proverbs	C, Chapters 1-3; Proverbs 1-31
Saturday Afternoon	Job	C, Chapter 4; Job 1-42
Sunday Morning	Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	C, Chapters 5 and 8; Ecclesiastes 1-12; Song of Songs 1-8

Key: SK – Stulman and Kim
 B – Brueggemann
 C – Clifford

Grading Procedures:

The final grade for this course will reflect the cumulative score for each of the following components:

Class Participation	50 points
Exegesis Paper	100 points
Book Review	100 points
Sermon Manuscript	100 points
Praxis Project	150 points

Final letter grades will be given according to the following scale:

465-500 points (93-100%)	=	A
450-464 points (90-92%)	=	A-
435-449 points (87-89%)	=	B+
415-434 points (83-86%)	=	B
400-414 points (80-82%)	=	B-
385-399 points (77-79%)	=	C+
365-384 points (73-76%)	=	C
350-364 points (70-72%)	=	C-

300-350 points (60-69%)	=	D
000-299 points (00-59%)	=	F

General Guidelines for Written Work:

1. All written work, unless otherwise stated, should be in a Word document, 12-point font, and double-spaced with one-inch margins.
2. All foreign words and terms transliterated into English should be italicized or underlined.
3. Avoid such common mistakes as:
 - The use of clichés and other overly informal means of expression. What is acceptable in everyday conversation is not always desirable in a formal paper.
 - Concluding a sentence with a preposition: “Who are you going with?” Instead, say, “With whom are you going?”
 - The use of contractions like “can’t,” “don’t,” and “won’t.”
 - Confusing the spelling of “its” and “it’s”; “accept” and “except”; and “affect” and “effect.”
4. Each body paragraph should have one focus which is identified in the “topic sentence” for that paragraph. The goal of the paragraph is to develop that topic. Therefore, two or three sentence paragraphs are to be avoided because an idea cannot be developed in three sentences. The rule of thumb is “develop or drop.”
5. Minimize the use of the verbs of being: am, is, are, were, and being. Regular active verbs make stronger sentences.

BAD SENTENCE: This sentence is in need of an active verb.

BETTER SENTENCE: This sentence needs an active verb.
6. Your projects should draw thoughtfully from your reading assignments, textbooks and other academically acceptable resources (references to Wikipedia are prohibited). You will do well if I see references to the required texts and other reference books in all your written work.
7. Use direct quotations sparingly. A direct quotation should only be used when a source says something of such importance that the reader would be deprived by not being aware of it. The frequent use of direct quotations indicates that the writer has not adequately “digested” the material.
8. Please follow the MLA Format and Style Standards as outlined in the Course of Study Student Handbook.
9. Written work should employ inclusive language that respects the equal dignity and worth of all human beings.
10. All assignments should be submitted by **11:59 pm** on the due date.

Notes:

1. The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus if changes are necessary to improve the course.
2. Please feel free to discuss class issues with me. I welcome your emails and calls.
3. “How foolish you are to go to school to learn what the teacher thinks. Go to school to learn what you think.” – St. Augustine of Hippo

APPENDIX 1: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE EXEGESIS PAPER

I. What is the Purpose of the Assignment?

The ultimate goal of reading the Bible is to find out what truths it has for our present lives and for God's people now and into the future. However, all the biblical writings are very old and were written out of cultural situations that in many ways were far different from ours. So we must first find out, as much as possible, what a text originally meant to its original author and hearers. This is called **exegesis**. It means that we draw our information out of the text itself and its original literary and socio-historical contexts. Only after we have worked to understand the meaning of a text, can we then try to figure out, in light of that meaning, what the text can say to us today.

II. Stage One: Preliminary Research and Reflection

1. The first thing to do is to read the passage carefully several times, including the surrounding sections of the book, to familiarize yourself with the text. Read the passage in at least three different versions. At this stage, do *not* read Bible commentaries or use a Study Bible which has notes to guide you. Read the text for yourself, for you will learn a great deal more this way.
2. At this stage, you will want to write observations and make notes for further research. Ask questions such as these:
 - What is the form of the passage? Is it a narrative, poetry, judgment oracle, salvation oracle, etc.?
 - How does the passage fit into the larger context? What precedes and follows the passage? What does this passage contribute to the overall argument of the biblical book?
 - Are there any repeated words or phrases? Does the passage employ irony, metaphors, similes, overstatement, etc.?
 - What are the significant and/or theologically "loaded" words in the passage? Often these will be highlighted by being repeated or mentioned at prominent places in the story.
 - Where do "shift" words come, which lead into an explanation, contrast, or new idea (e.g., but, therefore, for, because, since, so that, etc.)?
3. After carefully studying the passage yourself, you will want to read what others have written about it in commentaries, journal articles, and books dealing with specific topics.

III. Attitude

Do not limit your research to reading works that state the position you presently hold. You will strengthen your case by reading opposing views, for they will help you think through your own position and bring greater clarity to your thought.

Maintain an openness to the biblical material. Do not merely seek to prove what you already believe; this is a dishonest approach to research. Study the text carefully, become aware of the issues involved, formulate your conclusions, and then write your paper to demonstrate what you have discovered.

IV. Organizing

After reflecting on the significance of your passage and mentally dialoging with the explanations of it presented in your research, you will begin to formulate your own conclusions on what the text means. Before you compose these into a formal paper, however, construct an outline of what you want to communicate, sketching out the sequence and content. Below is a sample outline which may help you organize your paper.

Title

Your title should include the text reference and tell the reader something about the topic you have developed from this text. Often a title followed by a colon and subtitle is helpful. For example:

Arguing with Jesus: The Desperate Canaanite Woman of Matthew 15:21-28

I. Introduction and Thesis

In an opening paragraph, tell the reader why you choose this passage. Explain concisely the central theme of your paper. What is your main idea? What are you trying to show/prove/demonstrate? Avoid procedural language like, "I will do this, and then I will . . ."

II. Exegesis

A. Historical Background

1. Larger Historical Background

You may need to include information that provides a broader context. For example, the reader may need to know something about a nation against which Jeremiah announces judgement. Or it may be necessary to explain cultural customs, such as slavery or temple practices. Bible dictionaries or books on cultural backgrounds of early Christianity can help you here.

2. Immediate Historical Context

This background material will pertain directly to the text on which you are working. For example, in Isaiah 6:1-8, why is it significant that King Uzziah died?

B. Literary Context

1. Larger Literary Context

What is the focus of the entire book or letter in which you are working? How does your text fit into the book's total argument? For example, if you are examining Jeremiah 1:1-10, how might that text set the tone or state the theme for the entire letter?

2. Immediate Literary Context

What comes immediately before or after your text? How does this material relate to your text? For example, if your text is Galatians 5:22-26 – the fruit of the Spirit – the paragraph immediately before that is a description of the “works of the flesh,” which are completely opposite to the “fruit of the Spirit.” The two lists are contrasted.

Also, what kind of writing is it? A poem? A narrative? A salvation oracle? A judgment oracle, etc.?

C. Analysis of the Text

This should be the longest part of your paper. Your goal here will be to explain what your chosen text meant to its original audience. You may need to do verse-by-verse analysis. With the help of your commentaries and other sources, and in light of your previous work on the historical and literary contexts, give attention to matters such as the following (although not in any particular order):

- Literary or rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, irony, or word plays. Commentaries will help point these out.
- Quotations or allusions to Old Testament passages or other ancient literature. Where is the passage from? How does your passage use it and why?
- Words that need to be defined carefully for a proper understanding of the passage. Bible dictionaries will help with this.
- Various interpretations or opinions of various scholars concerning your passage.
- Other matters of importance dealt with in your sources.

III. Application

This short paragraph will take more creative thinking than the previous sections. Here you must consider what the text means today *in light of what it meant when it was written*. It may not mean the same thing because conditions have changed, such as historical location, social customs, different worldview, etc. Describe what has changed to affect the application of your text. Be specific in your application.

IV. Conclusion

A concluding paragraph will draw together your exegetical conclusions with your applications. The conclusion should tie back to your introduction. Have you demonstrated what you set out to prove?

V. What passage may I choose?

You may choose your passage from any of the following prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, or Malachi. Please choose a passage that is long enough to provide fodder for your exegesis, but not so long that it could not be adequately covered in a five-page paper. A good rule of thumb is to choose a text of at least five verses and no more than a single chapter. It is strongly recommended that you provide your selected passage to the instructor for approval before commencing your work.

APPENDIX 2: GUIDELINES FOR THE CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW

A critical review is not a destructive criticism of authors and their ideas, but a careful analysis of the work. A critical review attempts to answer several different questions, such as:

- What is the basic thrust of the author's work?
- Why does the author say what he or she says?
- To whom is the writing directed and for what purpose?
- For whom or what (or against whom or what) does the author stand?
- How well has the author met his or her own objectives?
- What is the reviewer's opinion of the work?

Your review should include the following key components:

1. A summary should synthesize the thrust of the book and its main arguments. Take care not to distort the emphasis given by the author. The summary must precede the evaluation. The reader must first understand the content of the book before hearing the reviewer's critique.
2. A critique of the book should be made first of all on the basis of the author's own objectives, as stated in the introduction. This mandates a careful reading of the introduction or preface. A critique must document the author's statements, giving the page where the item was found. Be sure to keep in mind the author's content in order not to distort the ideas. Although one may disagree with the author and with the position he or she espouses, the language of a book review must be courteous. A well-documented analysis will be more convincing than a heated, emotional tirade.
3. A personal reflection should follow. How does this work apply to your personal life? to your ministry setting? What questions does it raise for you?

The Book Review should roughly follow this format:

- Introduction: the introduction paragraph should grab the attention of the reader. Provide a statement or two concerning the "big idea" of the work.
- Summary of content (approximately two pages)
- Critique of content (approximately one page)
- Personal reflection (approximately one page)
- Conclusion: the concluding paragraph should summarize again the big idea of the book and your primary response.

APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINES FOR THE PRAXIS PROJECT

All of us are engaged in pastoral ministry. We work with people in crisis and in triumph. We “rejoice with those who rejoice,” and we “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). We assist them as they plummet the depths of their souls and seek answers to gnawing questions. The Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible engages the most profound questions of human experience and gives voice to the deepest emotions of the human heart.

As you read and reflect on the Wisdom Literature, how does it address the concerns of your pastoral situation? How does it answer the real questions of the people to whom you minister? How does it help us to think theologically and live faithfully as the people of God?

This written assignment will take a different form for each student, but it must do two things: (1) it must relate to a concrete area of pastoral ministry in your context; and (2) it must draw on the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible to illuminate and inform pastoral praxis. The major objective of this project is to apply the Wisdom Literature to your pastoral context. Therefore, it must draw on one or more of the following books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Song of Songs.

Here are some possibilities to get you started:

- A six-session parenting class drawn on wisdom from Proverbs.
- A six-session pre-marital counseling curriculum based on the Song of Songs.
- A six-session Bible study on aging based on Ecclesiastes.
- A six-week Bible study on suffering in Job.
- A series of podcasts on the meaning of life inspired by the Wisdom Literature.
- A devotional series to promote a ministry to the poor in your community based on Proverbs.
- A series of prayers for worship services based on these Scriptures.
- A liturgy for a service of lament based on Job.
- A drama based on Job for use in a worship service or other setting.
- A sermon series on one of these books or a theme from these books.
- An analysis of a movie or series of movies intersecting with these texts and an explanation of how you would use these films in your ministry.

These are just some of the options available to you. To avoid stifling your creativity, individual ideas pertaining to a project should be negotiated with the instructor. It is strongly recommended that you approve your project with the instructor before proceeding with your work.

Whatever your project, keep the following in mind:

- The project should include at least six pages of written text.
- The emphasis of the project is on utilizing the biblical passages to concretely and tangibly address the pastoral ministry concerns in your context.