

Teaching the Bible in the Church: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes
CE 3083 / OT 3053 Fall 2009

Instructors: David C. Hester and Patricia K. Tull

This is an interdisciplinary course concerned with the practice of teaching Bible in the congregation. It is concerned, in particular, with developing skills for leading congregational Bible study of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These skills include: the practice of biblical exegesis, interpretation, and educational design. We want to look with considerable depth at the process that lies “behind the scenes” of the most common adult church education experience: group Bible study led by a pastor or church educator.

Expected Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should:

1. Be able to exegete a passage of Scripture and create a plan for teaching the text in a congregational setting;
2. Have had an experience teaching one or more texts from Job, Proverbs, and/or Ecclesiastes to adults;
3. Examine issues related to Bible study in a congregation, including:
 - a. Biblical authority
 - b. Teaching Old Testament in the church
 - c. Exegesis and interpretation skills and presuppositions
 - d. The particular context of adult education

Methods and Requirements

Reading and Class Preparation

All students are expected to complete the common readings for the course. These include:

Blair, Christine. *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.

Groome, Thomas. *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980. Chapters 9-10. [Reserve]

Wink, Walter. *Transforming Bible Study: A Leader's Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Selected portions of volumes on *Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes* in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Volumes 4-5.

Selected readings from introductory articles in *New Interpreter's Bible*, Volume 1. [Reserve]

Students are also expected to consult at least two commentaries on Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes for introduction to the book, historical and literary issues, theological perspectives, and commentary on specific passages being studied or taught, one commentary being *The New Interpreters Bible's* relevant volumes.

Teaching (50%)

Students will teach twice during the semester, first in pairs, the second time individually. You will be given a list of passages from which to choose, and your second teaching session should not be from the same biblical book as your first. Exegetical notes, a statement concerning the passage's significance, and a plan for teaching should be submitted in advance of each teaching session (5-7 pages, double-spaced). Presentations will be followed by evaluative discussion. Each student is required to have notes and reflections on passages that his/her peers are teaching

in their team and individual sessions. These may be collected in a notebook or journal or whatever form you find helpful. Instructors may ask to look at your notes and reflections from time to time during the semester. These are working documents for you to bring and use in class during discussions.

Dates for teaching to be determined in class

Written assignments (25% each)

1. Each student will write a piece on biblical authority and interpretation in a congregational setting, focused particularly on the significance of *Job*, *Proverbs*, or *Ecclesiastes* for today (choosing the book you did not sign up to teach on). The piece can take the form of a sermon, a presentation to the session, the first lesson in a Bible study series, or a confirmation class session or some other format/genre that you can imagine might be helpful for presenting such ideas to a congregation. It should integrate insights from the common readings, critically evaluated and judiciously used. The first draft (4-6 pages double-spaced) will set out your approach, and the second draft (6-8 pages) will improve on it and add discussion of a particular passage in relation to your understanding of the Bible's authority in a congregational setting. **First draft due Oct 8; final draft Nov 17**
2. Each student will submit a final project. For those who are taking the course for CE credit, the project may be teaching notes, exegetical information, introductory material, a description of teaching method, and a fairly detailed plan for teaching a selected text. Those taking the course for Bible credit may explore a topic of interest and importance to you related to *Job*, *Proverbs*, or *Ecclesiastes*, its formation, history of interpretation, theology, or place in the church. Topics will be selected in consultation with instructors. 10-15 pages, double-spaced. **Due last day of Class.**

Use of Inclusive Language

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contributing to common knowledge and community virtue.

Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive.

Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse traditionally has been patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of constructing an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work shall be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God.

Racism also permeates our society and is detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to racial equality and justice.

Citation of Sources

Be careful to document fully any information included in your papers that is not original. Also be aware that when you summarize information, even when you give the complete documentation information, your summaries should be in *your words* and not retain too much of the original author's style. A paper that presents the ideas or writing of someone else as if they were your own constitutes plagiarism, and seminary policy on academic honesty will be followed. The Academic Support Center has handouts, and/or the Library can be of assistance.

Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings of the course, except for illness or other valid reasons.

Electronics-Free Environment

Because the format of the class is primarily discussion, laptops will not be necessary or useful in this class. Please take any notes you would like to keep by hand, and you may transcribe them later as needed. Needless to say, cell phones and other communications devices should be turned off during class time.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodation for a learning disability should be in contact with Kathy Mapes in the ASC Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) as soon as possible and should speak with the instructors to arrange appropriate adjustments.

Web Site

This course is posted on CAMS, which may be accessed through the Seminary web site. The CAMS site will be used for access to course documents, such as the syllabus and calendar, for student teaching plans to be submitted in advance of class presentations, for faculty prepared materials that may be made available to class participants, and for threaded conversations around questions or issues, as desired.

Before attending class, please reread the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes.

Thurs, Sept 10	Course introduction and introduction to wisdom literature in the Bible <i>Preparation:</i> read Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
Tues, Sept 15	Review of Proverbs and of Biblical Poetry <i>Preparation:</i> read the introduction to the book of Proverbs in the NIB Bible Commentary, vol. 5
Thurs, Sept 17	Review of Job and of Biblical Narrative <i>Preparation:</i> read the introduction to the book of Job in the NIB Bible Commentary, vol. 4
Tues, Sept 22	Workshop on Proverbs <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Sept 15
Thurs, Sept 24	Workshop on Job <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Sept 17
Tues, Sept 29	(no class)
Thurs, Oct 1	Review of Ecclesiastes and of Canonical Interpretation <i>Preparation:</i> read the introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes in the NIB Bible Commentary, vol. 6

Tues, Oct 6	Workshop on Ecclesiastes <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Oct 1
Thurs, Oct 8	Discussion of the Character of Adult Education; and Blair, <i>The Art of Teaching the Bible</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read the book First draft of authority piece due before class begins
Tues, Oct 13	Discussion of Groome, <i>Christian Religious Education</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read chapters 9-10; articles as assigned from NIB 1
Thurs, Oct 15	Discussion of Wink, <i>Transforming Bible Study</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read the book
Tues, Oct 20	Two Bible study sessions, using Blair's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Oct 22	Two Bible study sessions, using Blair's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Oct 27 - Oct 29	Research and Study Week
Tues, Nov 3	Two Bible study sessions, using Groome's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Nov 5	Two Bible study sessions, using Groome's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Tues, Nov 10	Two Bible study sessions, using Wink's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Nov 12	Two Bible study sessions, using Wink's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Tues, Nov 17	Second round of Bible studies begins <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied Final draft of authority piece due before class begins
Nov 19-Dec 10	Second round of Bible studies continues <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Dec 10	Final Bible studies and course conclusion <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied. Pledge yourself to fill out the online course evaluation.

Bibliography

Wisdom Literature

- Clifford, Richard. "Introduction to Wisdom Literature." In *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Crenshaw, James L. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.
- O'Connor, Kathleen M. *The Wisdom Literature*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990.
- Murphy, Roland E. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Job

Commentaries

- Clines, David J. A. *Job 1-20; Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1989.
- Clines, David J. A. *Job 21-37. Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006.
- Balentine, Samuel. *Job. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006.
- Gordis, Robert. *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978.
- Habel, Norman C. *The Book of Job. The Old Testament Library*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.
- Newsom, Carol A. "The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Wharton, James A. *Job. Westminster Bible Companion*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

Other Studies

- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Mary Knoll: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Hester, David. *Job. Interpretation Bible Studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- Murphy, Roland E. *The Book of Job: A Short Reading*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999.
- Newsom, Carol. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Perdue, Leo G. and Gilpin, W. ed. *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Proverbs

Commentaries

- Clifford, Richard. *Proverbs*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- Davis, Ellen. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Farmer, Kathleen. *Who Knows What Is Good? A Commentary on the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

- Fontaine, Carole. "Proverbs." In *Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Horne, Milton. *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.
- Van Leeuwen, Raymond C. "Proverbs." In *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Other Studies

- Camp, Claudia V. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. Sheffield: Almond, 1985.
- Dell, Katharine. *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
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Ecclesiastes

Commentaries

- Davis, Ellen. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
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- Towner, W. Sibley. "The Book of Ecclesiastes." In *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Other Studies

- Fox, Michael V. *Qohelet and His Contradictions*. JSOTSup 71. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989.
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