

Teaching the Bible in the Church: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes
CE 3083 / OT 3053 Fall 2014

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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 [Primarily MDIV SLO 1 and MDIV SLO 9]

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:

Bracke, John M. and Karen B. Tye. *Teaching the Bible in the Church*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003.

Brown, William P., ed. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

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

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. **[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 to instructors at least a day in advance of each teaching session (5-7 pages, double-spaced). Presentations will be followed by evaluative discussion. Each presenter will submit a brief (no more than 1 page) self-evaluation of the teaching session, which takes peer feedback into account. The self-evaluation is due by the start of the next class session following the teaching presentation. 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 two pieces on biblical authority and interpretation. The first piece, no more than 2 pp. in length, should set forth your perspective on biblical authority and the implications of your perspective for interpreting scripture texts. This paper is due in class on **September 30th**. Your second piece will address specifically biblical authority and interpretation in a congregational setting, focused particularly on the significance of *Job, Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes* for today. The piece can take the form of a sermon, a presentation to a particular group of leaders in the church, 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 or other ministry setting. It should integrate insights from the common readings, critically evaluated and judiciously used and reflect thoughtful development and refinement with respect to your earlier paper. This paper should be 6-8 pp. long and focus on a particular text in your chosen book as means to illustrate your perspective. This paper is due **November 4th**.
2. Each student will submit a final project. You might, for example, choose to create a plan for teaching another passage of scripture, choosing your text from the Wisdom book you did not teach from previously. The project would include teaching notes, exegetical information, introductory material, a description of teaching method, and a fairly detailed plan for teaching a selected text. Or you might choose to 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.

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 4	Course introduction and introduction to wisdom literature in the Bible <i>Preparation:</i> read Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes
Tues, Sept 9	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 11	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, Sept 16	Workshop on Proverbs <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Sept 9
Thurs, Sept 18	Workshop on Ecclesiastes <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Sept 11
Tues, Sept 23	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
Thurs, Sept 25	Workshop on Job <i>Preparation:</i> assignments to be given in class on Sept. 23
Tues, Sept 30	Biblical Authority and Interpretation <i>Preparation:</i> read the following essays in Brown, <i>Engaging Biblical Authority</i> : Brown, Introduction; Canon, ch. 3; Cardoz-Orlandi, ch. 4; Lapsley, ch. 11; McBride, ch. 13; and two additional essays of your choice. Prepare a two page max description of your understanding of biblical authority and implications for interpreting texts, in conversation with the assigned readings. Your papers will be discussed in class, then a copy turned in to the instructors.
Thurs, Oct 2	Discussion of the Character of Adult Education; and Bracke and Tye, <i>Teaching the Bible in the Church</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read the book
Tues, Oct 7	Discussion of Groome, <i>Christian Religious Education</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read chapters 9-10;
Thurs, Oct 9	Discussion of Wink, <i>Transforming Bible Study</i> <i>Preparation:</i> Read the book
Oct 14-16	Research and Study Week
Tues, Oct 21	Two Bible study sessions, using Bracke and Tye's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Oct 23	Two Bible study sessions, using Groome's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Tues, Oct 28	Two Bible study sessions, using Wink's method <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Oct 30	Two Bible study sessions, using Wink's method

	<i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Tues, Nov 4	Individual Bible Study sessions begin, with two sessions each day <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Nov 6— Dec 2	Two Individual Bible study sessions <i>Preparation:</i> Read commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied
Thurs, Nov 20	No Class
Thurs, Dec 4	Final Bible studies and course conclusion <i>Preparation:</i> Read Commentaries as assigned for the passages to be studied. Commit yourself to completing the course evaluation on line.

Bibliography

Wisdom Literature

- Alter, Robert. *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: Norton & Company, 2010.
- Brown, William P. *Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, and Crisis in the Bible's Wisdom Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.
- 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.
- Seow, C. L. *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary*. Illuminations. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- 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.
- Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 18A. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 18B. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- 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.
- Yoder, Christine Roy. *Proverbs*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009.

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.
- Fontaine, Carole. *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs, and Performance in Biblical Wisdom*. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- McKenzie, Alyce M. *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. [This doesn't need to be on the list; it isn't on teaching Bible study, strictly speaking, but the ideas of application might be useful to the students.]

Ecclesiastes

Commentaries

- 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. "Ecclesiastes." In *Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Horne, Milton. *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.
- Murphy, Roland E. *Ecclesiastes*. Word Biblical Commentary 23A. Waco: Word, 1992.
- 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.
- Lee, Eunhy P. *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qohelet's Theological Rhetoric*. BZAW 353. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005.
- Limburg, James. *Encountering Ecclesiastes: A Book for Our Time*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Ingram, Doug. *Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes*. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006.
- Shields, Martin. *The End of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006.