HEBR ST 653/514
WISDOM LITERATURE: PROVERBS & QOHELET

(…AND MUCH, MUCH MORE…) 

UW-Madison
Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies
Spring 2013

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Place and Time:
Class meeting time: T 8:50-9:40; Th 8:50-10:45
Class meeting place: Van Hise 1351
Final exam date: May 18, 2013, 7:45-9:45 am

Course Description:
This course is an in-depth study of biblical wisdom literature in Hebrew and Greek. It will provide students with a forum for detailed, critical engagement with the text and historical interpretation(s) of the books of Proverbs, Qohelet, and Job, as well as brief forays into Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon. Modern scholarship has wrestled with appropriate methodologies for understanding Israelite wisdom literature, with some (but not total) success. Students will analyze the text (alongside its ancient translations) from a variety of methodological perspectives, so that they might broaden their own understanding of appropriate ways to enter into inscrutable texts: they will develop and apply theories of metaphor and conceptual blending in order to come to grips with the literary features of wisdom literature, and they will approach the text with philological, linguistic, and text-critical tools, in order to deal with the corpus’s formation and the early history of its interpretation.

Student Achievement Goals:
Students will:

1. demonstrate competence in engaging Classical Hebrew wisdom literature and poetry, with an a view towards the literary appreciation of the text.
2. (a) learn how to use and (b) gain experience with the multitude of available reference grammars, dictionaries, commentaries, elements of secondary
literature, and electronic resources pertinent to the study of Classical Hebrew poetry, with particular emphasis on the Wisdom Literature.

3. apply methodologies for understanding the religious practices and sentiments related by the corpus.

4. exhibit a high level of fluency in cognitive approaches to ancient texts, including such aspects as metaphor and blending.

**Course Rationale:**
The ability to deal critically with the facets of biblical study handled in this course—literary appreciation of Hebrew poetics and a refined understanding of the major problems in studies of Wisdom Literature—are necessary skills in the field. In addition, the readings in cognitive approaches to texts assigned in this class serve an emergent strength of the department, as we seek more fully to understand the biblical text as a product of the intersection between embodied human cognition and the social and historical settings of the Bible’s development and early interpretation.

**Course Requirements:**
Requirements differ for graduate students and undergraduate students. Both groups will be expected to fulfill the requirements listed here, but undergraduate students will not be expected to work in a second ancient language (i.e., they will not be expected to work in Greek at all, unless they choose to do so), and the standards for their satisfactory completion of the readings and assignments will be set at a commensurately lower level.

1. 15% — Class attendance and participation, having prepared diligently to translate the biblical readings for the day, analyzing all forms and syntactic constructions. Unexcused absences will be deducted from the final grade.

2. 15% — Once during the semester, students will lead a Thursday session of the class (ca. 45 minutes thereof) in a detailed reading of a passage (for which the rest of the class has prepared the LXX). The student will prepare text and notes for the portion under investigation (graduate students will be expected to use observations from LXX + one other ancient version [Targ., Vulg., Pesh., etc.]). Further details will be distributed at the beginning of the class.

3. 30% — Final research paper, most likely based on the student’s presentation (req. 2 here).

4. 20% — Midterm exam (1 hr.)

5. 20% — Final translation exam (cumulative, 1 hr.)

**Texts:**
**Required:**

- access to: Learn@UW, where some resources will be posted (including the recommended sources below).
- access to: the Menahem Mansooor graduate study room (#1334 Van Hise), where a few other resources are held.

**A Note on Grading in the Course:**

The default grading system of this course is for a letter grade. The Professor will adhere stringently to the following definition of grades:

- **A** (Excellent, highly innovative work demonstrating outstanding command of the material, and very few doubts as to preparation for further, independent training in the area.)
- **AB** (High quality work, demonstrating credible innovation, with above-average grasp of the material and foreseeable capabilities to work independently in the field.)
- **B** (Good, dutiful, and solid work, but with moderate innovation and slightly-above-average grasp of the material; a few doubts as to the student’s preparation to work independently in the field in future study, but some further study will enable the student to do so.)
- **BC** ([This one strikes the professor as a relatively unnecessary grade, and will not be used except in extraordinary circumstances. If the student has not achieved the threshold of a B, see the next grade down…])
- **C** (Satisfactory, but on weak footing; a few concerns arise concerning the student’s ability to move forward competently, but not enough to prevent doing so; ostensibly a recommendation against pursuing advanced study in the area without significant further study.)
- **D** (Poor, barely adequate work; a recommendation not to continue in advanced study in the area.)
- **F** (Failure to attain a sufficient level of achievement in the coursework to convince the professor that the student is ready for or capable of further study in the subject.)

Please notice that **B=good** and **C=satisfactory** in this schema. The professor wishes to draw particular attention to this fact for a number of reasons; students are invited to consult with the professor privately in order to decide whether the graded option is best for them.

**NOTA BENE:** The Professor does not conduct business concerning special exemptions/assignments, etc. over e-mail, via Twitter, on Facebook, via text message, over the phone, or even via carrier pigeon (as impressive as that feat might be). In order to make any requests, students must speak with the professor face-to-face, either before or after class, or at a pre-arranged time (it is completely permissible to arrange the meeting through one of the media listed above).

*“Independent” here should not be construed as an automatic invitation to ask the Professor for an independent study opportunity. Rather, an A or AB is intended to signal that the student is fully prepared to begin to write those components of a dissertation in which this material will feature heavily. Expectations of further study, of course, apply.*
Course Schedule:

**T Jan 22: Introduction & Extra-Biblical Wisdom**

Required Readings:
- Weeks, *ISWL* 1–22
- Merikare (*COS* 1.35 [pp. 61–66])
- Amenemhet (*COS* 1.36 [pp. 66–68])
- Instruction of Any (*COS* 1.46 [pp. 110–115])
- Instruction of Amenemope (*COS* 1.47 [pp. 115–122])
- Dua-Khety or Satire of the Trades (*COS* 1.48 [pp. 122–125])

**Th Jan 24: Introduction & Extra-Biblical Wisdom**

Required Readings:
- Weeks, *ISWL* 107–144
- Dialogue between a Man and His God (*COS* 1.151 [p. 485])
- A Sufferer’s Salvation (*COS* 1.152 [pp. 486])
- The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer (*COS* 1.153 [pp. 486–492])
- The Babylonian Theodicy (*COS* 1.154 [pp. 492–495])
- Dialogue of Pessimism or The Obliging Slave (*COS* 1.155 [pp. 495–496])

**T Jan 29: Proverbs**

Required Readings:
- Weeks, *ISWL* 23–47
- Prov 5:1–6:35

**Th Jan 31: Proverbs**

Required Readings:
- Prov 7:1–8:36 (LXX Prov 8:1–13)

**T Feb 5: Proverbs**

Required Readings:
- Prov 9:1–10:32

**Th Feb 7: Proverbs**

Required Readings:
**T Feb 12: Proverbs**

**Required Readings:**
- Prov 24:1–34

**Th Feb 14: Proverbs**

**Required Readings:**
- Prov 25:1–26:28 (LXX Prov 26:1–12)

**T Feb 19: Proverbs**

**Required Readings:**
- Prov 27:1–28:28

**Th Feb 21: Proverbs**

**Required Readings:**
- Prov 29:1–30:16 (LXX Prov 30:1–10)

**T Feb 26: Proverbs**

**Required Readings:**
- Prov 30:17–31:31

**Th Feb 28: Qohelet**

**Required Readings:**
- Qoh 1:1–2:26 (LXX Qoh 1:1–12)

**T Mar 5: Qohelet**

**Required Readings:**
- Qoh 3:1–4:17
Th Mar 7: Qohelet
Required Readings:
• Qoh 5:1–6:11 (LXX Qoh 6:1–12)

T Mar 12: Qohelet
Required Readings:
• Qoh 7:1–8:17

Th Mar 14: Qohelet
Required Readings:
• Qoh 9:1–10:20 (LXX Qoh 10:1–13)

T Mar 19: Qohelet
Required Readings:
• Qoh 11:1–12:14

Th Mar 21: MIDTERM

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T Mar 26 — SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE (NO CLASS)

Th Mar 28 — THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)

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T Apr 2: Job
Required Readings:
• Weeks, ISWL 49–70.
• Job 1:1–2:13; 42:10–17

Th Apr 4: Job
Required Readings:
• Job 3:1–5:27 (LXX Job 3:1–12)
T Apr 9: Job
Required Readings:
• Job 6:1–8:22

T Apr 16: Job
Required Readings:
• Job 27:1–29:25

T Apr 3: Other Jewish Wisdom Literature: Ben Sira
Required Readings:
• Weeks, ISWL 85–106.
• Ben Sira 1:1–30 (in Greek; compare with available Heb. MSS)
Th May 2: Other Jewish Wisdom Literature: Ben Sira

Required Readings:
- Ben Sira 24:1–34 (in Greek; compare with available Heb. MSS)

T May 7: Other Jewish Wisdom Literature: Wisdom of Solomon

Required Readings:
- Wisdom 7:1–30

Th May 9: Other Jewish Wisdom Literature: Wisdom of Solomon

Required Readings:
- Wisdom 8:1–21