421 – Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature

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Course Goals: COS 421 - Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature

This course examines God’s Word as expressed through Israel’s prophets, selected Psalms, and selected passages from Wisdom literature.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the origin, history, and use of these forms of biblical literature among God’s people
2. Exegete these forms of biblical literature
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.
Text Book List

Unless otherwise noted, please use the most recent edition.

Required Texts for 421 – Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature

1. Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*
2. Louis Stulman & Hyun Paul Kim, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature*
3. Richard Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*

References

1. Bruce Birch, Walter Brueggmann, Terrence Frietham, David Peterson, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd Edition* (students will have the book from a previous class or licensing school)

Please note:
Each course has **assigned texts**. Students are required to read them, use them in their assignments and are accountable in the classroom for any discussion or presentation of materials. **Reference books are also required**; assignments assure the use of the reference books; they are not classroom texts. Assigned texts and reference books help the student build their own library. **Supplemental texts** (when applicable) are valuable, but optional texts if a student wants to pursue an area of ministry.

Students may acquire the books in a variety of ways: Order from Cokesbury.com; order from another vendor; purchase a used book; or borrow from a colleague.
Advance Assignments

1. Write two exegetical papers of 4-5 pages each, one on Jeremiah 1:1–10, the other on Psalm 1. First, work with these texts on your own, without consulting other helps (commentaries, study Bible notes, etc.). As you prepare your essays, read each passage in several translations and formulate your own questions and thoughts about its text. Only after you have developed your own thesis statement about the key argument(s) made in each passage, should you utilize other sources (e.g., commentaries, monographs, journal articles, etc.) to help refine your readings of the texts and further explore their historical, religious, and cultural contexts. Remember, the purpose of exegesis is to find and explain the meaning of Scripture, not to bring meaning to Scripture: our goal is to understand the biblical text in its original, ancient context(s).

2. Write two 4-5 page essays, one on each of the following two questions:

   a. What is a prophet in the Hebrew Bible? Is there a single definition? Use specific examples from the Hebrew Bible to support your arguments. How do you understand the differences and similarities between the activities and objectives of early Israelite prophets (e.g., Samuel, Elijah, Elisha) and later “writing” prophets (e.g., those prophets whose writings are preserved in the books of Isaiah through Malachi)? Our course textbooks will be helpful in preparing your answers to these questions.

   b. Provide a short definition of biblical Wisdom literature, briefly comparing it to other sorts of literature we find in the Hebrew Bible. Then select one book as an example of Wisdom literature from the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Job) and summarize the worldview of its author(s). What message is this author(s) trying to convey and how does it compare to that of other writers preserved in the Hebrew Bible? Our course textbooks will be helpful in preparing your answers to these questions.
The mission of the Course of Study School is to educate and share in the formation of Local Pastors as effective and faithful spiritual leaders of the ministry of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ in the world.

Our agreement with the Division of Ordained Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville is that we will provide a year-round experiential and classroom learning process. This process assumes cooperation between the instructors, the students and clergy mentors in the annual conferences.

The Division of Ordained Ministry recommends a guideline of 15-20 pages of written work for each course. That translates into 30 to 40 pages of written work for each module. If a student takes four classes (two modules), that individual will write about 80 pages during the year. Those papers are based on the reading of approximately 4-5 textbooks per class.

In order to keep our promise of year-round learning, and to keep the assignments from accumulating and overwhelming a student, the book list is available for students so that they can begin reading as early as possible. We encourage students to put dates on their calendars and plan for reading days, as well as time for writing. You know the demands of certain religious seasons such as Advent, Lent, and Easter. Work around them.

The writing manual approved by the Saint Paul Course of Study School faculty is: *Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th edition.* It is recommended that each student have a good collegiate-size American English dictionary of the student’s choice in paperback or hardcover and copyrighted since 1998.

In the event of an emergency situation, a student may request an extension from the Director (not assigned faculty) to the due date for advance assignments. This request may be made via email, and if granted, may extend to a three week maximum. A student may only receive two extensions during their tenure as a Saint Paul Course of Study student – so use them wisely. If assignments are not completed, the policies of the COS are such that the student may be asked postpone participation in a particular session of COS until that individual can complete all of the work.

Learning can be fun! Consider your reading as a dialogue with authors – some will be more interesting than others. All will have something to teach us. Share the learning process with friends or colleagues or interested members of your congregations.

**Instructions for sending assignments to COS office at Saint Paul School of Theology:**

Course of Study Students are to upload their papers through Moodle. You will need to set up a Moodle account in order to submit your assignments. If you need assistance in setting up your Moodle account, please contact cos@spst.edu for informational handouts. Additional questions on Moodle can be directed to our IT help desk at helpdesk@spst.edu (hours: M – F 8:00am – 5:00pm).