

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**  
**Degree Completion Program**  
**BOTD 540 St. in Wisdom Bks: Preaching Life Issues from Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes**

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An exegetical, theological, and homiletical study of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes with special emphasis on understanding and using wisdom literature in the Christian life and ministry with discussion of life issues such as suffering, and healthy relationships.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Describe the content and message of these books in their ancient Near Eastern cultural context.
2. Recognize and deal properly with the features of Hebrew wisdom literature and of Hebrew poetry.
3. Identify, explain, and apply the theological principles of these books to the lives of Christians today, especially in the area of suffering.

**TEXTBOOKS**

**Required:**

Andersen, Francis I. Job: An Introduction and Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976.

Cotton, Roger D., ed. BOT 540 Wisdom Books Handouts, 2005 (AGTS)

Garrett, Duane A. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. NAC. Nashville: Broadman, 1993.

The Holy Bible: Contemporary English Version. New York: American Bible Society, 1995.

Waltke, Bruce K. Proverbs 1-15. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

Class 1

Proverbs 1-4 and methodology for study and application

Class 2

Proverbs 5-15

Class 3

Proverbs 16-31

Class 4

Ecclesiastes

Class 5

Job and suffering

## **METHODOLOGY**

Lecture, discussion, readings, researched application project.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. FOR CLASS 1:

Goals of the session and the assignments below: to get the student into the wisdom literature and an understanding of biblical wisdom; to stimulate questions about meaning; to establish the approach of the professor for the class; and to equip the students to do the kind of work called for in this course, toward more effective Bible study, including doing word studies.

**HAVE READ:**

- 1) The handout on Expectations for Graduate Students.
- 2) All of Proverbs in one sitting if possible or at least chapters 1-9, from the CEV (*Contemporary English Version*).
- 3) The handouts related to wisdom and the fear of the Lord.
- 4) The textbook commentaries by Waltke and Garrett, the Introductions and read the Waltke commentary through Proverbs 4 and skim Garrett's on 1-

4.

NOTE: Be prepared for each class to discuss the next passages in relation to the CEV, the commentaries, and any assigned readings, according to the class schedule. The book of handouts should be read by the end of the course but ideally as soon as possible. All specified readings not in the book of handouts, along with other selected important sources, are on 2 hour reserve at the front desk of the library.

**TURN IN:**

- 1) Your summary, in about half a page, of the content of Proverbs 1-4.

NOTE: for our written work double space, do NOT justify the right margin, use an inch margin all around, proof read, spell check, and put the identifying information at the top of the first page (name, assignment, date, unless it is over 4 pages—then do a title page.

course, professor)

- 2) A list of your top ten major interpretation questions you found in the book of Proverbs.

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these
- 3) A typed, paragraph (a half page or so) summarizing your understanding of what is meant by wisdom in Proverbs and one on the fear of the LORD after reading handouts on them beginning with the copies from a concordance to see how terms were actually used in the OT.
2. FOR CLASS 2:  
Goals: to understand the nature of wisdom literature, its relation to comparable literature in the ANE (Ancient Near East), and relate it to Christians today, especially expounding life issues from it.  
**HAVE READ:**  
1) All the handouts related to Proverbs except the ones on Prov. 22:6 and 31:10-31.  
2) Waltke's commentary and skim Garrett's on Prov. 5-15.  
**TURN IN:**  
A 2-3 page, typed, word study (see instructions in handouts) on a significant word for your project.
3. FOR CLASS 3:  
Goal: to model how to deal with interpretive issues in the proverbs and exposition of more life issues.  
**HAVE READ:**  
1) The articles in the handouts on Prov. 22:6 and 31:10-31.  
2) About ½ of Garrett's commentary on Prov. 16-31—on verses of interest to you.  
**TURN IN:**  
A 1-2 page essay on how you now believe Christians should relate to individual biblical proverbs from the book of Proverbs versus some of the common abuses that exist.
3. FOR CLASS 4:  
Goal: to understand the book of Ecclesiastes and relate it to people today.  
**HAVE READ:**  
1) Ecclesiastes in the CEV.  
2) The textbook commentary on Ecclesiastes the introduction and about 1/3 of the text of the actual commentary on Ecclesiastes—on passages of interest to you.  
3) The handouts on Ecclesiastes.  
**TURN IN:**  
A 1-2 page, typed, essay on your summary of how to relate Ecclesiastes and its message to the Christian today.
4. FOR CLASS 5:  
Goals: to understand the book of Job and what it teaches about suffering.  
**HAVE READ:**  
1) Job in the CEV.  
2) The textbook commentary on Job, the introduction and about ¼ of the text of the actual commentary—on passages of interest to you .  
3) The handouts on Job.  
**TURN IN:**

A researched application project on a passage of your choice. This is to be an exegetical, Biblical-theological, study of a passage or a theme in Proverbs, Job, or Ecclesiastes, or a combination of them, with strong application for God's people today. This should demonstrate good interpretive method including the following:

- A. Understanding the language of the text(s) through comparing translations and doing some word studies, which include the use of (New) Englishman's Hebrew Concordance (coded to Strong's) or the Hebrew Concordance for the NIV, and the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE).
- B. Understanding the significance of the historical and cultural references in the passage (s) through background studies, including the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, and scholarly, exegetical commentaries.
- C. Understanding the literary intent of the passage(s) by outlining the flow of thought and studying the literary devices used by the writer.
- D. Understanding the theology intended through analyzing the theological and thematic terms and ideas used in context of the book and the whole Old Testament, and determining the underlying principles intended as the message of the inspired writer. Here again the best commentaries should be consulted, as well as Old Testament theologies, including House, and any other related theological studies. Be sure to research journal articles and read at least one for "A" level work.

The choice of passage or theme must be approved. If a single passage is chosen it should be at least 4 verses long and be some kind of literary unit.

There are three choices for method of presentation below. All three choices require a **full bibliography** of all sources consulted, and articles in multi-author books must follow the form in 11.26 in Turabian 6<sup>th</sup> ed. All three should have a strong practical relevance/application in the conclusions if not the whole presentation.

#### CHOICES FOR METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- 1) Turn in a 5-7 page typed, researched exegetical sermon outline OR a comparable practical application project OR a 9-12 page paper on the last day of class.
- 2) OR Present to the professor in his office, a detailed 2-3 page outline of the results of your study.
- 3) OR Present in class the highlights in 20 minutes of a detailed 2-3 page outline of the results of your study. The outline must be turned in ahead of time for the department to make photocopies.

For a paper the style should conform to Turabian 6<sup>th</sup> ed. with your choice of citation method: footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references (see Turabian 6<sup>th</sup> ed. chap. 10). However, for a sermon outline or other project few citations are expected. Most of those needed will be for explanations to the professor, not to the sermon audience. A list of all

sources consulted is needed for proper evaluation of your research. I greatly prefer to see any signed articles from multi-author works, such as NIDOTTE and encyclopedias, listed by author and title of the article rather than the book, (see Turabian 11.26). Also, an outline need not be double spaced throughout, but do **NOT** justify the right margin. Provide a title page but no cover; just staple it.

For a sermon be sure to capsulize your thesis at the end of your introduction in a proposition and a transitional question about that proposition which is answered by the main points of the sermon. The points must come from the text though not necessarily in the same order. The main points must be sentences and the points parallel to one another.

I recommend the approach of Lloyd Perry in a Manual for Biblical Preaching, the Foundational Pattern, pp. 65-72, 82. (see handouts)

Detailed explanations of significant exegetical decisions behind the sermon need to be written out just as they will be referred to in the sermon. If certain reasons will not be discussed publicly to avoid unnecessary confusion, then they need to be put in some kind of note to the professor set off from the rest of the material. You need to demonstrate the thoroughness and soundness of your exegetical work to the professor if not always to the people. Be sure to include what the text meant to the original readers/hearers as well as the principles you see that you want your people to apply to their lives today. You may include brief descriptions of the illustrations you plan to use but that is not required. Write a careful conclusion summarizing how you have established your proposition or answered your question and then suggesting specific applications for our lives today. Be sure to end with something that will effectively impress the message on the hearers' hearts.

Late work may be penalized. Please talk to the professor about any absences.

### **GRADING PROCEDURE**

Reading and Class participation	10%
List of ten interp. questions	02%
Summary of Prov. 1-4	03%
Summary of wisdom	05%
Summary of fear of the Lord	05%
Word study essay	15%
Essay on use of Proverbs	10%
Essay on Ecclesiastes	10%
Exegetically researched application Project	40%

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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### **SPECIFIC DATA**

Prepared by Roger D. Cotton, Th.D., October 2004.