

Writings (3 credits) James Eblen [jeblen@seattleu.edu or appointment]
HUNT 100 - Thursday mornings, 9:00am – 11:50am.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Students focus on biblical poetry, its art and distinctive genres within the third division of Hebrew Bible known as Writings (Kethuvim). The course also considers historical, catechetical, and liturgical factors in this collection .
Prerequisite: STMM 526.

COURSE GOALS:

1. Students grasp and can explain the differences in Jewish and Christian collections of biblical books beyond Pentateuch and Prophets.
2. Students can interpret biblical poetry with nuance about genre differences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: (strategies for reaching the goals)

1. Engaging the canonical questions around Kethuvim: formation and ordering of the Canon, text traditions (MT, LXX, Vg), terminology (apocryphal, deuterocanonical).
2. Reading aloud from a variety of modern translations the assigned passages of biblical poetry.
3. Articulating the emphasis and difference of the poetic genres found in the books of Kethuvim.
4. Presenting critical viewpoints that differ on the reading of a text (student assignments).
5. Moving the meanings of a text into current contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES [both MAPS and MDIV]

1. Ability to read scriptural texts critically.
2. Ability to be a responsive, discerning listener who can enter another's worldview [whether ancient or modern].
3. Knowledge of the interaction of religious/spiritual experience and culture in their ecumenical and multicultural dimensions.

TEXTBOOKS: (all required)

Robert Alter. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. NY: Basic Books, 1985.

Marcia Falk. *The Song of Songs: A New Translation and Interpretation*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

Donn Morgan. *Between Text and Community*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990.

James Crenshaw. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction (Revised and Enlarged)* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

METHODOLOGY:

Ordinarily, smaller numbers make the seminar style possible. Individual students will carry responsibility throughout the course for: 1) reading from a particular translation of Scripture; 2) leading the discussion on text and community settings for the books as we consider them. Assignments will be made as the course is organized.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND TEXTS – ten sessions

1. Introduction to Kethuvim.
2. Understanding biblical poetry: read Alter, 3-84, and Falk, 127-132.
3. Book of Psalms: esp Pss 1, 8, 48, 90, 73, 30. Read Alter, 111-136.
4. Book of Job: esp chs 38-42. Read Alter, 85-110.
5. Book of Proverbs: Read Alter, 163-184.
6. The Song of Songs: esp chapter 4. Read Alter, 185-203. Use Falk to compare.
7. Books of Ruth and Esther:
8. Books of Ezra and Nehemiah:
9. Book of Daniel:
10. Finale.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA:

- Attendance: Punctuality shows genuine care about the schedules of other people. There could be an excuse for missing a session, though missing a class may affect the final grade. Advance notice is welcome. The student has the responsibility for getting information about what went on in the session missed.
- Participation: More than attentiveness, participation means interacting with instructors and other students in each session. Participation will show a familiarity with assigned readings for the session.
- Presentation: The opportunity to lead a significant part of one class session in discussion and understanding of a particular book will demonstrate both learning and teaching skills. Details will be developed in the first class session about expectations and then linking students with particular books in the Kethuvim for a particular class session.
- Contribution: Here the capacity of the student for understanding and insight will shine forth in the weekly witness to a chosen [during first class] biblical translation or commentary with critical evaluative comments.
- Determining a grade: Successful completion of the factors outlined above would yield a **B** grade. A superior achievement in one or more of these areas will notch the grade upward. An outstanding achievement across the board will reach an **A**. Students will be invited to evaluate and grade their own performance as part of determining the final grade.
- Grading weight: Clearly class performance, in the variety of roles that are expected, will carry the most weight. Self-evaluation should add detail and insight that help notch the grade up or down.