JOB AND THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING – STMA 593

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry
Winter Quarter 2012 • Hunthausen 110 • Friday 9-11:50 am

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will examine how the Hebrew Bible addresses questions around human suffering. After surveying different biblical perspectives, we will immerse ourselves in the Book of Job, in which Job and his friends (and, ultimately, YHWH) consider the meaning of Job's suffering. While this course is primarily interested in the theologies of the Book of Job, we will also take into account the book's literary artistry, redaction history and historical context. By the end of this course I hope you will have a better understanding of this important book, which is as timeless, complex, and inexhaustible as the mystery it contemplates.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Ability to read scriptural texts critically (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Ability to use biblical tools and resources as a way to inform their own exegesis for the purpose of doing their ministry (MDiv).
- Ability to be a responsive, discerning listener who can enter another's worldview [whether ancient or modern] (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Awareness of their own social location/assumptions/hermeneutics as they engage the text in their own lives, their communities, and the larger world (MDiv).

III. TEXTBOOKS

A. Required

1. Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books. Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary* (Norton, 2010). Available at SU bookstore.
2. Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford, 2009). Available at SU bookstore.
3. Daniel Harrington, SJ. *Why Do We Suffer?: A Scriptural Approach to the Human Condition* (Sheed & Ward, 2000). Available at SU bookstore.
4. James L. Crenshaw, *Reading Job: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Smyth & Helwys, 2011). Available at SU bookstore.
5. Course Pack. Available at SuperCopy (http://www.seattleu.edu/repro).

B. Recommended

1. Gerald Janzen. *Job*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (John Knox Press, 1985).
2. Norman Habel. *The Book of Job*. Old Testament Library (Westminster Press, 1985).
3. Gustavo Gutiérrez. *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (Orbis Books, 1987).

IV. AN INTERLUDE: ONE READER'S REFLECTIONS ON JOB AND SUFFERING

V. SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Jan. 6 **Introduction to the Book of Job and Hebrew Poetry**

Assignment: D.J.A. Clines, "Why Is There a Book of Job, and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?," in *The Book of Job* (Peeters, 1994), 1-20; R. Alter, "The Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Harvard University Press, 1987), 611-624.

Jan. 13 **Biblical Perspectives on Suffering**

Assignment: Deut 3:23-29; 30:15-20; Pss 3, 13, 22, 88; Prov 8-9, 11; Ecc 8-9; Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; Dan 9; Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, pp. vii-29, 53-86; Newsom, pp. 1-31.

For further reading: Newsom, pp. 72-89.

Jan. 20 No Class

Jan. 27 **Prologue and Epilogue of Job**

Assignment: Job 1-2, 42; Crenshaw, pp. 41-46, 159-161; Newsom, pp. 32-71; T. Linafelt, "The Undecidability of BRK in the Prologue to Job and Beyond," *Biblical Interpretation* 4 (1996): 154-172.

For further reading: A. Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67-79; C.L. Seow, "Job's Wife," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 141-150.

Feb. 3 **First Cycle of Speeches**

Assignment: Job 3-11; Crenshaw, pp. 46-83; Newsom, pp. 90-129.

For further reading: C.L. Seow, "Poetic Closure in Job: The First Cycle," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34 (2010): 433-446; L. Perdue, "Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job: Theological Anthropology in the First Cycle of Job's Speeches (Job 3, 6-7, 9-10)," in *The Book of Job* (Peeters, 1994), 129-156.

Feb. 10 **Second Cycle of Speeches**

Assignment: Job 12-20; Crenshaw, pp. 83-107; D.J.A. Clines, "The Arguments of Job's Three Friends," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (JSOT Press, 1982) 199-214; Catherine Chin, "Job and the Injustice of God: Implicit Arguments in Job 13:17-14:12," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (1994): 91-101.

Feb. 17 **Third Cycle of Speeches; Meditation on Wisdom; Job's Closing Argument**

Assignment: Job 21-31; Crenshaw, pp. 107-133; Newsom, pp. 130-199.

For further reading: J.J.M. Roberts, "Job's Summons to Yahweh: The Exploitation of a Legal Metaphor," *Restoration Quarterly* 16 (1973) 159-65; Paul Fiddes, "'Where Shall

Wisdom Be Found?': Job 28 as a Riddle for Ancient and Modern Readers," in *After the Exile* (Mercer, 1996), 171-190; Stephen Geller, "'Where Is Wisdom?': A Literary Study of Job 28 in its Setting," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Fortress, 1987), 155-188; Mark Hamilton, "Elite Lives: Job 29-31 and Traditional Authority," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32 (2007): 69-89; J.C. Holbert, "The Rehabilitation of the Sinner: The Function of Job 29-31," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 95 (1983) 229-37; J.E. Hartley, "From Lament to Oath: A Study of the Progression in the Speeches of Job," in *The Book of Job* (Peeters, 1994), 79-100.

Feb. 24 **Elihu Speeches**

Assignment: Job 32-37; Crenshaw, pp. 134-147; Newsom, pp. 200-233.

For further reading: N. Habel, "The Role of Elihu in the Design of the Book of Job," in *In the Shelter of Elyon* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 81-98; J. Ross, "Job 33:14-30: The Phenomenology of Lament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975) 38-46.

Mar. 2 **God from the Whirlwind and Job's Response**

Assignment: Job 38-42; Crenshaw, pp. 147-159; Newsom, pp. 234-264; Tod Linafelt, "The Wizard of Uz: Job, Dorothy and the Limits of the Sublime," *Biblical Interpretation* 14 (2006): 94-109.

For further reading: Sylvia H. Scholnick, "The Meaning of *mišpat* in the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 521-29; Tod Linafelt, "The Wizard of Uz: Job, Dorothy and the Limits of the Sublime," *Biblical Interpretation* 14 (2006): 94-109; Robert Alter, "Truth and Poetry in the Book of Job" in *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Basic Books, 1985), 85-110; G. Gutiérrez, *On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Orbis Books, 1987), 67-81; B. Newell, "Job: Repentant or Rebellious?," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984):298-316 ; Christopher Seitz, "Job: Full Structure, Movement, and Interpretation," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 5-17.

Mar. 9 **Contemporary Approaches to Job**

Assignment: Harrington, *Why Do We Suffer?*, pp. 31-50; E. Wiesel, "Job, Our Contemporary," in *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends* (Simon & Schuster, 1994), 211-235; F. Anderson, "The Problems of Suffering in the Book of Job," in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job* (Baker, 1992), 181-188; R. Rubenstein, "Job and Auschwitz," in *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust* (New York University Press, 2000), 233-251; S. Kepnes, "Job and Post-Holocaust Theodicy," in *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust* (New York University Press, 2000), 252-266; Henrietta L. Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone: Faith and Loss in the Stories of Abraham and Job," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34 (2009):115-129.

VI. REQUIREMENTS

A. *Completion of reading assignments*. They should be completed prior to the class on which they are assigned.

B. *Attendance and participation in class*. I expect you to arrive on time to each class. Since absence and tardiness, even when they are "excused," diminish your participation in class, they will likewise diminish your participation grade. Moreover, because your classmates and I deserve your full attention, I expect you to keep food and smart phones packed away during class time (not counting the fifteen-minute break). If you take notes on a laptop, I expect you to refrain from social networking during class time. Any of these activities will diminish your participation grade.

C. *Completion of weekly one-page papers*. For each class you will be expected to turn in a one-page paper (literally, a single sheet with text only on one side) with **two** paragraphs. In the **first** I want you to respond to a biblical passage that I will choose from the week's assigned readings. In the **second** paragraph I want you to engage with the secondary literature. Choose something you found especially significant, insightful, challenging, or problematic, etc., and respond to it. These papers will be graded based on how thoughtfully you engage the assigned reading for that class. **Late one-page papers will not be accepted but will receive a zero**.

D. *Completion of a final paper*. This paper will be an exegesis of a biblical text from a list that I will supply. (Students may propose to study a text not on the list. Such a proposal should be typed, double-spaced, about a page long, and it should persuade me that your proposed passage is the only biblical text that will enable you to write a successful paper. Proposals must be submitted to me no later than January 27. Unpersuasive proposals will not be approved.)

The term "exegesis" refers to "the process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages…The goal of exegesis is to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage" (D. Stuart, "Exegesis," in *ABD* II, p. 682). A handout with more information on how to approach this paper, including the list of biblical passages, will be distributed later in the course. Additionally, it may be helpful to consult M. Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (rev. and exp.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009).

The Second Paper is due to me by 9:50 am on Friday, March 16, which is the end of our assigned exam period. Late papers will be docked ten points per day until it is turned in.

VII. CITATION FORMAT

Students in the Pastoral Counseling degree submit papers with citations in APA (American Psychological Association) format delineated by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. All other students submit papers with citations in CMS (Chicago Manual of Style) format delineated by *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers.* The basic rules for these style formats may be found at the following websites:

- **APA:** http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/ (Diana Hacker website/social sciences)
- **CMS** http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/ (Diana Hacker website/history)
  or http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (CMS website)

At times students need assistance with the writing process itself. In addition to face-to-face assistance offered by Seattle University's Writing Center (McGoldrick Learning Commons 2nd Floor), two websites offer online assistance with writing.

- **Seattle University Writing Center:** http://www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/ (Resources)
- **Purdue Writing Center:** http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

VIII. Special Needs

If you have or think you may have a disability (including an "invisible disability" such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, 206-296-5740.

IX. Academic Honesty

The School of Theology and Ministry strictly adheres to the Academic Policy concerning Academic Honesty as published in the Seattle University Student Handbook (see the Seattle University website).

X. Assessment

Your final grade will be calculated thus:

Weekly Paper Average	40%
Participation	20%
Final Paper	40%
Final Grade	100%

A	93 – 100
A-	90 – 92.99
B+	87 – 89.99
B	83 – 86.99
B-	80 – 82.99
C+	77 – 79.99
C	73 – 76.99
C-	70 – 72.99
D+	67 – 69.99
D	63 – 66.99
D-	60 – 62.99
F	< 60

Letter grades will be determined thus: