

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO at MTSO

COS 421 – Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, & Wisdom Literature

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**2026 Winter ONLINE
February 13-14 and March 13-14**

Zoom Sessions:

February 13,	7:00pm– 9:00pm
February 14,	9:00am– 11:00am and 1:00pm– 3:00pm
March 13,	7:00pm– 9:00pm
March 14,	9:00am– 11:00am and 1:00pm– 3:00pm

Course Description

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.

Textbooks

Required Texts:

- Stulman, Louis and Paul Kim. *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Ansberry, Christopher B. *Reading Wisdom and Psalms as Christian Scripture: A Literary, Canonical, and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2024.

Reference:

- Birch, Bruce C., Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Highly Recommended but not Required:

- Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., and Michael Fishbane, Consulting Editor. *The Jewish Study Bible*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

How to Read this Syllabus

This syllabus may seem long. I have tried to spell-out everything and anticipate your questions. I want you to understand what this course is all about. I want to make sure that students understand what is required in order to successfully complete the assignments. Ultimately, my hope is that you will be empowered and equipped for ministry. ***Your flourishing as a Christian and as a pastor is my primary goal.***

I have explained things in detail. I am not requiring extra work nor am I trying to be rigid and inflexible in the assignments. They are ***not*** designed to be burdens or mere busy work. It is my prayer that they will lift you up so that you may soar with power and freedom like Eagles.

So, don't let the syllabus scare you. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Course Philosophy and Pedagogy

Academically, I emphasize four things: **reading, thinking, writing, and conversing**. This will help you to achieve Learning Outcome 3 of this course: "Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day."

Professionally, I am committed to the contextual specificity of pastoral praxis. This means I will be asking you to **think** deeply about *your* context for ministry and how what we study in this course impacts the current context in which you practice pastoral ministry. I am guided again by Learning Outcome 3 as we focus on "*other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.*"

This course is about inquiry, inquiry from within concrete Christian communities. How does *your* context of ministry intersect with the Prophetic, Poetic, and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible? How does the Bible, Prophetic, Poetic, and Wisdom Literature, inform and instruct you and those in your charge in living the Christian life right here and right now?

Requirements and Grading for the Course

1. Populi Learning Modules: These learning activities are to be completed in lieu of face-to-face instruction. **35%**
2. Seven (7) Encounters with the TEXT Journals **35%**
3. Pastoral Praxis Project, at least 6 pages **30%**
4. Attendance at the Zoom Sessions

Explanation of the Course Requirements

I. Learning Modules on Populi

In order to meet the minimum hours of instruction required by the GBHEM, you will need to complete Learning Modules on Populi. Ideally, Learning Modules should be completed *before* the Zoom sessions. This may not always be possible. Life and the pressures of ministry have a way of altering our plans. Do your best. However, **be kind and gracious to yourself too.**

II. Encounters With the TEXT Journals

This assignment consists of two parts: (1) **reading** the Bible and (2) **writing** about how the biblical text *stirs* your soul and stimulated your **thinking**. What do these texts speak to you?

First Part: Reading: It is important for you to read and engage the actual texts of the Bible.

- **Read** with curiosity and a desire to find something you have never seen before.
- **Read** as if you are searching for treasure.
- **Read** as if you are on a quest, a quest to know God and obey God's commandments.

Read carefully, critically, and creatively....
Read as if you have never read those chapters/ books before...do not take anything for granted...

--Dr. Paul Kim, Professor MTSO

Engage and wrestle with these essential passages *before each class session*. They are due at least *one* day before the Zoom class.

Second Part: Journal Write: Writing is a form of learning. Write down the discoveries you made as a result of your readings. These may include insights, observations, struggles, and questions *about* the text or problems *you* have *with* the text.

Journals may take many forms:

- They may include your observations, discoveries, and analyses of passages.
- They may include your burning and gnawing questions, discomforts, or insights.
- They may be things which confirm or challenge your theology and your practice.
- They may include the places in the text which give you pause, make you wonder, or which grab *you* and will not let *you* go.
- They may include your pondering, musings, and ruminations on the text.

Do not write a whole commentary or do *any* additional research. What is important is *your* engagement with the biblical text. You are required to write a total of one to two (1-2) pages for each Scripture reading group. *It is easy to get carried away and write many more pages.* You will be tempted to write about **EVERY** possible insight and produce the perfect Journal assignment. If you have the time and the energy to actually write more, you may do so. You will not be marked down for Journals longer than two (2) pages. BUT more pages is *not* required. Let me underscore: one to two (1-2) pages per Encounter with the TEXT assignment is sufficient. **This assignment should aid your learning, not be an extra burden.**

Your one to two (1-2) page document may take many forms. It could be a list of statements, observations, or questions. It does not need to read like a structured research paper. It may contain short paragraphs of your thoughts. Whatever form your entries take, it should chronicle *your* intellectual and spiritual dialogue with Scripture. What you write should be helpful for *you*.

Time is always a concern. I am asking you to read many Bible passages. Realistically, it may *not* be possible for you to read *all* of the passages assigned for every journal. Realistically, you will *not* be able to meditate on the depths of every verse. *This is no different than what happens every week in ministry.* There is never enough time to devote to every task! Read as many of them as you can. Try to skim or scan all of them. Linger on the verses which jump out and grab you. Write about them. You may not be able to complete all seven (7) of the Encounters with the TEXT assignments. Do your absolute best. Be faithful; but ***be kind and gracious to yourself as well.***

Things to keep in mind for Encounter with the TEXT Journals:

1. Each Journal should be at least 1-2 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, 12pt font.
2. Journals may take many different formats.
3. Upload Journals one day before they are scheduled for discussion.
4. The file you upload should be labeled: **“Your Last Name, Journal #, Due Date.”**
5. Journals may be single spaced, double spaced, or a combination of both.
6. Identify the passage, at least by chapter, which generated your comment.
7. Chronicle *your* engagement with the biblical text *not* other books.
8. Journals should be helpful for *you* on *your* spiritual journey and in *your* ministry.
9. Do your best to complete all of the Encounters with the TEXT assignments.

III. Pastoral Praxis Project

The major objective of this project is for you to work at the intersection of The Poetic, Prophetic, and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible and *your* pastoral praxis.

All of us are engaged in the practice of pastoral ministry.

- We work with people in crisis and in triumph.
- We sit with people as they face tragedy and sin.
- We “rejoice with those who rejoice,” and we “weep with those who weep.” (Rom. 12:15 NRSV).

" Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!"

— Psalm 130:2 NRSV

“Behold, everything is empty-vain, and as futile as chasing after the wind.

— Ecclesiastes 1:14 WBT

“What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them...?”

— Job 7:17 NRSV

“And now therefore, hear the Word of the Lord....”

— Jeremiah 42:15; Amos 7:16 KJV

- We hear their screams and cries in the face of brutal reality.
- We assist them as they plumb the depths of their souls, seeking answers to gnawing questions and searching for drink to quench their raging desires.

The Poetic, Prophetic, and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible engage the most profound questions of human experience and gives voice to the deepest emotions of the human heart, to those shout of sheer ecstasy and those “groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. 8:26 KJV).

As you read and reflect on the Bible, ask yourself these questions:

- How does it address the concerns of *my* pastoral situation?
- How does it shed light upon the darkness of human experience, especially the darkness of the people in *my* community and in *my* charge?
- How does it answer the real questions of the real people I know, love, and care for?
- How does it help to “heal the sin sick soul” and “make the wounded whole”?
- How does it help us to think theologically/confessionally and live more faithfully?

This written assignment will take a different form for each student. But it must do two things.

- **First**, it must relate to a concrete area of pastoral ministry in *your* context.
- **Second**, it must bring to bear the resources of the Poetic, Prophetic, and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible to illuminate and inform pastoral praxis.

Some Possible Ideas for the Pastoral Praxis Project

Remember, these are ONLY suggestions. This list provides ideas of what might be done. They are designed to jump-start your thinking. You are encouraged to talk about this project with your peers, parishioners, or the Instructor. Use your creativity to align the deep needs of *your* context with the deep currents and reservoirs of the Hebrew Wisdom, Poetic, and Prophetic traditions.

1. Design a confirmation program built around the themes of biblical wisdom.
2. Design a series of podcasts on adulting.
3. Use Job to answer the question of why people suffering.
4. Analyze a real ministry incident through the lens of the Hebrew poets or sages.
5. Design an ecumenical service addressing a local or national tragedy.
6. Design a liturgy of lament or repentance utilizing the words of the Hebrew poets or sages.
7. Design a “Blue” Christmas service.
8. Craft prayers or compose songs/poetry based on these Scriptures.
9. Collect an anthology of Scriptures (prayers, songs and poems) for use in funerals or bereavement counseling consistent with the biblical theology of Israel’s prophetic, poetic, and wisdom traditions.
10. Create a handbook for yourself of practical and theological resources (especially from Wisdom Literature) for deal with trauma.
11. Design a series of devotional readings which help individuals acknowledge and process their trauma.
12. Write a detailed plan for using Psalms in worship.
13. Design a sermon series on wisdom themes.
14. Explore how these Scriptures inform issues of spirituality, the journey into Sanctification.
15. Write a meditation using resources from Wisdom Literature, Psalms, and Prophetic Literature addressing recent traumas which have fractured the United Methodist Church and your charge.

Things to keep in mind for the Pastoral Praxis Project:

1. Consult with the instructor and others about potential projects.
2. The project should be at least 6-pages of text.
3. The project should be typed, double-spaced, 12pt font.
4. The project should be submitted electronically by **Noon, 12:00 P.M., March 20.**
5. Not every project will require additional library research. However, if you do use resources, ideas, or quotes, they need to be documented using standard footnote format as outlined in Kate Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
6. Demonstrate how the Poetic, Prophetic, and/or Wisdom Literature of the Bible addresses the real ministry concerns of *your* charge.
7. This project will require theological and professional reflection.
 - a. It will require you to be creative, constructive, and focused on how to put the Bible into practice in ministry in your current ministry context.
 - b. It should draw you deeply into the biblical texts.
 - c. It will require a great deal **thinking, meditating, and praying.**
8. This project should ultimately provide materials which you can use in your ministry context. This should not be a mere academic assignment to fulfill a course requirement.

IV. Zoom Sessions

We will meet together as a class for 12 hours of Zoom instruction.

V. Textbook Reading

Reading takes a great deal of time. I do **not** expect you to master all of the material in the readings. Read as much and as deeply as you are able. If you are able to do a close reading of the textbooks, you will find many treasures. Remember that the textbooks in COS courses are designed to be resources for you to consult in your future ministry. Familiarize yourself with the textbooks enough so that in the future they can become resources for you. ***It is highly unlikely that you will be able to thoroughly read them during this course session.*** Rather, in the time you do have to devote to textbook reading, focus on gaining the big picture. Work for quality of insight rather than quantity of data.

Course Schedule

	List of Learning Modules With Their Due Dates	
LM 4a Due by Feb 13	Trauma Studies and The Human Condition	
LM4b Due by Feb 13	Trauma Studies and The Human Condition	
LM5 Due by Feb 13	Isaiah	
LM6 Due by March 14	Jeremiah	
LM7 Due by March 14	Ezekiel	
	Schedule of Zoom Sessions	

Zoom Session Friday Feb 13	Introduction. Trauma Studies	LM 4a Trauma Studies and The Human Condition Pt. 1 DUE LM 4b Trauma Studies and The Human Condition Pt. 2 DUE On Populi “How Christian Theology and Practice are being Shaped by Trauma Studies” Stulman/Kim, <i>You Are My People</i> Ch 1 Reading the Prophets as Meaning Making Literature
Zoom Session Friday Feb 13	Isaiah Encountering the TEXT #1 Passages Isaiah 1, 6-9, 40-42, 53-55, 60-62	LM 5 Isaiah DUE Stulman/Kim, <i>You Are My People</i> Ch 2 Isaiah as Messenger of Faith and Doubt Ch 3 Vision of Homecoming and Diaspora
Zoom Session Saturday Feb 14	Jeremiah Encountering the TEXT #2 Passages Jeremiah 1, 2, 9, 20, 23, 31	LM 6 Jeremiah Is DUE MARCH 14 Stulman/Kim, <i>You Are My People</i> Ch 4 Jeremiah as a Messenger of Hope in Crisis Ch 5 Jeremiah as a Complex Response to Suffering Ch 6 Conflicting Paths to Hope in Jeremiah
Zoom Session Saturday Feb 14	Ezekiel Encountering the TEXT #3 Passages Ezekiel 1, 2, 10, 16, 34, 37, 40	LM 7 Ezekiel Is DUE MARCH 14 Stulman/Kim, <i>You Are My People</i> Ch 7 Ezekiel as Disaster Literature Ch 8 Ezekiel as Survival Literature

Zoom Session Saturday Feb 14 Afternoon	What is Hebrew Poetry and How does it work? Interpreting and Using Psalms: The Poetry of Life	On Populi: “Hebrew Poetry” “Notes on Psalms” “Laments show an acute awareness of the dark side of Human Existence”
Zoom Session Saturday Feb 14 Afternoon	Job Encountering the TEXT #4 Passages Job 1, 2, 8, 9, 23, 38-42	Ansberry, <i>Reading</i> , Ch. 5. Job: Suffering Seeking Understanding Ch. 6. Theological Themes in Job (1) Ch. 7. Theological Themes in Job (2)
Zoom Session Friday March 13	Proverbs Encountering the TEXT #5 Passages Proverbs 1, 4, 7, 9, 15, 31 Ecclesiastes 1-3, 12	On Populi: “Proverbs Outline from Herbert G.” Ansberry, <i>Reading</i> , Ch. 2. Proverbs: Fear Seeking Understanding Ch. 3. Theological Themes in Proverbs (1) Ch. 4. Theological Themes in Proverbs (2) Ansberry, <i>Reading</i> , Ch. 8. Ecclesiastes: Finitude seeking Understanding Ch. 9. Theological Themes in Ecclesiastes

Zoom Session Saturday March 14	Psalms: Poetry of Life Encountering the TEXT #6 Passages Psalms 1, 2, 5, 13, 22 Psalms 29, 51	On Populi: “Hebrew Poetry” “Notes on Psalms” “Laments show an acute awareness of the dark side of Human Existence” <i>Ansberry, Reading,</i> Ch. 12. Psalms: Praise Seeking Understanding Ch. 13. Theological Themes in Psalms
Zoom Session Saturday March 14	Psalms: Poetry of Life Encountering the TEXT #7 Passages Psalms 72, 98, 100, 136, 137, Song of Songs 1, 4, 8	On Populi: “Prophecies Concerning Jesus in the Psalms” “Psalms, Theology of” <i>Ansberry, Reading,</i> Ch. 10. Song of Songs: Desire Seeking Understanding Ch. 11. Theological Themes in Song of Songs
Zoom Session Saturday March 14	Where Can Wisdom be Found? Where Have We Been and Where Do We Go From Here?	On Populi: “Helpful Books for Studying Prophets” “Bibliography for Beginning Biblical Studies” “Web Resources for Biblical Studies”

The Syllabus is Subject to Change.

Academic Honor

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions: (1) warning; (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course; (3) probation; (4) suspension; (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio. In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

COSSO Attendance Policy

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the class sessions shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

Students attending online are required to show their faces the entire class time in order to be considered present, unless internet bandwidth issues or emergency circumstances (e.g., a power outage) necessitate turning off one's camera or calling in to class by phone. You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (e.g., not driving). During asynchronous class time, faculty may monitor time used in posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation.

- **CANCELLATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable and unpaid registration fees are still due if withdrawing past the registration deadline. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.

Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.

- **NO SHOWS**

Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.