

Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study
July 2020

CS-421 Bible 2: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature
Dr. Rebecca Abts Wright

This syllabus is a guide, a roadmap, of where we plan to go and what we plan to do this semester. However, it is good to remember, as linguists are fond of saying, “The map is not the territory.” Also note that some of this work will be done on-line and some when we are in a room together at Wesley. In addition, the post-Wesley on-line portion will include some items that will emerge from our time together.

Book List

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms*. OR *The Spirituality of the Psalms* OR *Praying the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. (These three books, all by Walter Brueggemann, are very similar and any of them will be fine for this class.)

Stulman & Kim. *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.

Davis, Ellen. *Opening Israel's Scriptures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

In-person Requirements:

Bring a Bible. In fact it would be good if you would bring two: a standard Bible that you use often and the most “different” one you have. You do NOT need to bring other books to class.

At the close of each class session, I'll tell you what scripture passages to read and ponder and discuss before the next morning.

There will be small “reflection” assignments. These will be for discussion and need to be done, but they do not need to be in formal academic format. They show up below *in italics*.

On the final day, July 18, there will be group presentations. More about this anon.

The Map

1. Prophetic backgrounds
 - A. Abraham as husband
 - The wife/sister matters (in chapters 12, 20, and 26)
 - What do we learn from duplications? Is *The Reader's Digest Bible* to be preferred?
 - What do we learn from cross cultural studies? Weren't the Hurrians pretty strange?
 - Who is the hero after all?
 - Second wife (chapters 16, 21)
 - B. Abraham as father (chapter 22)

“Throw away lines”
“Throw away people?”

Translation matters

C. Abraham as our father in the faith (chapters 15, 17)

More translation matters – “But we’ve never heard that before!”

D. Joseph’s ups and downs

Still more translation matters

Read chapters 37-39. Reflect on chapter 38, in light of the fact that most commentators say it is “in the wrong place.” Why would someone say that? What is your opinion of its placement?

Of what use is literary criticism? Look especially at the use made of clothing.

E. What other matters in Genesis 12-50 do you want to address?

2. Jeremiah

A. His call (chapter 1)

Jeremiah as the Patron Saint of second-career pastors

Form Criticism and what we can learn from it.

B. The Temple Sermon and its aftermath (chapters 7 and 26)

On the use(s) of precedent.

C. The Confrontation with Hananiah

Imagine yourself in Jerusalem at the time of this confrontation. Which prophet would you believe? Why would you follow the one you chose? (Remember, there wouldn’t have been a “Book of the Prophet Jeremiah” yet.)

D. What other matters in Jeremiah do you want to address?

3. Excursus on Hebrew Poetry

A. Psalm 1 as exemplar

4. Isaiah 40-66

A. Just how many Isaiahs are there anyway? What difference does it make?

B. Isaiah 40

The importance of the second person plural.

Find as many quotations of Isaiah 40:3 in the New Testament as you can. For each one identify who/where is the voice and where is the road/highway. Do the New Testament writers use these images the same way they are used in Isaiah 40?

C. Farms, banquets, vineyards

Why does the prophet use these images so much? How may they be “translated” to our situations/circumstances?

D. The “Suffering Servant”

Who is/was the suffering servant and how do you know?

E. What other matters in Isaiah 40-66 do you want to address?

5. Job

- A. The prose beginning and ending and more translation matters
- B. The first three friends and their advice. How do they know what they know?
- C. The fourth friend. Does he have anything new to add to the conversation?
- D. The God speeches

Read portions of chapters 38-41 in different tones of voice. Can you make God sound angry? Wistful? Encouraging? Dismissive? Bored? Which one seems most appropriate and what do you learn from that?

- E. What other matters in Job do you want to address?

6. Psalms

- A. More vocabulary – including *selah*
- B. Brueggemann's tri-partite division
- C. On the use of Ugaritic (Psalm 24)
- D. What about the hard ones? (Psalm 137)

How are the Psalms used in your church? What is their purpose? Are there any problems you encounter?

- E. What other matters in Psalms do you want to address?