OT WISDOM LITERATURE FOR COUNSELING

OT 513
(the 3-hour version)
SPRING 2013

Brian C. Gault
A Syllabus

Contact Me
I’m usually in my office until 3:00pm, and you are welcome to drop by. You can also set up an appointment with me through Carrye Allen (601.923.1670). If you need other ways to contact me:
By email: bgault@rts.edu
By phone: 601.923.1671

Introduction to the Wisdom Literature Piece

Have you ever faced the dark night of the soul and felt that it would never end? Have you felt forsaken by God and cried out to God in utter despair? Have you mourned a deep personal loss? Have you wrestled with the meaning of life? Do you struggle with doubt? Have you wondered what God’s will is for your life? Have you ever felt that irrepressible hope that comes after God has met with you and assured you of his love?

These questions represent a wide gamut of emotions—from intense distress to sheer exhilaration—that we face regularly in the Christian life. But all too often in the course of “Happy Evangelicalism” (put on your happy face, regardless of the circumstances) these raw emotions make others uncomfortable, and once we learn that sad fact (often the hard way) we suppress and internalize these raw emotions, and they are no longer a part of shared community experience.

But the Biblical writers did not suppress raw emotions. They wrote them down. And what they wrote down (through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) became a part of canonized Scripture. It became a regular part of the worship of God by his people, not just individually, but communally. It became a part of the Scripture to guide and regulate our life today.

In the OT, God’s people were given God’s Covenant Promise and Law (Pentateuch), God’s History of God’s people under that Covenant Promise and Law (Historical Narrative), and a series of Lawsuits against God’s people for breaking that Covenant Law and Promise (Prophets). But under the Covenant, how were God’s people supposed to obey God and keep his commandments?
How were they supposed to understand God’s character and God’s world? (Job) How were they supposed to worship? (Psalms) How were they supposed to love their spouses? (Song of Solomon) In short, how were God’s people to live from day to day? Those answers are found in the Writings. The OT Writings take God’s Covenant and rub it into daily life.

The Writings are arranged in the Hebrew Canon during a time of post-exilic disappointment. The return to the land had been meager—only a fraction of the Israel returned to the Promised Land after the Cyrus Edict in 539 BC. The second temple (completed in 516 BC) lacked the splendor of Solomon’s temple, in part because the glory of Yahweh never returned. And there was no king on the throne. It seemed as though the Davidic covenant had failed on all fronts. Taken together, the Writings provide a roadmap for God’s people under God’s Covenant after the exile—the Writings describe Covenant Life.

This course is an introduction to the Writings of the Old Testament as arranged in the Hebrew Canon: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, and Song of Solomon. We will investigate the theology of each book (with special consideration given to the significance and message of the order of the Hebrew Canon), and see how these various theological components fit together into Biblical Theology as a whole.

The Writings contain the major poetical books of the Bible—Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. Since the genre of Poetry is one of the most difficult genres of Biblical literature to understand, this course will give students a basic understanding of how to read Hebrew Poetry through instruction of the essential components of Hebrew Poetry. The student will then put that understanding into practice in multiple assignments in the text. The goal is to get the students into the text in a significant way in order to apply the text in their own life. Then, with the tools to mine the rich text of the poetical books, my prayer is that the student would teach, use, and apply this Scripture throughout their daily life and ministry before the face of God.

**Introduction to the Counseling Piece**

At some level, as Christians, we think that Scripture belongs in clinic. The entire Marriage and Family Therapy program rests upon a biblical foundation. You likely chose a Christian counseling program because you want your counseling to be distinctively Christian. Obviously, using Scripture in clinic is not the only way that counseling can be Christian, but perhaps we’d like to use it more than we do.

There are dangers to using Scripture in therapy. I don’t want Scripture to be something that is “tacked on” as some sort of proof text in a session. I don’t want it to be some sort of minimalistic behavioral confrontation device (i.e., “Scripture says this, so change”).

But how should Scripture be used in session?

My suspicion is that in the clinic Scripture will flow most naturally if you “own” it. That is, if you’ve studied a passage in depth, digested it, and seen how it applies in your own life, it is more likely to “spill out” of you in clinic. It seems, then, like the ideal time to brainstorm about how Scripture could be used
effectively in clinic would be while you’re taking a graduate-level Biblical Studies course.

This course will do just that. This hour of the course each week will provide a forum to discuss pathways for how the Scripture we’re studying in the classroom might be applied in clinic. It will not be lecture. I am neither a counselor nor a counseling expert. I cannot tell you how or where you should use Scripture in clinic. But this course will be a workshop where we can share ideas, experiment in the clinic with the Scriptures we are studying in class, and report back on our successes and failures. I will simply serve to facilitate your discussion. You might think of this part of the course as a *Trying Scripture in Therapy* lab.

As such, this course will be only as good as you make it. Initially, we will invite MFT graduates in from the community to share examples of counseling situations where they deployed Scripture in therapy with success. In the next two meetings, you will explain and build a counseling “model” for me, and we will brainstorm together about methods, means, and ends for using Scripture in clinic. With a basic foundation laid, each subsequent class meeting (starting it week 5) will begin with a brief “brainstorm in review” where we will review the week’s three hours of lecture and consider possible situations and methods for deploying that material in session. After the brainstorm in review, each class meeting will be filled with interactive presentations and discussions around a particular student’s attempts to use Scripture in clinic.

I have not found a book with which I am comfortable on the topic of how Scripture should be used in a clinical setting (perhaps one of you will publish something on this topic one day). While I think we can use some of the stuff that CCEF publishes (and we shouldn’t be afraid of it—some of it is really good), it is insufficient as a model because of their presuppositions.

In the absence of a satisfactory model, I want to think about reaching the heart with the Scriptures. We’ll discuss John Eldredge’s *The Journey of Desire* because it too thinks about using Scripture to get to the life of the heart. Perhaps you can take this “heart” piece, integrate it with all the other pieces that you’re learning within the MFT program, and develop an effective strategy to speak to your client’s hearts with the Scripture in a way that will connect deeply and may affect change.

At the end of this course, you will have been exposed to how both graduates and peers have used Scripture in clinic, you will have been forced to consider various means to deploy Scripture effectively in clinic, and you yourself will have used Scripture in clinic at least once and reported back to the class. Hopefully, by the time this experiment comes to a close, you will feel more natural in the way you bring Scripture into the clinic, and perhaps you will have taken multiple steps down the lifelong journey of using Scripture to disciple the brokenhearted. Either way, at the end of the class, I can guarantee you that I will sure know a whole lot more about counseling.

**Textbooks**

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago:
Moody Press, 1988
God, et al. *The Holy Bible*. (Please use a more literal translation: NAS, ESV, NIV are preferred.)

**Written Requirements**
Here are the written assignments for the Wisdom Literature piece (see Schedule & Due Dates below for when they are due):

- **Psalms: Ten Unexpected Things to the Average Bible Reader.** As you read through the Psalms, please find 10 things that you think would come as a surprise to the average evangelical layperson. Did anything catch you off-guard? No explanation required; just the reference and text from the verse that surprised you.

- **Proverbs: A Topical Reference Guide.** Before you begin reading Proverbs, choose a topic of your own definition about which you want to gather wisdom from Proverbs (e.g., parenting, money, sloth, discipline, the heart, women, friends, etc.). Every time a proverb references your topic, write down the reference. I don’t expect your list to be exhaustive (though if you have BibleWorks, creating an exhaustive list is easy), but I do expect it to be thorough. At the end of the assignment, you’ll have a list of biblical references for wisdom concerning your subject. And once all the assignments are turned in, I’ll compose a sortable excel spreadsheet with everyone’s references so the class will have a “Comprehensive Topical Guide to Biblical Wisdom in Proverbs.”

- **Literary Analysis on Psalm 13.** Each Literary Analysis should include two steps (please choose between an application outline and a preaching outline):
  1. **Literary Analysis.** Students are required to answer the questions from the handout, *A Tool for Literary Analysis*, in some detail. The goal is to understand the poetry, uncover the structure of the passage, and determine the original meaning of the passage.
  2. **Application Outline.** Understanding the passage, how does it apply to us today? Specifically, how would you apply this passage in life? You may customize your outline to your situation (e.g., counseling, teaching, etc.) as long as you clearly define the nature of your situation. Your outline should be detailed enough that I get the gist of your application, without going into all the details. I’m looking for approximately two pages. Be sure to include the main theme of your outline, so I know the one point you are trying to drive home. The outline should not be a
simple restating of the historical fact or literary observation, but should be oriented towards application. E.g., instead of “The Psalmist’s fragile faith” your point should be “Our fragile faith,” if the application is appropriate to us today.

Here are the written assignments for the Counseling piece (see Schedule & Due Dates below for when they are due):

- **List of 20 Ways Scripture Can Be Used in Clinic.** This should be a list of 20 ways with a one or two sentence explanation of each. These ways can either be general methods (e.g., “To study a particular passage as a homework assignment”) or a particular end (e.g., “Use Scripture to give a voice to their story”).

- **3-Page Paper: Application from Ps 1-72 to a Client.** As you are reading through Pss 1-72 for Pss-Chron, chose an actual client in a specific situation and suggest a Scripture from Pss 1-72 that you could use with that client. This paper should have at least 5 sections:
  1. **Background.** Provide all the pertinent details. Explain the reason the client came in, the history of the counseling relationship, and why you have chosen this client. Please note whether the client is a Christian.
  2. **Scripture.** Write out the Scripture that you have chosen and comment briefly on how your verse or verses fits its immediate context in the larger passage in which it is found.
  3. **Method.** Explain how and when you might deploy this Scripture with your specific client.
  4. **Goal.** What is your purpose for using this Scripture? What are you trying to accomplish?
  5. **Analysis.** What would it look like if your method of using this succeeded? How would the client respond or receive this? What would it look like if your attempt failed? What do you think would be the determining factor whether your use of Scripture will succeed or fail?

- **Write Your Own Psalm.** Using what you have learned about parallelism and types of psalms, write your own psalm that should be at least 6 verses long.

**Discussion Lunch Requirements**

Significant discussion over key issues should be a vital part of any graduate level class. However, in light of the vast amount of material we need to cover in this class in such limited time, this discussion cannot happen during class time. Further, any in-class discussion would be dominated by a few vocal students and would not have time for participation from everyone. In order to have substantial discussion around certain issues with every student, you will sign up for two discussion groups over lunches on Monday prior to class. At this discussion group, you should be prepared:

  i. To discuss all the material to be covered (i.e., have it all read), and
ii. With book in hand and available as a reference, to answer specific questions concerning the item for which you signed up. For these Discussions, you will receive one of two grades, either a “100” for having read the material and participating in the discussion or a “0” for not attending the discussion or not participating. If you are forced to miss the discussion because of incapacitating illness or family tragedy, you must notify me beforehand. There will be no excuses afterward (only “0”s).

We will meet in the TV Room at Patterson’s Porch. Please be there ready to begin with the materials we will be covering no later than 12:10. You will be responsible for your own lunch.

The Wisdom Literature discussions will cover:

- **Psalms Reading Discussion.** This discussion will cover the articles in the Psalms, paying particular attention to the structure of the Psalter.

- **Wisdom Reading Discussion.** This discussion will cover the reading in Bullock’s *Introduction on Wisdom*, paying particular attention to the definition and theology of wisdom, approaches to the Song of Songs, and hermeneutical principles for interpreting Proverbs.

The Counseling discussions will cover:

- **Keller Preaching to the Heart Discussion.** After listening to Keller’s lectures on preaching the Gospel to the heart, we want to discuss his model and see which parts of it we might be able to deploy in a counseling setting.

- **Eldredge Journey of Desire Discussion.** This discussion will consider how the longings of the life the heart will impact how, where, and when you might use Scripture in the clinic.

**Use of Scripture in Clinic Presentations**

You will be responsible for a presentation in which you will report to the class on an instance of how you used Scripture in session. The presentations should use the Scripture covered in the class (though certain exceptions may be granted for the first couple of presentations since they are close to the beginning of class and we won’t have covered much before you need to use it in clinic). When you present, please provide the class with a one-page, printed, bullet-point summary that includes:

1. **Background.** Provide all the pertinent details. Explain the reason the client came in, the history of the counseling relationship, and why you have chosen this client. Please note whether the client is a Christian.
2. **Scripture.** Write out the Scripture that you used.
3. **Goal.** What was your purpose for using this Scripture? What were you trying to accomplish?

In your presentation, simply walk us through how you used the Scripture. Be sure to analyze whether your attempt accomplished its desired effect, and be prepared to answer questions.

**Testing Requirements**

**Final Exam.** A comprehensive final exam will be given during exam week. The exam will include both comprehensive essay and factual data. It will be thorough, so take good notes in class and study hard so you don’t get smoked.

**Protocols**

1. **Anonymity.** In order to help me be as objective as possible in the grading process, all assignments should be turned in with your RTS ID instead of your name. This way I won’t know that the work I’m grading is yours until after I grade it (and that could be to your advantage).

2. **Attendance.** Attendance is expected and we will begin on time, so please be prompt. If you cannot make class due to family emergency, please inform the instructor in advance. If the timing of the class infringes on your mid-morning nap, I recommend Barq’s Root Beer or coffee (if you can stand the taste of this vile brew) for the appropriate dose of caffeine.

3. **Required Reading.** It is expected that the student will complete the reading by the date due so that the student will be prepared for class. The reading will coincide with what we do in class, so to come to class without having completed the reading is to come unprepared. But there will be no “Reading Report” at the end of the class (so you won’t be put in that awkward spot of having to define what “reading” really is). However, the reading will be loosely covered on the Final Exam.

4. **Late Assignments.** Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day.

5. **Grading.** The grading scale will follow the catalog’s insanity (e.g., an 87 is a B-), but fear not—letter grades will fall out over a normal curve.

**Time Allotment & Grade Weight**

Wisdom Literature in Counseling is a four-semester hour course, which will meet in class for 39 hours this semester. Using the two-hours-out-of-class-for-every-hour-in-class standard, there should be 78 hours of work outside of class.

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<th><strong>PAGES</strong></th>
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<td>Firth &amp; Johnson, Psalms</td>
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<td>170</td>
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<td>Eldridge, Journey of</td>
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Desire
Psalms 122 10 12.2
Job 46 10 4.6
Proverbs 39 10 3.9
Ruth 3 10 0.3
Song of Solomon 8 10 0.8
Reading Totals 750 41.1

ASSIGNMENTS

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<td>Application Outline</td>
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<td>Write Your Own Psalm</td>
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GRADE WEIGHT

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Schedule & Due Dates

**Week 1:** JANUARY 29, 2013
B/C Due: Yeah, I’d start a class with something due on the first day
Topic: Syllabus, Canonical Theology, How to Read Hebrew Poetry

**Week 2:** FEBRUARY 5, 2013
B Due: Read Longman, Psalms, 37-85, Walton, Cantata, Firth, Psalms, 85-100, 229-246
B Topic: How to Read Hebrew Poetry, Introduce Literary Analysis
C Due: *List of 20 Ways Scripture can be used in clinic*
C Topic: Examples from people in the field (2)

**Week 3:** FEBRUARY 12, 2013
B Due: *Psalms Lunch Discussion Group*
B Topic: Types of Psalms
C Due: Read Eldridge, Desire, 1-106
C Topic: Build a Counseling Model/Discuss Ways
Week 4: February 19, 2013
B Due: Read Psalms 1-72
B Topic: Types of Psalms, Introduction to the Psalter/Psalms
C Due: Read Eldridge, Desire, 107-212
C Topic: Discuss Ways/Explore how types of Psalms might be used in Clinic

Week 5: February 26, 2013
B Due: Read Psalm 73-150, 10 Unexpected Things to the Average Bible Reader
B Topic: Introduction to the Psalter/Psalms
C Due: Journey of Desire Discussion Group, Write your own Psalm
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation

Week 6: March 5, 2013
B Due: Turn in Psalm 13 Literary Analysis
B Topic: Psalms/Worship
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation

Week 7: March 12, 2013
B Due: READING WEEK: Catch up on all the other courses you’re behind in
B Topic: Family & Friends
C Due: READING WEEK: Sleep
C Topic: More sleep

Week 8: March 19, 2013
B Topic: Job
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation

Week 9: March 26, 2013
B Due: Wisdom Lunch Discussion Groups
B Topic: Job
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation

Week 10: April 2, 2013
B Due: Read Proverbs, Ruth, Proverbs Topical References
B Topic: Proverbs/Ruth
C Due: Paper: Application from Ps 1-72 to a client
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation

Week 11: April 9, 2013
Read Song of Solomon (in Glickman's Appendix B, pp.176-189), Read Glickman, Song, 1-172
B Topic: Song of Songs/Ecclesiastes
C Topic: Brainstorm & Presentation
Selected Bibliography


Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. “The Promise to David in Psalm 16 and its Application in


**Student Data Sheet**

Name:

RTS ID:

Degree Program at RTS:

Expected Date of Graduation:

Favorite Movie:

Where are you from?

Where did you do your undergraduate degree?

Where do you go to church here in Jackson?

To what is the Lord calling you immediately after graduation?

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