Timeless Inquiries: Biblical Wisdom Literature and Contemporary Values

Instructor:
Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan
Phone: VST will assign
Email: ldkaplan@vst.edu
Office hours during term: by appointment

Purpose:
Biblical wisdom literature engages with a surprisingly modern set of concerns, including creation, ecology, feminine faces of God, sexuality, money, and responsibility. Using a variety of text-centered and reader-centered interpretive techniques, we will explore the lessons and questions of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Ben Sirach.

Competence Objectives:
Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to
- Summarize the content and describe the style of five works of wisdom literature
- Explain and apply a variety of Biblical interpretive techniques
- Use Biblical works of wisdom literature as resources to address selected contemporary issues

Format: Fall term 2014, Thursdays 9:00 am-12:00 noon, September 11, 18, 25; October 2, 9, 16, 30; Nov 6, 13, 20, 27; Dec 4. Course activities include lecture, discussion, student presentations and small group activities.

Required reading:

Additional shorter readings, drawn in part from the selected bibliography, will be available on moodle.

Assignments: Attendance, reading, class participation, group presentation with short paper, final paper on a selected topic demonstrating course competencies.

Attendance: Class attendance meeting VST policies.

Reading: Thoughtful preparation of the assigned readings before the class in which they are due.
**Class participation:** Includes careful listening and thoughtful responses to class lecture, discussion and reading; engagement in class activities, such as reflective writing or small group discussion.

**Group presentation:** Small groups of students (2-4, depending on course enrollment) will work together to prepare a 20-minute presentation on a short assigned text, exploring its content and relevance to a contemporary issue. The modality of the presentation can include speaking, drama, music, leading class activities and more. The group will also prepare a 2-3 paper in response to specific questions about the text. After review by the professor, the paper will be shared with the class. More detailed guidelines for the presentations and papers will be provided in the syllabus.

**Final paper:** Approximately 10 pages, on a topic of the student’s choice, approved by the professor. The final paper should be based on a Wisdom text studied in class, include appropriate outside reading, and demonstrate skill in both interpreting Biblical text and applying it to a contemporary issue. Detailed guidelines will be found in the syllabus; ideas, examples will be discussed in class.

**Prerequisites:** HB500

**Selected bibliography:**


A more detailed syllabus will be available later this summer.