

The Book of Job Through the Centuries

COURSE NUMBER (1.5 credits)

Monday-Friday, July 12-16, 2021, 9:00 AM to 12:00PM. Lecture and seminar.

Instructor: Professor Jin H. Han, PhD; jhan@nyts.edu

Purpose:

The book of Job is much more than a story of a suffering person. Through the centuries, this book, “one of the grandest things ever written with a pen” (Thomas Carlyle), has helped us to ask where God is in this bruised universe. In this course, we approach it from the perspective of “reception history,” which investigates how ordinary people in many times and cultures have interpreted the story of Job and his innocent suffering. Job has a rich history in this regard as a companion to those who have experienced or witnessed unspeakable sufferings. Our exploration will take us through ancient and modern examples inspired by Job. For example, we will listen to the aria, in George Frederic Handel’s oratorio *Messiah* (“I know that my Redeemer liveth”) and ponder on Job 19:25. We will struggle to decide whether we should smile or sob when we come upon Virginia Woolf’s letter of 1922, in which she says, “I read the book of Job last night. I don’t think God comes out well in it.” Medieval people will invite us to remember Job as the patron saint of lepers. Jewish people will share how they turn to the book in remembrance of the fall of Jerusalem and how they mourn for the victims of the Holocaust in front of Nathan Rapoport’s bronze statue of Job at Yad Vashem National Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. We will let the canonical book of Job and its readers accompany us in our own search for the meaning of life in the world where no living being is a stranger to suffering.

Required text: The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible

Other required reading materials are on electronic reserve (TBA)

Assignments:

1. Faithful attendance and attentive participation in all sessions in accordance with VST policies
2. Completion of reading assignments (prior to the session for which they are assigned)
3. A research paper (2,000-3,000 words) on a substantial topic in reception history of Job

Sessions

1. July 12 Orientation and the Prologue (Job 1-2)
2. July 13 Job and His Friends (Job 3-28; 32-37)
3. July 14 Job’s Final Plea of Innocence (Job 29-31)
4. July 15 Yahweh’s Speeches from the Whirlwind (Job 38:1-4:2:6)
5. July 16 The Epilogue (Job 42:7-17) and Lagniappe