

**Old Testament Psalms and Wisdom Literature:
Worship and Wisdom in a World of Suffering and Injustice
(BIB 378)**

Point Loma Nazarene University
Fall 2018
Mondays 2:55-5:45pm

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Course Description (Catalog)

A theological and exegetical study of worship and the life of wisdom as presented in the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, with attention to the ongoing realities of grief, suffering, and injustice in the world.

Course Focus

This course is designed to serve as an exegetical and theological introduction to the ancient liturgical collection known as the Psalms and to ancient Israel's wisdom tradition as expressed through the corpus of literature in the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha. The aim of the course is to engage in group exegesis of the texts in light of ancient Israel's cultic and wisdom traditions, especially examining the diverse theological perspectives of this literature and the ways in which those perspectives intersect with one another and inform the contemporary life of faith, particularly around issues of worship, suffering, and injustice.

The books comprising the Psalms and wisdom literature are essential for exploring the complexities of the life of faith. They witness to some of the most human dimensions of sacred scripture and provide diverse theological perspectives concerning prayer, worship, faithful living, suffering, and the meaning of life. Engaging the dynamics of these books can shape contemporary readers' notions of what it means to live as the people of God in the world, with all the complexities that such a life entails. Exploring these books allows readers to appreciate their unique homiletical and theological resources, especially the ways in which these scriptures speak to various dimensions of the human experience with God in the world.

Course Learning Outcomes

The class sessions, readings, and assignments should enable the student to

1. be familiar with the **content and major interpretive issues** of the OT Psalms and wisdom literature, including an acquaintance with the significant perspectives, themes, personalities, literary elements, and theologies in these texts.

2. practice the **critical interpretation** of these writings in dialogue with traditional and newer methods within biblical scholarship.

3. consider the OT's psalms and wisdom texts in light of **broader cultic, literary, and wisdom traditions from the ancient Near East**.

4. examine the **later development of the wisdom tradition** in the literature of the Protestant Apocrypha and New Testament.

5. appreciate the **contemporary theological significance** of this portion of the OT canon for understandings of prayer and worship, as well as reflections upon faithful living, suffering, and human existence.

Course Texts

1. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry and Writings* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008).
2. Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).
3. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).
4. A Bible of the student's choosing (NRSV preferred; modern translation required [i.e., no KJV, New KJV, Message, Living Bible, New Living Bible]).

***NOTE:** we will also make use of several videos from www.thebibleproject.com

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation and Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the OT's Psalms and Wisdom Literature, attendance is a necessity. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than TWO [2] classes), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than THREE [3] classes), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation.* See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material. The 10 points assigned to class attendance and participation will be assessed on the basis of faithful attendance (see numbers above) and active contributions to class discussions that evidence completion of the assigned reading.

2. Readings: Our weekly class sessions will center on group discussion of assigned biblical and non-biblical readings. All readings are required unless otherwise indicated. *Please bring your Bible to class.* It is important to keep up with the readings on a session by session basis or the information will quickly become overwhelming.

Evidence of reading preparation and completion for each class may be factored into the student's final grade (see class participation and attendance above).

3. **Homework Assignments:** In order to enhance the quality of our classroom discussions, the student will complete occasional homework assignments that correlate with a topic of class discussion (see descriptions and due dates on course schedule).

****NOTE: All hw assignments must be turned in during the session in which they are due. They MUST be TYPED (they will NOT be accepted in hand-written form), AND they may NOT be submitted via email for full credit (see Late Work Policy).***

4. “**Small (N+oqf- qātōn) Paper**” on **Non-Canonical or New Testament Wisdom Book:** Each student will submit a “small paper” that analyzes one example of the wisdom literature found in the Protestant Apocrypha or New Testament (Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, or James). The paper is due at the start of class on **Mon. November 5, 2018**. The paper should be **5-7 pages in length**, typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around.

*Each student may choose to write on either **Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, or James**

*To research the paper, in addition to a translation of the chosen wisdom book, the student should rely on the discussions of their chosen book in the main textbooks from our course. Outside commentaries or resources may also be used.

*The content of the paper should discuss the following three items:

- a) provide a summary of the basic content of your book/text
- b) outline the critical interpretive issues in scholarship on your book/text (date, authorship, provenance, etc.)
- c) describe how your book/text relates to the wisdom tradition and wisdom literature in general, especially the themes represented by the biblical books we have studied in the course

5. **Final Interpretation Paper on a Psalm or Wisdom Text:** As the final assessment for the course, each student will prepare an interpretive (“exegetical”) paper on a text of his or her choosing from Psalms, Proverbs, Job, or Ecclesiastes (the passage should be approximately 10-12 verses in length). *This will include a special reflection focus on how the text and its interpretation relate either to notions and practices of worship or attempts to deal (theologically and practically) with suffering and injustice (and the justice of God).*

****The final assignment has two parts—one required and one optional:***

A) **REQUIRED:** After selecting their biblical passage, the student should use the attached guide for researching and writing the exegetical paper. She or he will then produce a paper that is **12-15 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1-inch margins on all sides**.

Submission of the TEXT chosen for the paper is due Mon. October 22, 2018. The paper is due at the start of class on Mon. December 10, 2018 (the scheduled day of the final exam for the course).

B) *OPTIONAL “Creative Component” for Extra Points*: In addition to the main paper, the student can earn up to 20 additional points by submitting a creative component (on video) to accompany the exegetical paper. *The student must submit a 15-20 minute video of themselves working with/bringing to life their passage (and its interpretation) in a creative and meaningful way.*

((Examples include a video of the student giving a mini-sermon or Bible study teaching on the passage; creating a piece of art or a poem based on the passage and then videoing themselves explaining that piece or poem; composing a song and videoing themselves performing it and explaining it; or other ideas *but with the pre-approval of the professor.*))

6. *Optional Extra-Credit Assignment: The student will view the movie “*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*” (secure your own access to the movie) and write a “small paper” that explores the relationship between this movie and the themes and messages of the OT book of *Ecclesiastes*. The paper should be **5-7 pages** in length, typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. There is no set format, but the student should discuss *specific scenes and elements from the movie in conversation with specific passages and themes in Ecclesiastes*. The student can earn up to 25 points added directly on to the semester point total. The paper is due at the start of class on **Mon. November 26, 2018.**

Course Policies

1. Grading: The student’s grade will be based on a combination of class participation, reading, assignments, and exams as follows:

<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
10	Class Attendance and Participation
240 (12 at 20 pts each)	Homework Assignments
50	Small Paper on NT/Non-Canonical Wisdom Book
100	Final Interpretation Paper (plus possible 20 extra pts for creative component)

*Total: 400 (possible points)

<u>*Grading Scale:</u>	94-100 A	84-86 B	74-76 C	64-66 D
	90-93 A-	80-83 B-	70-73 C-	60-63 D-
	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	50s F

2. Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the OT’s Psalms and Wisdom Literature, attendance is a necessity. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than TWO [2] classes), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than THREE [3] classes), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material. The 10 points assigned to class attendance and*

participation will be assessed on the basis of faithful attendance (see numbers above) and active contributions to class discussion that evidence completion of the assigned reading.

3. Late Work Policy: In order not to be considered “late,” all assignments must be submitted **in person, in hard copy, in class** on the day listed as the due date. *NO assignment may be submitted electronically (by email, etc.) for full credit.* If the student “forgets” an assignment, he or she may submit it after class (either electronically or in hard copy) for no more than half credit. Any assignment submitted electronically (whether late or on-time) will receive no more than half credit. *No assignment will be accepted for credit of any kind more than one week after the original due date* (does not apply to extra credit, which must be turned in on-time in order to receive any credit).

4. Inclusivity: The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. This course will strive to practice sensitivity toward and foster respect for issues of inclusivity in matters of language and conduct. Each student should seek to enrich this inclusive atmosphere in both their class contributions and personal interactions.

5. Academic Honesty: Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one’s own when in reality they are the results of another person’s creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

6. Academic Accommodations: If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

Tentative Course Schedule

1. Tues. Aug. 28 (special Monday session on Tuesday)

- A. Starting Points
- B. The “Writings” and Their Place in the Canon
- C. Introduction to Hebrew Poetry
- D. Connections to Worship and Suffering

*Readings: none

*DUE: none

***MON. SEPT. 3: NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday)**

2. Mon. Sept. 10

- A. Introduction to Hebrew Poetry (con't) (Psalms and Poetry exercise)
 B. Initial Reflection on Worship in the Church
 C. Introduction to the Book of Psalms (and form criticism)

*Readings: 1) Psalms 1, 2, 150

2) Brueggemann, *Message*, pp. 15-24

3) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: "Form Criticism" and pp. 585-589 on Hebrew Poetry

4) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: "Psalms 1: Book of," "Psalms 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background," "Psalms 3: History of Interpretation"

*Recommended Only: 1) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: "Parallelism," "Cult, Worship: Psalms," "Psalms 4: Titles"

***DUE: 1) Poetic Analysis of 2 Psalms (follow the instructions from the guide sheet provided in the preceding session) [20 pts]**

2) 500-700 words (typed!) Reflection Essay on Worship: Type an essay (500-700 words) that provides your reflections on the following things about worship in Christian churches and life today: 1) How have you seen worship practiced? 2) Why do you think worship is typically done in the ways you have seen? 3) What do you see as the function of worship as it is done in the church and believers' lives? 4) What do you wish people thought about more concerning worship? [note: if you need some resource info for this, look at the Wikipedia entry "Christian Worship" and draw things from there] [20 pts]

3. Mon. Sept. 17

- A. Finish Introduction to the Book of Psalms
 B. Psalms of Orientation (Hymns, Divine Kingship, Creation, Royal, Temple, Zion, Torah)

*Readings: 1) Psalms 2, 8, 14, 15, 19, 21, 24, 33, 37, 46, 48, 72, 93, 95, 96, 100, 104, 112, 119, 131, 133, 145

2) Brueggemann, *Message*, pp. 25-49

3) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: "Confidence, Psalms of," "Hymns," "Kingship, Psalms Of"

***DUE: 1) Psalm Analysis (typed, 250-500 words): Choose one of the psalms that Brueggemann analyzes within pp. 25-49. Using your Bible, explain the genre of your psalm (be as specific as you can if it is a subgenre) AND provide an outline that identifies the major parts of the expected structure for that genre as they appear in your psalm. Last, give a brief summary of how Brueggemann interprets the theological function/meaning of the psalm. [20 pts]**

2) Find a creative expression of something that is like a psalm of orientation, describe it, and explain how it relates to the elements of that type of psalm (typed; 500-700 words): EXAMPLES: a) a contemporary Christian worship song or a church hymn; b) a radio song of any kind (Christian or not); c) a poem or piece of art; etc. etc. [20 pts]

4. Mon. Sept. 24

A. Finish Psalms of Orientation (as needed)

B. Psalms of Disorientation (Lament)

*Readings: 1) Psalms 13, 35, 51, 73, 74, 79, 86, 88 137

2) Brueggemann, *Message*, pp. 51-81

3) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Lament, Psalms of,” “Imprecation”

***DUE**: 1) Psalm Analysis (typed, 250-500 words): *Choose one of the psalms that Brueggemann analyzes within pp. 51-81. Using your Bible, explain the genre of your psalm (be as specific as you can if it is a subgenre) AND provide an outline that identifies the major parts of the expected structure for that genre as they appear in your psalm. Last, give a brief summary of how Brueggemann interprets the theological function/meaning of the psalm.* [20 pts]

2) Find a creative expression of something that is like a psalm of **disorientation**, describe it, and explain how it relates to the elements of that type of psalm (typed; 500-700 words): **EXAMPLES**: a) a contemporary Christian worship song or a church hymn; b) a radio song of any kind (Christian or not); c) a poem or piece of art; etc. etc. [20 pts]

5. Mon. Oct. 1

A. Finish Psalms of Disorientation (as needed)

B. Psalms of New Orientation (Thanksgiving)

*Readings: 1) Psalms 23, 27, 29, 30, 34, 40, 47, 65, 66, 91, 97, 98, 99, 114, 124, 138

2) Brueggemann, *Message*, pp. 123-157

3) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Thanksgiving, Psalms of”

***DUE**: 1) Psalm Analysis (typed, 250-500 words): *Choose one of the psalms that Brueggemann analyzes within pp. 123-157. Using your Bible, explain the genre of your psalm (be as specific as you can if it is a subgenre) AND provide an outline that identifies the major parts of the expected structure for that genre as they appear in your psalm. Last, give a brief summary of how Brueggemann interprets the theological function/meaning of the psalm.* [20 pts]

2) Find a creative expression of something that is like a psalm of **new orientation**, describe it, and explain how it relates to the elements of that type of psalm (typed; 500-700 words): **EXAMPLES**: a) a contemporary Christian worship song or a church hymn; b) a radio song of any kind (Christian or not); c) a poem or piece of art; etc. etc. [20 pts]

6. Mon. Oct. 8

A. Reflections on the Psalms and Worship

1. Psalms and Christian Worship
2. Psalms, Bono, and Eugene Peterson
3. Reflecting on the Whole: The Movement of Worship & the Costly Loss of Lament

*Readings: 1) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Worship”

***DUE: 1) 500-700 words (typed!) Reflection Essay #2 on Worship: Now that we have studied the psalms, type a second essay (500-700 words) that offers your reflections now on the following things about worship in Christian churches and life today in light of what we have explored in the psalms: 1) What do you see now in light of the study of the psalms as the function of worship as it is done in the church and believers’ lives? 2) What do you wish people thought about more concerning worship now in light of your study of the psalms?** [20 pts]

7. Mon. Oct. 15

A. Introduction to the Wisdom Literature

B. Introduction to Proverbs

*Readings: 1) Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*, chs. 1, 2, 3

- 2) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Proverbs 1, Book of,” “Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly,” “Wisdom Theology”

- 3) Proverbs 1—10

***DUE: After watching the video “Proverbs” from www.thebibleproject.com, type out a 200-word summary that puts in your own words the content of that video as an overall introduction to the book as a whole.** [20 pts]

8. Mon. Oct. 22

A. Finish Proverbs

*Readings: 1) Proverbs 11—31 (esp. focus on chs.11-12; 22:17—24:34; 30-31)

- 2) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Proverbs 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background,” “Proverbs 3, History of Interpretation”

***DUE: 1) Submit passage for final interpretation paper**

9. Mon. Oct. 29

A. Ecclesiastes (Pt.1)

*Readings: 1) Ecclesiastes (whole- read as much as possible; finish by next class)

- 2) Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*, ch. 5

***DUE: After watching the video “Ecclesiastes” from www.thebibleproject.com, type out a 200-word summary that puts in your own words the content of that video as an overall introduction to the book as a whole.** [20 pts]

10. Mon. Nov. 5

A. Ecclesiastes (Pt. 2)

- *Readings: 1) Ecclesiastes (finish reading whole book)
 2) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Ecclesiastes 1, Book of,” “Ecclesiastes 2, Ancient Near Eastern Background,” “Ecclesiastes 3, History of Interpretation,” “Qohelet”

***DUE:** “Small Paper” on Non-Canonical or NT Wisdom Book

11. Mon. Nov. 12

A. Introduction to Job

B. Job (Pt. 1)

- *Readings: 1) Job 1—2 (prologue); 3:1—14:22 (1st cycle)
 2) Clifford, *Wisdom Literature*, ch. 4
 3) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Divine Council,” “Job 1, Book of,” “Satan,” “Theodicy”

***DUE:** 1) After watching the video “Job” from www.thebibleproject.com, type out a 200-word summary that puts in your own words the content of that video as an overall introduction to the book as a whole. [20 pts]

2) Be working on final interpretive paper!

***MON. NOV. 19: NO CLASS (Dr. Kelle at Society of Biblical Literature Conference in Denver)**

12. Mon. Nov. 26

A. Job (Pts. 2 & 3)

- *Readings: 1) Job 15:1—21:34 (2nd cycle); 22—27 (3rd cycle); 28; (skim: 32-37)
 2) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Job 2, Ancient Near Eastern Background”

***DUE:** 1) Optional Extra-credit paper on “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” and Ecclesiastes

2) Be working on final interpretation paper!

13. Mon. Dec. 3

A. Finish Job

- *Readings: 1) Job 29-31 (Job’s Oath of Innocence); 38—42 (Yahweh’s Speech & Epilogue)
 2) Articles in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Job 3, History of Interpretation”

***DUE:** Be working on final interpretation paper!

14. Mon. Dec. 10 (*During Final Exams Week—we will meet!)

A. Concluding Reflections on Psalms, Wisdom, Worship, and Suffering

B. The Theology of the Psalms and Wisdom Literature

- *Readings: 1) Article in *Dict. of OT WPW*: “Wisdom and Biblical Theology”

***DUE:** Final Interpretation Paper (plus optional creative component video)

FINAL INTERPRETATION PAPER GUIDE (Part 1): Instructions for Researching the Paper

*For the research part of your paper, work through the following steps.

STEP 1: ENGAGING THE TEXT

Initial questions on which to make some notes:

- a. What drew you to this text for an exegetical paper? What interests you about it?
- b. What do commentaries and your other sources say about why this text is significant?

STEP 2: TRANSLATE YOUR TEXT

Read and compare at least four different translations (e.g. NIV, NRSV, NAB, etc.) of your text. Note any textual problems in margins or footnotes. Note words that seem significant or problematic.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE GENRE OF YOUR TEXT

Identify what “genre” (form) your text is. Use especially commentaries to identify the genre, what its typical characteristics and elements are, and see whether they appear in your text. What does this genre typically function to do? *(be specific! If you’ve got a psalm, what specific genre is it [hymn? Lament? Royal psalm? Etc.]? If you’ve got a wisdom text, is it a proverb? Sermon? Narrative? Metaphor? Etc.?)*

****If your passage is a PSALM:***

STEP 4: OUTLINE YOUR TEXT

Divide your text into main units and subunits based on the typical structure of the genre (hymn, lament, thanksgiving). Make an outline of the text using your division (note: you will organize the body of your paper by offering exegetical analysis of each section [as you have divided the text] in turn)

...OR...

****If your passage is not a psalm but is from one of the WISDOM BOOKS:***

STEP 4: PUTTING THE TEXT IN LITERARY CONTEXT

- a. Formulate a summary of the unit or section that *immediately precedes* your text.
- b. Formulate a summary of the unit or section that *immediately follows* your text.
- c. Make notes on how your text fits and functions in this literary context (e.g., is it a transitional passage? Is it the climax? Is it the beginning? Etc.)

d. Then create an OUTLINE of your text that shows the major units and subunits and reveals the structure, organization, and movement of the passage (use regular outline form with headings and subheadings).

STEP 5: PUTTING THE TEXT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Using outside resources such as commentaries and histories of Israel, compile notes on the following:

- a. what is the historical context of this passage? That is, what is the context in which it was composed?

What historical background does the text presume? How do you see that in the text itself?

STEP 6: ANALYZE THE LITERARY FEATURES & KEY TERMS OF YOUR TEXT

a. Within the text itself, what literary artistry do you see? What rhetorical devices are used? How do these devices affect the meaning of the text? Look for and note:

Repetition	Anaphora (repeated use of initial word)
Hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)	Irony
Simile (one thing likened to another)	Rhetorical Questions
Metaphor (implied comparison)	Dialogue Between Characters

b. Note key words, names, and places which seem significant. Use Bible Dictionaries and Concordances to explore the significance of these words.

c. Address the theological issues in the text: What appears to be the major theological affirmations in this text? What is being said about God? about humanity? about salvation?

STEP 7: RESEARCH YOUR TEXT

At this point you should work through a number of commentaries and other outside sources to supplement the initial notes you have taken on each of the steps above. From the commentaries, pull out additional items on the elements above, grab some quotations to use, look for insights or especially technical items that you missed, etc. You should find things to plug into each of the research categories above.

****Specifically:** Research your text using at least **four scholarly commentaries**. Highly recommended are the following series: a. Word Biblical Commentary, b. The New Century Bible Commentary, c. New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, d. Anchor Bible Commentary, e. International Critical Commentary, f. Old Testament Library, g. The Interpreter's Bible, h. Hermeneia, i. Continental Commentary, j. Berit Olam, k. New International Commentary on the OT (NICOT), l. Tyndale OT Commentaries, m. The Cambridge Bible Commentary.

STEP 8: FORMULATE A **THESIS STATEMENT** FOR YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT

Now that you have completed your research, come up with a single thesis statement that succinctly states your *reading/interpretation* of the text at hand (that is, a statement that says what this passage is in your view).

[*Example: "Hosea 2 is a metaphorical and theological commentary on the events in Samaria at the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic War (ca. 731 BCE)."]

****STEP 9: REFLECT ON YOUR TEXT IN LIGHT OF WORSHIP, SUFFERING, AND GOD'S JUSTICE**

You will be concluding your paper with a section devoted to giving your reflection on how your passage and the interpretation you've given relate either to notions and practices of worship or attempts to deal (theologically and practically) with suffering and injustice (and the justice of God). You may choose whether to focus on worship or suffering/justice of God(theodicy).

To research this, you need more than just your off-the-top-of-your-head opinion. You should look back through your interpretation and see what specific elements of the text speak to worship or suffering/injustice. THEN look through your commentaries and other resources you used (our textbooks, too!) to see what insights you can apply from them.

****Your goal is to conclude your paper with a discussion of this question:** *"How does your passage and your interpretation of it speak to how we can/are/should be thinking about either theologies and practices of worship or attempts to deal (theologically and practically) with the experiences of suffering and injustice (and questions about whether God is just ["theodicy"])*.

**FINAL INTERPRETATION PAPER GUIDE (Part 2):
Instructions for Writing the Paper**

****Your main goal is to write your research from page one of these instructions. In order to do that, follow these guidelines in putting together your final paper:**

1. Turn in your final paper TYPED, DOUBLED SPACED, WITH 12 PT. FONT AND 1-INCH MARGINS ON ALL SIDES.
2. Make sure to reference any authors that you cite, including the book, page number, etc. in a consistent form throughout the paper.
3. The final paper should be 12-15 pages in length.

Format for the Paper

**think of your paper as a guided tour through your passage, where you are the tour guide who is leading an informed, yet not expert, reader through a critical interpretation of your chosen text*

1. Opening/ Introductory paragraphs- Give a general introduction to your text:
 - a. Give a basic summary of what happens in your text (brief!)
 - b. Explain why you and others find this text significant in general
 - c. Provide your **thesis statement** for what this text is/is doing/is saying, etc.

***the following sections (##2-5) should be thought of as background to orient your reader to the unit-by-unit analyses that will form the body of the paper. Here you are providing the orienting information to set up your reading of the passage:*

2. Describe the form or type (genre) of material that your text is and how this impacts its interpretation.

3a. **Only do this if your passage is a PSALM:** Give the outline of your text that you have devised (major units, subunits) with labels that show the usual parts of your genre (hymn, lament, etc.)—this should be in regular outline form.

...OR...

3b. **Only do this if your passage is from the WISDOM BOOKS:**

- Summarize the context of the passages that come immediately before and immediately after your text and how your text functions in that context (literary context).
- Then give your OUTLINE of your text that shows the major units and subunits and reveals the structure, organization, and movement of the passage (use regular outline form with headings and subheadings).

4. Discuss the specific historical background of the text and how the text fits and functions within that historical context (see details on the research guide).

5. Note and discuss any significant textual and translation issues that arise from your comparison of different English translations.

***The following section (#6) should constitute the body of the paper. Here, organize the paper according to your outline (in other words, discuss the text by going sequentially through the major units as you have defined them). In the discussion of each unit, you should bring together the relevant insights you gained in your research especially from Step 6, letters a & b on the research guide. You should also bring in the supplemental insights you gained from commentaries and other sources for each unit. So:*

6. Walk through the passage unit by unit (following your outline of it) discussing the major literary devices found in the text, significant words, and any insights from commentaries (note: this is the primary part of the exegetical paper).

**The final sections of your paper should be thought of as the conclusion of your guided tour:*

7. Discuss the major theological affirmations in the text (from Step 6 letter c on the research guide)

8. Don't omit this section!--> Drawing upon your work from Step 9 on the research guide, conclude your paper with a discussion of this question: "How does your passage and your interpretation of it speak to how we can/are/should be thinking about either theologies and practices of worship or attempts to deal (theologically and practically) with the experiences of suffering and injustice (and questions about whether God is just ["theodicy"])? (you can choose whether to focus your discussion on worship or suffering/injustice)