

### UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2010**  
Instructor: Steven Dunn  
Course #: THEO 2010  
Section: 102  
Course Title: **Hebrew Scriptures: Old Testament Select Books:**  
Course Sub-Title: **Psalms and Wisdom Literature**

#### Description:

The Wisdom Books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs, along with the Book of Psalms, constitute a major part of the Hebrew Bible called the “writings,” or *Ketubim*, and provide a timeless resource for Jews and Christians to reflect upon the meaning of life and how best to live it, the problem of evil, the justice of God, creation, friendship, death, and (especially in the Psalms) ways to express all human emotions and experiences through praise, lament, and meditation. We will begin by examining the shape and characteristics of these books, their use of other Ancient Near Eastern literary influences, the contexts in which they were formed, and, using modern biblical scholarship, examine in detail the literary forms, theological claims, and the ongoing relevance and application of these texts in both Church, Synagogue and personal devotion. Essential to our task will be regular reading and study of the texts themselves, and following the instructor’s presentation of the material, class discussion and reflection upon the meaning and use of the texts today.

Requirements will include the regular reading and preparation of assigned Scripture passages and the textbook, mid-term and final objective exams based on the material covered in class and the reading assignments (study guides will be provided), a two to three page original “Introduction” for each Biblical book we study, and a final 5-7 page research paper, using *library sources* and in consultation with the instructor, which will explore in detail a particular wisdom book, Psalm, passage, or theme.

The goal is for the students to become familiar with these biblical books and their significance in the Bible, Judaism and Christianity, their historical background and development, how to interpret and analyze them using contemporary methods, and finally to understand their ongoing significance and application in life today. The timeless application of the Psalms and Wisdom books to real life issues and problems will provide rich material for class discussion and critical thinking as we reflect on how these books remain relevant today.

#### Required texts:

- *Saint Mary’s Press College Study Bible*, New American Bible (Winona, Minn.: St. Mary’s Press, 2007). ISBN: 978-0-88489-907-5.
- Other texts to be announced