

OT 698

Reading Job from the Margins

Candler School of Theology

Spring 2008

Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30

Bishops Hall 301

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1. Course Description

A richer interpretation of scripture is possible when the Bible is read in dialogue with those whose life experience, social location, and even physical location are different from our own. This may be particularly true of the book of Job, which is itself a dialogue among divergent voices grappling with righteousness, suffering, and the (in)justice of God. This course aims to embody Job's dialogical approach to truth by bringing together the insights of critical scholarship, our own readings, and the interpretations of readers in contexts foreign to our own. Participants will be assigned to one of four contextual sites (Central Outreach, Clifton Sanctuary, Emmaus House, or Metro State Women's Prison), where they will lead an 8-week Bible study with persons often excluded from academic and ecclesial biblical interpretation (the incarcerated, the homeless, the elderly). Classroom discussions will create a dialogue between critical scholarship and the contextualized readings, generating an array of interpretive insights inaccessible from any one perspective alone.

Prerequisites: OT501 and 502, or permission of the instructor.

2. Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will have:

1. *Read and analyzed* the book of Job in its entirety from a critical perspective
2. *Designed and implemented* an 8-week Bible study on the book of Job in one of four contextual sites, employing the pedagogical method of dialogical education, or "reading with."
3. *Learned to integrate* the insights of contextualized reading with those of critical scholarship
4. *Learned to incorporate* insights from contextualized reading into a worship service in a non-congregational setting

3. Textbooks and Resources

Required

1. The Bible. While other translations are useful and should be used in the course of the class (e.g., NJPSV/Tanakh, NIV) – especially in writing assignments if the student does not know Hebrew – we will be using NRSV as our standard translation. Students should bring a copy of the NRSV to class every day and should use it as the basis for written work. Please note that the text of the NRSV of Job is contained in its entirety in Newsom's *NIB* commentary (#2, below).

2. Newsom, Carol A. "The Book of Job: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 317-637 in *The New Interpreters Bible Volume 4*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. [REFERENCE]
3. Ekblad, Bob. *Reading the Bible with the Damned*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. [RESERVES]
4. Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Thirtieth Anniversary Edition. New York: Continuum International, 2000. [RESERVES]
5. West, Gerald O, ed. *Reading Otherwise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*. Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies. Leiden/Atlanta: Brill/SBL, 2007. [RESERVES]

Supplementary Resources

1. Gordis, Robert. *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 5738/1978. [RESERVES]
2. Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Translated by M. J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987. [RESERVES]
3. Habel, Norman C. C. *Job: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985. [RESERVES]
4. Janzen, J. Gerald. *Job*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985. [REFERENCE]
5. Newsom, Carol A. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. [RESERVES]
6. Pope, Marvin H. *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. The Anchor Bible 15. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965. [REFERENCE]
7. Saunders, Stanley P., and Charles L. Campbell. *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. [RESERVES]
8. Segovia, Fernando F. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis 2000. [RESERVES]
9. Segovia, Fernando F. and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from This Place: Vol. 1 Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. [RESERVES]
10. Segovia, Fernando F. and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from This Place: Vol. 2. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. [RESERVES]
11. West, Gerald O. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. [RESERVES]

4. Contextual Groups

Students will be assigned to one of four contextual sites, where they will lead “dialogical Bible studies.” Students will be responsible for leading a weekly Bible study in their assigned contextual sites, according to the schedule below. During the final week, students will lead a worship service in their contextual site. Contextual sites are as follows:

1. Central Outreach (homeless services)
2. Clifton Sanctuary Ministries (long-term homeless shelter)
3. Metro State Women’s Prison
4. Emmaus House (senior center)

5. Requirements and Grading

Because the contextual component of this course represents a significant time investment, the course requirements are geared toward preparation for the contextual sites and subsequent reflection on the experience. Course requirements are as follows:

1) Attendance and Participation

In order to create an environment of true dialogue in the contextual sites, it is imperative that the group develop a sense of consistency and commitment to one another. Thus, **weekly attendance at the contextual sites is mandatory**, unless an absence is pre-approved by the instructor or in the case of emergency. Attendance and participation in the contextual sites will be evaluated by self-assessment and by peer-assessment. The instructor will attend the contextual sites periodically.

It is expected that all students will prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all Tuesday evening classroom sessions. Unexcused absences or a consistent lack of preparation may result in a reduction of the student’s grade.

2) Weekly Contextual Bible Study

Each contextual group will plan and lead Bible study in its contextual site each week. Leadership of the contextual Bible study sessions is the responsibility of all members of the group. However, it is recommended that one student serve as the primary leader for each week’s contextual Bible study, with responsibility rotating among members. Though allocation of responsibilities is up to the individual groups, it is suggested that the student who submits the lesson plan also serve as the session leader for that week (see below).

During each Tuesday classroom session, groups will have 30 minutes to begin planning the following week’s Bible study. However, group planning should also occur outside of class.

At the class session *following* each Bible study, the group should the lesson plan used for the session to the instructor. Lesson plans needs not be elaborate, but should give a sense of how you are planning and leading the Bible study sessions.

In addition, during the course of the semester *each member of the group* should submit *two* (2) “verbatim” reports giving an account of the significant conversational moments in a particular session of the contextual Bible Study. These should be **3-4 pages** long (typed, double-spaced), and need not cover the entire session. The purpose is *not* analysis (second-order reflection) *but rather*

recollection. These verbatim reports may serve as raw material for the critical-contextual analyses (see #4 below).

No more than one student should submit a verbatim report for any one session, so coordinate among the group. Responsibility for submitting lesson plans may rotate among the group members. **NB: Grades for lesson plans and verbatims will be assigned as a group.**

3) Planning and leading a closing worship service in the contextual site

For each group, the final contextual session will be a worship service based on the book of Job. This worship service should incorporate insights from the book of Job developed over the course of the semester. The service should include liturgy and some form of biblical interpretation (sermon, drama, discussion, etc). **Each group should submit the plan for the worship service and any supporting materials (liturgies, sermons, etc.) on April 22. NB: Grades for the worship service will be assigned as a group.**

4) Critical/Contextual Analyses

During the course of the contextual Bible studies, each student will submit two critical/contextual analyses. The purpose of these analyses is to explore the ways in which the critical approach to Job (Newsom and other commentaries on reserve) and the contextual approach (contextual Bible studies) may interact to help us better understand the book of Job. Each critical/contextual analysis will be 3-6 double-spaced pages (750-1500 words). They are **due in class during the session following the relevant contextual Bible study** (e.g., an analysis of Job 1:1-2:13 would be due on 2/26, the week after that text is discussed in class). Analyses may also be submitted **via email prior to class.**

Further details as to structure and content will be distributed separately.

5) Final Paper

Each student will be responsible for a **final paper, to be submitted (via email or to the instructor's mailbox [BH #5]) no later than 6 p.m. on Monday, May 5, 2008.** Papers should be 10-12 double-spaced pages (2500-3000 words) integrating critical biblical scholarship on Job with insights gained from the contextual Bible studies. **Final papers may be expansions of the critical/contextual analyses (see #4 above).** In lieu of a final academic paper, students may propose projects more suited to their particular needs. **Such projects are subject to prior approval by the instructor; project proposals are due no later than April 22, 2008.**

Grade Calculation:

1) Attendance/Participation:	20% (combined instructor/self/peer-evaluation)
2) Weekly Contextual Bible Study:	20% (lesson plans + verbatims + observation)
3) Final Contextual Worship Service:	10% (plan + supporting materials)
4) Critical/Contextual Analyses:	20% (2 x 10%)
5) Final Project or Paper:	30%

6. Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Tues 1/22 Introduction to the Course and Book of Job, Part 1

Preparation:

1. Job 1-42

Tues 1/29 Introduction to Contextual Exegesis and Book of Job, Part 2

Preparation:

1. Newsom, "Job," 319-41
2. Readings from "*Reading With*": *An Exploration of the Interface between Critical and Ordinary Readings of the Bible* (Semeia 73) [available on Blackboard]:
 - a. West and Dube, "An Introduction: How We Have Come to 'Read With,'" 7-17
 - b. West, "Reading the Bible Differently," 22-41
 - c. Weems, "Response to "'Reading With': An Exploration of the Interface between Critical and Ordinary Readings of the Bible," 257-61
3. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 9-86.

During the week following this session, groups will meet for an orientation to their contextual sites at the regularly scheduled time and location of the contextual Bible study.

Tues 2/5 Dialogical Education and Contextual Reading

Preparation:

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 87-183
2. Saunders and Campbell, "Street Readings / Reading the Streets," 86-94 [available on Blackboard]:
3. **At your contextual site during the week prior to this class session, attempt a "dislocated reading" of Job in your group's context:**
 - a. choose a brief section from Job (no more than 3 chapters)
 - b. in your contextual group, read the chosen text out loud
 - c. as a group, reflect together on the interaction between the text and the context: how does the contextual site affect your reading of Job? how does Job affect your reading of the contextual site?
 - d. write a brief (15 minute) journal response to your reading, to be discussed in class

During the week following this session, groups will meet to continue orientation to their contextual sites at the regularly scheduled time and location of the contextual Bible study.

Tues 2/12 Towards a Dialogical Reading

Preparation:

1. TBA (either Ekblad or West; available on Blackboard)

During the week following this session, groups will meet to continue orientation to their contextual sites at the regularly scheduled time and location of the contextual Bible study.

Tues 2/19 Job: Narrative Introduction

Preparation:

1. Job 1:1-2:13
2. Newsom, 343-61
3. Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*:
 - a. "Preface," xii-xvii
 - b. "Reading Scripture for the Liberation of the Not-Yet-Believing," 1-10
 - c. "New Beginnings Require New Readings," 11-24
 - d. "Reading and Praying the Psalms," 127-53
4. After reading Ekblad, free-write any ideas you may have about how you would like to arrange your contextualized Bible study, to be shared with the group during class.
5. During this session, we will begin working in groups to plan for the first contextualized Bible study.

During the week following this session, and each subsequent week, groups will meet for contextual Bible study at the time and location specified by the group's contextual site supervisor.

Tues 2/26 Job: The First Cycle

Preparation

1. Job 3:1 – 14:22
2. Newsom, "Job," 362-445
3. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
4. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
5. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 1:1-2:13 due

Tues 3/4 Job: The Second Cycle

Preparation:

1. Job 15:1-21:34
2. Newsom, "Job," 446-96
3. Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*:
 - a. "Encountering God in Exodus and at Today's Margins," 93-112
 - b. "God's Empowering Call to People: Reading Isaiah with Exiles," 113-26
4. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
5. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
6. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 3:1-14:22 due

Tues 3/11 No class: Spring Break

Tues 3/18 Job: The Third Cycle/Wisdom Poem

Preparation:

1. Job 22:1-28:28
2. Newsom, "Job," 496-535
3. Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*:
 - a. "Getting back into the Garden," 25-60
 - b. "God Empowers the Down and Out: Nonheroic Readings of the Patriarchal Narratives," 61-92
4. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
5. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
6. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 15:1-21:34 due

Tues 3/25 Job: Job's Concluding Speech

Preparation:

1. Job 29:1-31:40
2. Newsom, "Job," 535-57
3. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 3-52 [available on Blackboard]
4. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
5. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
6. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 22:1-28:28 due

Tues 4/1 Job: God's Speeches and Job's Replies, Part 1

Preparation:

1. Job 38:1-40:5
2. Newsom, "Job," 595-614
3. *Reading Other-Wise*:
 - a. West, "Reading Other-wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities: An Introduction," 1-5
 - b. Lees, "Remembering the Bible as a Critical 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed,'" 73-85
 - c. Kahl, "Growing Together: Challenges and Chances in the Encounter of Critical and Intuitive Interpreters of the Bible," 147-58
4. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
5. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
6. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 29:1-31:40 due

Tues 4/8 Job: God's Speeches and Job's Replies, Part 2 / The Prose Narrative: Conclusion

Preparation:

1. Job 40:6-42:17
2. Newsom, "Job," 614-37
3. *Reading Otherwise:*
 - a. Simopolous, "Who Was Hagar? Mistress, Divorcee, Exile, or Exploited Worker: An Analysis of Contemporary Grassroots Readings of Genesis 16 by Caucasian, Latina, and Black South African Women," 63-72
 - b. Ekblad, "Journeying with Moses toward True Solidarity: Shifting Social and Narrative Locations of the Oppressed and Their Liberators in Exodus 2-3," 87-102
4. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
5. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
6. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 28:1-40:5 due

Tues 4/15 Preparation for Contextual Worship Services

Preparation:

1. Saunders and Campbell, "The Streets, the Powers, and the Word: Learning from William Stringfellow," 63-82 [available on Blackboard]
 2. Bring your ideas for the final worship service, to be led this week. This session will be devoted to thinking about what it means to worship in a non-congregational context and working in groups to plan the week's services.
 3. Group lesson plan from previous week's contextual study due
 4. Group verbatim from previous week's contextual study due
 5. Optional: Critical/contextual analysis of Job 40:6-42:17 due
- During the week following this session, groups will meet to lead worship at the contextual site at the regularly scheduled time and location.***

Tues 4/22

Final Thoughts

1. Come prepared to make a brief (5 minute) presentation to the class on what you are planning for your final paper or project.
 2. Group worship plan and supporting materials due
- Contextual groups do not meet this week.***