

**Note:**

Course content may be changed, term to term, without notice.  
The information below is provided as a guide for course selection  
and is not binding in any form.

**Course Number, Name, and Credit Hours**

BI-6621 Studies in Psalms and Wisdom Books, 3 credit hours

**Course Description**

This course is an analysis of the Psalter and wisdom books of the Old Testament and serves as a capstone course for the MA[BS] program. It includes a study of Hebrew poetry, along with a study on the purpose, message, and function of the Psalms and wisdom books. This course has a particular focus on various methods and approaches to these books.

**Prerequisites:** BI-5500 Hermeneutics and BI-5533 Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology.

**Course Objectives**

1. **Demonstrate** an understanding of the basic content, structure, and historical background of Psalms and wisdom books (**Engagement and Motivation**)
2. **Recognize** and describe major features of Hebrew poetry and their significance for interpretation (**Performance and Action**)
3. **Exegete** a passage from Psalms or the Wisdom books by utilizing a variety of methods and by appropriately using digital resources (**Performance and Action**)
4. **Engage** in theological reflection from Psalms and/or the wisdom books (**Reflection and Critique**)
5. **Appropriate** a passage from the Psalms or Wisdom books to a ministry context (**Commitment and Identity**)

**Course Textbook(s) and/or Supporting Information**

Required textbooks for all Moody Online classes can be found on the [Required Textbooks](#) section of the Moody website.

*NOTE: Additional content or links to Internet content may be required and will be provided in the course.*

**Assignments (what student does for a grade)**

**Guideline for the Discussion Board:** Post your initial response to the discussion question by mid-week (Friday, 11:59pm CT). Then read and respond to at least **TWO** of your classmates' initial posts by the end of the week (Monday, 11:59pm CT).

**Standard for Written Papers:** All papers must be in **Turabian** style. Each page should be approximately 300 words, 12-pt. Times New Roman font on double-spaced lines with 1" margins. (Therefore, a 2-page paper is approximately 600 words; a 3-page paper is approximately 900 words, etc.) Here is a guide to Turabian style: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

**1-1 Poetry and Background Analysis (2-page paper):** For your final project in week 8, you will be writing a major interpretative paper on a psalm (see the instructions below). You will be working on this psalm throughout the course.

For this paper, which will be part of your final project, choose a psalm from one of the following and perform the following assignment: 1) Break up your psalm into strophes; 2) display the verses in parallel lines; 3) describe any images or language of the psalm that could be clarified by reference to its ancient near eastern context. Check your strophic divisions with at least two commentaries from the course bibliography (in “Student Resources” in the menu).

This assignment should be **two-pages, double-spaced**, not including the text of your psalm. Choose from one of the following psalms: 2, 8, 22, 34, 73, 89, 103, 110, 116. Each psalm is limited to up to 2 people writing on it. You will sign-up for the psalm you want online in Week 1.

**2-1 Canon and Genre Analysis of a Psalm (2-Page Paper):** This **two-page paper** should include the following elements for the psalm you have chosen for your final project: 1) In the first page, analyze the psalm’s placement within the Book of Psalms. How does understanding its place in the book influence your interpretation of the psalm? For this section, engage with at least two commentaries and a journal article. Two commentaries which wrestle with the issue of canonical placement are **J. Clinton McCann’s in the *New Interpreter’s Bible*** and **Erich Zenger and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld’s in the *Hermeneia* series**. The NIV Study Bible notes are also often helpful in this. 2) In the second page of your paper analyze the genre of psalm you are studying (praise, lament, corporate, individual) and reflect on how that helps you understand the psalm better. You should interact with at least two commentaries and demonstrate how you made your analysis.

**3-1 Argument and Application of a Psalm (chart):** Please fill in the provided chart for its four parts in reference to the psalm you have chosen to analyze in this course:

- In **Part 1**, utilizing the article “Prayers that Form Us,” analyze the argument of your psalm. Who is the speaker? Who is the audience? Do either change throughout the psalm? What beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions is the Psalmist trying to encourage in the users of the Psalm? How is the psalmist relating to God? In the last row of the chart, include a statement of the message of the psalm as a whole in one or two sentences.
- In **Part 2**, add a paragraph describing how each strophe of the psalm relates to the overall message. In this section, you should utilize at least 2-3 commentaries from the course bibliography.
- In **Part 3**, briefly reflect on the argument of the Psalm in relation to its placement in the book. Does this nuance your interpretation at all?
- In **Part 4**, using the article “Applying the Psalms,” reflect on how this psalm could be applied to your context.

**4-1 NT Use of a Psalm (2-page paper):** This paper is an analysis of the use of **Psalm 2** in the *New Testament*. Use the “Passage Guide” in Logos for Psalm 2 in order to find the relevant NT passages (see tutorial): <https://www.screencast.com/t/lcKb6tQ5n>.

For this paper **two-page paper**, you should analyze how the NT writers are using and interpreting Psalm 2. Following this, reflect on how their interpretation informs your own approach to the psalm. Is it in line with the original meaning of the psalm? The meaning of the psalm as a book? Use the article by Walke as a framework.

**5-1 Job 3-31 (chart):** Fill out the three columns in the attached chart for Job, chapters 3-31.

- In the 1st column, list who is speaking in that chapter.
- In the 2nd column find several representative verses that seem to summarize that person’s point-of-view.
- In the 3rd column, summarize in your own words what that person has said in that chapter (in a few sentences).

The goal of this assignment is to understand the “ebb ‘n flow” of the conversation between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. [Job 3 has been done for you as an example.]

**6-1 Reflection on Job (Blog):** Write a blog post in either the voice of Job or the voice of one of his friends (specify which friend). The post should outline (1) what the character thought about the relationship between suffering/prosperity and righteousness/wickedness before this experience; (2) what they learned from the experience; and (3) how it has changed how they think about God.

**Special Blog Instructions:** Please comment on AT LEAST one other student’s blog-post. [NOTE: Please write at the end of your post: “I am reviewing <student’s name>’s post” so the instructor knows which blog you reviewed. (You will have to go back to your blog and “edit” to add this name.)]

**7-1 “Vanity” Word Study (2-page paper):** Utilizing your tools in **Logos Bible Software**, perform a word study on the Hebrew word **הַבָּל**, often translated “vanity” or “meaningless” found in Ecclesiastes 1:2 (5x in that one verse!). This is a key word to help with the meaning of the book of Ecclesiastes. Based on your study: What does the word mean? How does that help inform our understanding of the book? Summarize the main reasons why Ecclesiastes says that life is “vanity”. Your paper should be outlined as follows: 1) Analyze the semantic range of the term; 2) examine the uses of the word in the book; 3) based on your study reflect on the meaning of the term for Ecclesiastes. This paper should be **two pages**.

**7-2 Outline of Ecclesiastes (chart):** In the provided chart, insert a few key verses from each chapter of Ecclesiastes in the 2nd column, then summarize each chapter in 2-3 sentences in the last column.

**8-1 Final Psalms Project (paper):** This summative project should be composed of the following elements based on your previous assignments (1-1, 2-1, 3-1 & 4-1). Put these four assignments together

as a cohesive whole in **9-10 pages** (not including the bibliography at the end). Be sure to make improvements based on the remarks from your instructors on your graded assignments.

1. An outline of the Psalm based on strophic division along with a rationale for your divisions and an acknowledgment of other perspectives. **[Assignment 1-1]**
2. An analysis of the place of this psalm within the context of the book of Psalms along with a reflection on the significance of this for its interpretation. **[Assignment 2-1]**
3. A description of the genre of the psalm. **[Assignment 2-1]**
4. An analysis of the argument of the psalm along with a reflection on how it is attempting to shape the user. (This analysis should take into consideration of the psalm's canonical placement and genre.) **[Assignments 2-1 & 3-1]**
5. A reflection on how this psalm could be appropriated in a specific context. For this section, indicate a real-life setting (e.g., high-school youth group in the suburbs; small rural congregation; college Bible study) and reflect on how this psalm could apply to this specific group. How would you go about teaching it? How could it inform your corporate worship (if applicable)? How should the community be changed by it? **[Assignment 4-1]**
6. A concluding paragraph explaining how this psalm has shaped you through your study of it. **[new]**

**NOTE:** This paper should be research based and cite at least 10 SOURCES utilizing both commentaries and journal articles.

### Assessments

The following are the graded assessments for this course:

Assessments (# in parentheses)	% of Total
<b>Discussions (11)</b>	25
(1) 1-1 Paper: Poetry and Background Analysis (2-page paper)	6
(2) 2-1 Paper: Canon and Genre Analysis of a Psalm (2-page paper)	6
(3) 3-1 Chart: Argument and Application of a Psalm (2-page chart)	8
(4) 4-1 Paper: NT Use of a Psalm (2-page paper)	6
(5) 5-1 Chart: Job - Chapter Summaries	10
(6) 6-1 Blog: Reflection on Job (300 word blog)	8

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(7) 7-1 Paper: “Vanity” Word Study (2-page paper)	6
(8) 7-2 Chart: Outline of Ecclesiastes (chart)	5
(9) 8-1 Paper: Summation Paper on Psalms (based on assignments 1-1, 2-1, 3-1 & 4-1)	20
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

Letter grades are determined by the following scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage Equivalent	Description
A	96 – 100	Exceptional work
A-	94 – 95	Excellent work
B+	92 – 93	Very good work
B	89 – 91	Good work
B-	87 – 88	Above average work
C+	83 – 86	Average work
C	79 – 82	Work needs improvement
C-	75 – 78	Minimally acceptable work
F	< 75	Unacceptable work