Course Description: This course is designed for students who want to study biblical or comparative literature beyond an introductory level by exploring two books that broke all conventions for their genres and established new standards: The Book of Job and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. The method employed by this course will be largely direct—entailing interaction with the texts themselves in English translation when necessary. Secondary reading will provide supplementary insights. The approach is intentionally neutral; that is, we will attempt to examine the texts and their history on their own terms, rather than promote a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint.

Note: The syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Goals: The goal of this course is to equip students with academic tools for critically evaluating historical texts by building a foundation for the study of Job and Alice. At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Appreciate the literary nature of the Bible by finding comparisons to works of literature in their own culture.
2. Adequately address philological, literary, and exegetical issues, such as nonce formation, poetics, and episodic narratives.
3. Investigate historical questions such as the setting/provenance of a text, influences upon a text, and a text’s influence throughout history.
4. Critically evaluate philosophical and religious themes like the problem of evil and protests against mainstream schools of thought.

Required Texts:


I strongly recommend a hard copy of AAW and TTLG, such as the 2-in-one facsimile edition by Engage Books (ISBN: 1926606337, 978-1926606330).

Recommended Texts:


Assessment:

**Participation, 15%**: It is essential that students attend class, with a copy of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and Greenstein’s translation of *Job*, ready to discuss the weekly reading. A student may choose to bring an entire Bible to class instead of Greenstein’s translation. Students may miss 3 days, no questions asked, but *missing more than 3 will result in deduction of participation points*.

**Weekly Reading and Discussion Forum, 25%**: Each week, students are responsible for reading the assigned material and posting a question, comment, or reply (100-200 words) and at least two additional replies to someone else’s post (50-150 words) from the previous week. Discussion will focus on the weekly reading. Please make posts and responses thoughtful and intellectual, not emotional or inflammatory. Also be sensitive to other students and refrain from offensive posts. Note: the instructor reserves the right to give pop quizzes if posts are not reflecting thoughtful engagement with the reading material. The first two posts should be uploaded before class every Tuesday, and the third post must be uploaded before class on Thursday. Posts that are turned in later than one week will receive ½ credit.
Religious Studies 4050: The Book of Job and Alice in Wonderland: 
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Instructor: Dr. Ryan M. Armstrong
OSU Spring 2023

Research Paper in three parts, 40%: Due February 22, March 8 and April 19.
OSU policy requires that an upper division “H” credit course includes 10 pages of out-of-class written assignments, turned in in at least two stages, with feedback given between each stage. In order to meet this requirement, each student will select a passage of the book of Job (no more than eight verses) and write two related assignments on it.

Close Reading Due Feb 22, 11:59pm. 10% of Research Paper Grade. The first paper will be a “close reading” of your passage. 600-900 words, 2-3 pages (11pt Calibri font or 12pt Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double-spaced). Look only at the book of Job; there’s no need to conduct further research. Provide a verse-by-verse analysis of your passage, within its immediate chapter. You may look a little at its overall literary context, but focus on your specific verses. The following questions may be used to guide your analysis (but feel free to ask similar questions of your own):

1. What does this passage say? What is the meaning or meanings of each verse? Who is talking, and why are they saying it? What are they trying to communicate? What emotions are behind the passage? Does your passage respond to another passage?
2. How would you divide the poetry and/or narrative in the chapter? Are there major divisions based on themes or repetitions?
3. What are they key words or themes? Is anything repeated? Why is it repeated? What does it emphasize? Is there any wordplay that might accentuate something in the chapter?
4. What happens in your passage? What is different from the beginning of the chapter to the end of the chapter? How does your passage contribute to that change? How would the chapter be different without your verses? Does your passage have the same theme as the rest of the chapter? If so, how does it progress that theme? If not, what affect does the new theme have on the chapter?

History of Interpretation Due March 8, 11:59pm. 10% of Research Paper Grade. For the second paper, write about your passage in light of its “reception history.” 600-900 words, 2-3 pages (11pt Calibri or 12pt TNR, 1 in margins, double-spaced). Look at literature, film, TV, plays, art, and commentaries that are influenced by the book of Job. Please compare three or more of the following commentaries: the medieval rabbi Rashi, medieval rabbi Berechiah, Pope Gregory the Great, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and Albert Barnes. Look for connections to your passage in ARTStor. Then return to your passage. How do these interpretations affect the way you re-read this passage? With which points from these sources do you agree? With which do you disagree? What challenges you from these interpretations? Write a thesis statement as your main takeaway, then use your pages to argue that thesis.
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Final Research Paper Due April 19, 11:59pm. 80% of Research Paper Grade. For the final paper, look at scholarly sources, then go back and revise your first two papers. Combine them into one final paper: 2800-3100 words, 10–12 pages, including revisions of your previous papers (11pt Calibri or 12pt TNR, 1 in margins, double-spaced).

Compare Habel’s commentary and Greenstein’s translation/footnotes. Then consult 3 scholarly articles dated after 1920 from peer-reviewed journals (ASOR, AAR, CBQ, JBL, JSOT, TC, Vetus Testamentum); you may include articles that are required reading in this course, or you find new ones on JSTOR. This paper will be graded according to the rubric found on p. 3 of this syllabus, and it must address:

1. **Literary Nature.** Is your passage written in poetry? What makes it poetic? What wordplays and literary devices are used? Are there unique words or linguistic phenomena? Does the passage repeat words, themes, or sounds? How is the content affected by the form in which it is written?

2. **Literary Context.** How does this passage contribute to the chapter in Job? What is the message of the chapter? What keywords appear in this passage that occur elsewhere in Job? What ideas in this passage occur elsewhere in Job? How does this passage contribute to ideas that are developed throughout the book? How does this passage contribute to the book’s storylines? In light of your research, how does this passage and this chapter contribute to the overall message of the book of Job?

3. **History and Intertextuality.** Does this passage references or similarities to other biblical texts? Other texts from the Ancient World? Are there texts that might indicate an indirect textual influence on your passage? Is the passage affected by historical ideas, events, or material culture? What does your passage say about the world at the time it was written? What other works of literature, art, film, etc. bear similarity to your passage? What other works of art or literature might offer further insight?

4. **History of Interpretation.** Is this passage cited directly in the Talmud or early church? What do commentators and preachers say about this passage? Have artists or later writers been influenced by this passage? Is there art that affects your reading of the passage? What overall significance has this passage had on interpreters throughout history? What is its significance for marginalized groups? What impact does this passage have on you and your community?

Reflection on Alice, 20%: Due May 11. Choose a passage, a character, a theme, or a stylistic choice found in the Alice Books and write a brief essay on it. No research is required outside of the reading in this course. You might consider the following questions: Why is it significant? How does it contribute to the book itself? Is it affected by historical events? Does it respond to fairy tales or other works of literature? How has it impacted others in the history of interpretation? Does it invite a comparison to biblical literature? Must be 2-3 pages/500-750 words, 11pt Calibri or 12pt TNR, 1-inch margins, double-spaced.

For every paper written in this course, the first paragraph should contain a thesis that summarizes what you will argue in your paper. Examples might look like the following:

“This paper will argue that the message of this passage is ____, which contributes to the theme of ____ in the book of Job.”
“This paper will argue that interpreters throughout history have been (in)correct in interpreting ______ in this passage, as indicated by a literary and historical analysis.”
“This paper will argue that works of literature/art such as _____ have (in)accurately depicted Job and his friends based upon an analysis of this passage.”
“This paper will argue that works of literature/art such as ____ parallel provide a helpful parallel for understanding this passage, because both teach ____.”

Each following argument should draw from the four categories above to argue your thesis statement. You can use subheadings with a mini thesis, if this is helpful. Examples might look like:

“First, the passage occurs in ___’s speech, as (s)he attempts to argue____.”
“Second, the passage makes use of keywords that indicates a continued development of the theme ____.”
“Third, interpreters throughout history have made these same observations, beginning with ____.”

Papers should be 11pt Calibri or 12pt TNR, 1 in margins, double-spaced. Use Chicago Style, with footnotes for sources other than the Bible or Alice books. For references to primary sources, they may be done in parentheses, such as (Job 9:32) or (AAIW, 45).
**Religious Studies 4050: The Book of Job and Alice in Wonderland: Evil, Nonsense, and Madness**

Instructor: Dr. Ryan M. Armstrong
OSU Spring 2023

**Grading Rubric for Research Paper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>C or below</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Overall Grade: Average score from each category: A, B, C, D, F</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Writing Style: Presenting in an organized fashion, progression of thought, concepts are fully explained</td>
<td>Difficult to follow. Little to no preparation was put into method of communicating. Either exceeds or falls far under the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage or sources were submitted late for approval.</td>
<td>Clear presentation and easy to follow. Very few concepts remain unclear. Falls within the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.</td>
<td>Clear progression of thought with good explanations of difficult or unique concepts. Easy to understand. Falls within the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Clear thesis statement (e.g., “This passage indicates ___ about Israel's history, and later interpreters find that it teaches ___ about God.”) Organized, persuasive argumentation and demonstration of thesis</td>
<td>No clear thesis statement, lacks organization, arguments; evidence does not clearly support the thesis.</td>
<td>A fairly clear thesis and organization; arguments are generally persuasive with a few exceptions.</td>
<td>Crystal clear thesis, arguments are persuasive, conclusions are significant and insightful.</td>
<td></td>
<td>----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Use of primary texts to support thesis. Cite specific passages from the Bible and other historic texts to support your argument. Explain the passages before and after yours. Explain which texts influenced yours.</td>
<td>The paper does not exhibit a deep knowledge of the primary texts. Little content from within the primary texts is offered as support of the thesis.</td>
<td>The paper is dependent upon a deep understanding of the primary texts. It points to several passages as evidence for your thesis.</td>
<td>The paper is steeped in a thorough understanding of primary texts. A close reading of the primary texts is evident in the way the presentation engages with them.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Examples from scholarly sources to support your thesis. Take time to understand them, and explain how they support your argument. Or if you disagree, show why your argument is stronger than their objections.</td>
<td>Little or no effort was made to interact with secondary material. There is little thought behind citations.</td>
<td>Care is taken to find evidence for thesis among scholarly sources. If scholarly sources work against thesis, an explanation is offered. It is clear that the student has consulted Habel, Greenstein, and three other articles.</td>
<td>Excellent use of scholarly sources to argue thesis, including Habel, Greenstein, and three other articles. Citations are specific passages from these sources. They either support thesis or are thoughtfully addressed with counterarguments.</td>
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Grading Rubric for Alice Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>C or below</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Overall Grade: Average score from each category: A, B, C, D, F</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Writing Style: Presented in an organized fashion, progression of thought, concepts are fully explained</td>
<td>Difficult to follow. Little to no preparation was put into method of communicating. Either exceeds or falls far under the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage or sources were submitted late for approval.</td>
<td>Clear presentation and easy to follow. Very few concepts remain unclear. Falls within the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.</td>
<td>Clear progression of thought with good explanations of difficult or unique concepts. Easy to understand. Falls within the word requirements (2800-3100). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.</td>
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<td>b) Clear thesis statement (e.g. “This passage indicates ____ about Israel’s history, and later interpreters find that it teaches ____ about God.”) Organized, persuasive argumentation and demonstration of thesis.</td>
<td>No clear thesis statement, lacks organization, arguments; evidence does not clearly support the thesis.</td>
<td>A fairly clear thesis and organization; arguments are generally persuasive with a few exceptions.</td>
<td>Crystal clear thesis, arguments are persuasive, conclusions are significant and insightful.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Attention to the text</td>
<td>Little more than a cursory reading of Alice is reflected in the essay.</td>
<td>It is clear the student has read the Alice books and understands the context for their topic.</td>
<td>The student has read the Alice books and given attention to details in the text that support their argument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Little or no thought was given to the chosen topic. The essay reflects very little effort in the investigation of the topic or in constructing an interesting essay.</td>
<td>Care is taken to think through the topic and to understand the Alice books.</td>
<td>It is clear the student wants to understand the Alice books or contribute to their interpretation. The student has thought carefully about the topic and the books.</td>
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Looking down the rabbit hole. Or is it a rabbit whole?
Religious Studies 4050: The Book of Job and Alice in Wonderland: Evil, Nonsense, and Madness

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Reading Schedule
Readings other than required texts are available on Canvas.

Jan 17, 19. The Lands of Uz and Wonderland: History, Provenance, Setting

Jan 24, 26. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland: Frame Tale, Episodes, Debates, the Trial of the Knave
Reading assignment: AAW

Jan 31, Feb 2. The Book of Job: Righteousness, Justice, and Evil
Reading assignment: Tues. Job 1–13; Thurs. Job 14–26

Feb 7, 9. The Book of Job: Plot Twists, God’s Character, Resolution…?
Reading assignment: Tues. Job 27–37; Thurs. Job 38–42

Feb 14, 16. Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There: Plot Structure, Literary Devices, Satire, Jabberwocky, Philology
Reading assignment: TTLG

Feb 21, 23. Putting them together
Research Paper 1, Close Reading, Due Thurs. Feb 22 11:59pm

Feb 21, 23. Curiouser and Curiouser: Seeking Understanding and Identity
Reading assignment:
Tues. Habel, 60–69.

Feb 28, March 2. Down the Rabbit Hole: Artists’ Interpretations
Reading assignment:
Watch: Dir. Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske. Alice in Wonderland, Walt Disney Productions, 1951.
Watch: Dr. Trey Parker. Cartmanland, South Park Season 5, Episode 6, 2001.
March 7, 9. Protest and Satire

**Reading assignment:**

Tues.

Thurs.

Watch: [Armstrong’s Parody in Alice and Job on YouTube](Armstrong’s%20Parody%20in%20Alice%20and%20Job%20on%20YouTube)

**Research Paper 2, Reception History, Due March 9 11:59pm**

March 14, 16. *Spring Break*

March 21, 23. Making Sense of Nonsense: Lewis, Language, and Logic

**Reading assignment:**

Tues.

Thurs.
Watch: Armstrong’s and [Breaking the Fourth Wall](Armstrong%20and%20Breaking%20the%20Fourth%20Wall)

March 28, 30. Dialects and Dialectics: Language in the Lands of Uz and Wonderland

**Reading assignment:**

Tues.

Thurs.
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Apr 4, 6. Evil and Madness in the Justice System

Reading assignment:
Tues.

Thurs.

Apr 11, 13. Frenemies and the King of Hearts

Reading assignments:
Tues.

Thurs.

Apr 18, 20. Mediation and Un-Mediation

Reading Assignment:
Tues. Armstrong, 46–91
Research Paper Final Deadline Thurs. April 19 11:59pm

Apr 25, 27. The Divine Encounter and the Queen of Hearts

Reading assignment:
Tues.
Exodus 33–34

Thurs.
May 2, 4. Reflections

Reading Assignment:
Pre-Finals Week

May 11, 10am: Alice Reflection Essay Due

Additional Policies

Late Submissions: 20% will be deducted for each day that an assignment is turned in after the deadline. Papers more than 5 days late will receive a 0. Don’t let this happen to you! An exception will be made for discussion posts, which will be accepted any time before May 1 for 50% credit if you email the TAs after submitting it late. You may not take an exam after the deadline—so mark them in your calendars right now.

Academic Integrity: OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment,
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examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. To appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst | (405) 744-5627| http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu

Students with Physical or Learning Disabilities: If you need special accommodations the University will make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office, and then set up with me and the TAs: 315 Student Union | (405) 744–7116| https://sds.okstate.edu/

Equal Opportunity: 409 General Academic Building/405-744-7607 https://1is2many.okstate.edu/ OSU is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age or protected veteran status. OSU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs and activities. Examples of sexual misconduct and/or sex discrimination include: sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and intimate partner violence, stalking, or gender-based discrimination. Please conduct yourselves in a way that is welcoming to each other. We want each of you to be respected and listened to.