

OT 421-3 Biblical Interpretation after the Holocaust  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
Spring 2013  
Mondays and Wednesdays 4:30-6PM

Instructors:

Tyler Mayfield  
[tmayfield@lpts.edu](mailto:tmayfield@lpts.edu)  
Office: Schlegel 315  
(502) 992-9375

Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos  
[jbos@lpts.edu](mailto:jbos@lpts.edu)  
Office: Gardencourt 303  
(502) 992-9423

**Course Description:**

This course critically examines Christian biblical interpretation in light of the Holocaust. Students first reflect theologically on the events of the Holocaust through autobiographies, films, and fiction in order to understand more deeply pertinent ethical and hermeneutical issues. Subsequently, the course focuses successively on 2 major themes: Christian anti-Judaism and theodicy. Students examine the long-standing anti-Jewish traditions that have flourished in Christian theology, preaching, and popular conceptualization as a means to consider alternative understandings of Judaism and its relationship to Christianity. The course especially focuses on anti-Judaism in biblical interpretations and offers different ways of reading problematic texts. In addition, students grapple with questions of theodicy engendered by the Holocaust regarding theology and ethics.

**Course Objectives:**

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Reflect critically on the Holocaust as a historical event with profound ethical, theological, and religious implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue, and biblical interpretation, and the human relationship to God.
- 2a. Identify anti-Judaism and anti-Judaic readings of the Bible in a Christian context.
- 2b. Provide some alternative readings of these problematic texts.
- 3a. Understand the theological problem of evil and the question of theodicy in light of the Holocaust including the human relationship to God.
- 3b. Evaluate and discover biblical understandings of evil and theodicy.

## Assignments and Grading:

1. Discussion Postings on [www.lore.com](http://www.lore.com). **Due Weekly.** Students will post and respond to entries weekly throughout the semester as a way to process the course and its readings. This assignment is not taken lightly as it represents a substantial amount of the final grade. Students should provide one entry of at least 250 words by noon each Thursday during the semester. This entry should relate to class discussion or course readings and help to further the conversation. Then, students should respond to at least 2 other entries from that week by their fellow students. Responses should be around 100 words and are due by Monday at noon. [40% of final grade.]
2. Creative Reflection on Holocaust Museum Trip. **Due March 25.** Students are asked to reflect on the trip to the Holocaust Museum in a creative manner by producing an artistic work and a 1-page reflection on the work. Students will present their work in class on March 25. We will provide further guidelines to help the student complete this assignment. [20% of final grade.]
3. Essay for a Magazine. **Due April 24.** Students will write a 4 page magazine article acceptable for publication in a denominational magazine or The Christian Century on some aspect of the Holocaust and its relationship to faith and theology. Thus, the audience will not be a scholarly one, but informed and interested Christian laypersons and ministers. Students have liberty to choose the topic and the manner in which to address it. [20% of final grade.]
4. Final Conversation with Professors. **Time TBD.** Students will participate in a conversation with Johanna and Tyler during the final exam period. This conversation will include questions brought by the student for discussion as well as other questions, a true conversation. [20% of final grade.]

## Additional Required Activities:

- A. Participate in the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center Field Trip. Weekend Visit to Chicago, IL. <http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/> Friday, March 8 – Saturday, March 9.
- B. Attend Louisville's Yom HaShoah community service. Either April 6-7.
- C. Attend 1 Shabbat service at The Temple. <http://templeaibs.org/>

## Course Policies:

Academic Honesty: All work turned in is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the

staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an *early* date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy:

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Students requiring accommodation for a physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) within the first few days of the course and should speak with me as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with me.

Inclusive Language: Our use of language, personally and as a community, is a powerful tool of both healing and oppression. In order to establish a more egalitarian environment and in accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. Avoid language for people that excludes part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes (e.g., use humanity instead of mankind). Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown.

When referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. The God of the Hebrew Bible is envisioned in both personal and non-personal ways, as well as masculine and feminine terms. Referring to God repeatedly as “He” does not capture this splendid diversity. See [http://www.lpts.edu/Academic\\_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp](http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp).

Policy on late work: All written assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Use of electronic devices in class: Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class,

you may ask me for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking. You may not access the Internet during class time. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites, will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will negatively affect the course grade.

**Course Books & Materials:**

1. Jenna Blum, *Those Who Save Us* (Adult; Later Printing edition, 2005).
2. Elie Wiesel, *Night* (any version)
3. Robert P. Erickson, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
4. Livia Bitton-Jackson, *I Have Lived A Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust* (Simon Pulse, 1999).
5. Mary C. Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?: Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (Paulist Press, 2000).

## Course Schedule:

### Part One: Remembering and Reflecting on the Holocaust

#### Monday, February 11

Introductions to Course, Syllabus

What is the Holocaust? What happened? Timeline and Terminology

Readings:

Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, “*Why Do We Call the Holocaust “The Holocaust?” An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels*” article [CAMS]

“Chronology” from *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1993): 22-33 [CAMS]

Livia Bitton-Jackson, *I Have Lived A Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust*

#### Wednesday, February 13

What (theological) questions does the Holocaust engender?

Readings:

Eli Wiesel, *Night*

Fred Alford, *After the Holocaust: The Book of Job, Primo Levi, and the Path of Affliction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 1-25, 129-156. [CAMS]

#### Monday, February 18

Women’s Accounts of the Holocaust

Readings:

*Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1993)---selections: Etty Hillesum (Letter from Westerbork, pg. 46-57), Charlotte Delbo (Arrivals, Departures, pg. 58-64), Gisella Perl (A Doctor in Auschwitz, pg. 104-118), and Mary Jo Leddy (A Different Power, pg. 355-362). [CAMS]

Bev. Allen Asbury, “Can I Still Be A Christian after Auschwitz?” in *Good News after Auschwitz? Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001): 29-35. [CAMS]

Wednesday, February 20

Guest Speaker on Theresienstadt

Monday, February 25

Involvement of church and theology in the Holocaust

Readings:

Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust – Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* pg. 1-60

Wednesday, February 27

Documentary: WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT written, produced and directed by Pierre Sauvage

Readings:

Magda Trocmé “The Courage to Care” in *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1993): 309-316 [CAMS]

Monday, March 4

Fiction & the Holocaust

Readings:

*Those Who Save Us* By Jenna Blum

## **Part Two: Christian Anti-Judaism**

Wednesday, March 6

Historical Lead-Up

Readings:

Mary Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?* Parts I, II, and III

*Field Trip to Chicago tentatively scheduled for March 8-9 (Friday afternoon and Saturday)*

Monday, March 11

Advent Hymnody

Isaiah in Advent Texts

Readings:

Advent Hymns [CAMS]

Patricia K. Tull, “‘Isaiah ’Twas Foretold It’: Helping the Church Interpret the Prophets,” in *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust* edited by Tod Linafelt (New York: New York University Press, 2000): 192-207. [CAMS]

Wednesday, March 13

Anti-Judaism in Christian Readings of the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible

Exodus story

Readings:

Pixley and Levenson articles in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* edited by Alice Ogden Bellis & Joel S. Kaminsky [CAMS]

Monday, March 25

Reflection on visit to Holocaust Museum due in class

Wednesday, March 27

Anti-Judaism in Christian Readings of the New Testament

Hymnody of Easter (The Reproaches “*Oh my people, ...*”)

Readings:

Easter Hymns [CAMS]

Terence Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010): 1-29; 151-59. [CAMS]

Monday, April 1

Focus on Texts: Gospels: The Passion

Readings:

Section of Tomson [CAMS]

Wednesday, April 3

Focus on Texts: Paul

Readings:

John Gager's chapters on Paul in his *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* parts I and IV [CAMS]

Johanna Bos, *Making Wise the Simple*, 263-295.

Monday, April 8

Anti-Judaism in Augustine and Luther

Readings:

Exegesis/Sermon of Gen 4 by Augustine [CAMS]

Against the Jews in Corpus Christianorum [CAMS]

Wednesday, April 10

Anti-Judaism & contemporary Denominational Statements/ Preaching

Readings:

Johanna Bos, "You Only Have I Known": Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christians in Light of the Partiality of God for Israel (unpublished manuscript) [CAMS]



Sermon examples [CAMS]

Monday, April 15

Christian participation in the Holocaust.

Readings:

Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust – Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* pg. 94-138

Stephen Haynes, “Beware Good News: Faith and Fallacy in Post-Holocaust Christianity” in *Good News after Auschwitz? Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001): 3-20. [CAMS]

Douglas K. Huneke, “A Post-Shoah Interventionist Christianity: Expanding the Ranks of the Faithful Remnant in the Third Millennium” in *Good News after Auschwitz? Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001): 141-56. [CAMS]

### **Part Three: Theodicy & Ethics**

Wednesday, April 17

God on Trial play

Monday, April 22

Introduction to the Issues

Readings:

Mary Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?* Parts IV and V

Wednesday, April 24

Theological questions from the Jewish community

Readings:

Peter Haas, *Morality After Auschwitz* part 4 [CAMS]

Fackenheim: *To Mend The World* (Bloomington: Indiana U Press, 1982), Part III: chs 13-15 and Part V. [CAMS]

Emil L. Fackenheim, “The 614<sup>th</sup> Commandment” in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* edited by John K. Roth and Michael Berenbaum (St Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1989): 291-95. [CAMS]

Monday, April 29

Christian Responses to the Holocaust

Readings:

John T. Pawlikowski, “Liturgy and the Holocaust: How Do we Worship in an Age of Genocide?” in *Christian Responses to the Holocaust: Moral and Ethical Issues* edited by Donald J. Dietrich (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003): 168-76. [CAMS]

Wednesday, May 1

Reading Esther after the Shoah

Readings:

TBD

Monday, May 6

Reading Jesus’ Stories after the Shoah

Readings:

TBD

Wednesday, May 8

Conclusion