**Psalms**

Spring 2020

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**A painting on the wall

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Amy Erickson, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible

aerickson@iliff.edu

**Assignments**

1. Participation in Canvas Discussion Groups.

For the forums prior to Gathering Days, please do the secondary readings and then do a close reading of the psalm I’ve assigned in light of those readings. For your post, make some observations and raise some questions about the psalm’s meaning, use of imagery, use of other texts or traditions or its function, etc., and if you’d like, talk about what difference your perspective makes for your reading and/or consider its applicability to a particular community or situation. Please try to connect the reading(s) and the psalm.

Please respond to at least two or three of your colleagues, asking questions, making observations from your own work on the psalm, noting differences in interpretations and wondering about the nature of your peers’ different perspectives.

After Gathering Days, there will be two forum discussions where you’ll be in groups based on your contexts.

2. Presentation at Gathering Days: A Reading from Your Context.

Choose a psalm to exegete (or read closely) for your community. Read it closely, attending to the language, metaphors, shifting tones and moods, etc.

Choose a perspective that best represents the context and concerns of your community (feminist, queer, Asian, African-American, womanist, ecological, Christian, Jewish, etc.) and try to read the psalm with that perspective as a lens.

Describe your audience or community, focusing on the particular struggles this community experiences as they intersect with those expressed in the psalm.

This assignment is meant to be experimental and unfinished. The goal is for you to bring us enough information about the psalm and about your community so that we can collaborate on a reading that highlights the intersections between the psalm and the community.

What to bring to Gathering Days:

* a working argument or a claim that lays out your reading of your chosen psalm and articulates your perspective
* a bullet pointed list that shows how the text supports that claim
* a description of your community (as it is relevant to the psalm)
* some thoughts about the intersections between the psalm and your community (consider: How does the psalm captures the community’s anxieties/ struggles/ fear/ resentments, etc? How might the psalm might offer a different worldview, a different perspective on the struggle - or a new way of contextualizing that struggle - or a fresh source of hope?)

3. Exegesis Paper: 5-7 pages. This can be based on the psalm you presented during Gathering Days.

4. Pedagogical Response: Each student will develop a practical resource on the Psalms, a group of psalms (e.g., laments) or a particular psalm for a local congregation or a community. The resource could take the form of a sermon, a video, a piece of art, a piece of music, a seminar, a class, a lecture to a particular audience.

**Readings**

Most of the readings will come from the *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*. Edited by William P. Brown. The entire volume is available through the Iliff library’s suite of on-line resources (Oxford Handbooks Online Religion). You will be able to find the majority of the articles I’ve assigned through EBSCOHost. If I know they’re not available electronically through the Iliff databases, I will post PDFs. And of course, if you have any trouble finding something, email me or one of the helpful librarians.

**Schedule**

**Week 1. Introduction to the Psalms**

Pss 1, 2, 30 (thanksgiving), 37 and 49 (wisdom), 46 (Zion), 51 (penitence), 68 (ancient), 96 and 99 (enthronement)

Brueggemann, Walter. “Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function.” *JSOT* 17 (1980) 3-32.

Brown, William P. “The Psalms: An Overview.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 1–23. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Read **Psalm 1** closely. And then in light of the readings, make some observations and raise some questions about its meaning, use of imagery, use of other texts or traditions or its function, etc. and if you’d like, consider its applicability to a particular community or situation.

**Week 2. Lament Psalms**

Psalms 3, 6, 17, 38, 42-43, 54, 58, 86, 94

Cottrill, Amy. “The Articulate Body: The Language of Suffering in the Laments of the Individual”

Mandolfo, Carleen. “Psalm 88 and the Holocaust: Lament in Search of a Divine Response”

# Raphael, Rebecca. *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature*

In Chapter 4, 108-119. On Ps 38, Ps 94. (PDF posted)

Essays by Patrick Miller, Brian Blount, Luis Rivera-Pagan, and Peter Paris in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. Ed. Brown and Miller. 2005. (PDF posted)

Queer Theology Podcast (“Depressed – Ps 42-43”)

<https://www.queertheology.com/podcast/depressed-psalm-42-43/>

For close reading: **Psalm 44**

**Week 3. Imprecatory Psalms**. The Problem of Anger, Violence, and Hatred

Psalms 7, 12, 52, 55, 58, 69, 83, 97, 109, 140

Lemon, Joel. "Saying Amen to Violent Psalms: Patterns of Prayer, Belief, and Action in the Psalter" in *Soundings in Theology of the Psalms*.

Day, John N. *Crying for Justice: What the Psalms Teach Us about Mercy and Vengeance in an Age of Terrorism*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005. Pages TBD.

Queer Theology Podcast (“Psalm 54: A Place for Anger”) <https://www.queertheology.com/podcast/a-place-for-anger-psalm-54/>

For close reading: Psalm 137

Suggested

Zenger, Erich. *A God of Vengenance: Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath*, 1995.

Day, John N. “The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics”

**Week 4. Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving**.The Psalms as Poetry

Psalms --- TBD

Dobbs-Allsopp, Frederick W. “Poetry of the Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms.

# Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms.* Chapters TBD(PDF).

**Weeks 5 and 6: Perspectives on the Psalms** (on campus)

Psalms TBD

**Culturally Based Readings**

Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., “Singing a Subversive Song: Psalm 137 and ‘Colored Pompey.’” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms.

John J. Ahn, “Rising from Generation to Generation: Lament, Hope, Consciousness, Home, and Dream.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms.

Edesio Sanchez, “Psalms in Latin America.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms.

**Feminist Readings**

Knowles, Melody D. “Feminist Interpretation of the Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 424–436. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Runions, Erin. “Sexual Politics and Surveillance: A Feminist, Metonymic, Spinozan Reading of Psalm 139.” In *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field*. Ed. Yvonne Sherwood, 296-314. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

**Queer Stances**

Stone, Ken. “Queer Criticism.” In *New Meanings for Ancient Texts*. Ed. S. McKenzie and J. Kaltner. Westminster John Knox, 2013.

**Eco-Readings**

Rensberger, David. “Ecological Use of the Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 608–620. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Stone, Ken. “All These Look to You”: Reading Psalm 104 with Animals in the Anthropocene Epoch”

Arthur Walker-Jones, “Psalm 104: A Celebration of the Vanua.” In Habel, Norman C. (Ed.). *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. Earth Bible. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Abotchie Ntreh, “The Survival of Earth: An African Reading of Psalm 104” In Habel, Norman C. (Ed.). *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. Earth Bible. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

**Week 6. Exegesis Paper Due**

**Weeks 7 and 8**.

In preparation for writing your pedagogical response paper, you’ll group up and read relevant to your community. If you and at least one of your colleagues would like to see a different group of readings here, let me know and we can work together to come up with something more applicable. Also, I’m happy to substitute readings that are more specific or more suited to your particular context.

**Group 1: Reading with the Poor and the Damned: Activist Readings**

Ekblad, Bob. *Reading the Bible with the Damned.* Westminster John Knox: Louisville, 2005. Esp “Reading and Praying the Psalms” (127-154).

Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the* *Bible*, Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1999.

Gerald West, *Doing Contextual Theology: A Resource Manual, part one, two and three,* PDF

Gerald West,*A Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, Orbis, 1996, available free online at <http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/ujamaa/resources.htm>

**Group 2: Reading the Psalms in the Church/Community**

Attridge, Harold W., and Margot E. Fassler, eds. *Psalms in* Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic*Traditions*. Papers presented at the Up with a Shout conference held at Yale University in January 2002. Symposium Series 25. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004.

Brettler, Marc Zvi. “Jewish Theology of Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 485–498. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Jacobson, Rolf A. “Christian Theology of the Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 499–512. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Bond, Gilbert I. “Psalms in a Contemporary African American Church.” In Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions. Edited by Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler, 313–323. Symposium Series 25. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003.

Morgan, Michael. “Singing the Psalms.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 569–582. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Spirituality of the Psalms*.

**Group 3: Psalms as Resources for Pastoral and Spiritual Care**

Hays, Rebecca W. Poe. “Trauma, Remembrance, and Healing: The Meeting of Wisdom and History in Psalm 78.” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 41 (2016): 183–204.

Schnabl Schweitzer, Carol L. “Psalms as Resources for Pastoral Care.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms. Edited by William P. Brown, 583–595. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Strawn, Brent A. “Trauma, Psalmic Disclosure, and Authentic Happiness.” In Bible through the Lens of Trauma. Edited by Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, 143–160. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016.

Person, Gretchen. Psalms for Healing: Praying with Those in Need. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

**Week 9**. Pedagogical Response Due.

**Week 10**. Read and Respond to Pedagogical Responses in Canvas.