

Liberation, Social Justice, Bible
BSHR 8200
3 units
Starr King School for the Ministry - GTU
Fall 2021

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Office Hours by appointment

Online Zoom Meetings
every Monday, 9:40-11am PST

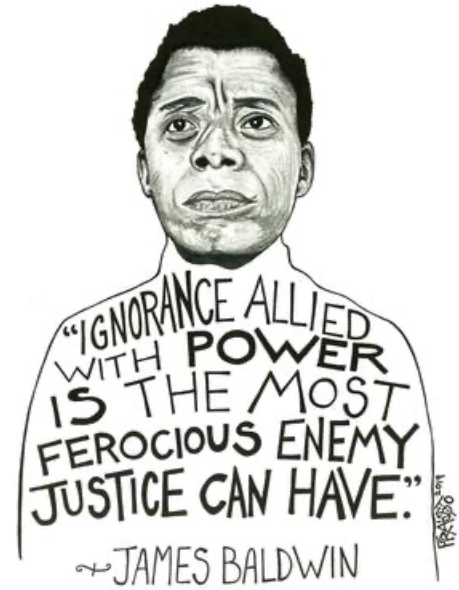


Image by Rick Frausto

Course Description:

What does the Bible actually say about slavery, homosexuality, abortion, immigration, women's roles, and more? In this course, we will discuss the ways in which the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament have been used to support movements of liberation and social justice as well as to support and justify oppressive and violent systems such as slavery, income disparity, sexism, homophobia, racism, and xenophobia. By situating biblical verses within their literary, cultural, and historical context, we will dismantle oppressive and kyriarchal readings. The overarching ethic of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is liberation and social justice. However, this ethic has been obscured by oppressive readings which fail to account for context. This course will equip students with tools for countering systems of oppression through critical contextual readings of the sources, as well as by introducing intersectional feminist, postcolonial, queer, and ecological methodologies to "de-weaponize" Scripture. Students will use these hermeneutical tools to develop "flipped scripts" that speak to their own contexts. This approach will provide students with the ability to use the Hebrew Bible and New Testament to breathe strength, life, and love into those who have been the target of judgment, marginalization, and violence as well as to reclaim these sacred texts as a critical resource for liberation and social justice.

This is an online Zoom synchronous 3000 level course, Ph.D. students may take the class and write a longer final paper which could be used for Research Readiness Review. The format is lecture/discussion. Lectures will be posted to VoiceThread each week on Moodle. Zoom session participation is mandatory and will be primarily for group discussion of the lecture and the readings. Evaluation is through reflection papers & a final paper, zoom participation & watching VT lectures. Maximum enrollment is 20. This course falls primarily within the following SKSM Thresholds: 2) Prophetic Witness & Work 3) Sacred Text and Interpretation and 4) History of Dissenting Traditions and Thea/ological Quest.

I. Student Learning Objectives

This course is meant to equip students with tools to engage in a meaningful way in the academy, ministry, life, and/or activism about what the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Jewish and Christian traditions teach regarding social justice and pathways to liberation. Exploring the history of how Jewish and Christian sacred texts have been used on both sides of social justice issues and delving into the literary, cultural, and historical contexts of the verses used to support and sustain oppression offers students the ability to critically engage in counter-oppressive discourse. During the course, students will:

- Explore the historical, literary, and cultural context of biblical citations and extra-biblical traditions that are most often used to support systems of marginalization, exploitation, and violence.
- Engage in open and respectful dialogue concerning different spiritual and cultural approaches to matters of social justice, including but not limited to racism, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, immigration, LGBTQI rights and protections, sexism & androcentrism, rape, poverty, environmental justice, and disability.
- Apply historical-critical and intersectional feminist methodological frameworks to develop and practice a hermeneutic of suspicion, remembrance, and resistance. This hermeneutical cycle will be used to create and foster counter-oppressive readings or ‘flipping the script’ on dominant oppressive readings of Jewish and Christian Sacred Texts and traditions that have been imbued into western society & culture.
- Learn how to access, search, and use library research tools and resources.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of all course requirements, students will be able to:

Learning Goal	Assessment/Evaluation
Identify examples in current events that either explicitly or implicitly cite Jewish and Christian Sacred Texts to support abuse and oppression and contextualize this use within the context of the course.	Completion of two 4-6 page reflection papers as described below.
Be prepared to engage in dialogue and communicate liberating readings of the aforementioned citations when encountered in ministry, life, and activism.	Active participation in the weekly zoom discussions that reflects engagement with the assigned readings and lectures. VT lectures are set as assignments and logged into the Moodle gradebook.
Cultivate a process-oriented understanding of the hermeneutic of suspicion.	Be able to identify 8 common methods that have been used to silence wo/men and marginalized communities in religious texts. This will be assessed through practical application in zoom discussions.
Create and foster counter-oppressive readings that speak to a student’s own faith and/or cultural tradition.	Create a ‘flipped script’ through the completion of a final 12-15 page long reflection paper/project and brief presentation as described below.

III. Educating to Counter Oppressions

This course seeks to advance the values expressed in the statement of [Educating to Counter Oppressions \(ECO\)](#) that is central to Starr King School for the Ministry's educational design. The overall goal is to help each person prepare for religious leadership, within a multi-religious and counter-oppressive context to create just and sustainable communities.

IV. Course Policies

Please refer to the following course policies links:

- a. Academic Conduct <https://www.skism.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integrity-misconduct/>
- b. Plagiarism <https://www.skism.edu/plagiarism/>
- c. Notice to Students About Your Privacy (FERPA) <https://www.skism.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>
- d. Disability Policy <https://www.skism.edu/resources/student-handbook/starr-king-policies/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

V. Course Grading

- a. *Participation*: 40% of final assessment. Student participation is determined by active engagement in online zoom discussion and watching the lectures. Students are expected to attend the weekly zoom meetings, attendance will be taken every week and constitutes half of the participation assessment. Each voicethread lecture is set so that the system logs if it has been watched to completion. Each lecture needs to be viewed before Monday's zoom meeting, in order to get full credit towards your final participation assessment. Developing an ability to discuss these texts is a learning objective of the course. Please note that some material covered may trigger trauma at times, so it is important to factor in time to process and reflect on the course material before the zoom discussion so that everyone can engage in open, respectful, and productive dialogue. "Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist."- Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," *Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 1984), 112. This course wrestles with texts and traditions that have been used to substantiate kyriarchal structures of power and justify violence so in order to develop the proper level of comfort in informed and liberating dialogue each student must engage with the material and the community. (See Zoom Discussion Guidelines/Community Expectations Handout).
- b. *Two Reflection Papers*: 30% of final assessment (15% each). **A 3-5 page reflection paper is due twice during the semester (October 11th & November 8th)** on how a current issue in the media (commercials, news broadcasts, YouTube videos, newspaper articles, Facebook trends, tweets, music, tv, film, etc.) and how it intersects with the themes/topics of the course by placing it in dialogue with the assigned readings. (See Writing Assignment Guidelines Handout). Engage with a minimum of 2 different course materials (quote or reference readings and/or lectures) in the reflection papers. These papers will reflect the student's critical engagement with the course materials and acts

as a foundation for how to engage in current discourse with ancient sources and traditions.

- c. *Final Paper & Presentation*: 30% of final assessment. **A 12-15 page paper is due [December 17th]** that identifies how the student's faith tradition and/or cultural background has traditionally addressed engaged with a particular social justice issue or how a theme/topic does or does not intersect and engage with the student's own faith tradition and/or cultural background. Engage with a minimum of 4 different course materials (readings and/or lectures). The paper or project should offer a liberating counter-oppressive interpretation/ 'flipped script' that reflects the students own voice and integrates a critical understanding of the historical, literary, and cultural context of the topic. This paper/project will allow the student the opportunity for deeper engagement within their own context, and thus act as preparation for conversations that they are likely to encounter directly in their ministry, the academy, life, and/or activism. Students will give a 5-10 minute presentation on voicethread prior to the last zoom meeting. (See "Writing Assignment Guidelines and Final Presentation" Handout for further information).
- d. *Attendance Policy*: Students are expected to contact the instructor before the Monday zoom meeting if they are unable to attend. They will be asked to email a one-page reflection on a particular discussion point from the lecture and readings before the next zoom discussion in order to get full participation credit. A student will be marked with an unexcused absence if a student does not notify the instructor before the zoom discussion which will impact their overall participation assessment. Open communication is essential, if there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance please contact the instructor as soon as reasonably possible.
- e. If any students with disabilities or whose first language is not English are in need of academic accommodations, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss options and make arrangements. Planning and communication are essential to providing adjustments that will properly address student needs.

VI. Course Format

Tuesday is the start of each week, meaning that the zoom discussion on Monday will always focus on the readings and lecture of the previous week. The new lecture will be posted after the zoom discussion to ensure that the discussion remains focused on the current topic/theme.

Voicethread lectures offer historical context and methods that compliment and supplement the readings, they **do not** summarize the readings. The readings for the course are a mix of primary sources (a product of the time period being addressed) and secondary sources (commentary on primary sources from later periods, including but not limited to our own).

Required Text:

A Bible with Apocrypha, any translation is acceptable, but students will have to cite the translation they are using in all written papers and have available for zoom discussions so that the class can address differences in translation and the potential ideological impact that may have on the topic at hand. The Oxford Annotated Bible is suggested.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE:

Read:

- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Reaffirming Feminist/Womanist Biblical Scholarship" *Encounter* 67.4 (2006): 361-373;
- Pablo R. Andiñach and Alejandro F. Botta, "Introduction: The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation: Worldwide Trends and Prospects" in *Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, eds. Pablo R. Andiñach and Alejandro F. Botta (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 1-8;
- Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz and Frank M. Yamada, "Culture and Identity" in *The Peoples' Companion to the Bible* (Fortress Press, 2010), 3-9;
- Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Teaching Students about the Bible in the Age of Trump" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35.2 (2019): 107-109;
- Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, "Scripturalizing the Pandemic" *Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)* 139.3 (2020): 625-634.

Watch:

- Post & Watch Student Introductions on Voicethread Discussion Platform
- Voice Thread Lecture: "In A Beginning: Intersectional Feminist Hermeneutics & Why Flipped Scripts Matter"

Discuss:

- Zoom: September 13th

WEEK TWO:

Read:

- Theodore W. Jennings Jr. "Same-Sex Relations in the Biblical World" in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* ed. Adrian Thatcher (OUP, 2014), 206-220;
- Ruby Blondell and Kirk Ormand, "Introduction: One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Homosexuality" in Ruby Blondell and Kirk Ormand eds. *Ancient Sex: New Essays*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 2015), 1-14;
- David Tabb Stewart, "LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics and the Hebrew Bible" *Currents in Biblical Research (CBR)* 15.3 (2017): 289-314 (Bib & Glossary, 308-314).

Watch:

- Voice Thread lecture: "Balancing the Emic & Etic: Ancient Mores, Modern Preconceptions" & "Combating Clobber Texts: The Sin of Homophobia"

Discuss:

- Zoom: September 20th

WEEK THREE:

Read:

- Deuteronomy 15; Exodus 21; Leviticus 25
- Daisy Yulin Tsai, *Human Rights in Deuteronomy: With Special Focus on Slave Laws*. (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 183-192;
- Kenneth Ngwa, "At Exodus as the Door of (No) Return" *Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)* 136.1 (2017): 213-220;
- Brad Braxton, "Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians" in *Scripture and Traditions*, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 411-428;
- Mukti Barton, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?" *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity* ed. Anthony G. Reddie (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 47-58;

- Wil Gafney, “A Reflection on the Black Lives Matter Movement and Its Impact on My Scholarship” *Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)* 136.1 (2017): 204-207.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: “Confronting Slavery & Its Legacy: Liberation, BLM, & Bible”

Discuss:

- Zoom: September 27th

WEEK FOUR:

Read:

- Genesis 1-9 & Esther
- Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, and the Bible” in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds*, eds. Barnhill, David Landis and Roger S. Gottlieb. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 229-241;
- Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, “Ecology in a Biblical Perspective” in *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 351-362;
- John Rogerson, “The Creation Stories: Their Ecological Potential and Problems” in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives* eds. David Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, and Francesca Stavropoulou. (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 21-31;
- Alyssa Henning, “Learning from Esther at the Last Well on Earth” *Journal of Feminist Studies of Religion (JFSR)* 33.2 (2017): 170-175;
- Jonathan Kangwa, “Women and Nature in the Book of Job: An African Eco-Feminist Reading” *Feminist Theology* 29.2 (2020): 75-90.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: “Eden & Eve ~ Eco & Equity”

Discuss:

- Zoom: October 4th

WEEK FIVE:

Read:

- Zechariah 7; Jeremiah 22; Psalm 9; Psalm 82
- Elisa Tames, “Poverty, The Poor, and the Option for the Poor: A Biblical Perspective” in *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel Groody (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) 41-54;
- Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009): “Introduction”, ix-xx; “Prophetic Condemnation of Economic Exploitation”, 65-79; “Jesus’ Renewal of the Covenant”, 99-114;
- Obery M. Hendricks Jr., “The Biblical Values of Ocasio-Cortez’s Democratic Socialism” *Sojourners* January 30, 2019: <https://sojo.net/articles/biblical-values-ocasio-cortezs-democratic-socialism>.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: “Poverty, Prophecy, & Covenantal Economics”

Discuss:

- Zoom: October 11th

First Reflection Paper Due October 11th by Midnight PST

WEEK SIX:

Read:

- Isaiah 35; 42.1-43.14; Dead Sea Scroll 4Q521; Matthew 11.1-6; 13.13-39
- Hector Avalos, "Redemptionism, Rejectionism, and Historicism as Emerging Approaches in Disability Studies." *Perspectives in Religion* 93 (2007): 91-100.
- Jeremy Schipper, "Why does Imagery of Disability Include Healing in Isaiah?" *JSOT* 39 (2015): 319-333.
- Julia Watts Belser, "Violence, Disability, and the Politics of Healing: The Inaugural Nancy Eiseland Endowment Lecture" *Journal of Disability & Religion* 19.3 (2015): 177-197.
- John M. Hull, "Difficult Texts: Matthew 23.16-26 – Blindness as a Term of Abuse." *Theology* 114 (2014): 34-6.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: Guest Lecture by Dr. Eric Harvey, "Resisting the Eugenics of Utopia: Redemptionist, Rejectionist, and Historicist Readings of Biblical Texts on Disability"

Discuss:

- Zoom: October 18th

WEEK SEVEN:

Read:

- Genesis 16; Ruth
- Boyung Lee, "When the Text Is the Problem: A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy" *Religious Education* 102:1 (2007): 44-61;
- Fulata Lusungu Moyo, "Traffic Violations": Hospitality, Foreignness, and Exploitation: A Contextual Biblical Study of Ruth" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 32.2 (2016): 83-94;
- Gale Yee, "She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn": Ruth, The Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority" in *They Were All Together In One Place: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. Randall Bailey, et al. (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 119-140 (bib. 134-140).

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: "Postcolonial Hermeneutics: Challenging Empire & Welcoming the Stranger"

Discuss:

- **No Zoom Discussion- Reading Week** October 25th- 29th

WEEK EIGHT:

Read:

- Reading Week: Begin research for final Flipped Script paper/project

Watch:

- No lecture Reading Week October 25th- 29th

Discuss:

- **Zoom:** [discussion will be **on the week seven lecture & readings**] **November 1st**

WEEK NINE:

Read:

- John 9 & 10
- Daniel London, Chapter 2: "Mimetic Theory and the Anthropological Tale of the Fourth Gospel", 23-38; Chapter 4: "Blaming the Victimizer: Vision, Blindness, and the Judge (9:8-41)", 61-82 in *Theodicy and Spirituality in the Fourth Gospel: A Girardian Perspective* (Fortress Academic, 2020)

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: Guest Lecture by the Rev. Dr. Daniel London, “Dismantling Anti-Semitic Readings of the Gospel of John & other NT Writings”

Discuss:

- Zoom: November 8th

Second Reflection Paper Due by November 8th Midnight PST**Week Ten:****Read:**

- Judges 19; Matthew 20.1-16; Deuteronomy 15; Romans 13
- Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “A *Mujerista* Hermeneutics of Justice and Human Flourishing” in *Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, eds. Pablo R. Andiñach and Alejandro F. Botta (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 181-195;
- Daisy L. Machado, “The Unnamed Woman: Justice, Feminists, and the Undocumented Woman” in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*. Vol. 1st ed. eds. María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodriguez. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), 161-176 (Bib, 175-6);
- Ilsup Ahn, “Proclaiming the jubilee year for undocumented migrants: anti-immigration biopolitics and a Christian theopolitical response” *Political Theology* 18.3 (2017): 249-268 (Bib, 266-8);
- Margaret Mitchell, “The Apostle and the AG,” *Sightings*, June 21, 2018, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/apostle-and-ag>.

Watch:

- Voice Thread lecture: “Re-centering Hospitality: Xenophobia, Immigration, Bible”

Discuss:

- Zoom: November 15th

WEEK ELEVEN:**Read:**

- Tat-siong Benny Liew, “Queering Closets and Perverting Desires: Cross-Examining John’s Engendering and Trans-Gendering Word Across Different Worlds” in *They Were All Together In One Place: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, edited by Randall Bailey, et al. (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 251-288 (Bib. 281-88);
- Joy Ladin, “In the Image of God, God Created Them: Toward Trans Theology” *Journal of Feminist Studies of Religion (JFSR)* 34.1 (2018): 53-58;

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: “The Expansive Divine: Inclusion & Transformation”
- The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney, “Biblical Language for a God Who Transcends Gender” TheoEd Talks, February 20, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLfpaRhsSUI>

Discuss:

- Asynchronous Voice Thread Discussion. Post video on VoiceThread, (see guidelines handout in moodle general section) November 22nd

WEEK TWELVE:**Read:**

- Romans 13; 1 Corinthians 1-4, 15; 1 Thessalonians; Acts 16-17
- Jeremy Punt, “Paul and ancient forms of colonialism. Pauline agency in postcolonial perspective: subverter of or agent for empire?” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes* (Fortress Press, 2011), 53-61;

- Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Redressing bodies at Corinth: racial/ethnic politics and religious difference in the context of empire" in *The Colonized Apostle*, 127-145;
- Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, "Beyond the heroic Paul: toward a feminist and decolonizing approach to the letters of Paul" in *The Colonized Apostle*, 161-174.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: Guest Lecture by Dr. Philip Erwin "Reading Paul, Thinking of Others"

Discuss:

- Zoom: November 29th

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Read:

- Seth Downland, "Family Values" and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda, *Church History* 78.3 (2009): 606-631;
- Jeannie Whitten-Andrews, "Calling for a Pro-Love Movement: A Contextualized Theo-Ethical Examination of Reproductive Health Care and Abortion in the United States" *Feminist Theology* 26.2 (2018): 147-159;
- Autumn Reinhardt-Simpson, "My Sister, My Enemy: Using Intersectional Readings of Hagar, Sarah, Leah, and Rachel to Heal Distorted Relationships in Contemporary Reproductive Justice Activism." *Feminist Theology* 28.3 (May 2020): 251-63.

Watch:

- Voice Thread Lecture: "Changing Perceptions of Personhood: The Religious and Political Foundations of the Abortion Debate"

Discuss:

- Zoom: December 6th

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Watch:

- Voice Thread Student Presentations on Final Papers

Discuss:

- Final Zoom Discussion: December 13th

Final Paper Due on December 17th by Midnight PST

If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, including sexual and gender-related: violence, assault, harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, first get to a safe location.

SKSM encourages all members of the SKSM community to report these incidents to local law enforcement authorities and to seek medical attention as needed.

For emergencies, call 911

- City of Berkeley Police Department: Emergency (510) 981-5911 or Non-Emergency (510) 981-5900
- Highland Hospital Sexual Assault Center: 1441 E. 31st St., Oakland, 510-437-4688
- Bay Area Women Against Rape 24-hour hotline: (510) 845-7273
- Rape Crisis Center 24-hour helpline: 1-800-670-7273
- National Domestic Violence hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse (CORA) 24-hour hotline: 1-800-300-1080
- National Sexual Assault hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Trans Life Line: 1-877-565-8860 <https://translifeline.org>
- National Center for Transgender Equality: <https://transequality.org/additional-help>

Incident(s) of possible sexual misconduct against SKSM students should also be reported by emailing a written complaint to the Title IX Coordinator or by using the on-line reporting form at

<https://www.sksm.edu/reporting-sexual-misconduct/> • Rev. Dr. Christopher Schelin, Title IX Coordinator; cschelin@sksm.edu.