

Tuesday 1:30–4:20 Hunthausen 100

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Office Hours: Monday 3:45–4:45 and Wednesday 10:30–11:30 And by appointment

COMMUNICATING WITH ME

E-mail: This is usually the best way to communicate. Please put “STMA 593” in the subject title. *Please use only your SU email address.* I will often want to communicate with the entire class between classes, so please check your SU email several times between Tuesdays.

Voice mail: Although I find e-mail most efficient and helpful, you are also welcome to leave a voice message on my office phone at any time. I check it even when I am not in my office. Since I seldom allow the phone to interrupt a conversation someone is having with me in my office, you will usually hear the recording even when I am in my office. Don’t be discouraged. I’ll get your message as soon as I’m free.

Coming to my office: My office is in the Theology and Religious Studies Department on the second floor of Casey. It is always best to make a prior appointment to see me, even during my scheduled office hours, so that I can make plans to accommodate all the students in both my classes. But feel free to drop by, to see whether I am free.

Leaving written messages: Please put written messages for me in the box on the counter just outside my office door, or write a note on the memo board there.

Submitting papers: If for any reason you are submitting a paper other than at class time, please put it in the box just outside my office door. If there are any exceptional circumstances or if there is any information that would be helpful to me, please write that note as a reminder to me on the front of the paper.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a new and experimental course devoted to justice and injustice both in the Hebrew Bible (with forays into the New Testament) and in US society today. We will take two approaches: beginning with the Hebrew Bible as foundation and coming forward to issues today; and beginning with issues today and going backward to the Bible to see if there are any connections.

We will read two short books on justice themes in the Bible, one anthology with twelve chapters, each devoted to a specific issue of injustice in our society today, and one anthology in the form of a discussion guide devoted to one issue, the global slave trade.

Students will write a ten-page paper interpreting a short text relating to justice and injustice. Please begin the process of choosing your text right away. It should be one episode, no more than ten verses, and preferably shorter. There are seven deadlines for submitting a portion of your work, so that I can guide you through each step. Toward the end, I will ask for a two-page excerpt so that I can give feedback before you write the entire paper.

COURSE OBJECTIVES / STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students can expect to gain information and to develop skills in the following areas:

1. Familiarity with a great number of and a wide variety of the texts in the Hebrew Bible dealing with justice and injustice.

2. Understanding several major themes in the Hebrew Bible such as God's choice of a people, promise and covenant, faithful and unfaithful responses, obedience and blessing, disobedience and curse, liberation, God's presence and absence, and the conditions of the covenant.
3. Learning how to do close study of biblical texts.
4. Understanding biblical texts in their own social, economic, political, and religious context.
5. Interpreting biblical texts and using them in pastoral ministries.
6. A greater awareness of the difficulties involved in understanding and interpreting the Bible and, paradoxically, a greater confidence in their own ability to do so.
7. Reflecting, in the light of the experience in the course, on the importance of inductive study of texts, of becoming more aware of one's own experience and the questions one brings to the text, of broadening the community to which one listens, and of various factors impinging on the interpretive process, such as the life experience and social context of both the individual interpreter and of the interpreting community, and of notions of authority in its various manifestations.

TEXTS

Required volumes:

Amazing Grace: Christians and the Global Slave Trade. Sojourners on the Issues. A Discussion Guide from the Editors of *Sojourners Magazine*. 2007. 51 pages.

Dempsey, Carol J. *Justice: A Biblical Perspective*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008.

Lowery, Richard H. *Sabbath and Jubilee*. Understanding Biblical Themes. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.

Peters, Rebecca Todd, and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, eds. *To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Seattle University's *Student Guide to Editing and Style*. Available in the SU Bookstore.

Bibles:

You are each invited to bring the Bible of your choice on the first day. Let's discuss options for the quarter.

Other required readings, usually current articles on specific issues of injustice, will be announced as appropriate, by students and professor.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Behavior Appropriate to an Advanced Graduate Seminar

Prompt and regular attendance; preparation for each seminar by reading carefully and critically, reflecting and integrating beforehand, and knowing what you most need to discuss; active and enthusiastic participation in each day's discussion; respectful listening to and learning from each other; prompt communication with me about any problems that arise; in general, taking responsibility for our communal learning.

If I am ever unexpectedly absent due to an emergency, I will expect you to follow these procedures: Elect a moderator who is willing to spend twenty extra minutes (and gain extra credit). Follow the moderator's directions for the full three hours. (These will probably include breaking up into small groups, then reporting to the whole class.) During the last fifteen minutes each student will write me a one-page response: (1) What were the most important things you learned from the combination of the readings and the class discussion? Be very specific. (2) What questions puzzle you still? This response will count as your class participation for the day. The moderator will write a personal response too, and

also a separate one-page report on what the class did, how the discussion went, what problems arose, what good things happened.

2. Interpretation of a Short Text Regarding Justice and/or Injustice: Excerpt and Paper

Full instructions are given below for your study of your text and your writing the paper.

3. Presentation of one chapter in *To Do Justice*.

Read more about the topic, probably three or four current articles in newspapers and magazines. There may also be a documentary you can watch. Choose the best single outside resource for all of us to read and email its url to us by Friday noon before the class when you will be presenting. Prepare a handout for us with more information and suggestions for additional resources. Present more to us than we have found in *To Do Justice* and your article. Then lead a rousing discussion. Incorporate the “Questions for Discussion” at the end of your chapter.

EXTRA CREDIT

You are each invited to bring something of beauty — art works? music? — that relates to the text assigned for the week. If you want to do this, please tell me in advance.

EVALUATION

While it is neither possible nor desirable to determine a grade solely on the basis of numbers, the following percentages indicate the relative importance of each component of your activities in the final evaluation:

Class Participation	30%
Presentation	10%
Steps in Preparation for Writing the Paper	20%
Mini-Paper	10%
Finished Paper	30%

Some of the factors relativizing the above percentages are:

1. To succeed in this course each student must complete **each portion** of the course.
2. No student will earn an A without **regular attendance** and **active participation** in class discussions.
3. **Late assignments** will be penalized.

SCHEDULE

Please read the assignments in the order they are presented below.

The blank lines show where students can sign up to lead the discussion of the reading.

Tuesday, January 6

Let's get acquainted with each other and with the course.

Friday, January 9, 12:00 noon: First Deadline toward Paper (See Method and Schedule below)

Tuesday, January 13

Amazing Grace, 3-51.

- Read with your Bible open. When an author refers to a biblical text, look it up and read its context: at least the immediate paragraph surrounding the verse(s) mentioned. Read the biblical text carefully, preparing to discuss it in class.
- Each of the four sections of *Amazing Grace* begins with "Questions to Consider." We will discuss these as well as any other issues that arise.

To Do Justice:

Hinson-Hasty and Peters, "Preface" and "Introduction," ix-xxiv

Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, "For Workers," 1-11 _____

- Read with your Bible open. When an author refers to a biblical text, look it up and read its context: at least the immediate paragraph surrounding the verse(s) mentioned.
- Each chapter in this book ends with "Question for Discussion."

Wednesday, January 14, 5:00 p.m.: Second Deadline toward Paper

Tuesday, January 20

1:30, beginning of class: Third Deadline toward Paper

To Do Justice:

Gloria H. Albrecht, "For Families," 12-20 _____

Darryl M. Trimiew, "For Those Affected by Drugs," 21-30 _____

Carol J. Dempsey, *Justice: A Biblical Perspective*, 1-43:

"Introduction"

"Justice and Liberation Attained through Violence"

Tuesday, January 27

1:30, beginning of class: Fourth Deadline toward Paper

To Do Justice:

Elizabeth M. Bounds, "For Prisoners and Our Communities," 31-40 _____

Marcia Y. Riggs, "For Public Education That Practices and Promotes Peace," 41-51 _____

Carol J. Dempsey, *Justice: A Biblical Perspective*, 45-85:

"Hospitality of Heart"

"Women, Children, Slaves, and Donkeys"

Tuesday, February 3*To Do Justice:*

Aana Marie Vigen, "For Healing and Wholeness," 52-62 _____

Johnny B. Hill, "For Financial Security in All Stages of Life," 52-62 _____

Carol J. Dempsey, *Justice: A Biblical Perspective*, 87-113:

"Compassion: The Heart of Justice"

"Peace: The Flower of Justice"

"Epilogue"

Tuesday, February 10***1:30, beginning of class: Fifth Deadline toward Paper****To Do Justice:*

Miguel A. De La Torre, "For Immigrants," 73-84 _____

Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, ix-xi, 1-35:

"Preface"

"An Ethic of Abundance and Self-restraint"

"Households and Kings, Honor and Shame"

"Free the Hebrew Slave!"

Tuesday, February 17*To Do Justice:*

Rosetta E. Ross, "For People Lacking Affordable Housing," 85-96 _____

Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, 37-77:

"Release the Debt! Release the Wealth!"

"Proclaim Liberty!"

Tuesday, February 24***1:30, beginning of class: Sixth Deadline toward Paper****To Do Justice:*

Grace Y. Kao, "For All Creation," 97-107 _____

Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, 79-122:

"Sabbath and Creation"

"Sabbath and Household Hospitality"

Tuesday, March 3*To Do Justice:*

Gary Dorrien, "For Alternatives to War and Militarism," 108-117 _____

Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, 123-152:

"Sabbath Made for Humans"

"A Modern Spirituality of Sabbath and Jubilee"

Tuesday, March 10

1:30, beginning of class: Final Deadline: Final Paper***To Do Justice:***

Rebecca Rodd Peters, "For Funding Our Values," 118-127 _____

In our discussion today, what have we learned about justice themes in the Bible? How can we use our learnings in our personal and family lives? in our ministries?

METHOD & SCHEDULE FOR STUDYING YOUR PERICOPE AND WRITING YOUR PAPER

Choose the text that you want to study. We will call this your "pericope."

- It is a brief (perhaps 5-8 verses) text in the Hebrew Bible.
- Though it may belong to a larger section, you can defend dealing with it on its own.
- It pertains directly to our coursework on justice themes in the Hebrew Bible.
- You obtain my permission to work on this pericope before you do anything else!

FIRST DEADLINE: By **12:00 noon, Friday, January 9**, email me your request for your pericope. Give the exact chapter and verses of your choice and write two sentences explaining your choice. Wait till I respond before you do any work on this text.

The first 80% of your study of this text and your preparation for writing your paper will be performed on your own! You may use dictionaries, maps, and general resources, but no commentaries, articles, or tertiaries specifically on your pericope. For 80% of your time, you have the privilege and challenge of being alone with the text, getting to know it very closely and developing a relationship with it. Only during the last 20% of your time of study will other readers and commentators intrude into your time together.

Perform your 80% in the following order!

1. NRSV: Read your pericope aloud several times.
2. NRSV: Alternate reading your pericope aloud and silently several times.
3. NRSV: Type pericope in thought lines. Try to fit it on one page if appropriate.
4. Proofread very carefully according to the NRSV! The only thing that should be different is "Yahweh" for "the LORD."
5. Think about whether you want to do fancy indenting or anything that will show off your pericope better.
6. **SECOND DEADLINE:** By **5:00 Wednesday afternoon, January 14**, email me your beautifully typed and proofread pericope in thought lines, so I can look at it and give feedback before you go further. I'll respond as quickly as I can!

Note: I will not be proofreading your thought lines against the NRSV. I will assume that you will have done that very carefully, down to the last comma.

7. Revise according to my feedback, if you agree and if appropriate.

Keep coming back to this page each day as you are working on this project. Read aloud, read silently, read the 8 copies in step #8, noticing your colorings

8. Print 8 copies or more. Use all the colored highlighters, pens, pencils, crayons, etc. that you have to immerse yourself in the text. Ask questions of the text – a different one on each page. Title each page with the question asked. The questions asked depend on the nature of the pericope. For example: Who is speaking? Who is acting? Future tense vs past tense? Positive vs negative? How is each person named and described? Repetitions? You will think of more questions, the more deeply you get into the text, and the longer you stay with it.

9. At each stage, write down your comments, things you notice, puzzles, questions, insights, things you will especially look for when you begin the 20% (reading other experts' comments). Keep this list neat and easily accessible and usable. You will be referring to it at each stage of your 100%. It will probably remain most useful if you type it as it grows.

THIRD DEADLINE: At the beginning of our class on **Tuesday, January 20**, give me **all** these hard copies through step 9.

10. Even before you receive those back from me, you can easily begin this step: NRSV, NIV, REB, NJPS. Find your pericope in all four translations and begin reading all of them aloud and silently. (Continue reading all four throughout all 100% of your work, to keep your mind on the pericope and to keep reminding yourself of the different translations.)

11. Type the other three translations in the same thought lines, so that comparison of all four is very easy. You may want to narrow the margins, decrease the font size, use two sheets of paper next to each other (scotch tape them), use 8 ½ x 14 paper sideways ... be creative. Try to fit all four translations together for ease of comparison.

12. NRSV, NIV, REB, NJPS: With all the colors you have, go through all four, line by line, and highlight the differences. Highlight especially the differences that matter, that give you an additional insight, the disagree, etc. If, after your first go-round, you have found many differences, begin again on fresh sheets and highlight only those differences that seem to you at the moment to be substantial. Keep both comparisons and refer back to both of them.

13. At each stage, keep your list of questions and comments up to date, neat, accessible, and usable. You want it to be very user-friendly so that you can return to it every day.

In one sense, your own 80% is now complete. Keep it with you whenever you are working on the pericope. Keep referring back to the various typed sheets of NRSV alone and all four. Keep reminding yourself of the questions, insights, etc., that you wrote down. But even as you work on the 20%, you may want to return to your 80% to add new questions, comments, "aha moments," etc. ... or to color another sheet of the NRSV or the four translations.

FOURTH DEADLINE: At the beginning of our class on **Tuesday, January 27**, give me all these hard copies through step 13.

14. You are now beginning your 20%, although you will probably still occasionally add to your 80%. And you will *use* your 80% every day. Search for helpful secondary resources in the library. Compile your bibliography, which in this case means "Works that have helped me in understanding my pericope and/or in preparing to write my interpretation."

IS EACH OF YOU FAMILIAR WITH USING THE LIBRARY TO FIND COMMENTARIES AND JOURNAL ARTICLES ON BIBLICAL TEXTS? DO YOU NEED ANY SUGGESTIONS OR OTHER HELP?

I would strongly urge that you use the following:

- at least six full-volume commentaries. Check the publication dates and emphasize the more recent

commentaries.

- six or seven recent journal articles contributing to the exegesis of the text. Try to find a wide diversity of authors among recent journal articles (diversity of gender, country, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.).
- several recent newspaper or magazine articles suggesting relationships between the text and US society.

Do not use the internet unless you show me specifically a printed version of what you want to use and get my approval. My experience with students' using the internet for biblical study has suggested that most of what's on line is—at best—not very helpful, and often harmful.

Don't forget to use the annotations in *NOAB* plus all other secondary resources that are assigned for the course.

You may find the 12-volume *New Interpreter's Bible* very helpful (it was published during the 1990's).

Does your pericope involve any women? Then at a minimum include the chapter on your book in the *Women's Bible Commentary*. Athalya Brenner has edited two different series of *The Feminist Companion to the Bible*, so there are two volumes on most of the books of the Hebrew Bible.

15. FIFTH DEADLINE: At the beginning of our class on **Tuesday, February 10**, bring me your complete (as far as you know) bibliography, beautifully typed according to the *Student Guide to Editing and Style*. The bibliography is to include all the works that have been helpful to you in your study, whether or not you have referred to them in your paper.

Warning: I care about the fine points of typing bibliographies. Take great care with this step.

Note: You won't have footnotes; give citations as in the Student Guide in parentheses in the text itself.

16. Photocopy and read these commentaries and articles, marking your copy in the way most helpful to you and taking careful notes. Are your questions from your 80% answered? Do you need to find further resources? Keep your notes from other experts' comments (your 20%) quite apart from your own list of comments (your 80%).

17. Type two full pages that will be part of your ten-page paper. For instance, if your pericope is verses 6-12 of a chapter, these two pages might explain verses 8-9. They are NOT the introduction or the conclusion or the tertiary. They show me precisely how you explain, interpret, comment on one or two verses.

18. SIXTH DEADLINE: the beginning of our class on **Tuesday, February 24**.

Please bring to class your beautifully written and typed final draft (as far as you know) of a two-page excerpt of your paper PLUS an improved revision of your bibliography.

19. In light of my feedback, revise your excerpt and continue writing the rest of the paper. Fix your bibliography one last time.

Nine pages will be commentary, exegesis, interpretation, secondary resource, explanation of your pericope in ANE context. This will probably mean one paragraph of introduction and another of summary/conclusion, and — mostly — interpretation of each verse of your text.

The tenth page will be tertiary in some fashion: somehow discussing the relevance of this pericope to people of faith today, to your particular church, to you personally; or your thoughts on this process of working on a text, and what you learned; or your own midrash (or play, dialogue, journal entries,

whatever -- get ideas from the Supplement to the Syllabus!) -- in this last case, you may have some extra pages.

Length: No paper is to be longer than ten pages plus bibliography, unless your tertiary section is a midrash.

Audience: decide, and tell me, whether you are writing to me, to the other students in this class, to everyone in STM, or to _____. Then actually write to that person(s). Don't start by explaining what Exodus (or Isaiah or Amos) is. Take for granted as much as your audience knows.

Probably one paragraph of introduction is all most of you will need, before you get into the nitty gritty of explaining what each verse means.

Format: SU's *Student Guide for Editing and Style*. You are encouraged to use the Writing Center to discuss your paper at each stage of preparation and writing. If you have any questions I will be happy to talk or email with you.

20. ABSOLUTE FINAL DEADLINE: Beginning of the last class, Tuesday, March 10:

Your beautifully written and typed final draft of your complete ten-page paper with final bibliography not counted in those pages. PLUS everything you did in preparation, all your 80%, your excerpt and bibliography with my feedback, etc.

Be sure your name is on every page. Please put everything in an envelope to keep it all together. Bring it all to our last class together this quarter.

RECOMMENDED VOLUMES

CHALLENGE TO ALL OF US: LET'S ADD MORE TITLES TO THIS LIST AS THE COURSE PROGRESSES, AS AN AID TO ALL OF US!

Studying the Bible:

Michael Joseph Brown. *What They Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

The Hebrew Bible and Justice:

Boff, Clodovis; and George V. Pixley. *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*. Translated from the Spanish and Portuguese by Paul Burns. Theology and Liberation Series. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*. 2d ed. New York: United Church Press, 1982.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Peace*. Understanding Biblical Themes. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.

Gruse, Robert. *You Shall Not Steal: Community and Property in the Biblical Tradition*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985.

Habel, Norman C. *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Lebacqz, Karen. *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987.

Walsh, J. P. M. *The Mighty from Their Thrones: Power in the Biblical Tradition*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

Yoder, Perry B. *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace*. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1987.

Preaching on Justice:

Aaron, Charles L. *Preaching Hosea, Amos, and Micah*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Davison, Lisa Wilson. *Preaching the Women of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Resner, André. *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Van Seters, Arthur. *Preaching and Ethics*. Preaching and Its Partners. St. Louis: Chalice Press.