The Passion Narratives:

exegesis, theology and the arts

NEWTEST 803 (2014)

Syllabus 1.5

Prerequisites:  NT754

ThD and Advanced Master Level Students.

Class meets:  2.30-5.00, in 060L, on Tuesdays, beginning January 14th

Instructors:

Professor Richard Hays
Office: 150 A Langford. Tel. (919) 660-3434 Email: rhays@div.duke.edu

Professor Jeremy Begbie
Office: 0055 Langford. Tel. (919) 660 3591 Email: jeremy.begbie@duke.edu
Aim of the course:

The aim of this course is to explore the ways in which the four canonical passion narratives can be elucidated and interpreted through the joint engagement of (i) contemporary New Testament exegesis, (ii) the Church’s theological/doctrinal tradition, and (iii) a diversity of art forms. The course is therefore an exercise in an integrative approach to the reading of these texts, which can help to foster a “Scriptural imagination” in the Church.

It will involve

- the close *exegesis* of sections of the canonical passion narratives
- consideration of some of the classic *theological/doctrinal readings* of these texts in the history of the Church
- *engagement with the arts* (especially visual art, music and poetry) – attending to the way these narratives have been (and could be) directly treated by artists, and more generally to the way the arts in their own right can be modes of faithful theological interpretation

No particular artistic expertise or knowledge is required.

The course will culminate in “Sounding the Passion” (April 9-13), a five-day interaction of music, poetry and theology organised by *Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts*, and centering on a visit by the Scottish composer, James MacMillan. It includes the US premier of MacMillan’s *St Luke Passion* in Duke Chapel on April 13th, a work which has evolved out of conversations between Duke Divinity School and the University of Cambridge. MacMillan will speak to the class at a seminar to be arranged in the final week of the course.

Reference Bibliography:


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Course Requirements

1. **TEXTS TO READ**

Reading for each class will be assigned as indicated in the class schedule. Additional readings may be suggested as the course. In addition, please bring a synopsis of the four Gospels to class with you. Preferably:
Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum, 12th edition (ed. Kurt Aland; Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2001) or any other recent scholarly synopsis you already own. NB: if you do not already own one of the Aland editions, there is no need to buy one. They are very expensive. Rather than buying any of these, you can buy a much cheaper English-only synopsis (though if you can afford one of the Greek-English or Greek only Aland editions, they will serve you well in the future); English-only option:


NB2: avoid Throckmorton’s A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels (it is an excellent synopsis, but it only includes the 3 synoptic Gospels, not John)

2. BOOK REVIEW OR ARTISTIC EVALUATION OR CLASS PRESENTATION

Please choose one of the following options:

EITHER

Mid-term book review
(3500-4500 words – excluding footnotes, but please keep footnotes to a minimum)

To be submitted March 6th

Choose one of the following to review:


The review

- should carry the reader through the basic argument of the book
- should pay special attention to the way the material throws light on/engages with the Gospel passion narratives
- should attempt to assess the book, in terms of strengths and weaknesses etc, given what you have learned throughout the semester from the lectures, in-class conversations, and the other materials you have read for the course.

OR

A Theological Interpretation and Evaluation of an Artistic Representation of the Passion

(3500-4500 words – excluding footnotes, but please keep footnotes to a minimum)

To be submitted March 6th

Choose one artistic representation of some part or aspect of the passion of Jesus, and offer a theological interpretation and evaluation of it. You will be expected to draw upon material from the course, as well as relevant literature on the piece of art itself. If possible, where appropriate, you should address the following questions:-

- What particular aspects of the passion are being evoked/portrayed/explored?
- To what extent does a particular Gospel narrative (or more than one) come to the fore?
- In what ways do the circumstances of this art’s production bear upon its treatment of the passion? (When/where/why was it made? What is its historical, social and cultural context?)
How are the artistic materials (stone, words, pigment, instrumentation, etc) employed towards theological ends? Likewise the style, the formal elements (line, pattern, overall structure and shape) – how do they contribute (if at all)?

- To what extent does the piece of art reflect a particular doctrinal tradition (or traditions)?
- Are there ways in which it could be misleading exegetically, theologically?

OR

A class presentation of 20 mins. maximum on any aspect of the course, to be agreed in advance with one of the course instructors – to be delivered on April 8th. There will be an upper limit of seven presentations. In addition to the presentation itself, a written piece of work (2,000-3,000 words) will be required.

3. FINAL PAPER (6,000-7,000 words, excl. footnotes) To be submitted by April 25th.

Class attendance and participation are required

Students are expected to participate in class. Lack of consistent participation or readiness/preparation for class, including missing more than two class sessions, will be reflected in one’s final grade.

Grading:

1. Book review/theological exegesis/presentation  40% of grade
2. Final paper 60% of grade

All papers must be submitted, in electronic version (Word format, please), on or before the specified due date, to the Sakai Dropbox. A late paper will be penalized as much as one full letter grade for each day the paper is late. No paper submitted after the due date will be eligible for the grade “A”. If a paper is not turned in at all, a grade of “0” will be assigned (making it hard to pass the course).

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale (note—final grades will not necessarily be rounded up):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (excellent)</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B (good)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C (satisfactory)</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (passing)</td>
<td>64-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
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<tr>
<td>F (inadequate)</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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Weekly Schedule

(1) January 14  
Introduction – Texts, Theology and the Arts

(2) January 21  
Gethsemane

**Biblical text:** Mark 14:32-52 and parallels  
(For background, see Brown, 1.107-310.)

**Theological Texts:**
- Robert Jenson, “Identity, Jesus, and Exegesis,” pp. 43-59 in Davis and Hays (eds.), *Seeking the Identity of Jesus.*

**Artistic expressions:**
Rowan Williams, “Gethsemane“
Gethsemane scene from Mel Gibson, *The Passion of the Christ*

(3) January 28  
Trial  
(Dr Kavin Rowe)

**Biblical text:** Luke 22:54-23:25  
(For background, see Brown, 1.311-877.)

**Theological Texts:**

**Artistic expression:**
(4) **February 4**

**Crucifixion and Dereliction**

**Biblical text:** Mark 15:16-39 and parallels
(For background, see Brown, 2.900-1198.)

**Theological Texts:**
**Bauckham,** Richard, “God’s Self-Identification with the Godforsaken: Exegesis and Theology”, in *Jesus and the God of Israel,* Eerdmans, 2008, pp. 254-268

**Artistic expressions:**
Grünewald, Isenheim altarpiece; Rocha, “The Tortured Christ”;

(5) **February 11**

**Seven Last Words**

**Biblical texts:** 1) Lk 23.34; 2) Lk 23.43; 3) Jn 19.26-27; 4) Matt 27.46/Mk 15.34; 5) Jn 19.28; 6) Jn 19.30; 7) Lk 23.46.
(For background, see the relevant sections in Brown.)

**Theological Text:**

**Artistic expressions:**
Music by James MacMillan

(6) **February 18**

**NOTE NEW TIME – 2.00-4.00pm**

**Poetry and Passion**
**With Rev Dr Malcolm Guite,**
**University of Cambridge**


**Artistic expression:**
*The Dream of the Rood* (9th/10th cent.), in *The Faber Book of Religious Verse,* 25-32. (See Sakai – and please come with both modern and early versions.)
(7) February 25  

John’s Gospel

(but beginning with MacMillan’s Seven Last Words)

Biblical text: John 18:1-19:42

Theological texts:

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SPRING BREAK

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(8) March 18  

J S Bach: St Matthew Passion

Biblical text: Matt 26:36-27:66
(For background, see Brown, 1:146-end; 2:879-1296)

Theological text:

Listening/viewing: opening chorus, as at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaD5eow2srU
(9) March 25  Preaching the Passion Narratives
   With Fleming Rutledge

   Theological texts:
   selections from Fleming Rutledge,
   *The Undoing of Death*,
   Eerdmans, 2005

(10) April 1  The Passion Dramatised

   Student Presenters:
   Willem Van Klinken
   Raphaela Swadosch

   An examination of the “Passion Play” tradition, especially in its recent “public versions”, and the way in which specific texts are read, expanded and dramatised.

   Theological texts:

   Artistic expressions:
   Various online videos

(11) April 8  Class presentations
(12) **Friday, April 11th, 9-11**  *St Luke Passion*

Meeting with composer James MacMillan, in 060L.

(13) **April 15th**  Wrap up (usual time; venue tbc)

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**COURSE POLICIES**

**Disability statement:**

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact, if you have not done so already, the Disability Management System—Student Access Office at 919-668-1267 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion. Please also contact Ms. Kori Robins, Divinity Registrar (krobins@div.duke.edu or 919-660-3428).

**Integrity:**

In accordance with the Honor Code, students are expected to do their own work for each of the assignments. Any violation of the Honor Code will result in a failing grade, and depending on the severity of the case could result in additional consequences.

**Absence and Tardy Policies:**

Regular and prompt class attendance is expected. Failure to attend may negatively affect the student’s final grade.

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*Richard Hays/Jeremy Begbie*

February 2014