A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Bible has come under fire from various directions for its depiction of divine violence and divinely sanctioned violence. Yet Christians claim that God seeks the reconciliation, restoration, and healing of all relationships and all creation. By investigating a variety of troubling biblical texts, the course explores what it might mean to call the Bible “Scripture.” Among the texts to be considered are those that depict divine violence, genocide, divine judgment, imprecation, ant idolatry polemic, and the vilification of enemies and opponents.

B. OBJECTIVES

Students who participate in this course should develop ability:

a) to engage critically and constructively with biblical texts in conversation with an awareness of violence in its many guises in our time;
b) to understand and to explain the complexity of the Bible’s testimony concerning violence, and to bring that testimony into conversation with the various ways the Bible testifies to the mission of God in the world;
c) to develop an hermeneutical approach that honours the biblical testimony regarding violence in its many forms while also presenting an interpretation of the Bible’s testimony concerning the mission of God;
d) to comprehend both the scope and limits of naming the Bible as Scripture and to articulate a working model for Scripture’s role in the church and the life of discipleship.

C. TEXTBOOKS & REQUIRED READING


Other short articles TBA. E.g. Richard Middleton’s work on creation and violence in the Bible and the ancient Near East.

Students will be responsible for reading the Introduction, chapter 1, and the conclusion of the following book by Eryl Davies. Students, most likely in groups of two, will also be responsible for presenting a seminar on one of the five hermeneutical approaches presented in chapters 2 through 6 (see Course Requirements below). Several copies of the book will be available on the library reserve shelf.


**D. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. The course will proceed in seminar format, with presentations by the professor and the students. Students will be responsible for critical engagement with the assigned readings, which will be distributed throughout the first half of the semester. Students may be assigned to initiate class discussion on specific readings. Class participation 25% of course grade.

2. During the first half of the term, students will make a presentation to the class on one of the hermeneutical approaches discussed in Eryl Davies’s book (see above). 20% of course grade.

3. During the second half of the term, students will write an essay on a topic or on a biblical scholar’s work and will make a summary presentation to the class on the essay. Selection of topics will be done in consultation with the professor (see list below). Each essay will reflect engagement with the four course objectives (above). All students will be given a copy of the essay (via the course portal) one week prior to the presentation and will be expected to read it and come prepared to discuss it the following week. For this reason, no extensions will be allowed. 40% of course grade.

4. One student will be responsible for presenting a critical and constructive response to another student’s essay and in leading the class in a discussion of the essay. The class discussion will include reflection on the four course objectives (above). Preparing the review will involve some research beyond the reading of the student’s essay. 15% of course grade.

Examples for essay topics (since these are the basis for presentations, only one student may choose a particular topic; another student with interest in the topic may choose to be the respondent):

- Appraisal of Walter Brueggemann’s approach to violence in biblical texts in his recent *Theology of the Old Testament*. 
• Appraisal of John Goldingay’s approach to violence in biblical texts in his recent *Old Testament Theology*.
• René Girard’s notion of the scapegoat and mimetic rivalry as applied to violence in the Bible (cf. Raymund Schwager as well).
• *Atonement and Violence: An Assessment of the Debate in Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation*, edited by John Sanders
• Vengeance and Wrath: Key Themes in Biblical Theology
• Election, Inclusion, Exclusion, and Otherness: Interacting with the work of Joel Kaminsky, Joel Lohr, Lawrence Wills and others.
• Justice and the Judgment of Nations in the Bible
• Does the Bible have a Political Theology and, if so, Does That Theology Include a Place for Violence?
• A Critical Appraisal of and Constructive Response to the book *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*.
• “The God I Don’t Understand”: Christopher J. H. Wright’s proposals for understanding the violence of God in the light of the mission of God (he deals with the topic in several of his books).
• Origen’s Resignification of Scripture and the Resurgence Theological and Figural Readings of the Bible.
• Proposals for Preaching on Scripture’s Violent Texts

There are no examinations.

E. COURSE OUTLINE. Details TBA. Reading assignments will be added.

Sept. 9
Sept. 16
Sept. 23
Sept. 30
Oct. 7
Oct. 14 No Class: Thanksgiving Day
Oct. 21
Oct. 28
Nov. 4
Nov. 11
Nov. 18
Nov. 25 No Class: Society of Biblical Literature Convention. An additional make-up class session may be organized.
Dec. 2
F. ADDITIONAL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Students should familiarize themselves with CMU’s policies on academic misconduct, class attendance, examination rescheduling, extensions, etc. See the Student Handbook on Academic Matters (pp.  ).


**Extensions and Late Essays.** Because of the seminar format of the course, permission for extensions will only be given for reasons such as serious illness and family crises.

The **Final Withdrawal Date without academic penalty** is November 13, 2013.

**Grading Scale**

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<th>Subjective Evaluation</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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