

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary
Fall, 2024

BIBHB 601: Africana Readings of Exodus 1-15: Human and Non-Human Liberation

Meeting Days/Time: Tuesdays at 8:00-11:00 a.m. CST
Meeting Place: Online (Teams)

Instructor: Kenneth Ngwa
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Course Description

The course is a theoretical and exegetical exploration of portions of the Exodus *as* story and *as* motif, with particular focus on a variety of interpretive theories, including but not limited to narrative, liberationist, eco-critical and postcolonial analyses. Specifically, this course explores theoretical, methodological, and exegetical approaches that define and animate Africana readings and interpretations of Exodus 1-15. The course dialogues with theories in postcolonial necropolitics, ideological criticism, womanism, bosadi, eco-criticism, health/healing, dream epistemologies and memory studies, etc. and illumines intersecting dimensions of human and non-human liberation and flourishing in Exodus.

Theory:

The Biblical *story* of Exodus (1-15) and its *motifs* of oppression, liberation, war, ecological plagues or signs, human migration and “arrival” et., have had lasting significance for identity formation around religion, gender, culture, ethnicity, race, economics, generations, space, health, politics, etc. The *story* and its *motifs* functioned to give origin and purpose to ancient Israel’s national identity. This identity is developed in relation to Egypt as an ideological and physical place. The *story* and its *motifs* have also functioned as narrative “prototypes” and symbols of communities developing ideologies and praxis about social justice and equity. An organizing theory for this course is that the Exodus story and its motifs are concerned with three key problems:

- A. The reality of erasure – physical and cultural death – that animates the story of Exodus, and the communal work to foster life.
- B. The reality of marginalization or alienation that infuses the story of Exodus, and the work to foster healthy community.
- C. The problem of singularity (single heroes, imperialism, autocracy) that is present in the story, and the work to create and foster an alternative in the form of multiplicity.

These three realities constitute a form of triple consciousness that animates liberation work and its relation to communal flourishing.

Course Objectives

- A. Explore a broad cross section of theories relevant to Africana interpretations of Exodus
- B. Explore the religious, political, and ethical implications of exodus interpretations
- C. Develop exegetical skills by interpreting portions of Exodus 1-15

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- A. Demonstrate familiarity with key theoretical approaches to Exodus interpretation

- B. Develop a working methodology that aligns theory and praxis for social justice, community formation, and flourishing.
- C. Produce a contextually based exegetical paper, a “policy paper,” or a sermon on a text from Exodus 1-15, chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Required Student Participation:

Each student is **EXPECTED** to read the required assignments for each session, attend class sessions regularly and on time, and be actively involved in classroom discussions. The classroom space will function as a healthy and safe space for discussions. This means that everyone is expected to listen carefully to their peers, engage one another in respectful ways even when they disagree (significantly), and see themselves as vital contributors to the overall healthy experience of the class.

Furthermore, in light of the course objectives and outcomes, each student is expected to develop **TWO** papers, a theoretical paper (5-6 pages max.) and a final paper (15-20 pages max.). These papers should be both theoretical and hermeneutical. The papers may be in the form of a sermon, a research paper, or a “policy paper.” The theoretical paper is **due by midnight CST on October 22** (work begins on October 1). The theoretical paper should form the bases for the interpretive project or paper. Students will do in-class presentations on their final projects, receive feedback, and revise and submit their work for a final paper (due on **Tuesday December 10, by midnight CST**).

Please Note:

All papers should be submitted by email to the instructor as Word documents. All papers should be double-spaced, font size 12, with footnotes or in-text citations, and complete bibliographic details. It is expected that **ALL** scholarly work **MUST** be cited and appropriately referenced. **Plagiarism is UNACCEPTABLE** and will lead to a failing grade in the course.

Papers shall be evaluated on the following basis.

- A. Clear definition of working theory and engagement with scholarship
- B. Clear thesis statement and methodology
- C. Good use of evidence (textual or otherwise)

Student Services

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator and your professors will see your accommodation letter.

Grading

Active Participation in weekly class meetings = 35%
Theoretical Paper on Triple Consciousness = 20%
Final presentation and paper = 45%

Final Grade Scale: Grades: 90% and above = A range; 80-89% = B range; 70-79% = C range; 60-69% = D range; below 60% = F

Tentative Schedule

SECTION ONE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Tuesday, September 3: Introductions and Overviews

- a. Introductions and Welcome
- b. Overview of Course Goals and Learning Outcomes
- c. Overview of course theory

Tuesday, September 10: Exodus and Triple Consciousness Quests for Liberation

Readings:

Sara Lomax-Reese, #WURDoftheDay: The #Threeness of Being Black, American and a Woman — & Running a Radio Station While At It.” March 12, 2018.

<https://medium.com/@onwurd/wurdoftoday-the-three-ness-of-being-black-american-and-a-woman-running-a-radio-station-55c183f6f93>

Nahum Welang, “Triple Consciousness: The Reimagination of Black Female Identities in Contemporary American Culture,” *Open Culture Studies* 2 (2018), 296-306.

Atima Omara, “Triple consciousness: To be Black and an Immigrant in America.” *Salon*. September 2017. <https://www.salon.com/2017/09/17/triple-consciousness-to-be-black-and-an-immigrant-in-america/>

Petra R. Rivera, “Triple Consciousness,” *Transition* 105 (2011), 156-163.

Kenneth N. Ngwa, *Let My People Live: An Africana Reading of Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022), 13-34 (Available as an e-book on library website)

Tuesday, September 17: Exodus, Colonization, and Africana

Readings

Rhondda R. Thomas, “Exodus and Colonization: Charting the Journey in the Journals of Daniel Coker, a Descendant of Africa,” *African American Review* 41/3 (2007), 507-519.

Phyllis Taoua, “The Chance of Freedom: Of Storytelling and Memory in Neo-Slave Narratives,” *Transition* 131 (2021), 194-213.

Kenneth Ngwa, “At Exodus as a Door of (No) Return,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 136/1 (2017), 213-220.

Additional Readings

Anna Kasafi Perkins, “Resisting Definitive Interpretation: Seeing the Story of the Exodus through Caribbean(ite) Eyes,” *Caribbean Quarterly*, 51, No. 2 (June 2005), 53-66 (On Moodle)

Masiwa Ragies Gunda, “Understanding the Role of the Exodus in the Institutionalization and Dismantling of Apartheid: Considering the Paradox of Justice and Injustice in the Exodus,” *Religions* 12 (2021), 1-13. (On Moodle)

Tuesday, September 24: Intersectional Postcolonial Approaches

Readings:

Gerald O. West, “Twice Called, Thrice Rebuked: Doing African Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 134/4 (2015), 850-854.

Kenneth Ngwa, “The Making of Gershom’s Story: A Cameroonian Postwar Hermeneutics Reading of Exodus 2,” *JBL* 134/4 (2015), 855-876.

L. Juliana Claassens, “Memories of Midwives,” *JBL* 134/4 (2015), 877-881.

- Aliou C. Niang, "Space and Human Agency in the Making of the Story of Gershom through a Senegalese Christian Lens," *JBL* 134/4 (2015), 882-889.
- Musa W. Dube, "A Luta Continua: Toward Trickster Intellectuals and Communities," *JBL* 134/4 (2015), 890-902.

Tuesday, October 1: Asynchronous Work (5-6 double pages max)

- a. What is a triple-conscious theory?
- b. How is triple consciousness related to Africana interpretations of Exodus as a story and a motif?
- c. How do you situate yourself within triple consciousness scholarship?

Tuesday, October 8: Womanist & Bosadi Approaches to Exodus

Readings:

- Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "How Liberating Is the Exodus and for Whom? Deconstructing Exodus Motifs in Scripture, Literature, and Life," in Athalya Brenner and Gale E. Yee eds., *Exodus and Deuteronomy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 3-28.
- Madipoane Masenya, "'...but you shall let every girl live': Reading Exodus 1:1-2:10 the Bosadi (Womanhood) way," *Old Testament Essays* 15/1 (2002), 99-112.
- Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 35-53.

Tuesday, October 15: Eco-critical Approach

Readings:

Exodus 7-10

Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 111-132.

Yoon-Jae Chang, "Exodus to a New Earth," *The Ecumenical Review* 65/4 (2013), 485-488.

Ched Myers, "Nature against Empire: Exodus Plagues, Climate Crisis and Hardheartedness." Blog. <https://chedmyers.org/2018/07/08/blog-2018-07-08-nature-against-empire-exodus-plagues-climate-crisis-and-hardheartedness-ched-myers/>

Tuesday, October 22: Health Approach

Readings:

Exodus 7-11

Randall C. Bailey, "'And they shall Know that I am YHWH!': The P Recasting of the Plague Narratives in Exodus 7-11," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, 22/1 (1994), 1-17.

Devon J. Supervise, Kenneth L. Pargament, and Jerry W. Lee, "Keeping Sabbath and its Relationships to Health and Well-Being: A Mediatonal Analysis," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 22 (2014), 241-256.

Felix Chimera Nyika, "Breaking the Glass Ceiling and Malawian Neocharismatic Churches," *PentecoStudies*, 15/2 (2016), 150-171.

Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 133-153

Tuesday, October 29: Contextual Bible Study Approach

Readings:

Gerald West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1/2 (2015), 235-261.

Ujamaa Center *CBS Manual*, pp 3-5 & 9-13

Sarojini Nadar, "Beyond the 'Ordinary Reader' and the 'Invisible Intellectual': Pushing the Boundaries of Contextual Bible Study Discourses," in Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia eds., *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012), 13-27

Madipoane Masenya, "Whose Reading Matters? Rereading Exodus 1 in the context of African (South African) Women," *Dialog* 59/2 (2020), 107-114.

Tuesday, November 5: Exodus and Dreams of Liberation and Flourishing

Readings:

Psalm 126 and Numbers 12:1-16

Safwat Marzouk, "Migration in the Joseph Narrative: Integration, Separation, and Transnationalism," *Hebrew Studies* 60 (2019), 71-90.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "Prophecy in the Present Tense: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee Pilgrimage, and Dreams Coming True," *Meridians* 12/2 (2014), 142-152.

Dann J. Broyle, "The Underground Railroad as Afrofuturism," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 6/3 (2019), 170-184.

Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 143-148.

Stephanie Jones and Nicol R. Howard, "Traversing the Gaps: An Afrofuturist Approach to Social Change Through Dreaming in Science Fiction and STEM/Computer Science Education," *Journal of Future Studies* 26/3 (2022), 45-52.

SECTION TWO: EXEGETICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL WORK

Tuesday, November 12: Exodus 1-2

Ngwa, *Let My people Live*, 81-110.

Gabriel Akimana, "Gender-Based Violence and Ironies of Patriarchy in Exodus 1:15-22," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 175 (2023), 21-33.

Tuesday, November 19: Exodus 3-4

Readings

Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Hulisani Ramantswana, "Lupfumo lu Mavuni (Wealth is in the Land): In Search of the Promised Land (cf. Ex 3-4) in the Post-Colonial, Post-Apartheid South Africa" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 151 (Mar 2015), 96-116.

Tuesday, November 26; Thanksgiving Break; SBL Meeting. NO CLASS

Tuesday, December 3: Student Presentations and Discussions

Tuesday, December 10 (if needed): Student Presentations and Discussions