

RELI 386 – Exodus and Revolution: Violence and Religious Narrative
Weds 1-3, Rockefeller Hall 212
Fall 2009

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I do not like the New Testament, that should be plain... The *Old* Testament—that is something else again: all honor to the Old Testament! I find in it great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naiveté of the *strong heart*; what is more, I find a people. – Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

I: Course Description

This seminar will explore the way a single biblical story, the story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, has influenced politics, literature, and identity formation. Central to the class will be political philosopher Michael Walzer's claim that the Exodus provides a paradigm of social democratic politics. After reading the Exodus story ourselves, we will begin to interrogate Walzer's claim by examining the story's in an array of contexts. We will consider the role that Exodus played in the construction of American political identity, Latin American liberation theology, and Israeli politics. Particular attention will be paid to the role of Exodus in African American political and religious traditions. Finally, the class will broach more theoretical questions about the role of religion in creating conceptions of nation and peoplehood. Do we need paradigmatic stories for shaping political and moral identity of community? Does the demand for a paradigm, particularly a paradigm like Exodus with its emphasis on chosenness and messianism, produce distasteful politics in the process? How can we read stories like Exodus responsibly?

a) participation: This course will be taught as a seminar course—not a lecture course. I will be directing and shaping discussion, as well as raising important theoretical concerns. Your questions, preoccupations, perplexities, and passions will comprise our discussion's substantive content. You should consider this class a collective intellectual endeavor in which our questions and concerns contribute to an environment of open and respectful exchange. Of course, it is essential that you come to class having read closely and ready to contribute to class discussion. Participation will count for approximately 20% of your grade

b) presentation and response: 20%

- Presenting (20-30minutes): The idea is not to summarize the assigned text, but to give a provocative critical reading. Plumb your passions, and then incorporate them into your response.
- Response Question (10 minutes): You are responsible for beginning each class with a short account of what we talked about, which will then lead into your posing a mock essay question that you think came out of the previous class session. You need to write this down and hand it in.

c) writing (see syllabus for due dates)

- Mid-term paper (7 pages) 20%
- Final paper (12-15 pages) 40%

III Required Texts:

Regina Schwartz, *Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago)

Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Penguin)

Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *Exodus ! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago)

Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (HarperCollins)

Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Orbis)
 Zora Neal Hurston, *Moses Man of the Mountain* (Perennial)
God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, ed. Conrad Cherry
 (University of North Carolina Press)
 Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton)
 Rene Girard, *The Rene Girard Reader* (Crossroad Herder)
The Bible--New Revised Standard Version (Zondervan)
 For Your Amusement (definitely check it out!):
<http://www.thebricktestament.com/exodus/index.html>

IV: Schedule of Class Meetings

Sept 2--Introduction

Sept 9—THE BIBLICAL EXODUS

- Exodus 1-25, 29:38-46
- Numbers: 10-21, 31-32, 34-35
- Leviticus 11:1-31, 15:16-30, 18, 19:10-27, 25:35-26:46
- Deuteronomy 1, 3:23-29, 4:1-40, 7, 13, 28-31:21, 32:44-52, 34
- Jeffrey Stout, "What is the Meaning of a Text?" **[BB]**

Sept 16—WALZER'S EXODUS

- Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*—ALL
- Edward Said, "Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution*: A Canaanite Reading," *Grand Street* 5 (1985-86), 86-106.
- Edward Said and Michael Walzer, "An Exchange: Michael Wazler and Edward Said," *Grand Street* 5 (1985-86), 246-259

Sept 23—VIOLENCE, NARRATIVE, AND THE NATION

- Regina Schwartz, *Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*—ALL
- Benedict Anderson, excerpt from, *Imagined Communities*
- Alasdair MacIntyre, excerpt After Virture, chapter 15

Sept 30—SACRIFICE: THE TIES THAT BIND

- Excerpts from the Girard Reader
- Mathews, Donald G. "The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice." *Journal of Southern Religion* 3, 2000: <http://jsr.fsu.edu/mathews.htm>

Oct 7—AMERICAN FOUNDINGS

Excerpts from David and Carolyn Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* **[BB]**

- Selected essays from: *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*, ed. Conrad Cherry
 "Introduction," by Conrad Cherry, 1-21
 John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity"
 Nicholas Street, "The American States Acting Over the Part of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness"
 Samuel Langdon, "The Republic of the Israelites an Example to the American States"
 Henry Ward Beecher, "The Battle Set in Array"
 Benjamin M. Palmer, "National Responsibility before God"
 Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address"

Oct 14—AFRICAN AMERICAN APPROPRIATIONS

- Albert Raboteau, "African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel"
- Eddie Glaude, *Exodus!* -TBA

FALL BREAK

Oct 28—AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTESTATIONS

Zora Neale Hurston, *Moses Man of the Mountain*

Allen Dwight Callahan, "Exodus," from *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*, **ON BB**

Nov 4—LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*

Nov 11—DEMOCRATIC POSSIBILITIES

Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*

Eric Sundquist, "The Black Nation Israel," *Strangers in the Land*

Nov 18 - EXODUS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

THANKSGIVING

Dec 2—MODERN JEWISH STRUGGLES

Jon D. Levenson, "Liberation Theology and the Exodus"

Jon Levenson, "The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism"

Collected Essays from *The Jewish Political Tradition*, ed. Michael Walzer, et. al.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "The Uniqueness of the Jewish People," "The Religious Significance of the State of Israel" **DO NOT READ "AFTER KIBIYEH" IN PDF**