

## **SYLLABUS J Term 2011**

### **Title of Course:**

**The Art of Presence: Text, Theology, and Theater**

**Instructors: Johanna Bos  
Cheryl Goodman-Morris**

### ***Course description***

**This course intends to engage students in a study of the composition and literary structure of biblical narrative with a goal of giving voice to the narrative through theological interpretation in theatrical performance. We will undertake in-depth explorations of biblical narrative, including both Testaments, focusing on specific narrative blocks for further literary and theological analysis. The intent is to deepen students' exposure to biblical texts through sharpening literary analytical tools and putting the results into the shape of performance. This class will thus increase love for and immersion into Scripture, while at the same time equipping students to become a dynamic engaging presence in leading worship.**

### ***Objectives***

**By means of biblical inquiry and the study of dramatic techniques, students will learn:**

- (1) Through the analysis of the structure and content of biblical narrative to become more deeply acquainted with specific biblical material.**
- (2) Through a close study of the literary structure, character presentation and development in Hebrew narrative to hone creative and analytical skills In interpreting the material**
- (3) Through the analysis of biblical narrative to develop storytelling skills, including grounded, organic delivery, memorization skills and ability to connect with an audience.**
- (4) Through the study of acting, voice and movement to develop performance skills.**
- (5) Through interpreting, performing and original character work to discover one's individual voice in relation to the biblical text.**
- (6) Through work in an ensemble setting to develop collaborative leadership skills.**

### ***Method***

Classes will open with meditative prayer, warm ups, and focus exercises. The morning will be partly devoted to close study of biblical narrative, guided by the text, posted questions and secondary material. The course will run from Jan. 10 through Jan. 21 during which we will study a narrative cycle in the Book of Genesis with the goal of performing the cycle in an ensemble piece. After opening exercises we will begin with an exploration of a biblical text, starting at the literary level and moving to the interpretive/theological level. This study will be followed by instruction in theater techniques. Afternoons will be devoted to workshop/rehearsal blocks. We will meet 4 days the 1st week, Mon-Thurs., Jan. 10-13, from 9-12, and 1-4 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14, will be open for individual coaching sessions. Class will not meet on Jan. 17, Martin Luther King's birthday, but will meet Tues., Jan. 18-Thurs., Jan. 20, with a possible final rehearsal on Friday Jan.21. At the conclusion of the session, on Friday, Jan. 21, there will be an evening to present the ensemble piece and monologues created by the class.

### ***Requirements***

[See Stated Objectives above]

1. In order to provide evidence of ability to articulate analytical and theological interpretive skills of biblical material, students will keep regular written reflections to be gathered in a portfolio which the instructors will review at the end of the class:

- A minimum of one page on each biblical text that is studied in detail in class.
- One page each day on their involvement with the performance part of the course.
- A 3-5 page paper will chart biblical theological insights and growth in performance skills achieved during the class, in which they link literary analysis with theological interpretation through performance.

2. To give evidence of skills learned in giving shape and voice to biblical text, students will put into practice the theater techniques they have learned; specifically:

- As the class progresses, each student will present a 3-5 minute monologue in class based on a Biblical character.

\* The class will perform an ensemble piece based on the Abraham/Sarah/Hagar cycle on the evening of Jan.21, 2011.

**\* In addition to the ensemble piece, students will present a selection of monologues practiced in class on the evening of Jan.21..**

### ***Inclusive Language***

**In speech and in written assignments, it is the policy of the school to avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. Do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well.**

**Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary. See:  
[http://www.lpts.edu/Academic\\_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp](http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp).**

### ***Evaluation***

**Students are expected to attend class at all times and to be prepared for discussion and other assigned activities. Absences on account of illness or other emergencies should be cleared with the instructor ahead of time. All written material should be collected in a portfolio to be checked by the instructors at the end of the course. The course will be taught on a pass/fail basis.**

### ***Academic Honesty***

**All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an early date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.**

### ***Internet and Cell Phones***

**The use of laptop computers during class is discouraged. Cell phones are to be turned off. Exceptions may be requested from the instructor.**

### ***In Preparation***

Read the textbook *Reading Biblical Narratives* ahead of time.

Read biblical texts posted on the CAMS site.

Pick one biblical character from the selected texts for monologues that speaks to you in a particular way. Choose people you are drawn to or repelled by, characters to whom you have a strong reaction.

Biblical Texts for critical in-depth study and performance:

- 1) Terah's family; Call to Abram; Abram and Sarai in Egypt: Genesis 11:27-12: 20;
- 2) Sarai, Abram and Hagar: Genesis 16: 1-15;
- 3) Birth announcements and birth of Isaac: Genesis 17: 15-22; Genesis 18: 1-15; 21: 1-7;
- 4) Hagar and Ishmael: Genesis 21: 8-21

Possible Texts for monologue preparation:

Genesis 16: 1-16; Genesis 27: 5-17; Genesis 38: 1-30; Genesis 39:1-23; Joshua 2; Judges 4:17-23; Judges 16; 1 Samuel 1: 1-28; 1 Samuel 25: 1-43; 2 Samuel 3: 1-39; Ruth 1; 3:1-17; Matth. 14:22-33; Mark 7: 24-30; Mark 14: 3-9; Luke 1: 26-38; 46-56; Luke 10: 38-42; Luke 18: 18-23; John 2:1-12; John 3:1-16

Required reading

Amit, Yairah. *Reading Biblical Narratives – Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 2001.

Weems, Renita J. *Just a Sister Away – Understanding the Timeless Connection between Women of Today and Women in the Bible*. New York: Time Warner, 1998, 2005.

Ben Izzy, Joel. *The Beggar King and the Secret of Happiness*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2003.

Buechner, Frederick. *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale*. San Francisco: Harper 1977.

Troeger, Tom. *Imagining a Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.

Material posted on CAMS from the following books:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

Fokkelman, J.P.. *Reading Biblical Narrative – An Introductory Guide*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *But She Said – Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon, 1992.

Gunn, David M. and Nolan Fewell, Danna. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Bar Efrat, Shimon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Sheffield: Almond, 1989.

#### Recommended Reading:

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way*. New York: Putnam, 1992.

Johnstone, Keith. *Improvisation and the Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Leonard, Jr., Jim. *The Diviners: A Play in Two Acts and Elegies*. New York, Samuel French, 1980.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*. New York: North Point, 1980.

Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater*, Third Edition. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1999.

#### Class Schedule:

January 10: Opening exercises.

The structure and composition of Genesis 12:1 – 25:18 plot and character development. Theological interpretation of this narrative within the complex of ancestor narratives in Genesis.

Theater Techniques.

Sketching out the possibilities of a performance

Workshop/rehearsal of biblical text.

January 11: Opening exercises. First monologues.

Focus on: Genesis 12: 1-20

Theater techniques

**Afternoon: workshop/rehearsal .**

**January 12: Opening exercises. Monologues of chosen characters.  
Focus on Genesis 16: 1-15 structure, composition, plot and character.  
Theater techniques. Sketching possibilities of performance piece.**

**Afternoon: workshop/rehearsal**

**January 13: Opening exercises. Monologues of chosen characters.  
Focus on: Genesis 17: 15-22; 18: 1-15; 21: 1-7.  
Theater techniques.**

**Afternoon: Workshop/rehearsal**

**January 14: Coaching sessions for individuals.**

**January 18: Opening exercises. Monologues.  
Focus on Genesis 21: 8-21; 25: 1-18  
Theater techniques.**

**Afternoon: Workshop/rehearsal**

**January 19: Opening exercises. Monologues.  
Review of the narrative cycle studied  
Theater techniques.**

**Afternoon: Workshop/rehearsal.**

**January 20: Opening exercises. Monologues. Review. Theater techniques**

**Afternoon: workshop/rehearsal.**

**January 21: Opening exercises.  
Performance rehearsal, wrap-up and preparation for evening performance**

**Evening: Presentation of Ensemble piece and Monologues.**