Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

SF/RHS 501: “You hear my cry”: Reading and praying the Psalms as a spiritual practice.

Syllabus – Fall 2019

Teaching Team:
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Rationale for the course

This class seeks to introduce to the Psalms as a rich spiritual and practical resource for our spiritual formation as ministerial leaders, as well as for the practice of ministry.

Our exploration of the tradition of the Psalms will focus on their various forms and on the occasions to pray them: as prayers of the individual, as prayers of the community, as hymns, and as songs of thanksgiving. Likewise we will explore the ways in which the differing forms of praise, lament/complaint, and wisdom give voice to the complex realities of the life of faith. We will consider how to use the psalms as a resource for spiritual care of ourselves and others.

We will immerse ourselves in the metaphors and the faith world of the Psalms through reading, prayer, meditation, and chanting. We will also read selected interpretations and re-creations of the Psalms from feminist, liberation-theological, post-colonial, and queer perspectives. We will consider how the psalms invite us to expand our images and metaphors for God.

Martin Luther called the Psalms a “small bible.” It was through continuously reading and praying the Psalms that Luther drove home his deep fundamental theological conviction that humans will be justified by grace alone. Consequently, some of his first writings for the larger public written in the vernacular language explained to his contemporary audience the meaning of selected Psalms. Through holding on to the Psalmists’ certainty that they would, ultimately be saved by God, Luther could develop his own spirituality based on this essential hope for justification through faith in the God of the Bible.

This class aims at immersing ourselves into the faith-world of the Psalms and at gaining strength in faith through these testimonies of our ancestors’ faith.

Outcomes

This course intends to train students in Spiritual Formation. It attempts to help students to self-identify as persons created and called to live ethically in community and, more specifically as people of faith who are called to give witness to Jesus Christ, their Trinitarian faith, care for creation, and community with human neighbors (Competency M.Div. MA, MAM #1).
This course also enables the student to understand their religious heritage in the form of the scripture of the Old Testament (Competency M. Div., MA, MAM # 2). Also, it enables the
student to become aware of the cultural contexts of the biblical texts (Competency M. Div. MA, MAM #5).

Textbooks: