

DMin S604: Paul's Use of Narrative

Early Edition

WTS, May 2016

Dr. Carla Works

cworks@wesleyseminary.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the stories that are informing and supporting Paul's instruction to the churches and how these stories are employed to shape congregations. Particular attention will be given to the appropriateness of "story" as a hermeneutical category for Paul's letters, the evidence of stories engaging Paul's thought, the problem of competing narratives in Paul's churches, and the significance of "story" for the church today. Some of the topics explored will include the gospel as story, Paul's own story, God's story, the stories of Israel, and competing stories in Paul's environment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed so that students will engage in the following:

- Identify critical issues in the identification of narrative(s) in the study of Paul's letters
- Assess whether or not there is a grand narrative substructure to Paul's thought world
- Study texts in the Pauline corpus that convey language from multiple perspectives and perhaps competing stories or values
- Reflect on the value of Paul and story for the stories of contemporary readers

Intersection with Wesley Seminary's Curricular Objectives for the D.Min. Degree

- Educate you about current trends and issues in theological disciplines, particularly pertaining to Pauline studies
- Encourage you to integrate theological disciplines with your practice of ministry (through theological reflection and through the final project for the course)
- Prepare you to add to the church's knowledge of the practice of ministry (through the final project and through the class's creation of a wiki resource guide)
- Provide you with opportunities to establish lasting collegial ties (through class discussion and through collaboration on the wiki resource guide)

COURSE READINGS

*****The students are expected to read all assignments before class begins.*****

Bruce W. Longenecker, ed. *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Westminster John Knox, 2002). ISBN: 978-0664222772

Ben Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*. Westminster John Knox, 1994. ISBN: 978-0664254339

Articles posted on Blackboard:

Fowl, Stephen. "Some Uses of Story in Moral Discourse," *Modern Theology* 4 (1988): 293-308.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *Our Mother Saint Paul*, (chapter 7) 101-111, 191-194.

Gorman, Michael. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*, 98-114 (Chapter 4)

Hays, Richard B. "Is Paul's Gospel Narratable?" *JSNT* 27 (2004): 217-239.

Keesmaat, Sylvia. "Exodus and the Intertextual Transformation of Tradition in Romans 8:14-30," *JSNT* 54 (1994): 29-56.

Lloyd Lewis, "An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle," in *Stony the Road We Trod*, 232-241

Martin, Dale. *Slavery as Salvation*, chapter 4

PRE- CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Critical Review on Ben Witherington's *Paul's Narrative Thought World*. Outline Witherington's key argument, critical assumptions, and rationale for this project. In your assessment, what are the strengths of this book? Weaknesses? Does Witherington succeed in capturing "Paul's narrative thought world"? Are there any aspects of this project that resonate with your ministry? This reflection should be 3 to 4 double-spaced pages. **Due at the beginning of the first day of class.** Please post on Blackboard.

2. Pre-Class Journal Entry: In 300 words, reflect on the ways in which the stories in Paul's thought world shape your ministry. (NOTE: This assignment will be factored into the participation grade). *Due before class begins. Please post on Blackboard.*

3. Reading.

Reading Assessment Guide: Attached you will find a worksheet to help you take notes on your reading. Answers to this worksheet will not be collected, but will be discussed in our seminar time. Students will be responsible to summarize their answers to the attached questions.

Reflection Guide: Below is a sample of some of the larger questions that will be discussed in our seminar time together. You are invited to reflect on these questions as you are doing your pre-class assignment.

- Is there an over-arching story of God/creation/Israel/Christ discernible in the Pauline texts? Is Paul drawing from an overarching narrative or only from specific stories (such as the "gospel" or stories within Israel's traditions)?
- Even those who doubt the category of narrative in Pauline study note that Paul does appeal to stories from Israel's Scripture. In your assessment, how does Paul use scripture in his letters?
- What is the gospel? Is it a story? Can it be reconstructed from Paul's letters? If it is a story, which parts are essential elements?
- What role does Paul's own story play in his letters?
- How might Paul's use of story(ies) shape the identity and behavior of the early believers?
- Are there other stories that need to be considered as we read the Pauline epistles? If so, whose stories?
- In what ways do the stories in Paul's thought world shape your ministry?