

**Course Syllabus**  
**The Biblical Story of Healing and Hope**  
**BTS/PCD 5080C: Topics in Biblical and Theological Studies**  
**June 13–17, 2016, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**  
**Voluntary Withdrawal Date July 15, 2016**

**Instructor: Dan Epp-Tiessen**  
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### **Course Description**

In order to face the challenges of our world, peacemakers must be people of hope. This course will explore the overarching biblical story, that runs from God's creation of the world at the beginning of time to God's re-creation of the world at the end of history, as a story of healing and hope, focusing on how this story can nurture a spirituality and faith that are personally transformative and empower Christians to be agents of God's healing power in a hurting world. The course will examine biblical themes such as God as creator and liberator, prophetic visions of hope, praise and worship, God's reign/kingdom as initiated by Jesus, resurrection, and God's sustaining presence in human life, always asking how these biblical resources can be empowering for the challenges of peacemaking, justice work, and creation care.

### **Learning Objectives**

After successful completion of this course students should have:

1. An understanding of the overarching biblical story that runs from creation to new creation as a story of healing and hope.
2. Awareness of the contribution that important themes and texts of the Bible make to this narrative of healing and hope.
3. An understanding of the nature of biblical hope and how such hope is central to vibrant Christian life.
4. Awareness of how the biblical story can nurture and sustain personal and collective spirituality and practices that lead to both personal and social healing and transformation.
5. Some understanding of how the biblical story can generate hope and inspire and sustain peacemakers in their challenging work of reconciliation, peacemaking, seeking justice, and caring for creation.

### **Textbooks**

N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

Any modern translation of the Bible, but not a paraphrase. **Students should bring their Bibles to each**

class.

**It is the responsibility of students to acquire their own copies of the textbooks. The textbooks can be purchased online at <http://www.amazon.ca/books-used-books-textbooks/b?node=916520>.**

## Course Requirements

**Reading** The textbooks by Wright and Middleton. Because the class discussion will assume familiarity with these two textbooks, even students not taking the course for academic credit are expected to read them before the beginning of the course.

**Attendance** The classroom is a learning community in which the presence of each student enhances the learning experience of others. Consistent class attendance is expected of all participants in the course, and is mandatory for students taking the course for academic credit. I cannot give credit to students who do not participate in the course, and so any student missing more than one session will not receive academic credit for the course.

**Written Work** **\*More detailed instructions for written assignments are given at the end of the syllabus.**

A book review essay (3000–4000 words) focusing on the course textbooks. Due by the beginning of the first class on June 13.

A reflection paper (3500–4500 words) focusing on the content of the course. Due before midnight on Saturday, July 2.

A research essay (4500–5500 words). Due before midnight on Saturday, Aug. 6.

All assignments should be emailed to the instructor at [depptiessen@cmu.ca](mailto:depptiessen@cmu.ca). If you do not receive an acknowledgment that your work has been received then it is your responsibility to re-submit or contact the instructor. You are more than welcome to submit your work before the due date.

Learning to meet deadlines is an important academic and life skill. Assignments received on time will be rewarded with full marks but the grade of late assignments will automatically be reduced by one full letter grade. Exceptions will be made for students who experience illness or some major life crisis.

Good communication skills are essential for justice and peacebuilding work. In their written assignments students will be expected to communicate knowledgeably, clearly, concisely, and persuasively. Written work should be well informed, well organized, and well documented. It should use proper academic format and proper English writing style with a minimum of stylistic, grammar, and spelling errors.

Grading	Book review essay	30%
	Personal Reflection paper	20%
	Research essay	40%
	Class participation and preparation	10%

**Grading Scheme:** Each completed assignment will be given a numerical grade and a corresponding

letter grade. The final mark will be determined by the sum total of all numerical grades, which is then assigned a letter grade according to the scale below. Please note that grades are not final until vetted by the CMU Dean's office.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Points	Descriptor
A+	95-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	88-94	4	Excellent
B+	81-87	3.5	Very Good
B	74-80	3	Good
C+	67-73	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-67	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49		Failure

<b>CONTENT</b> (quality of the information/ideas and sources/details used to support them)	- has clarity of purpose - has depth of content - displays insight or originality of thought -demonstrates quality and breadth of resources	- has clarity of purpose - has substantial information and sufficient support - contains some originality of thought -uses quality resources	- has clarity of purpose -lacks depth of content and may depend on generalities or the commonplace - has little originality of thought -uses mostly quality resources
<b>STRUCTURE</b> (logical order or sequence of the writing)	- is coherent and logically developed -uses very effective transitions	- is coherent and logically developed -uses smooth transitions	- is coherent and logically (but not fully) developed -has some awkward transitions
<b>CONVENTIONS</b> (appearance of the writing: sentence structure, usage, mechanics, documentation)	- has virtually no errors of conventions	- has minimal errors of conventions	- is understandable <u>but</u> has noticeable problems of sentence structure, usage, mechanics or documentation
<b>STYLE</b> (personality of the writing: word choice, sentence variety, voice, attention to audience)	- is concise, eloquent and rhetorically effective -has nicely varied sentence structure -is engaging throughout and enjoyable to read	- displays concern for careful expression -has some variation in sentence structure -is generally enjoyable to read	- has some personality <u>but</u> lacks imagination and may be stilted and may rely on clichés -has little variation in sentence structure -is not very interesting to read

**Academic Conduct** Students must be familiar with CMU polices regarding plagiarism and other aspects of academic misconduct, as spelled out in the *CMU Academic Calendar* <http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=registrar&p=policies>. If you have doubts about appropriate use of an author's material, a useful website to consult is <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>. Plagiarism is a serious issue and will result in significant grade reduction or failing the course.

**Laptops & Tablets** Students are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in class, but such usage is a privilege. This privilege will immediately be revoked if a student uses such devices for non-academic purposes. Use of other electronic devices in class is prohibited.

#### Accessibility Programs

CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at [sloepky@cmu.ca](mailto:sloepky@cmu.ca) or 204.487.3300 x.340.

## Tentative Course Outline

### Monday, June 13

10:00–11:00

- Introduction to the course
- Self-introduction of students
- Christian understandings of hope

11:30–12:30

- The Bible as a grand metanarrative of healing and hope
- The overarching plot of the biblical story

1:30–3:30

- Genesis 1–2 as the foundation of biblical hope
- How does the story of “the fall” (Genesis 3) complicate the picture?
- Is there any hope in the flood story?

4:00–5:00

- God begins to form a people: The call of Abraham and Sarah
- Living between promise and fulfillment

### Tuesday, June 14

9:00–10:30

- Psalm 46: The promise of God's presence in difficult times
- The Book of Exodus
  - humour as a source of hope in Exodus
  - the midwives Shiphrah and Puah: heroic stories as a source of hope
  - salvation as holistic
  - exodus as an ongoing paradigm of deliverance for God's people

11:00–12:30

- “Bound for freedom”—what do covenant and law have to do with salvation and hope?

- Not all biblical stories are liberating: Genocide and ethnic cleansing in the book of Joshua
- Fallout from Joshua: Justification for colonialism, conquest, genocide, Doctrine of Discovery

1:30–2:30 - Sampler: Participants will sit in on other courses

3:00–5:00 - The emergence of prophetic hope

- Isaiah: Messianic king, glorified Zion/Jerusalem, restoration from exile, Suffering Servant
- Jeremiah: Lessons on how to survive in exile
- Ezekiel: Can these dry bones live?

**Wednesday, June 15**

9:00–10:30 - How prophetic hope morphs into apocalyptic hope

- The Book of Daniel: Apocalyptic visions promising God’s defeat of oppressive empires

11:00–12:30 - Jesus and the proclamation of the Kingdom/Reign of God

1:30–3:30 - The healing role of lament and praise in the life of faith

- The shape of God’s Kingdom/Reign: Jesus and his parables, healings, exorcisms, beatitudes
- The already but not-yet character of the Kingdom

4:00–5:00 - Atonement theories: How does Jesus save us?

**Thursday, June 16**

9:00–10:30 - The transforming power of the cross

- James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*
  - how can the biblical story and Christian practices heal distorted human desires?

11:00–12:30 - “Eternal life” in the Gospel of John

- The shape of the Apostle Paul’s future hope: The return of Christ, the new aeon, resurrection, the role of the church, renewal of creation

2:00–3:30 - Is hope in life after death escapist, or can it be a source of empowerment in the work for peace, justice, and care for creation?

- What about heaven, hell, the return of Christ, and the final judgment?

- More on the shape of Paul’s future hope

4:00–5:00 - Building for the kingdom: Resurrection and the mission of the church

### **Friday, June 17**

- 9:00–10:30
- Becoming friends with the strange book of Revelation: What story is it trying to tell?
  - Dragon Wars: The Christmas story according to Revelation
- 11:00–12:30
- Sources of hope in Revelation: The throne of God, worship, the Lamb that was slain, God’s defeat of the Dragon-Beast system (the Roman Empire), the new Jerusalem, God’s new creation
- 1:30–3:00
- How Christian hope becomes escapist and other-worldly in the post-New Testament era
  - final reflections

## **Book Review Essay**

A book review essay is basically a combination of two book reviews with some added comments comparing the books being reviewed. Your task is to review the two textbooks for this course.

Begin your review essay with a title page that includes your name, followed by the heading “Book Review Essay of,” followed by the full bibliographic information of the books you are reviewing.

Begin your review of each book by summarizing the author’s main thesis and describing how he develops that thesis. Then summarize the main points of the book. Be careful not to simply provide an outline of the book but rather an engaging summary of its main arguments and line of reasoning (ca. 60% of the essay). You may use the very occasional direct quotation from either book, but generally you should make your points in your own words.

Footnotes are not necessary in a book review. To indicate the source of a quotation or important point simply include the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence (eg. p. 34).

At some point in your review essay you should bring the two books into dialogue with each other. How are they similar or different, are there points of overlap, do the authors adopt similar or different approaches, is their content complementary, supplementary, or contradictory, etc.?

Provide some of your own intellectual interaction with the contents of each book. What did you learn from each book? Are there issues that were omitted that might have been discussed? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each book? What contributions does each book make to an understanding of the Christian faith and the Bible?

Total length of this assignment is 3000–4000 words.

An electronic version of this assignment is due at the beginning of the first class on June 13. Please email your assignment to [depptiessen@cmu.ca](mailto:depptiessen@cmu.ca). If you do not receive an acknowledgment that your work has been received then it is your responsibility to re-submit or contact the instructor.

## Personal Reflection Paper

This paper provides an opportunity for you to reflect personally on what you have learned in the course and where you find hope in the biblical story.

Choose two or three biblical texts or themes that inspire, challenge, and empower you, and are sources of healing and hope for you. These texts or themes may be ones that we discussed during the course or they need not be. I encourage you to choose at least one that we did not deal with in class, but this is not essential.

Your engagement with each text or theme should:

1. Provide a clear summary of the text or theme. You need to demonstrate that you understand it and are doing justice to what the Bible says.
2. Explain what it is about the text or theme that inspires you and gives you hope. How does this text/theme function in your life?
3. Explain the implications of the text/theme for your personal life, and/or the life of the church, and/or for Christian engagement with the needs of the world. You needn't address all three of these with respect to each text/theme, but you should make sure that your reflections are not only limited to implications for your personal life.
4. Engage the insights and information shared in class as well as those found in the textbooks. Your comments will hopefully not be limited only to material covered in the course, but your reflection must engage in a significant way with the material discussed during the course and in the textbooks. You should also feel free to include insights gleaned from sources beyond this course.

Total length of this assignment is 3500–4500 words.

An electronic version of this assignment is due before midnight on Saturday, July 2. Please email your assignment to [depptiessen@cmu.ca](mailto:depptiessen@cmu.ca). If you do not receive an acknowledgment that your work has been received then it is your responsibility to re-submit or contact the instructor.

## Essay Assignment

Each student is required to write a research essay of 4500–5500 words dealing with a particular biblical text or topic related to the course material. The following points are important to remember as you work on your essay.

1. The essay should make use of a wide range of relevant scholarship on the passage or topic, and indicate that you are familiar with both the relevant scholarly viewpoints regarding the text or topic, and any interpretive issues involved. You may use internet sources, but because such sources are often unreliable you should use them judiciously and sparingly, and only as a supplement to library sources.

2. The essay should contain some of your personal evaluation of issues raised by the text or topic and the related scholarly work. There are often differences of opinion among biblical scholars and theologians, and so it is important to be able to evaluate the validity of different arguments and viewpoints.

3. The essay should provide an in-depth analysis of the biblical text or topic, but it should also include significant theological reflection on how your particular text or topic fits into the larger biblical story of healing and hope and also how it can generate healing and hope today.

4. It is essential that the paper utilize proper essay format, and be written in proper English style with a minimum of stylistic, grammar, and spelling errors. It is also essential that you avoid plagiarism and document your work properly. You should use the Chicago style of documenting your work. Students must follow carefully the suggestions in the document “Guidelines for Essay Writing” that will be distributed during the first class. CMU’s official style guide is Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, Sixth edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012). Papers which are not properly documented or are not written in university level prose, will be returned to the student unmarked and the student will have opportunity to complete the assignment properly.

5. Below are a few potential topics to stimulate your thinking. I want you to work on a topic that is of particular interest to you and so I encourage you to come up with a topic that is not on this list. Before the week of classes is over each student should choose an essay topic and have a conversation with me about the focus of their research. The text or topic for the essay may not be the same as one chosen for the personal reflection paper.

The creation poems at the end of Job

A word study of the Hebrew words “to judge (shaphat)” and “justice (mishpat)”

The “Day of the Lord” in the Old Testament prophets

Old Testament Images of the Messiah

Psalms of trust

Psalms that are hymns of praise

The *Parousia* (return) of Jesus

The significance of resurrection for Paul

The significance of exorcisms performed by Jesus

The significance of healing stories (choose several examples)

“Eternal life” in John and elsewhere in the New Testament

The throne of God as a symbol of hope



The centrality of Zion for Old Testament hope

Biblical images of the last judgment

What is the role of the disasters in the book of Revelation?

Worship as a source of hope in the Book of Revelation or elsewhere

Choose to explore a particular passage that is significant to the biblical story of healing and hope

An electronic version of this assignment is due before midnight on Saturday, Aug. 8. Please email your assignment to [deptiessen@cmu.ca](mailto:deptiessen@cmu.ca). If you do not receive an acknowledgment that your work has been received then it is your responsibility to re-submit or contact the instructor.