

Wyt 3824hf/6824hf
Music, Prophecy and Culture

Instructor: Dr. Brian J. Walsh
Tuesdays, 7.00-9.00

Description:

While theology has always found a fruitful dialogue partner in the arts, this course will approach the world of contemporary music in genres as diverse as rock, bluegrass, hip hop, folk and alternative rock as theological resources in their own right. Attending to the interweaving of biblical iconography, symbols, narratives, motifs and themes in the lyrics of these artists, we will explore the prophetic, pastoral, liturgical and theological contribution that they make for Christian reflection and praxis in a late modern socio-historical context. There will be focused attention in this course on the artistry of Canadian singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn. We will also have sessions with local musicians playing their music and in conversation.

Required Texts:

Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* 2nd ed (Fortress Press, 2001).

Stephen Ctanzarite, *Achtung Baby: Meditations on Love in the Shadow of the Fall* (Continuum, 2007).

Brian J. Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and a Christian Imagination* (unpub. mss available from the instructor).

Selected Readings

Some Further Recommended Readings:

David Dark. *Everyday Apocalypse: The Sacred Revealed in Radiohead, The Simpsons and other Pop Culture Icons* (Brazos Press, 2002).

Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Popular Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Bill Friskics-Warren. *I'll take you there : pop music and the urge for transcendence*. Continuum, 2005.

Michael J. Gilmour, ed., *Call Me the Seeker: Listening to Religion in Popular Music* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

Michael J. Gilmour. *Gods and Guitars: Seeking the Sacred in Post-1960s Popular Music* (Baylor University Press, 2009).

Michael J. Gilmour. *Tangled Up in the Bible: Bob Dylan and Scripture* (Continuum, 2004).

Steve Stockman, *Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2* (Relevant Media, 2001).

Robert Vagacs, *Religious Nuts Political Fanatics: U2 in Theological* (Cascade Books, 2005).

Brian Walsh, *Subversive Christianity* (Alta Vista College Press, 1994).

Raewynn Whiteley and Beth Maynard, eds. *Get up off your knees : preaching the U2 catalog* (Cowley Publications, 2003).

Course Learning Objectives:

1. to develop intertextual listening skills, attending to biblical themes, motifs, narratives and echoes in contemporary music.
2. to develop theological discernment of shifting cultural realities.
3. to engage in creative theological reflection in dialogue with the music of the artists discussed in the class.
4. to explore the pastoral, liturgical and praxiological possibilities inherent in the work of these artists.

Requirements:

1. Class Participation 20%
2. Album review 20% Due: **October 19**
3. Major essay engaging the theological motifs, images, echoes and implications of a significant themes in the work a contemporary artist: 60%
Proposals for the paper are due on **November 2**; and the paper is due on **December 7**.

Additional requirements for Advanced Degree Students:

1. Three seminar discussions on Jeremy Begbie's book, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Baker, 2007): times to be arranged
2. Reflection Paper: addressing questions of theological method in the theology/pop culture interface – 5 pages, due at the end of the course (or could be incorporated into the major research paper)

Some Important Notes:

1. **Double Sided Printing:** In order to conserve natural resources, all assignments in this course are to be double-sided or to be printed on the clean backs of re-used paper.

2. Wycliffe College Policy on Assignment Extensions:

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than two weeks before the completion of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar's office.

One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not been requested by the stated deadline.

Course Outline

- Sept. 14 Prophecy, Pathos and Music
Reading: Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, chs 1-3
- Sept. 21 Kicking at the Darkness: What are we doing here?
Reading: Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, chapters 4-6
Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness*, chapters 1-3
- Sept. 28 One Day I Shall Be Home: Cockburn's Creation Dream
Reading: Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness*, chapters 4-6
- Oct. 5 Rumours of Glory: Cockburn's Humans
Reading: Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness*, chapters 7-8.
- Oct 12 U2 and the Postmodern Turn
Reading: Stephen Catanzarite, *Achtung Baby*
- Oct. 19 Funerals, Bibles and the Burbs: Arcade Fire's Prophetic Parodies
Reading: Michael J. Gilmour, "Arcade Fire's Parodic Bible," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 21 (2009): [http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art\(se\)-ArcadeFire.html](http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art(se)-ArcadeFire.html)
Album Reviews Due
- Oct. 26 Reading Week
- Nov. 2 Waiting for a Miracle in a Broken Wheeled World: Cockburn, evil and hope
Reading: Walsh, *Kicking at the Darkness*, chapters 9-13.
Paper Proposals Due
- Nov. 9 Beyond Relevance: Worship, Hymnological Eclecticism
and the Pop Music Canon: A conversation with Rob Crosby-Shearer
about the music of Wine Before Breakfast and River
Reading: tba
- Nov. 16 Hip Hop Prophecy: Guest Lecture by Cyril Guérette (aka Ill Seer)
Reading: tba
- Nov. 23 Music, Soul and Faith
Guest singer-songwriters Deb Whelan and Monica Schroeder in conversation and
playing some tunes.
- Nov. 30 From Worship to Art and Back Again: an evening with Glen Soderholm
- Dec. 7 House Concert/Party
Major Essays Due