SYLLABUS for READING POETRY THEOLOGICALLY Summer 2021
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MONDAY, June 7: INTRODUCTIONS
Why poetry and the study of poetry offer a creative and important form of theological speech and reflection?
What does the study of poetry contribute to the tasks of theology and to the practices and mission of the church? How does it affect the ways that we read the Bible or other sacred texts?
How does poetry help us to understand contemporary voices, including those struggling with faith or of no faith, as well as voices that have been marginalized?
What does it mean to read poetry theologically, and how do we do it?

POETRY OF RELIGIOUS DEVOTION

Secondary Reading: “How Does Christianity Relate to Literature?” (Calvill & Pooley); see also the instructor’s “Reading Poems in Their Own Terms”

TUESDAY, June 8: POETRY AS BIBLE READING
Scott Cairns (“YWHW’s Image”); Lucille Clifton (“Report from the Angel of Eden”); Mary Szybist (“Annunciation Under Erasure”; see also text of Luke 1:26ff); Marie Howe (“Annunciation”); Eugenia Leigh (“Psalm 107”; please look up and read this Psalm in the Bible)

Secondary Reading: “Revised Versions: Poetry as Bible Reading” (David Mahan)

WEDNESDAY, June 9: POEMS OF MODERN FAITH & SEEKING

Secondary Reading: “Work that Enfaiths” (Denise Levertov); “Facing Altars” (Mary Karr)

THURSDAY, June 10: POETRY OF HISTORIC VIOLENCE & OPPRESSION

Secondary Reading: “Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective” (Copeland)

FRIDAY, June 11: POEMS OF RESURRECTION & RENEWAL
Noel Rowe (“Resurrection”); Mary Karr (“Descending Theology: The Resurrection”); Elizabeth Jennings (“Lazarus”); Mary Oliver (“The Place I Want to Get Back To”); Tina Chang (“Easter”)

Secondary Reading: “Poetry, Theology, and Emptiness” (Noel Rowe)