

Department of English
TTP Readings and Prompts

Downing, Crystal. "Imbricating Faith and Learning: The Architectonics of Christian Scholarship" from *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* eds. Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen, Oxford UP, 2004, pp. 33-45.

Gilyard, Keith. "Tracking Prophetic Witness." *Composition and Cornel West: Notes toward a Deep Democracy*, U of Southern Illinois UP, 2008, pp 52-77.

- Keith Gilyard examines the work and words of Cornel West in light of composition theory. His chapter on Prophetic Witness discusses the connection of West's understanding of prophetic witness to the goals of critical composition.

O'Connor, Flannery. "Catholic Novelists and Their Readers." *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970, pp. 169- 190.
www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9118.

- O'Connor writes about the role of the Christian novelist. She argues that it is no different than that of a novelist--to portray the real skillfully. She says the knowledge of the reality of the supernatural should make the Christian novelist more avid to do justice to the natural. Her argument is applicable to other novelists who write to make a point--the art and reality have to come before any message at the end, or before the utility of ideas.

Paulsell, Stephanie. "Writing as a Spiritual Discipline" in *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, edited by Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, Eerdmans, 2001, pp. 17-31.

- Paulsell's essay draws on the lives of Marguerite d' Oingt and Virginia Woolf to discuss the value of writing for spiritual formation. Though the essay is included in an anthology for theological educators, it offers important theory about writing.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. "Writing as a Means of Grace." *Going on Faith*, edited by William Zinsser, Wipf & Stock, 1999, 121-136.

- Pelikan looks at spiritual autobiographies by Augustine, Boethius, and Newman in order to show how by engaging in written self-reflection these writers were able to articulate powerful truths about God, humans, and the church.

Pieper, Josef. "Work, Spare Time and Leisure." *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*. Ignatius press, 1990.

- Pieper speaks of the necessity for human persons to be able to contemplate and appreciate beauty to develop their full humanity. Pieper expresses succinctly that the foundation of the human person in society is leisure, free time in which one can contemplate, be receptive to being and its beauty. "The intent here is to make one thing clear: that music, the fine arts, poetry—anything that festively raises us

human existence and thereby constitutes its true riches—all derive their life from a hidden root, and this root is a contemplation which is turned toward God and the world so as to affirm them” (from the Preface). As Pieper himself realizes, his study of the artistic impulse and contemplative life is a study of “the ultimate fulfillment of human existence. We are really asking how such fulfillment may come about...if we are unable to answer this question, then we will also be unable to resist convincingly the claims of a world absolutely defined by work” (pg. 22, 23). He is asking the question: what sort of existence is worthwhile enough to last for all eternity?

Rand, Elisabeth. “Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies” *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Feb., 2001), pp. 349-367.

- Rand’s essay argues that spiritual identity may be the most important way that students make meaning, and the complex ways faith is enacted in discourse. Rand’s study is situated primarily in schools that have no faith connection. While this may seem irrelevant to Messiah students, many students in composition theory articulate similar experiences here a Messiah.

Smith, David. “Reading Practices and Christian Pedagogy: Enacting Charity with Texts.” In *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, edited by David I. Smith and James K. A. Smith, Eerdmans, 2011, pp. 43–60.

- Smith frames his argument around two central questions: “What if we approached the Christian literature classroom not only in terms of what interpretations change hands, but also in terms of what kinds of practices are shared? Might this shed light not only on how reading can be Christian, but also on the nature of Christian teaching and learning?” (47). Drawing on theories and traditions of spiritually engaged reading, Smith reflects on and reimagines his own pedagogical practices as liturgies of charitable and engaged reading. In the essay Smith concludes that “the effort to think through Christian [literary] pedagogy in the light of the history of Christian practices is worthwhile” to students, professors, and institutions of Christian higher education (60).

Walhout, Clarence. “The End of Literature: Reflections on Literature and Ethics,” *Christianity and Literature*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Summer 1998), pp. 459-76.

- Walhout succinctly stakes his chief claim: “The end of literature is not the discovery of universal moral truths and values; it is the exploration of possible ways of acting in historically specific situations” (474). Because humans are finite beings living in dilatory time – from one syllable to the next, as Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* suggests – human knowledge is consequentially contingent and provisional. Since literary texts – narrative, dramatic, and even lyric – dramatize human choices, the primary end of reading, teaching, and discussing literature is to achieve ethical wisdom: “In a story we envision a situation in which characters act, and in following a course of action we are in effect considering the plausibility and desirability of the characters’ choices” (472).

Prompts:

1. Messiah's distinct mission and vision include service, leadership, and reconciliation: "We don't just serve because it's the 'right thing to do'; we serve because God calls us to open our hearts to the poor and needy and to work for justice wherever injustice prevails. We learn to lead believing that Jesus is our ultimate example of leading with compassion, respect and love. And, because of our faith, we are compelled to build bridges of understanding and peace to demonstrate the reconciling love of God to others." Our selected readings in English studies give voice - explicitly or suggestively, out of great hope or great pain - to diverse notions about our shared vocation as scholar-teachers of English and followers of Jesus. How do you understand these voices to be conversing with each other and how does this conversation inform your work at Messiah College?
2. Many enter the profession of English and the office of Christian at least partly because we love the beauty of story and song, and we are moved to nurture and walk next to others and to share this love. There is something in this orientation that is worthwhile enough to last for eternity, and yet the academy and the wider culture are defined by work rather than beauty. How do you remember, nurture, and make room for beauty, contemplation and leisure in your own reading and teaching life, and how do you support it in the lives of your students? What happens when a culture, be it a college or a nation, leaves behind these elements of the good life?