

Finding Faithfulness in all the Wrong Places:

Making Sacred Sense of Drunkenness, Deceit, and Debauchery in the Hebrew Bible

Wednesday, January 16

4:00PM – 5:30PM

Royce 314

This talk will be “birthed” out of my current book project (Reading Sacredness in the Badly Behaving Bible) exploring the morally questionable stories of the Hebrew Bible that early Jewish and Christian interpreters had difficulty receiving as scripture. In the interpretive tradition, many of these stories are whitewashed and/or spiritualized in dramatic ways. For example: David's illicit marriage to Bathsheba and murder of Uriah the Hittite disappear from the rewritten narratives of 1+2 Chronicles; Abraham is told to lie about Sarah being his sister (and God protects her while inside Pharaoh's harem), Noah's drunken stupor becomes an occasion for prophetic revelation; and Jephthah who sacrifices his daughter is celebrated as a hero of faith. Through an examination of the reception and interpretation of narratives of Drunkenness, Deceit, and Debauchery in the Hebrew Bible, I will consider the impact of the textualization/scripturalization of oral narratives on the reception of them in early Jewish and Christian literatures.



Peter Lanfer is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Occidental College after receiving his Ph.D. from University of California, Los Angeles in 2010. Dr. Lanfer is a specialist on the early interpretations of the Bible in Jewish and Christian writings. His work examines the cultural role of sacred literature in the dynamic expressions of Jewish and Christian communities in the Greek and Roman empires. Dr. Lanfer is currently exploring the theological challenges presented by morally suspicious texts in the Hebrew Bible in his forthcoming manuscript *Reading Sacredness in the Badly Behaving Bible*. Dr. Lanfer teaches courses on Jewish and Christian histories and literatures (including the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish and Christian Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic writings), apocalyptic and messianic movements in antiquity, as well as the archaeology and history of Jerusalem and Israel.