UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2016
Instructor: Dr. Joshua Ezra Burns
Course #: THEO 3010
Section: 101/901 (Majors/Honors-combined)
Course Title: Hebrew Scriptures: Old Testament Selected Books
Topic: Comedy in the Bible

Description:

What's funny about the Bible? Among the diverse literary forms and expressions found in the Bible, the comedic element seldom attracts the attention of serious scholars. Our purpose in this course will be to probe the question of whether there is comedy to found in the sacred scriptures of the Jewish and Christian faiths. Our investigation will focus on examples of parody, satire, and the absurd in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament and, to a lesser extent, the New Testament. Assessing their literary and theological objectives, we shall attempt to discern why the authors of those otherwise sober texts occasionally thought to infuse the word of God with liberal doses of humor and random silliness.

The course will follow a seminar format. Course grades will be assessed on the basis of class attendance and participation, regular reading response assignments, a research project, and a final examination. The course is designed for students with some prior background in the critical study of the Bible, a moderately functional sense of humor, and a hardy emotional resistance to literary depictions of cruelty. In other words, it's not for the easily offended.