



Image: *Massacre of the Innocents* by Pieter Breughel the Younger
 Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, Austria, ©KHM-Museumsverband

Blood and Betrayal Meanings in the Massacre of the Innocents

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7:00 – 8:00 PM, reception to follow

University of Arizona, ENR2, Room S107

How do we understand the awful violence of the gospel story of the Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2: 16-18)? Why did plays, paintings, and stories depicting the slaughter of Bethlehem's babies by King Herod's soldiers multiply across Europe in the fifteenth century, often conveyed with an extraordinary brutality that still takes our breath away? Some saw the deaths of these children as a betrayal by rulers, governments, fathers, and even by God. We'll explore how their anger and anxiety shifted from medieval into the early modern period and how it continues to resonate today.

Nicholas Terpstra is Professor of History at the University of Toronto and President of the Renaissance Society of America. He works on intersections of politics, gender, religion, and charity in early modern social history and particularly on the experience of people at the margins, like orphans, abandoned children, youths, widows, criminals, refugees, and the poor. He's currently exploring how a focus on global religious dynamics and the experiences of migrants and religious refugees can give us a different view of a period or movement like the Reformation. Recent publications in these areas include *Religious Refugees of the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* (2015), *Global Reformations: Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures* (2019), and *Lost & Found: Foundlings in the Early Modern World* (2023). Terpstra is also involved in a major digital mapping project that geo-references sixteenth and seventeenth century census data to maps and aerial views of Renaissance cities like Florence in order to visualize social, cultural, economic, and demographic realities and developments: see DECIMA (Digitally Encoded Census Information and Mapping Archive, <http://decima-map.net>) and also *Mapping Space, Sense and Movement in Florence: Historical GIS and the early modern city* (2016), and *Senses of Space in the Early Modern World* (2024).

