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## **Black Theologies**

**TH 3623**  
**SPRING 2022**  
**Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00 PM**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a course for students interested in the historical development and contemporary engagement of black and womanist theologies. Students will explore internal critiques within the fields of black and womanist theology and current dynamics within the disciplines.

### **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

Students from a variety of programs enroll in this course. The work of the course has been designed to contribute to the following program-specific Student Learning Outcomes:

#### **MDIV**

SLO 2: Students will learn to become skillful interpreters of the history of Christian experience.

SLO 3: Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to reflect critically and self-critically on relationships between Christian faith and various forms of systemic injustice.

#### **MAR**

SLO3: demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary

SLO4: demonstrate the ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues

#### **MAMFT**

SLO 3: Graduating students will be able to think ethically and make appropriate clinical ethical decisions.

#### **QEP**

Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings. Students can demonstrate competence with this SLO in many ways including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism.
2. Identifying racism in its many manifestations (structural, personal, communal, etc.)
3. Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and antiracism
4. Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
5. Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

To contribute to these Outcomes, students will:

1. Read and analyze academic texts in theology.

Thus, the course will rely on primary texts that serve as examples of theology done well.

2. Write papers that interpret academic texts, explain and compare positions, and construct their own theological arguments.

Thus, the course will include instruction on writing in a seminary setting, as well as assignments that require demonstration of these skills.

3. Internalize critical thinking skills and practice them in the presence of others and in conversation with texts.

Thus, the course will introduce conceptual frameworks for theology, both doctrinal and methodological.

4. Discuss and evaluate criteria for doing theology well.

Thus, the course will explore what it means to be accountable to a community—past, present, and future—in the work of theology.

5. Collaborate in order to advance a theological position through dialogue.

Thus, the course will both model and instruct students in the use of a diversity of views as a resource to improve the adequacy and comprehension of one's own position.

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Attendance and informed participation during class (20%)
2. Two 5-6 page book reviews. (20%, 20%)
3. Two 2-3 page reflection papers (10%, 10%)

Prompts for these papers are at the back of the syllabus. All papers are to be submitted electronically by midnight of the day they are due.

**Papers will be written following the conventions of academic writing. I highly recommend that you take advantage of the services of the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Schlegel Hall, in preparing your written assignments for this course.**

In unusual circumstances, requests for extensions may be made in advance. Late papers submitted without an extension will be penalized by loss of up to a grade (e.g. from B+ to B) for each day they are late.

3. Oral final examination in groups: claiming the wisdom and role of theologian (20%)  
Questions will concentrate on articulation of the student's emerging theological and ethical understandings, in awareness of and conversation with diverse positions.  
Preparatory questions will be distributed in advance. Times for the meetings will be arranged for the final week of the semester.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS:**

1. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001. ISBN: 1570751579
2. Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9781602582934
3. Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: a Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2017. ISBN: 9780664239039
4. Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999. ISBN: 1570754427
5. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780800662745.

### **ADDITIONAL TEXTS:**

1. Rosetta E. Ross, "Black Theology and the History of U.S. Black Religions: Post Civil Rights Approaches to the Study of African American Religions. *Religion Compass*, 6:4, April 2012, p. 249-261.
2. National Committee of Negro Churchmen, "Black Power." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 19-26.
3. "The Black Manifesto." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 27-36,
4. National Committee of Negro Churchmen, "Black Theology." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 37-39.
5. William R. Jones, "Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology: A Critique of Washington, Cone, and Cleage." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 141-154.

6. James Cone, "Epilogue: An Interpretation of the Debate among Black Theologians." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 425-440.
7. Victor Anderson, "Ontological Blackness in Theology." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Eds. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Pp. 893-921.
8. William R. Jones, "Divine Racism: The Unacknowledged Threshold Issue for Black Theology." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Eds. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Pp. 89-853
9. William R. Jones, "James Cone: God, Champion of the Oppressed." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Eds. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Pp. 854-873.

### **LIBRARY RESERVES:**

1. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*. Eds. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
2. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., eds. *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
3. James Cone, ed. *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993.
4. James Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds. *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 2*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1992.

**Please have available your own copy of these readings on the day they are discussed in class.**

### **USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS:**

Students are expected to set aside class time for the sole purpose of focusing on the class. Please do not email, text, use social media, read or watch things online, or any other electronically mediated activities during class. Cell phones should be silenced and/or turned off and put away. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask us for an exception to this rule.

If, due to the ongoing infuriating heartbreaking pandemic, classes are held online, please treat class time with the same respect and standards of good manners that would apply in person. Keep your camera on (backgrounds can be changed) and remain seated, in a position in which you can take notes and respectfully engage with your classmates. Class time is not to be used to prepare a meal, go shopping, exercise, drive, or anything else that would not normally be done during an in-person class session. It is tempting to believe that we can successfully multitask and that hearing class discussion is enough. Mounds of research show that multitasking decreases how well we do each task. Research further shows the people who believe they are skilled at multitasking do it with the least success.

The one standing exception to this rule is pets. If you are so fortunate as to cohabitate with an animal, feel free to introduce your pet to the class. The pet did not consent to the rules of the class and cannot be expected to follow them.

### **LPTS CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

As with all LPTS classes, this course will honor these Seminary policies:

### **Use of Inclusive Language**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. For more information see:

<http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>

Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God.

### **Academic Honesty**

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see *The Code of Student Conduct*, 6.11; the *Student Handbook*, p. 19.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu) during the first two days of class (or, even better, before the class begins) and should speak with the instructors as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructors.

### **Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructors of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

### **2/8            Introductions**

1. Rosetta E. Ross, "Black Theology and the History of U.S. Black Religions: Post Civil Rights Approaches to the Study of African American Religions. *Religion Compass*, 6:4, April 2012, p. 249-261.
2. National Committee of Negro Churchmen, "Black Power." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 19-26.
3. "The Black Manifesto." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 27-36,
4. National Committee of Negro Churchmen, "Black Theology." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 37-39.

### **2/15            James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power**

### **2/22            Critiques and Rejoinders**

1. William R. Jones, "Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology: A Critique of Washington, Cone, and Cleage." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 141-154.
2. James Cone, "Epilogue: An Interpretation of the Debate among Black Theologians." In *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Vol. 1*. Ed. James Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993. Pp. 425-440.
3. Victor Anderson, "Ontological Blackness in Theology." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Eds. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Pp. 893-921.
4. William R. Jones, "Divine Racism: The Unacknowledged Threshold Issue for Black Theology." In *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Eds. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Pp. 89-853

### **2/25            \*\*Book Review on Black Theology and Black Power due\*\***

### **3/1              Brian Bantum, Redeeming Mulatto, ch. 1-3**

### **3/7              Brian Bantum, Redeeming Mulatto, ch. 4-6**

### **3/9              \*\*\*Reflection paper on Redeeming Mulatto due\*\*\***

### **3/21            Wilda Gafney, Womanist Midrash, introduction and note on translation**

### **3/28            Wilda Gafney, Womanist Midrash, 15-20, 189-198.**

- 3/30**            **\*\*\*Reflection paper on Womanist Midrash due\*\*\***
- 4/4**             **Kelly Brown Douglas, Sexuality and the Black Church**
- 4/11**            **Kelly Brown Douglas, Sexuality and the Black Church**
- 4/20**            **\*\*\*Book review on Sexuality and the Black Church due\*\*\***
- 4/18**            **Essays on Black Theology and Black Lives Matter, TBD**
- 4/25**            **M. Shawn Copeland, Enfleshing Freedom**
- 5/2**             **M. Shawn Copeland, Enfleshing Freedom**

*Times for the oral Final Examination will be arranged for the final week of the semester.*

## **Critical Book Review Format**

The critical book review provides an assessment of a text and an interaction of the ideas of that text with the ideas of others in the field and with your own analysis. The review should be five to six pages, typed (10-12 point text) and double-spaced. Divide the review into the following sections:

1. **The Golden Thread:** Summarize the argument in about two pages. Focus on the main thesis of the book and how the author proceeds to argue for that thesis as the book progresses. Lengthy summaries are unnecessary. Look for the links between ideas and how those ideas move the argument along and result in a conclusion. In the case of an edited book, discover the rationale for grouping these articles together and show how, taken together, they provide a perspective or contrasting perspective on a particular topic. While you may compare points of view in your account, do not summarize each article individually.
2. **Internal critique:** Show how the book holds together. Is it well-organized? Is the argument sound? Is it well-researched and documented? Are the conclusions warranted? Does the writing style fit the content? Internal analysis of the text should be done in one to two pages.
3. **External critique:** What are others in the field saying about this topic? Bring into dialogue the argument of the book with other voices. A book review off the web might be helpful. This section should take about one page.
4. **Your critique:** On the basis of your knowledge and experience, what is your opinion of this work? How will the understanding this text has given you aid in your own thinking and action? Use about one page for this analysis.
5. **Questions for discussion.** Compose five questions that will stimulate discussion on the issues raised in the readings.

Developed by Frances Adeney (used with permission)

## **Reflection Paper Format**

The reflection paper both summarizes and responds to the main argument of a book. The review should be two to three pages, typed (10-12 point text) and double-spaced. Divide the review into the following sections:

1. Summarize the main argument of a book. This should take about one page.
2. Describe your own response—emotional, spiritual, experiential, intellectual, or some combination of these—to this work.
3. Reflect on the “why” and “now what” of your response.

