

SYLLABUS – HEART AUGUST 2015

Title of the Course: To Know the Heart of the Stranger

August 21-28 2015

Instructor: Johanna Bos

Course description:

We will study the connections and interactions of racism and sexism (including heterosexism) in their economic contexts, as they promote and reinforce dominant structures and practices in religion and the world. One of the screens for our analysis will be the biblical category of the stranger as s/he occurs in narrative and legal regulations in the Torah. Textbooks in the area of liberationist feminism will provide a structure for critique and analysis both of the biblical period and our current context. Fictional material written by authors who write from a female minority perspective will provide a crucial tool of access to worlds and experiences that may be unfamiliar to many.

Course objectives:

To understand more clearly and deeply the ideologies of racism and sexism, in their systemic connections, their intersectionality, as they work together to uphold oppressive patriarchal modes of thought and practice. To link these ideologies to biblical material and reflect on both the material and the reality to which it speaks in new ways. We should come away from this course having gained in understanding the intertwining of sexism and racism in the United States and with a greater ability to address issues of domination, subordination and privilege. Ultimately, we hope that all of us will seek to walk in solidarity with those whose voices have traditionally been undervalued and silenced and whose life experience has not counted in the traditions. Solidarity with the heart of the stranger is a consistent biblical requirement that must find concrete expression in the daily lives of faithful people today.

Overall objective

Our overall objective is to create recognition of gender, race and class privilege in one's specific context, also as it affects theological perspectives and faith commitments, and thus to foster human relations that reflect more closely the biblical mandate to live in solidarity with the " other" whose reality is marked by domination and oppression.

Method

The course will run from Friday August 21 through Friday August 28. During class time we will mix presentations from the instructor with discussions of readings and of our written statements. Classes will open with a liturgical exercise and end in a similar manner. Students are expected to participate in offering an opening or closing liturgy, which can be done in small groups. [See guidelines]. Each student will bring an identity statement to the course for which the guidelines are separately posted. A part of your

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statement will be read and discussed in class. In addition, there will be a description and analysis of a cross-cultural experience for which guidelines are posted also. Some other unorthodox ways of learning may be explored, as drawing, music and/or dance.

Policy on Inclusive Language:

In speech and in written assignments, it is the policy of the school to avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. Do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary. See: http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

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 Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Requirements and evaluation

Students are expected to attend class at all times and to be prepared for discussion and other assigned activities. Absences on account of illness or other emergencies should be cleared with the instructor ahead of time. Student evaluations by the professor take place on a non-competitive basis. All students begin the course with an A grade. Acquaintance with required readings, completing assigned written material, participation in discussions and presence in the class are expected of each student. Devaluation takes place if assignments are not met or for lack of participation in other ways, absences, etc.

Internet and Cell Phones

The use of laptop computers during class is discouraged. Cell phones are to be turned off. Exceptions may be requested from the instructor.

In Preparation

Before the course begins there are two written tasks to complete.

- An identity statement should be ready in part ahead of time and students should continue to work on it during the course for handing in to the instructor

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at the end. There is no required length for this statement but it should be no shorter than five pages double-spaced.

- . Everyone is expected to engage in one event of a cross-cultural nature and be prepared to discuss the experience in class.

Guidelines for identity statement and cross-cultural experience and guidelines for liturgical experiences are posted on CAMS.

We will begin the class with a discussion of language and how it reflects and shapes our ideologies and material for reading on this subject is posted on CAMS. Other required reading will be posted on CAMS as well.

N.B Before studying assigned material draw up a note on the author and her context [research this on the Internet if you need to.]

Required Resources:

Alice Walker: *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (Harcourt 1992) ISBN 0151731527

Octavia Butler: *Kindred* (Beacon, 2003)

Edwidge Danticat: *Brother, I'm Dying* (Knopf 2007)

Marita Golden and Susan Richards Shreve: *Skin Deep: Black Women and White Women Write about Race* (Doubleday 1995/2011) ISBN 978-0-307-79478-9

bell hooks : *Teaching to Transgress – Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994) ISBN 0-415-90808-6

Johanna W.H.van Wijk-Bos: *Reformed and Feminist – A Challenge to the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991) ISBN 0-664-25194-3

West, Traci. *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York University Press, 1999) ISBN 0-8147-9335-5

Posted material on CAMS (Mark Taylor, Stephen Ray etc)

Assigned biblical texts

Handouts

Recommended novels:

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Gloria Naylor: *The Women of Brewster Place*

Toni Morrison. *Beloved* (Vintage/2004)

Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye*

Recommended textbooks:

**Paula Rothenberg. *Invisible Privilege: A Memoir About Race, Class and Gender*
(University Press of Kansas/2000) ISBN 0700610049**

Johanna W.H.van Wijk-Bos. *Making Wise the Simple – the Torah in Christian Faith and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005)

Paula Giddings. *When and Where I Enter - The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow) ISBN 0688146503

**Gagne, Patricia, Richard Tewksbury, eds. *The Dynamics of Inequality: Gender, Class, Race, and Sexuality in the United States*. New York: Prentice Hall, p. 2003.
Chapter 3 [pp. 89-142]**