AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIONS

Course Description
This course introduces you to the variety of African American religions that developed in the Americas during and after the Atlantic slave trade up to today. We will look at the religious experiences of African Americans in what is now the United States and in places around the Caribbean world. The historical contexts surrounding the development of African American religions and the lived experiences of African Americans are the main topics of our course. The class includes discussion of West African religions, the impact of the Atlantic slave trade, the role of politics, the construction of racial identities, and most importantly, the diversity of African American religions.

Within various forms of Christianity, Islam, and even Hip Hop, we will examine the interplay between religion, race, colonialism, and self-determination.

Reli 240-01: African American Religions
Course Learning Outcomes

1. Identify leading thinkers, texts, practices, and historical developments in African American religious history.

2. Assess how religion, colonialism, and race have intersected in American and Western history.

3. Evaluate how religious ideas and practices allowed African Americans to critique American racism and argue for social justice.

4. Analyze and contextualize primary sources about African American religious history and culture.

5. Identify the complex interactions between religious belief and practice and the rich historical, social, political, cultural, economic, and intellectual context in which religious people inhabit and live their religion.

Student Responsibilities

As a student enrolled in this course, you agree to do the following:

1) Come to class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire meeting. Make-up accommodations will only be offered for documented University approved activities, extreme illness (i.e., not allergies or a cold), or family emergency.

2) Complete assigned readings, in their entirety, on schedule. You should complete assigned readings by the start of the class meeting. And bring the readings to class.

3) Contribute to class discussions. You should come to class with questions and comments, prepared to participate in a lively discussion.

4) Complete all assignments, in a timely manner. I will allow extensions for in distressing cases of family emergencies and extreme illness. Otherwise late papers will be deducted a full letter grade for every day it is late, starting immediately at the beginning of class.

5) Ask for help when you need it. I am happy to assist students in their attempts to master course materials and successfully complete course assignments. Come to my office hours and I am always available via email.

Course Policies

I do not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. We are an intellectual and academic community, and all of us are responsible to act with integrity. All violations of the Gonzaga Academic Honesty Policy will result in a zero on the assignment. Plagiarism is the act of passing another’s work off as your own. For more on plagiarism consult the guide on blackboard. Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic violations.

The GU Academic Honesty Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work. Each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Click here for more on Academic Citizenship at Gonzaga.
Requirements and Grading

1) Primary Source Worksheets: Over the course of the semester, you will be required to fill out 6 primary source worksheets. The worksheet is due the class period the reading was assigned. Each worksheet is worth 50 points.

2) Religion and Colonialism Paper: You will write a 750 word essay about what you think is most significant about the intersections of religion, race, and colonialism. Worth 150 points.

3) Take-home Midterm: Worth 100 points.


5) Final Essay/Unessay: You will write a 1200 word essay in reflection of the semester or complete an unessay. Due during finals week and worth 300 points.

6) Preparation: The least boring and most effective way to learn is to participate fully in the process. You are expected to contribute to the success of this course by: Reading the assigned materials, attending every class, taking notes, listening respectfully, and contributing to class discussions. Also included in your preparation grade will be 11 pop quizzes each worth 20 points. These quizzes will cover the day’s reading assignment. At the end of the semester your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and your total quiz score determined from the remaining quizzes. Make up quizzes will only be offered for students with excused absences. Worth 300 points.

6 Worksheets: 300 points
TFNT Paper: 200 points
Colonialism Paper: 150 points
Take-home Midterm: 150 points
Final Essay/Unessay: 300 points
Preparation: 300 points
Total: 1400 points

1400-1255 points: A range
1254-1115 points: B range
1114-976 points: C range
975-837 points: D range
836 and below: F

Course Policies

Americans with Disabilities Act:
Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should:
1. Register with and provide documentation to the Disability Resources, Education, & Access Management Center (DREAM).
2. Bring a letter to me from DREAM indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done within the first two weeks of class.

For more information about services available to GU students with disabilities, contact: disability@gonzaga.edu; 313-4134. Or visit their office in Foley 209. See also http://www.gonzaga.edu/Campus-Resources/Offices-and-Services-A-Z/Disability-Resources-Education-and-Access-Management/default.asp
Course Policies

RESPECT FOR MATERIAL, OUR SUBJECTS, AND YOUR PEERS
This is a course in religious studies and not confessional in nature; that is, we are not here to promote a particular religious viewpoint or to debate religious “truth.” Rather, we will be engaging religious materials as anthropologists, historians, and sociologists to understand their meanings for the people who have produced and used them. You may have your own religious commitment; if so, throughout this course you will likely encounter opinions and religious beliefs and activities with which you do not agree. This does not make them unworthy of your study, consideration, and respect. I ask you to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone else whose practices and beliefs may differ from your own and yet carry immense meaning and value for that person. If your personal religious commitment is causing you to have difficulties doing this, please feel free to discuss it with me privately.

Furthermore, students will be expected to communicate in a civil manner at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified way. Treat your peers and the subject material with respect.

A NOTE ON HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
Consistent with its mission, Gonzaga seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and Gonzaga’s policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Gonzaga encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in the Student Handbook: www.gonzaga.edu/studenthandbook about what happened so they can get the support they need and Gonzaga can respond appropriately. There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. Gonzaga is legally obligated to respond to reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, unless made to a confidential resource. Responses may vary from support services to formal investigations. As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following website: www.gonzaga.edu/titleix. My office is a safe space but I am legally required to report sexual misconduct.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
According to the Gonzaga University attendance policy, if you miss more than 6 class meetings, you will receive a “V” for this class, which is the same as a “F.”
Course Schedule

Important: You need to come to class having already read the assigned reading for that day; in other words, readings are due the date listed.

**Week 1: Course Introduction**
- **Wednesday, Sept 2**: Syllabus; Class Expectations
- **Friday, Sept 4**: Religion, Race, and Colonialism
Reading: “Anchoring Religion in the World” on blackboard

**Week 2: Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade**
- **Monday, Sept 7**: No Class. Labor Day.
- **Wednesday, Sept 9**: Religions in West and Central Africa
  Reading: 1 “Traditional Ibo Religion and Culture” and 2 “African Religions in Colonial Jamaica” in *Documentary Witness (DW)*
- **Friday, Sept 11**: The Atlantic Slave Trade
  Reading: “Praying the ABCs” in *Fire in the Bones (FiB)*

**Week 3: New World Syncretisms**
- **Monday, Sept 14**: What’s African and what’s American?
  Reading: “Death of the African Gods” on blackboard
- **Wednesday, Sept 16**: Haitian Vodou
  Reading: “Of Worlds Seen and Unseen” on blackboard
- **Friday, Sept 18**: Vodou
  Reading: “Haitian Zombies” on blackboard

**Week 4: Slave Protestantism**
- **Monday, Sept 21**: Slave Missions
  Reading: 3 “Slave Conversion on the Carolina Frontier” and 4 “Address to the Negroes in the State of New York” in *DW*; and “Essay on Slavery” on blackboard
- **Wednesday, Sept 23**: Slave Rhetoric
  Reading: “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel” in *FiB*
- **Friday, Sept 25**: Invisible Institution and Slave Rhetoric
  Reading: 7 “Plantation Churches: Visible and Invisible” in *DW*; and “Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Forth Her Hands’: Black Destiny” in *FiB*

**Week 5: Resistance**
- **Monday, Sept 28**: Invisible Institution
  Reading: “Slave Songs and Spirituals” in *DW*
Religion and Colonialism Paper Due
Wednesday, Sept 30: Rebellion
Reading: 11 “Religion and Slave Insurrection” in DW
Friday, Oct 2: Conjure and “Magic”
Reading: “Conjure and Christianity” on blackboard; and 9 “Conjuration and Witchcraft” in DW

Week 6: Segregation and the AME
Monday, Oct 5: The “Negro Pew”
Reading: 22 “Protesting the Negro Pew” and 21 “Black Churches in New York City, 1840” in DW
Wednesday, Oct 7: The AME
Reading: “Richard Allen and the African Church Movement” in FiB; and 14 “Life Experience and Gospel Labors” in DW
Friday, Oct 9: The AME
Reading: 16 “A Female Preacher Among the Methodists” in DW

Week 7: Freedom?
Monday, Oct 12: Abolition and Emancipation
Reading: 12 “Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ,” 23 “I Will Not Live a Slave,” and 24 “Welcome to the Ransomed” in DW
Wednesday, Oct 14: Jim Crow and Religion
Reading: “The Black Church” in FiB
Friday, Oct 16: The Long Civil Rights Movement
Reading: 35 “Of the Faith of the Fathers,” 44 “Things of the Spirit,” and 45 “The Genius of the Negro Church” in DW

Week 8: Black Catholicism and Its Influence
Monday, Oct 19: No Class. Founder’s Day.
Take-home Midterm Due
Wednesday, Oct 21: Black Catholicism
Reading: “Minority Within a Minority” in FiB; and 32 “The First African American Catholic Congress” in DW

Friday, Oct 23: Cercle Harmonique
Reading: “Cercle Harmonique” on blackboard

Week 9: In and Outside the Black Church
Monday, Oct 26: The Great Migration
Reading: 48 “Organized Religion and the Cults,” 49 “Black Judaism in Harlem,” and 51 “Elder
Lucy Smith” in *DW*

Wednesday, Oct 28: Father Divine
Reading: 50 “The Realness of God, to you-wards ...”
Friday, Oct 30: The Moorish Science Temple
Reading: “FBI MST Files” on blackboard

**Week 10: MLK and Civil Rights**
Monday, Nov 2: MLK and Civil Rights
Reading: “How Far the Promised Land?: Black Religion and Black Protest” in *FiB*; and 53 “National Baptist Philosophy of Civil Rights”
Wednesday, Nov 4: MLK and Civil Rights
Reading: 54 “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in *DW*
Friday, Nov 6: MLK and Civil Rights
Reading: A Hidden Wholeness” in *FiB*

**Week 11: Malcolm X and Black Power**
Monday, Nov 9: Nation of Islam
Reading: 52 “Self Government in the New World” in *DW*
Wednesday, Nov 11: Nation of Islam and Malcolm X
Reading: “The Ballot or the Bullet” and “Letters from Abroad” on blackboard
Friday, Nov 13: Black Power and Black Theology
Reading: 57 “Black Power Statement’ and ‘Black Theology’” and 58 “Black Theology and the Black Church” in *DW*

**Week 12: Power and Politics**
Monday, Nov 16: James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*
Reading: Start *The Fire Next Time*
Wednesday, Nov 18: James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*
Reading: Continue/Finish *The Fire Next Time*
Friday, Nov 20: No Class. Dr. Clark will be at a conference.

**Week 13: No Class.**
Monday, Nov 23: *The Fire Next Time Paper Due*
Nov 23 - Nov 27: No Class. Dr. Clark will be at a conference, and then Thanksgiving!

**Week 14: “After” Civil Rights**
Monday, Nov 30: Black Theology “after” Civil Rights
Reading: “The Cross and the Lynching Tree” on blackboard
Wednesday, Dec 2: Black Theology “after” Civil Rights
Reading: “Epilogue” in *FiB*
Friday, Dec 4: Black Power in the Age of Obama
Reading: “Confusing God and Government” and “A More Perfect Union” on blackboard

**Week 15: Religion and Hip Hop**
Monday, Dec 7: The Religion of Hip Hop
Reading: TBA

Wednesday, Dec 9: The Religion in Hip Hop
Reading: TBA

Friday, Dec 11: TBA
Reading: TBA

**Final Exam Week**
Tuesday, Dec 15: 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm