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.

[Note: Blue, bolded type denotes an embedded link!]

**Your Professor**

Dr. Emily Clark  
clarke2@gonzaga.edu  
Twitter: @clark_emс  
Robinson House 008  
Office phone: 313-6781  
Office Hours: M 1:00-2:00 pm; Thurs 12:00-3:00; and by appointment

**Inside this Syllabus**

Course Learning Outcomes  
Course Texts  
Student Responsibilities  
Requirements & Grading  
Course Policies  
Course Schedule

**How This Course Helps You Graduate**

This course fulfills one of your graduation requirements  
(200-level Religious Studies or Christianity/Catholic Tradition).

**Course Texts**


All three books are required. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.
Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify the sources of Christian traditions: scripture, doctrines, historical developments, leading thinkers, or practices.
   We'll identify leading thinkers, texts, practices, and historical developments in African American religious history.

2. Students will be able to interpret and analyze sources of Christian tradition critically and creatively by employing contemporary scholarly methods that relate sources to historical contexts, to other sources, and to the experiences of faith.
   We'll analyze and contextualize primary sources about African American religious history and culture.

3. Students will be able to articulate how the sources of Christian tradition and methods of interpretation and analysis promote cultural transformation and social justice.
   We'll assess how religion, political power, colonialism, and race have intersected in American history and evaluate how religious ideas and practices allowed African Americans to critique American racism and argue for social justice.

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.
3) 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

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.”

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. At least three should be completed before the end of February. Only three will be accepted from March 1’s readings to the end of the semester. No exceptions.
2) Primary Source Response Paper: You will write a 750 word response paper to an assigned primary source of your choice. Like the worksheets, it is due the class period the reading was assigned and must be completed by April 3rd. Worth 150 points.
3) Take-home Midterm: Worth 150 points.
5) Final Essay/Unessay: You will write a 1200 word essay in reflection of the semester or complete an unessay (details to come!). 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 1400-1255 points: A range
TFNT Paper: 200 points A/A- cutoff at 1297

Reli 240-03: African American Religions
Primary Source Response: 150 points
Take-home Midterm: 150 points
Final Essay/Unessay: 300 points
Preparation: 300 points
Total: 1400 points

1254-1115 points: B range
B+/B cutoff at 1200
B/-B cutoff at 1158
1114-976 points: C range
C+/C cutoff at 1060
C/C- cutoff at 1019
975-837 points: D range
D+/D cutoff at 920
D/D- cutoff at 876
836 and below: 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, Jan 18:** Syllabus; Class Expectations
**Friday, Jan 20:** Religion, Race, and Colonialism
Reading: “Anchoring Religion in the World” on blackboard

**Week 2: Historical Grounding**

**Monday, Jan 23:** Religions of West Africa
Reading: 1 “Traditional Ibo Religion and Culture” and 2 “African Religions in Colonial Jamaica” in Documentary Witness (DW)
**Wednesday, Jan 25:** The Atlantic Slave Trade
Reading: “Praying the ABCs” in Fire in the Bones (FiB)
**Friday, Jan 27:** What’s African and what’s American?
Reading: “Death of the African Gods” on blackboard

**Week 3: Historical Grounding**

**Monday, Jan 30:** Haitian Vodou
Reading: “Of Worlds Seen and Unseen” on blackboard

**Wednesday, Feb 1:** Haitian Vodou
Reading: “Haitian Zombies” on blackboard
**Friday, Feb 3:** 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
Week 4: Slave Protestantism
Monday, Feb 6: Slave Rhetoric
Reading: 22 “Protesting the Negro Pew” in DW; and “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel” in FiB
Wednesday, Feb 8: 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
Friday, Feb 10: Invisible Institution
Reading: 8 “Proud of That ‘Ole Time’ Religion” and 13 “Slave Songs and Spirituals” in DW

Week 5: Resistance
Monday, Feb 13: Rebellion
Reading: 11 “Religion and Slave Insurrection” in DW
Wednesday, Feb 15: Conjure and “Magic”
Reading: “Conjure and Christianity” on blackboard; and 9 “Conjuration and Witchcraft” in DW
Friday, Feb 17: Abolition
Reading: 12 “Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ” and 18 “David Walker’s Appeal” in DW

Week 6: The AME
Monday, Feb 20: No Class. Presidents’ Day.
Wednesday, Feb 22: The AME
Reading: “Richard Allen and the African Church Movement” in FiB; and 14 “Life Experience and Gospel Labors” in DW
Friday, Feb 24: The AME and Gender
Reading: 16 “A Female Preacher Among the Methodists” in DW

Week 7: Freedom?
Monday, Feb 27: Jim Crow and Religion
Reading: “The Black Church” in FiB
Wednesday, March 1: The Long Civil Rights Movement
Reading: 40 “Social Work at Olivet Baptist Church,” 44 “‘Things of the Spirit,’” and 45 “The Genius of the Negro Church” in DW
Friday, March 3: The Long Civil Rights Movement
Reading: “‘How Far the Promised Land?’: Black Religion
and Black Protest” in *FiB*

**Take-home Midterm Due before 11:59pm**

**Week 8: Black Catholicism and Its Influence**

*Monday, March 6*: Black Catholicism  
Reading: “Minority Within a Minority” in *FiB*

*Wednesday, March 8*: Black Catholicism  
Reading: 32 “The First African American Catholic Congress” in *DW*

*Friday, March 10*: Afro-Creole Spiritualism  
Reading: “Cercle Harmonique” on blackboard

**March 13-17: Spring Break!!!**

**Week 9: In and Outside the Black Church**

*Monday, March 20*: The Great Migration  
Reading: 48 “Organized Religion and the Cults,” 49 “Black Judaism in Harlem,” and 51 “Elder Lucy Smith” in *DW*

*Wednesday, March 22*: Father Divine  
Reading: 50 “The Realness of God, to you-wards ...” in *DW*

*Friday, March 24*: The Moorish Science Temple  
Reading: “FBI MST Files” on blackboard

**Week 10: The Era of Civil Rights**

*Monday, March 27*: MLK and Civil Rights  
Reading: 54 “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in *DW*

*Wednesday, March 29*: MLK and Civil Rights  
Reading: “A Hidden Wholeness” in *FiB*

*Friday, March 31*: Nation of Islam  
Reading: 52 “Self Government in the New World” in *DW*

**Week 11: The Era of Civil Rights**

*Monday, April 3*: Nation of Islam and Malcolm X  
Reading: The Ballot or the Bullet” and “Letters from Abroad” on blackboard

**Last Chance for your Primary Source Response Paper**

*Wednesday, April 5*: No Class. Dr. Clark will be away
at a meeting on American Religion. Watch “The Time Has Come” from Eyes on the Prize. 
Friday, April 7: No Class. Dr. Clark will still be away at a meeting on American Religion. You should start reading James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*.

**Week 12: Black Power and Politics**  
**Monday, April 10:** *The Fire Next Time*  
Reading: Be at least part of the way into the second essay of *The Fire Next Time*  
**Wednesday, April 12:** *The Fire Next Time*  
Reading: Finish *The Fire Next Time*  
**Friday, April 14:** No Class. Good Friday.

**Week 13: Black Theology**  
**Monday, April 17:** No Class. Easter Monday.  
**Wednesday, April 19:** Black Power and Black Theology  
Reading: 57 “Black Power Statement’ and ‘Black Theology’” and 58 “Black Theology and the Black Church” in *DW*  
**Friday, April 21:** Black Theology “after” Civil Rights  
Reading: “The Cross and the Lynching Tree” on blackboard

**Week 14: “After” Civil Rights**  
**Monday, April 24:** No Class. Dr. Clark will be at Yale University to give a lecture.  
**The Fire Next Time Paper Due to blackboard by 11:59pm on Tuesday April 25**  
**Wednesday, April 26:** No Class. Dr. Clark will be on her way back from Yale.  
**Friday, April 28:** Black Theology “after” Civil Rights  
Reading: “Epilogue” in *FiB*

**Week 15: Religion and Hip Hop**  
**Monday, May 1:** The Religion of Hip Hop  
Reading: “Believe Me, This Pimp Game is Very Religious” on blackboard  
**Wednesday, May 3:** The Religion in Hip Hop  
Reading: “Hip Hop Lyrics” on blackboard  
**Friday, May 5:** TBA  
Reading: TBA

**Final Exam Week**  
**Tuesday, May 9:** 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm