

Reformed Theological Seminary — Atlanta
Christianity as a Cultural Minority
04HT6211 — Summer 2020

Instructors:

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Teaching Assistant: Keith Pinckney

Class Description

This course looks at the driving narrative behind countercultural expressions of the church. With a view to the global significance of the African American Christian experience, the global Body of Christ is presented as a religious minority unto itself, often living under cultural hostility. Taking the African American Christian experience as a case study, this course interacts with the historical emergence of the African American church — its theology, ministry and cultural influence in light of the struggle for temporal freedom. Lastly, this course presents an approach to cultivating and rediscovering a fresh view of Christian perseverance for our current age.

Class Objectives — At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Articulate the common themes found in the African American Christian experience to the other global and historical realities.
2. Articulate the significance of Hauerwas' concept of a Truthful Narrative, and Vanhoozer's concept of the canon as normative for Christian theology, for the minority Christian experience.
3. Identify the development stages of the African American church.
4. Explain the relationship between cultural/historical context and the development of theology.
5. Identify the basic models of today's African American church.
6. Articulate the challenges faced by the church in contemporary society.
7. Discuss implications of Covenantal theology from the perspective of the sub-dominant culture.

Tentative Lecture Schedule

This class will meet via Zoom on the following dates and times*:

Dates:

July 13,15,16,17

July 20,22,24

July 27,29,31

Aug 3,5,7

Hours: 10:00a-12:00p

**Approximately 30% of the course may be recorded and loaded into Canvas.*

Required Reading

1. Genesis 1-3
2. Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine*, pp 115-150
3. Hauerwas, Stanley, *Resident Aliens*
4. Bacote, Vincent, *The Political Disciple*
5. Movie: *MULLY*, available through Amazon Prime. This is required viewing for the “Alternative Witness” discussion group.
6. Ellis, Carl F., *Going Global: Beyond the Boundaries*, pp. 1-86
7. Frazier, E. Franklin & Lincoln, C. Eric, *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier*, pp 7-203.
8. Ellis, Carl F., *Free at Last? The Gospel in the African American Experience*, pp. 13-137, 172-207

Student Evaluation

1. Reading accounts for 20% of the final grade.
Complete all reading assignments by July 31, 2020. Students will report on the percentage of reading they have completed over the course of the semester on the final exam. If the student does not report the percentage of the reading they have completed, it will be assumed that they have not completed any of it.

2. Final exam accounts for 40% of the final grade.
Students will submit the final exam via Canvas by August 21, 2020
3. **The integration paper is due on August 28, 2020**, loaded into Canvas. A 10-15 paged, double-spaced integration paper accounts for 40% of the final grade.
 - a. Guidelines for grading integration papers:
 - i. **Creativity:** Evidence of personal insight into the content — 25%
 - ii. **Clarity:** Critical thinking and expression of thought clearly communicated, paper topic stated up front, logical argumentation — 25%
 - iii. **Conceptualization:** Analytical skills evident — 25%
 - iv. **Contribution:** Practical and usable in ministry — 25%
 - b. The paper may reflect critical interaction with any of the books required for this class, those listed in the “Additional Reading” section, or from the student’s own research as it applies to the course material. As a relative guide, students should count on citing and interacting with at least 1 good reference per every two pages of paper length. So, for a 10-page paper, students should cite and interact with at least 5 good sources relating to their integration topic.
 - c. Format guidelines for integration papers
 - i. Paper must be in *MS Word 95* or higher, *MS Word for mac 2008* or higher, *WordPerfect X4* or higher, *or Pages*. If none of these will work for you a PDF is acceptable *only as a last resort*.
 - ii. Use Turabian for citations.
 - iii. Please load the papers into **Canvas**.
 - iv. Make sure you name is *on the paper itself*, not just in the document’s file name.

If you run into difficulty meeting deadlines, please contact Teaching Assistant Keith Pinckney.

Select Texts for Additional Reading

1. Roberts, J. Deotis, *Black Religion, Black Theology*
2. Caretta, Vincent, *The Life of Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage*
3. Caretta, Vincent, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*
4. Albert, Octavia Victoria Rogers, *The House of Bondage or Chatlotte Brooks and Other Slaves*
5. Lincoln, C. Eric & Mamiya, Lawrence H., *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, pp. 1-195

6. Roberts, J De Otis, *The Prophethood of Black Believers*
7. Roberts, J De Otis, *Liberation ad Reconciliation – A Black Theology*

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 14)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 44)