

Christianity as a Cultural Minority

Reformed Theological Seminary — Atlanta

04HT6211

Fall Term, 2023

Instructor:

Carl F. Ellis, Jr.

September 22-23
September 29-30
October 20-21

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the historical emergence of the African American church — its theology, ministry and cultural influence in light of the larger biblical narrative and the struggle for freedom. The quest for dignity, identity and significance are also highlighted. 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. The theological origins of anti-Christian hostility are located in the historical African American church within the global story of religious persecution. This course also presents an approach to cultivating and rediscovering a fresh view of Christian perseverance as practiced by the African American Christian community, for our current age.

COURSE OBJECTIVES — At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the development stages of the African American church.
2. Explain the relationship between cultural/historical context and the development of theology.
3. Identify the basic models of today's African American church.
4. Articulate the challenges faced by the church in contemporary society.
5. Discuss implications of Reformed theology from the perspective of the sub-dominant culture.
6. Articulate the common themes found in the African American Christian experience to the other global and historical realities.

REQUIRED READING

1. Genesis 1-3
2. Book of Acts
3. Albert, Octavia Victoria Rogers, *THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE OR CHARLOTTE BROOKS AND OTHER SLAVES*
4. Ellis, Carl F., *GOING GLOBAL: Beyond the Boundaries*, pp. 1-86*
5. Frazier, E. Franklin & Lincoln, C. Eric, *THE NEGRO CHURCH IN AMERICA/ THE BLACK CHURCH SINCE FRAZIER*, pp 7-203
6. Ellis, Carl F., *FREE AT LAST?: The Gospel in the African-American Experience*, pp. 13-137, 172-207

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

1. Bacote, Vincent, *THE POLITICAL DISCIPLE*
2. Caretta, Vincent, *UNCHAINED VOICES: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*
3. Lincoln, C. Eric & Mamiya, Lawrence H., *THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE*, pp. 1-195
4. Smith, James K.A., *IMAGINING THE KINGDOM*, pp 100-192

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Complete all reading assignments by October 6, 2023.**
2. Complete the final exam by **December 7, 2023**
3. Integration paper due on **December 5, 2023** — 10-15 pages

* If this book is difficult to get, the instructor will make it available in another format.

4. **Guidelines for integration papers**

- a. **CREATIVITY**; Evidence of personal insight into the content — 25%
- b. **CLARITY**; Thinking and expression of thought clearly communicated — 25%
- c. **CONCEPTUALIZATION**; Analytical skills evident — 25%
- d. **CONTRIBUTION**; Practical and usable in ministry — 25%

5. **Interactions**

All participants will complete five professor-to-student interaction and four student to student interactions. These discussion questions will be posted on Canvas.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. **Reading accounts for 20% of the final grade.**

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. **The final exam accounts for 40% of the final grade.**

3. **The integration paper accounts for 40% of the final grade.**

4. **Format guidelines for integration papers**

It must be in *MS Word 95* or higher, *MS Word for Mac 2008* or higher, *WordPerfect X4* or higher, or *Pages*.

Please load the papers into **Canvas**.

MAKE SURE YOUR NAME ON THE DOCUMENT ITSELF.

If you send it by email, please make sure that the subject is “**Xy-CM**”

If you run into difficulty meeting the deadline, please email or call:

cellis@rts.edu

(423) 280-4183 (cell)

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 Student Services Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 42 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. 42)