

SYLLABUS

HT6205: The Gospel and Race

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Course meeting times: Weekly online assignments beginning the week of December 1; in person instruction in Orlando, January 12-16, 2026, 6p-9p.

Course description:

An introductory exploration of the intersection between the Gospel and racial issues. Attention will be paid to biblical-theological material, the history of race relations especially in the United States, and sociological data. Students will seek to work through these issues toward practical steps for ministry application in their local ministry contexts.

Goals:

1. *Introduce* the student to biblical-theological material on race, emphasizing God's mission to forge a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural people in and through Christ.
2. *Overview* the history of race relations, especially in the United States and focusing on white-black relations, engaging with key voices in the Christian tradition.
3. *Begin* to use key sociological terminology in thinking about race relations and develop theological constructs for understanding these issues.
4. *Suggest* practical steps for ministry application in local ministry contexts.

Required texts:

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spigel and Grau, 2015); ISBN: 978-0812993547

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Dover, 2014); ISBN: 978-0486280417

Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); ISBN: 978-0195147070.

Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020); ISBN: 978-0830848317

Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters to a Birmingham Jail: A Response to the Words and Dreams of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Chicago: Moody, 2014); ISBN: 978-0802411969

Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity with Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019); ISBN: 978-0310597261

Jarvis J. Williams, *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021); ISBN: 978-1540964625

In Pursuit of Gospel Unity: PCA Papers on Racism and Racial Reconciliation (Atlanta: Committee on Discipleship Ministries, 2019); order here:

<https://www.pcabookstore.com/p-91508-pursuit-of-gospel-unity-pca.aspx>

Recommended books:

Richard A. Bailey, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* (New York: OUP, 2014)

Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Anthony Bradley, *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2013); ISBN: 978-1596382343.

James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2013).

David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Carolyn Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1970* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (New York: OUP, 2008).

J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003); ISBN: 978-0830826162

Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2005).

_____. *For a Continuing Church: The Roots of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2015).

Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020).

Peter Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship* (New York: OUP, 2009).

Requirements and Grading:

1. *Regular attendance and class participation* (10%). Since we only have a week-long class, no absences are allowed; because this is a class that will have a number of discussion sessions, full participation in the discussions will be required for full points.
2. *Reading* (30%). You will be required to read 100% of the required texts. You will fill out a reading report that will disclose how much of the assigned readings you have read.
3. *Online interaction* (40%). Each week, I will post a discussion question for the readings (see the schedule for which book will be discussed each week). The student will post twice each week to receive full weekly points.
4. *Final paper* (20%). You will write a five-page critical interaction with Irwyn Ince's *The Beautiful Community*.
5. *Grading scale (standard RTS scale):*

97-100	A
94-96	A-
91-93	B+
88-90	B
86-87	B-
83-85	C+

80-82	C
78-79	C-
75-77	D+
72-74	D
70-71	D-
Below 70	F

As part of our purpose to train servants of the triune God to walk with God in all of life, we expect godly integrity in the academic work done at RTS. God's covenant with His people calls for honesty and a commitment to truth (as in the 9th commandment). As we live in that covenant and in community with one another, upholding truth is an essential duty. Specifically applied to academic labors, this means that we accurately represent our work to others. In other words, neither cheating nor plagiarism is tolerated.

Instructions on particular assignments:

1. *Online interaction*
 - a. Each week on Monday, there will be a discussion question related to a particular week's reading. Please see the course schedule for the particular reading for the week.
 - b. You will need to post twice during the week: your first post will be a response to the discussion question and your second post will be a response to someone else's comment—whether a fellow classmate or the instructor.
 - c. To receive full points for the week, you will need to post twice. If you post once, you will receive half points; if you don't post at all, you receive no points.
 - d. You will only be able to post in the week for the discussion—from Monday to Sunday.

No late posts will be accepted.

 - e. Your posts will need to be relatively substantive—while it is in the judgment of the instructor what “substantive” looks like, it certainly looks like a good faith effort to interact with the discussion question and with your classmates.
2. *Five-page response paper to The Beautiful Community.*
 - In section one, answer the following question (2-3 pages): *In what ways did Ince set a theological framework for his promotion of diverse-yet-united community? Please cite examples. Did you find this theological framework to be helpful in thinking through these issues?*
 - In section two, answer the following question (2-3 pages): *As Ince applied his theological framework in the second half of the book, what two or three applications stood out to you as truly significant? Please cite examples. How useful would this book be in your own community as you wrestle with the multiform, multicultural design that God has for the church?*
 - a. The response will be written with one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12 point Times Roman font. Please write in complete sentences, paragraphs, etc.
 - b. The response will be due on **Friday, February 26, 2026; no late papers will be accepted.**
 - Please email your paper—along with your reading report—to both email addresses listed in the syllabus.

3. Reading

- a. With your Ince paper, you will turn in a reading report, which will estimate how much of the reading you completed. I will also provide a form on Canvas, which will be posted prior to our final in-person class time. You must use the provided form; failure to do so will result in a point deduction.
- b. If you do not turn in a completed reading report, you will receive no points for reading. It is **due on February 26, 2026**; no late reports are accepted.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND PROBABLE LECTURE SCHEDULE

ONLINE DISCUSSION SCHEDULE (PLEASE HAVE YOUR READING COMPLETED BY THIS WEEK SO THAT YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE DISCUSSION)

December 1: Williams, Redemptive Kingdom Diversity.

December 8: Tisby, Color of Compromise

December 15: DuBois, Souls of Black Folk and Coates, Between the World and Me

December 22: no online discussion (Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!)

December 29: Loritts, Letters to a Birmingham Jail

January 25 Emerson and Smith, Divided by Faith

NB: we will not have a discussion question for the PCA papers (In Pursuit of Gospel Unity), but that will be reflected on the reading report.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

DAY	LECTURE
Monday, January 12	All Nations: Biblical Reflections on Race
Tuesday, January 13	Continued
Wednesday, January 14	Divided by Faith: Historical Reflections
Thursday, January 15	Continued/Sociological Realities
Friday, January 16	Continued/Way forward: Practical steps

February 26, 2026: Reading Report and Ince paper due



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: 02HT6205: The Gospel and Race
 Professor: Dr. Sean Michael Lucas
 Campus: Orlando
 Date: January 2026

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>			
<p>Articulation (oral & written)</p> <p>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</p>			
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Several short writing assignments that interact with biblical, theological, and cultural/global information
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Interaction with biblical materials on race.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Emphasizes that love for God motivates practical steps toward racial reconciliation
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	Within a Reformed worldview, students engage the topic of racial relations.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Engages the topic of racial relations within a winsomely reformed ethos.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to	None	

	construct and skill to lead a worship service.		
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Moderate	Practical steps suggested on applying classroom learning to ministry in local church context
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Engagement with recent denominational actions and larger public on the most significant public issue—race—over the past 250 years.