

Course Syllabus
Christian Theological Seminary
H-634 Black Methodist History and Politics
Spring 2012

Mon. 6:00-8:45 pm
Room 158

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Course Description:

The emergence of African-American Methodist churches and denominations in the late 18th and early 19th centuries has been attributed to a variety of causes: 1) the impulse of denominationalism in American religion; 2) the quest for African-American autonomy and freedom; and 3) an act of divine providence. Despite their often different social and historical contexts, these African-American Methodist bodies—African Union, AME, AMEZ, CME—all remained strongly loyal to the Wesleyan spirit and movement.

The purpose of this seminar is threefold: 1) to re-examine the historical, theological, social roots of these religious bodies and to trace their growth and development as regional bodies to national and global denominations; 2) to compare their respective histories and polities, as well as their involvement in Pan-Methodist ventures and ecumenical conversations and partnerships; and 3) to propose a constructive proposal for Black Methodist merger/union in the 21st century.

The course will proceed along a dual track that integrates historical narrative and interpretation with church polity, culminating in a final research project.

Required Texts:

Ted A. Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, revised edition.*
(Abingdon, 2011).

Raymond R. Sommerville Jr., *An Ex-Colored Church: Social Activism in the CME Church, 1870-1970* (Mercer University Press, 2004).

Library Reserves:

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal.

The AME Hymnal.

The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dennis Dickerson, "Black Ecumenism: Efforts to Establish a United Methodist Episcopal Church," *Church History* 52 (December 1983): 479-91.
The Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.
Discipline of the CME Church.
 Nile Harper et al., *Urban Churches, Vital Signs* (Wm. Eerdmans, 1999).
 C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University, 1990).
 Mary R. Sawyer, *Black Ecumenism: Implementing the Demands of Justice* (Trinity Press, 1994).
 Grant S. Shockley, ed., *Heritage and Hope: The African American Presence in United Methodism* (Abingdon, 1991).
 John Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody* (Univ. of Tenn. Press, 1992).
 Linda E. Thomas, ed., *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology* (Fortress Press, 2004).

Course Requirements:

- 1) Three Comparative-Analysis Papers (10% each): You will write three 5-page papers comparing and analyzing two African-American Methodist denominations on three of the following five topics:
 - a) Beliefs and Doctrines (due Feb. 20);
 - b) Ordained Ministry (due Mar. 5);
 - c) Episcopal leadership (due Mar. 19);
 - d) The Local Congregation (due April 9)); or
 - e) Worship and Rituals (due April 23).
- 2) Three In-class Quizzes (10% each): The quizzes will cover materials presented in class and readings from the previous two weeks. Quiz #1 (Feb. 13); Quiz#2 (Feb. 27); Quiz #3 (April 16).
- 3) A Final 12-page Paper (20%): The final paper should make a compelling case for or against the organic merger of two or more of the denominations studied, based upon what you have learned during the class. These papers are due in class on April 30 (Week 14).
- 4) Three Opening Class Meditations (10%). These 5-10 minute meditations should incorporate elements of African-American Methodist spirituality, rituals and music. Consult AME, AMEZ, and CME Hymnals on reserve.
- 5) Attendance and Participation (10%): Please arrive on time for class and fully prepared to participate. Inform the professor of any anticipated absences. You will be allowed one excused absence; two or more absences will result in a grade deduction; and three or more will result in a failing grade.

Course Calendar

Week 1 (Jan. 23): I. Introduction to Course

- A. Overview of African American Methodist Bodies
- B. African Methodists in the Early Wesleyan Movement

Reading: Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, Ch. 27 (reserve);
Selections from AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

Week 2 (Jan 30): I. Black Methodist Polity, Doctrines and Beliefs
II. Presentation: Ted Campbell and Sharon Grant, "The Nature of Wesleyan Doctrine" The Wesleyan Studies Project Series II: Methodist Doctrine

Reading: Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine*, introduction to Ch. 4

Week 3 (Feb. 6): I. Black Methodist Polity, Doctrines and Beliefs

Reading: Campbell, *Methodist Doctrine*, Chs. 5-7

Week 4 (Feb. 13): I. African Methodists in the Antebellum North
II. Presentation: Dennis Dickerson, "African Methodism in Early America" The Wesleyan Studies Project, Series 1: Methodist History
III. Polity: Church Membership

*Quiz #1 on History, Polity and Doctrine

Reading: George Singleton, *Romance of African Methodism*,
chs 1-6;
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

Week 5 (Feb. 20): I. African-American Methodists in the Antebellum South
II. Polity: Ministry (Part 1)

*Paper #1 Due: Beliefs and Doctrines

Reading: Sommerville, *An Ex-Colored Church*, Ch. 2;
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

Week 6 (Feb. 27): I. African-American Methodists in War and Freedom
II. Polity: Ministry (Part 2)

Reading: Singleton, *Romance of African Methodism*, Chs. 7-9;
Sommerville, *An Ex-Colored Church*, Ch. 3;
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

*Quiz #2 on History and Ministry

Week 7 (Mar. 5): I. African-American Methodists in the Methodist
Church: The Central Jurisdiction
II. Polity: Denominational Departments and Ministries

*Paper #2 Due (Ordained Ministry)

Reading: Grant Shockley, *Heritage and Hope*, Chs. 2-5;
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

Week 8 (Mar. 12): I. African American Methodists and the Civil Rights
Movement
II. Polity: Conferences (Part 1)

Reading: Mary Sawyer, *Black Ecumenism*, intro and Ch. 2
(reserve);
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

Week 9 (Mar. 19): I. African-American Methodists and Ecumenism
II. Polity: Conferences (Part 2)

Reading: Dennis Dickerson, "Black Ecumenism: Efforts to Establish
a United Methodist Episcopal Church" (reserve);
Mary Sawyer, *Black Ecumenism*, Chs. 1 and 3 (reserve);
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

*Paper #3 Due (Episcopal Leadership)

Week 10 (Mar. 26): I. African-American Methodists: Models of Ministry
II. Polity: Judicial Administration, Trials and Appeals

Reading: Nile Harper, *Urban Churches, Vital Signs*, 30-41,
101-9 (reserve);
AME, AMEZ, CME *Disciplines*

*Easter Recess (April 2-6): No Class

Week 11 (April 9): I. African-American Methodist Worship and Rituals

Reading: John Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody*,
Chs. 1-3 (reserve);
AME, AMEZ, CME *Hymnals and Disciplines*

*Paper #4 due (The Local Congregation)

Week 12 (April 16): I. African-American Methodist Theologians

*Quiz #3 on Worship and Ritual

Reading: Linda E. Thomas, *Living Stones in the Household
of God*, Chs. 1, 5, 18, & 19.

Week 13 (April 23): I. African American Methodist Women

Reading: Vashti McKenzie, *Not without Struggle*;
AME, AMEZ, and CME Disciplines

*Paper #5 Due (Worship and Ritual)

Week 14 (April 30): I. Roundtable Discussion on the Future of
African-American Methodism: Merger and Beyond
II. Communal Meal

*Final Paper Due