

**TH 362-3 Black Theology**  
**Spring 2013**  
**Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary**  
**Professors: Shannon Craigo-Snell and Lewis Brogdon**  
**Schlegel 200 (ext 438) and 100 (ext 374)**

### **Course Description**

In this course, students will have the opportunity to explore African American theologies before the Civil Rights movement, the origins and development of Black Theology as a theological movement in the late 1960s against the backdrop of the Black power and Black Consciousness movements, and Womanist Theologies. Black Theology is a theological perspective which draws on the diverse sources, including religious experience, art, literature, music, and lived narratives. These sources will inform our study. Students will engage critical voices that have shaped the movement such as James Cone, but also engage critiques of Cone and Black Theology. The course will provide students a thorough introduction to the contours of the movement and its place in late twentieth and early twenty-first century theological discourse. *Black Theology* will fulfill the requirements of an elective course for a concentration in Black Church Studies in both the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Religion) programs.

A doctor of ministry candidate taking this class will, in addition to the reading and reporting requirements for doctoral level work, indicate an advanced level of appreciation for the theoretical and practical perspectives in the content of the course, demonstrate critical reflection on the limitations and assumptions of the materials studied, and show a depth of theological insight into the way the material can be integrated into the candidate's practice of ministry.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Students will be introduced to the origins, major themes, and developments in Black Theology
- Students will critically reflect on the influence and legacy of Black Theology on the Black Church and contemporary society
- Students will assess the importance of Black Theology for gender, economic, and racial justice.

### **Course Textbooks**

James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis, 1997).

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

Kelly Brown Douglass, *Sexuality and The Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis, 1999).

M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010).

## Course Requirements

### A. Assignments: Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Religion) Students

1. Read assigned texts. The readings are not very long, because close and careful reading is expected.
2. Attend class. Class will address readings AND present material not found in readings.
3. Actively participate in discussion. This is an important component of the course that will allow further exploration of the primary texts and instruction on how to analyze theological works.
4. Present one reading for the class, including a brief summary and 2-3 questions for discussion. The presenter will be responsible for the first 10-20 minutes of class and will turn in a copy of the presentation.
5. Submit one critical book review. This should be 5-7 pages long and include a summary of the work, and internal critique, and an external critique. *Due on March 27*
6. Submit one constructive theological paper. This should be 5-7 pages long and argue for a constructive thesis in conversation with one of the texts studied in the courses. Further instructions will be handed out in class. *Due on April 24*
7. Complete a group, oral final examination.

### B. Seminar Assignments: Doctor of Ministry Students

1. Read assigned texts. The readings are not very long, because close and careful reading is expected.
2. Attend class. Class will address readings AND present material not found in readings.
3. Actively participate in discussion. This is an important component of the course that will allow further exploration of the primary texts and instruction on how to analyze theological works.
4. Present one reading for the class, including a brief summary and 2-3 questions for discussion. The presenter will be responsible for the first 10-20 minutes of class and will turn in a copy of the presentation.
5. Submit one critical book review. This should be 5-7 pages long and include a summary of the work, and internal critique, and an external critique. *Due on March 27*
6. Submit one constructive theological paper. This should be 5-7 pages long and argue for a constructive thesis in conversation with one of the texts studied in the courses. Further instructions will be handed out in class. *Due on April 24*
7. Complete a group, oral final examination.
8. Essay (12 pp). Subject to be discussed with professors.
9. Additional readings
  - Johnny Hill, *Multidimensional Ministry for Today's Black Family* (Judson, 2007).
  - Ralph C. Watkins, *Leading Your African American Congregation through Transition* (Judson, 2007).
  - Linda E. Thomas, *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology* (Fortress, 2004).
  - Lee June, *Yet With a Steady Beat: The Black Church through a Psychological and Biblical Lens* (Moody, 2008).

**Papers** should be emailed to both Lewis and Shannon by midnight on the due date. Students with serious medical problems or major family emergencies may contact the professors BEFORE a paper is due to discuss extensions. Late papers (without extension granted) will be marked down one third of a grade (for example, A- to B+) every 24 hours for three days. Without an extension granted, papers turned in more than 72 hours after the due date will not be accepted.

**Grading:**

Grades will be determined in the following way:

Class participation 10%

Seminar presentation 15%

Critical book review 25%

Constructive theological paper 25%

Oral exam 25%

**Course Schedule****February**

8 Introduction: The Emergence of Liberation Theology and Black Studies

- In class handout

Unit 1: History of African American Theology

13 African American Theology (19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

- Reading: Norman Yetman, ed., *Voices From Slavery*, 11-54; Bruno Chenu, *The Trouble I've Seen* (An Anthology of 210 Spirituals-**scan over these**), 231-85; and WEB DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 7-15, 134-46, 177-88

15 African American Theology (pre Civil Rights era)

- Reading: Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 11-73

20 African American Theology (pre Civil Rights era)

- Reading: Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 74-109; Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Letter from a Birmingham Jail," 289-302

Unit 2: The Emergence of Black Theology

22 Black Theology and Black Power

- Reading: James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, chs 1-2

27 Black Theology and Black Power

- Reading: James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, chs 3-4

**March**

1 Black Theology and Black Power

- Reading: James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, chs 5-6

Unit 3: Critiques of Black Theology

6 Is Black Theology White Theology?

- Reading: Cecil Cone, *The Identity Crisis in Black Theology* 26-72, 92-122

8 Black Theology and "Blackness"

- Reading: Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness*, 86-117

13 Black Theology in Black Churches

- Reading: Cone, *For My People*, 99-121; Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 50-66
- Guest panel of local pastors

Unit 4: Womanist Theology

15 Introduction to Womanism

- Reading: bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1-15; Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, xi-xii; Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, 15-33.

20 Research and Study Week

22 Research and Study Week

27 Sexuality and Ecclesiology

- Reading: Kelly Brown Douglass, *Sexuality and The Black Church*, intro and chs 1-2; *Book review due*

29 Easter *No class*

### **April**

3 Sexuality and Ecclesiology

- Reading: Kelly Brown Douglass, *Sexuality and The Black Church*, chs 3-4

5 Sexuality and Ecclesiology

- Reading: Kelly Brown Douglass, *Sexuality and The Black Church*, chs 5-6

10 **In Class Writing Lab**

12 Theological Anthropology

- Reading: M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, intro and chs 1-2

17 Theological Anthropology

- Reading: M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, chs 3

19 Theological Anthropology

- Reading: M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, chs 4-5

### Unit 5: Race, Class, Economics, and Nihilism

24 Black Theology, Race, and Racism

- Reading: Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto*, intro and chs 1-2; *Paper due*

26 Black Theology, Race, and Racism

- Reading: Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto*, chs 3-4

### **May**

1 Black Theology, Race, and Racism

- Reading: Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto*, chs 5-6

3 Black Theology and Economics

- Reading: Alistair Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, intro and 181-216

8 The Challenge of Nihilism

- Cornel West, *Race Matters*, ch 1

10 The Challenge of Nihilism

- Joy Degruy Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 114-82

## LPTS Policy Statements

Please refer to the following policy statements that govern academic life at Louisville Seminary.

### 1. Use of Inclusive Language

Inclusive Language:

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, [http://www.lpts.edu/Academic\\_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp](http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp).

### 2. Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

### 3. Special Accommodations

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center ([kmapes@lpts.edu](mailto:kmapes@lpts.edu)) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

### 4. Use of Electronic Devices

All cell phones should be turned off during class unless waiting for an important call, in which case you should let the professor know ahead of time. When using computers in class do not access the Internet unless specifically for purposes relevant to the course. Checking of email or Facebook will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will adversely affect one's class participation grade.

### Course Bibliography

Albert B. Cleage, *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

James Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984).

\_\_\_\_\_, *My Soul Looks Back* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (New York: Orbis, 2010)?

Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).

William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

J. Deotis Roberts, *A Black Political Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005)

J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987).

Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds. *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Vol. I and II, 1966-1979*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

Will Coleman, "Tribal Talk: Black Theology in Postmodern Configurations," *Theology Today* 50.1 (April 1993), pp. 68-77.

James Cone, "Martin Luther King, Jr., Black Theology-Black Church," *Theology Today* 40.4 (Jan. 1984), pp. 409-420.

C. Eric Lincoln, "Black Consciousness and the Black Church in America" *Missiology* 1.2, pp. 7-20.

Noel Leo Erskine, "Black Theology: Retrospect and Prospect," *Theology Today* 36.2 (July 1979), pp. 176-185.

James Evans, Jr., "African American Christianity and the Postmodern Condition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 58.2 (Summer 1990), pp. 207-222.

Cheryl Sanders, "Roundtable Discussion: Christian Ethics and Theology in Womanist Perspective," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5.2 (Fall 1989), pp. 83-91.

Timothy L. Smith, "Slavery and Theology: The Emergence of Black Christian Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History* 41.4 (Dec. 1972), pp. 497-512.

J. Cameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford, 2008).

Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University press, 2010).

### Critical Book Review Format

The critical book review provides an assessment of a text and an interaction of the ideas of that text with the ideas of others in the field and with your own analysis. The review should be five to six pages, typed (10-12 point text) and double-spaced. **Divide the review into the following sections:**

- 1. The Golden Thread:** Summarize the argument in about two pages. Focus on the main thesis of the book and how the author proceeds to argue for that thesis as the book progresses. Lengthy summaries are unnecessary. Look for the links between ideas and how those ideas move the argument along and result in a conclusion. In the case of an edited book, discover the rationale for grouping these articles together and show how, taken together, they provide a perspective or contrasting perspective on a particular topic. While you may compare points of view in your account, do not summarize each article individually.
- 2. Internal critique:** Show how the book holds together. Is it well-organized? Is the argument sound? Is it well-researched and documented? Are the conclusions warranted? Does the writing style fit the content? Internal analysis of the text should be done in one to two pages.
- 3. External critique:** What are others in the field saying about this topic? Bring into dialogue the argument of the book with other voices. A book review off the web might be helpful. This section should take about one page.
- 4. Your critique:** On the basis of your knowledge and experience, what is your opinion of this work? How will the understanding this text has given you aid in your own thinking and action? Use about one page for this analysis.
- 5. Questions for discussion.** Compose five questions that will stimulate discussion on the issues raised in the readings. (developed by Frances S. Adeney)