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**11/12-632: Biblical Hermeneutics
African American Biblical Interpretation
Fall Semester 2014**

Professor: Cheryl B. Anderson

Room 210

Monday 6:30 to 9:30 pm

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Course Objectives:

- * Familiarization with the variety of biblical interpretation in the African American tradition and the continuing tensions within those same traditions
- * Awareness that all biblical interpretation takes place in particular social locations and must be in dialogue with interpretations from other social locations
- * Ability to critically analyze scholarly resources and evaluate their possible contribution to a particular racial/ethnic community

Required Texts:

Lee H. Butler, Jr., *A Loving Home: Spirituality, Sexuality, and Healing Black Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). **ISBN-13:** 978-0800662677, Kindle version available at amazon.com for \$9.99.

Randall C. Bailey, ed., *Yet With A Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*, *Semeia Studies* 42 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003). **ISBN-13:** 978-1589830721, \$25.51 at amazon.com.

Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999). **ISBN:** 1-57075-242-7, \$15.67 at amazon.com.

Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). **ISBN-13:** 978-0800625016, \$22.50 at amazon.com.

Marvin A. McMickle, *A Time To Speak: How Black Pastors Can Respond to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic*. **ISBN:** 9780829818031, \$24.99 at amazon.com.

Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins, *Loving the Body: Black religious studies and the erotic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). **ISBN-13:** 978-1403976383, \$34.50 at amazon.com.

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NOTE: Additional readings not found in these books are available on the course Moodle site.

Course expectations:

- completion of reading assignments before each class
- active and informed participation in class sessions
- punctual and regular attendance at all class sessions

Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. It is expected that you will give your full attention to the lectures and discussions in the class. To facilitate your engagement with the class, cellphones and earpieces must be turned off and put away, and your laptops should be used only for taking notes.

Our class discussions will supplement and integrate the readings rather than repeat that material. For this reason, missing a class damages the learning process. Consequently, two absences from a full class session will result in a substantial lowering of your grade and more absences than that will make it unlikely that the course can be successfully completed. Partial absences due to tardiness or early departures, among other things, will count towards missing a full class session. If you have to miss a class for any reason, please inform me in advance by telephone or email.

Course Grading:

Consistent and active participation in class discussions (including summarizing and leading the class discussion on two readings)	20%
Identify a social/economic issue associated with the African American community, research the parameters of the issue, describe perspectives of the black church, relevant biblical texts and propose possible solutions.	20%
Brief Exegetical Assignment (2-3 pages and due April 29) Choose a pericope from the Africana Bible or True to our Native Land and compare its treatment there to that in a variety of Conventional commentaries such as the Anchor Bible, NIB, Women's Bible Commentary, etc. Please inform professor of commentaries chosen in advance.	20%
Analytical Paper (12-15 pages) (Due Monday, December 16)	40%

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An analytical paper can cover a particular topic covered in the class, a particular text (as interpreted in a given historical period or in the contemporary setting), or the work of one scholar. All assignments must be submitted to receive a final grade in the course. Furthermore, all assignments must be submitted on the date specified. Requests for extensions are strongly discouraged. Any extension granted for any assignment may result in the lowering of your final grade.

September 8 (Session 1)

Social Location: Part One

Butler, *A Loving Home*, Chapters 1-3

Randall C. Bailey, "The Danger of Ignoring One's Own Cultural Bias in Interpreting the Text," in R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 66-90 and "Academic Biblical Interpretation among African Americans in the United States," in *African Americans and the Bible: An Interdisciplinary Project*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000), 696-711.

Larry L. Enis, "Biblical Interpretation among African American New Testament Scholars," *Currents in Biblical Research* 4 (2005): 57-82.

Ron Liburd, "Like. . . A House Upon the Sand: African American Biblical Hermeneutics in Perspective," *Journal of ITC* 22 (1994):71-91.

September 15 (Session 2)

Social Location: Part Two

Butler, *A Loving Home*, Chapters 4-7

Felder, *Stony the Road*, articles by Wimbush, Weems, Hoyt, and Myers

September 22 (Session 3)

Issues of Translation and Tensions in Pluralistic Contexts

Wil Gafney, "Hearing the Word-Translation Matters: A Fem/Womanist Exploration of Translation Theory and Practice for Proclamation in Worship," in *Text and Community*

Clarice J. Martin, "Womanist Interpretation of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 6 (Fall 1990):41-61.

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September 22 (Session 3 con't)

Johnnetta Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 71-101.

Articles by Kwok Pui-Lan and Judith Plaskow in Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction, ed. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 101-129.

Ron Liburd, "Textual Harassment?: A Hermeneutical Perspective on African American Preaching," in Randall C. Bailey, ed., Yet with A Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature (2003), 85-101.

September 29 (Session 4)

The Exodus Motif

David W. Kling, "Exodus in the African American Experience," in The Bible in History: How the Texts Have Shaped the Times (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 193-229.

Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, 3rd ed., R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 235-241.

Randall C. Bailey, "He Didn't Even Tell Us the Worst of it!" *Union Seminary Quarterly* 59 (2005): 15-24.

Musa W. Dube, "Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible" *Semeia* 78 (1997): 11-26.

Irene Monroe: "When and Where I Enter, Then The Whole Race Enters with Me: Que(e)rying Exodus," in Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible, ed. Robert E. Goss and Mona West (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 82-91.

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives," in Yet With A Steady Beat, 123-143.

October 6 (Session 5)

Perspectives on Old Testament Texts

Reports due on a social or economic issue facing the African American community

John W. Waters, "Who was Hagar," in Stony the Road.

Renita Weems, "The Hebrew Women are not like the Egyptian Women: The Ideology of Race, Gender, and Sexual Reproduction in Exodus 1," *Semeia* 59 (1994): 25-34

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October 6 (Session 5 con't)

Wilma Ann Bailey, "The Sorrow Songs: Laments from Ancient Israel and the African American Diaspora," in Yet With A Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, ed. Randall C. Bailey, *Semeia Studies* 42 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 61-83.

Stephen Breck Reid, "The Theology of the Book of Daniel and the Political Theory of W.E.B. DuBois," in The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration, ed. Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 37-49.

October 13 (Session 6)

More on Old Testament Texts

Harold V. Bennett, "Triennial Tithes and the Underdog: A Revisionist Reading of Deuteronomy 14:22-29 and 26:12-15," in Yet With A Steady Beat, 7-18.

Valerie C. Cooper, "Some Place to Cry: Jephthah's Daughter and the Double Dilemma of Black Women in America," in Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Semeia Studies* 44 (2003), 181-191.

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Black Mother Women and Daughters. . .," in A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther, Second series, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 192-210.

Cheryl B. Anderson, "Reflections in an Interethnic/racial Era on Interethnic/racial Marriage in Ezra," in Fernando Segovia, Randall Bailey, and Benny Liew, eds., They Were All Together in One Place?: Toward Minority Criticism (Semeia Studies).

October 20 (Session 7)

Issue: Race and Ethnicity

Felder, Stony the Road, articles by Felder, Copher, and Bailey

Randall C. Bailey, "Is that Any Name for a Nice Hebrew Boy. . .?," in The Recovery of Black Presence, 25-36.

Abraham Smith, "Do You Understand What You are Reading. . .?" *Journal of ITC* (Fall 1994): 48-30.

Clarice Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation," *Semeia* 47, 105-135.

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October 20 (Session 7 con't)

Brad Braxton, "The Role of Ethnicity in the Social Location of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24," in Yet With A Steady Beat, 19-32.

Resources: Rodney Sadler, Jr., Can A Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity and Othering in the Hebrew Bible (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Love L. Sechrest, A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectic of Race (T&T Clark, 2010), Mitzi Smith, The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Woman (Princeton Theological Monograph, 2011), and Gay L. Byron, Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature (New York: Routledge, 2002).

October 27 (Session 8)

Issue: Sexuality

Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Orbis Books, 1999).

November 3 (Session 9)

Issue: Sexuality

Pinn and Hopkins, eds., Loving the Body, articles by Brown, Smith, Butler, Griffin, Anderson, Pollard and Brown Douglas

Resources: Kelly Brown Douglas, Black Bodies and the Black Church: A Blues Slant (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Eboni Marshall Turman, Toward A Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).and Horace L. Griffin, Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

November 10 (Session 10)

Issue: The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Marvin A. McMickle, *A Time To Speak: How Black Pastors Can Respond to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008).

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November 17 (Session 11)

Issue: Slavery

Katie Cannon, "Slave Ideology and Biblical Interpretation," in The Recovery of Black Presence, 119-128.

Suzanne Scholz, Biblical Studies Alternatively, articles by Shanks, Rice, and Glancy, 203-241.

Lloyd A. Lewis, "An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle," in Stony the Road, 232-246.

J. Albert Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 165-196.

Clarice Martin, "Somebody Done Hoodoo'd the Hoodoo Man": Language, Power, Resistance, and the Effective History of Pauline Texts in American Slavery" *Semeia* 83/84 (1998): 203-233.

Resource: Stephen R. Haynes, Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

December 1 (Session 12)

Issue: Gender, the Household Codes, and the book of Revelation

Clarice Martin, "The Haustafeln (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation, in Stony the Road, 206-231.

Ann Holmes Redding, "Not Again: Another Look at the Household Codes," in Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender, ed. Kristen Kvam, Linda Schearing and Valarie Ziegler, 455-462.

Brian Blount, Can I Get a Witness?: Reading Revelation Through African American Culture (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37-67.

Clarice Martin, "Polishing the Unclouded Mirror: A Womanist Reading of Revelation 18:13," in From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective, ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 82-109.

Demetrius Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience," in Yet With A Steady Beat, 33-59.

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December 1 (Session 12 con't)

Resources: Demetrius Williams, An End To This Strife: The Politics of Gender in African American Churches (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), Keri Day, Unfinished Business: Black Women, the Black Church, the Struggle to Thrive in America (Orbis Books, 2012), and Sharon Ellis Davis, Battered African American Women: A Study of Gender Entrapment (Edwin Mellen, 2014).

December 8 (Session 13)

Comparative exegetical assignments are due and to be discussed in class

Analytical Papers due December 16, 2014