

African American Religious Thought

RELG 3345 CRN 28113

Spring 2015

TR 9:25-10:40

Old Main 112

Dr. Julia Winden-Fey

Old Main 104F

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Office hours: 8:30-9:15 TR/or by appt

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This is an optional core (or elective, if not taken as a core) course for religious studies majors and minors, an elective for philosophy majors and minors and students majoring or minoring in African/African American Studies, and an upper-level elective for other interested students. This course studies various historical and contemporary figures, movements and theological developments in the history of African American religion.

Following a brief exploration of the origins of African American religion in the United States, the course will focus primarily on religious thought and practice from the 1950s to the present. Through readings, video and discussion, we will map the history and contours of African American religion, culminating with the emergence and growth of Black and Womanist Theologies. Particular attention will be given to the ways in which the experience of oppression and the interaction of race, class, gender and sexuality in American culture have each impacted African American religious practices and thought.

As with any religious studies course, students should leave this course having

- Improved their skills in critical reading, writing, thinking and speaking
- Increased their understanding of the personal, social and cultural dimensions of religion
- Developed their ability to critically analyze religion as a cultural phenomenon

As part of the UCA Upper-Division Core, this course will challenge students to analyze their own cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions, and belief systems. Students will be asked to:

- Articulate their own cultural values and assumptions
- Compare cultural values across a range of cultures
- Respond to complex questions with answers that reflect multiple cultural perspectives

REQUIRED TEXTS

Down by the Riverside: Readings in African-American Religion, edited by Larry G. Murphy

Strength to Love, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Malcolm X: The Last Speeches, edited by Bruce Perry

A Black Theology of Liberation, 20th Anniversary Edition, James H. Cone

Other readings as assigned (to be posted on myUCA/myCourses)

ASSIGNMENTS

Mid-term Essay Exam	25%	Take-home essay questions
Final Essay Exam	25%	Take-home essay questions
Observations & Reflections Journal	20%	Reflections on daily readings; collected periodically
Short Research Paper/Presentation	20%	Topic: an A/AA minor U.S. religious tradition or figure
Participation & Attendance	10%	Required (see below)

Attendance Policy: Attendance, preparation, and active participation is required for this course, as the class will function as a seminar. Your successful completion of this course requires your engagement with the material and your peers through in-class dialogue and discussion. More than 3 absences is grounds for being withdrawn from the course.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(Changes in this schedule will be announced in class and via email)

Week 1 (Jan 8)	Class Introductions
Week 2 (Jan 13, 15)	What is “African American Religion”? Read: Murphy 1-48; 122-131; DuBois (myUCA)
Week 3 (Jan 20, 22)	African Religions in the U.S. Read: Murphy 243-259; <i>in-class film</i>
Week 4 (Jan 27, 29)	History and Development of African American Christianity Read: Murphy 49-67; 133-138; 175-199
Week 5 (Feb 3, 5)	The Black Church Read: Lincoln (myUCA) and Higginbotham (myUCA)
Week 6 (Feb 10, 12)	Social Advocacy and Protest Read: Murphy 97-104; 293-314
Week 7 (Feb 17, 19)	Martin Luther King, Jr Read: Carson (myUCA); King ix-30
Week 8 (Feb 24, 26)	MLK, Jr sermons Read: King 43-52; 145-164
<i>Mid-Term Exam due Feb 26th</i>	
Week 9 (Mar 3, 5)	Islam in the U.S. Read: Introduction to Islam (myUCA); Murphy 69-80
Week 10 (Mar 10, 12)	African American Muslims Read: Murphy 203-207; 317-328; “God’s Judgment” (myUCA)
Week 11 (Mar 17, 19)	Malcolm Little/Malcolm X Read: <i>Speeches</i> 7-57, 109-181
<i>Spring Break – March 23-27</i>	
Week 12 (Mar 31, Apr 2)	Black Liberation Theology Read: Cone ix-42; 116-137
Week 13 (Apr 7, 9)	Womanist Theology Read: Grant (myUCA), Cannon (myUCA); Douglas ix-62
Week 14 (Apr 14, 16)	Sexuality in the Black Church Read: Douglas 63-145
Week 15 (Apr 21, 23)	African/African American Traditions in the 20 th and 21 st Centuries In-class presentations; Research paper due – Apr 23rd

Final Exam due – 10am, April 28th

Statement on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Use of Electronic Devices

Students may use electronic devices (e.g., laptops, tablets) in class to take notes and access the Internet for appropriate, course-related purposes. These devices may not be used to send text messages, check email, surf the Internet, or do anything else not directly related to the course. The professor reserves the right to prohibit any student from using electronic devices if such use distracts others or otherwise disrupts the class.

Use of Recording Devices

Students may not use audio or video recording devices in class without the professor's permission.

Statement on Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

Student Handbook Policies

Students are responsible to familiarize themselves with all policies listed in the Student Handbook. Special attention should be given to the Sexual Harassment and Academic Policies. [Title IX Disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>.]

Building Emergency Plan

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.