

Your Professor

Dr. Emily Clark

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Humanities 335

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Office Hours: M 1:00-2:00 pm
and Tues 11:00am-2:00 pm;
and by appointment

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How This Course Helps You Graduate

This course fulfills the
Christianity/Catholic
tradition core curriculum
requirement and has a
Social Justice core
designation.

Course Texts

Milton Sernett, ed., *African
American Religious History: A
Documentary Witness* (Duke
University Press, 1999).

Onaje X.O. Woodbine, *Black
Gods of the Asphalt: Religion,
Hip-Hop, and Street Basketball*
(Columbia University Press,
2016).

Both are required.

Additional readings will be
posted on Blackboard.

AFRICAN AMERICAN RELIGIONS



Course Description

This course introduces you to the variety of African American religions that developed in the Americas during and after the Atlantic slave trade up to today. We will look at the religious experiences of African Americans in what is now the United States and in places around the Caribbean world. The historical contexts surrounding the development of African American religions and the lived experiences of African Americans are the main topics of our course. The class includes discussion of West African religions, the impact of the Atlantic slave trade, the role of politics, the construction of racial identities, and most importantly, the diversity of African American religions.

Within various forms of Christianity, Islam, and even Hip Hop, we will examine the interplay between religion, race, colonialism, and self-determination.

Christianity/Catholic Tradition Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify the sources of Christian traditions: scripture, doctrines, historical developments, leading thinkers, or practices.

In African American Religions, we'll identify leading thinkers, texts, practices, and historical developments in African American religious history.

2. Students will be able to interpret and analyze sources of Christian tradition critically and creatively by employing contemporary scholarly methods that relate sources to historical contexts, to other sources, and to the experiences of faith.

In African American Religions, we'll analyze and contextualize primary sources about African American religious history and culture.

3. Students will be able to articulate how the sources of Christian tradition and methods of interpretation and analysis promote cultural transformation and social justice.

In African American Religions, we'll assess how religion, political power, colonialism, and race have intersected in American history and evaluate how religious ideas and practices allowed African Americans to critique American racism and argue for social justice.

How to Succeed in this Course



1) Come to class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire meeting. Make-up quizzes will only be offered for documented University approved activities, contagious illness, or family emergencies. **Email me when you know you're going to be absent.** Your lowest quiz grade is dropped to account for other absences.

2) Regularly check your email. I frequently email about grades, housekeeping issues, and more.

3) Complete assigned readings, in their entirety, on schedule. Engage with your reading. Consider coming to class with 3 Qs about the

reading (a rich **q**uote to unpack, a discussion **q**uestion for the class, and a **q**uandary that the reading left with you.) And **bring** the readings to class.

4) Contribute to class discussions. You should come to class with questions and comments, prepared to participate in a lively discussion.

5) Complete all assignments, in a timely manner. Due dates are firm but I allow requested extensions if requested 12 hours before due date. Otherwise late papers will be deducted a full letter grade for every day it is late.

6) Ask for help when you need it. I am happy to assist you in your attempts to master course materials and successfully complete course assignments (Really, I am). Come to my office hours and I am always available via email.

Course Policies

RESPECT FOR MATERIAL, OUR SUBJECTS, AND YOUR PEERS

This course is not confessional in nature; that is, we are not here to promote a particular religious viewpoint or to debate religious “truth.” Rather, we will be engaging religious materials in order to understand their meanings for the people who have produced and used them. You may have your own religious commitment; if so, throughout this course you will likely encounter opinions and religious beliefs and activities with which you do not agree. This does not make them unworthy of your study, consideration, and respect. I ask you to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone else whose practices and beliefs may differ from your own and yet carry immense meaning and value for that person. Furthermore, you will be expected to communicate in a civil manner at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified way. Treat your peers and the subject material with respect.

COURSE POLICY ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

This class and classroom is one that respects and welcomes each other. Many of my classes cover topics related to race, colonialism, religion, and racism. These conversations and readings are difficult for some students, and I encourage you to live in that space of productive discomfort and allow yourself to be challenged. Gonzaga’s [Mission Statement](#) emphasizes a commitment to intercultural competence, diversity, and social justice. Let’s live that mission in the classroom. Through these sometimes-uncomfortable conversations, we will learn and grow together.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

I do not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. We are an intellectual and academic community, and all of us are responsible to act with integrity. All violations of the Gonzaga Academic Honesty Policy will result in a zero on the assignment. Plagiarism is the act of passing another’s work off as your own. Whether intentional or not, all plagiarized assignments will receive a zero. If you have questions or concerns about plagiarism, consult the guide on blackboard. [Click here for more on Academic Citizenship at Gonzaga.](#)

SCREEN POLICY

You are welcome to use your computer or tablet in class to take notes and refer to pdf readings you did not print out. Screens are **not** to be allowed for other purposes during class. If you have your screen open, you have agreed that I can cold-call on you at any time. The only exceptions to this rule are those with relevant disability accommodations.



DISABILITY ACCESS POLICY

Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should:

1. Register with and provide documentation to the Disability Access.
2. Bring a letter to me from the [Disability Access Office](#) indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done within the first two weeks of class. The sooner I know, the sooner we can work together and help you succeed.

For more information about services available to GU students with disabilities, contact:

disability@gonzaga.edu; 313-4134; Foley Library 209.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

I enforce the [Gonzaga attendance policy](#), if you miss more than 6 class meetings, you will receive a “V,” which is the same as a “F.” Per the University [policy on religious holidays](#), exceptions to this include religious holidays. And any COVID-related issue, like exhibiting symptoms, is fully excused.

A NOTE ON HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Consistent with its mission, Gonzaga seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and Gonzaga’s policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Gonzaga encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in [Gonzaga’s Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy](#).

As a faculty member, I want get you connected to the resources here on campus specially trained in and experienced in assisting in such complaints, and therefore **I will report all incidents of gender-based harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct to Title IX**. A representative from that office will reach out to you via phone and/or email to explore options for support, safety measures and reporting. I will provide our Title IX Director with all relevant details, including names and identifying information, of the information reported. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following websites: Equity and Inclusion and Title IX. If you would like to directly make a report of harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct directly, you may contact our Title IX coordinator (Stephanie Thomas; 509-313-6910; Business Services Building 018; thomassn@gonzaga.edu). Or fill out an online [Sexual Misconduct Form](#). For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit our [Title IX](#) website or the website for [Equity and Inclusion](#). My office is a safe space but I am legally required to report sexual misconduct.

Assignments and Grading

- 1) Reading Quizzes. There will be 11 pop quizzes each worth 20 points. These quizzes will cover the day’s reading assignment. At the end of the semester your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and your total quiz score determined from the remaining quizzes. Make up quizzes will only be offered for

students with excused (officially documented) absences. Worth 200 points.

2) Primary Source Worksheets: Over the course of the semester, you will be required to fill out 4 primary source worksheets. The worksheet is due just before the class period the reading was assigned. In other words, it cannot be turned in after the reading has been discussed. Each worksheet is worth 50 points. You **cannot** do a worksheet and a response paper on the same reading.

3) Take Home Midterm: This essay has you reflecting on the most significant reading so far in the semester and why. Full prompt posted to blackboard. Worth 125 points. (A general rubric for essays in this class is on blackboard in the Prompts/Guides area.)

4) Primary Source Response Paper: You will write a 750-word response paper to an assigned primary source of your choice. This is sort of like an expanded primary source worksheet. Like the worksheets, it is due the class period the reading was assigned. Worth 100 point. You **cannot** do a worksheet and a response paper on the same reading.

5) Final Essay/Unessay: You will write a 1500-word essay in reflection of the semester or complete an **unessay**. Worth 225 points.

6) In-Class Participation: You contribute to the success of this course by: reading the assigned materials, attending every class, taking notes, listening respectfully, staying on task, and **actively contributing** to class discussions. Worth 150 points. (A rubric for class participation is on blackboard in the Prompts/Guides area.)

Reading Quizzes: 200 points	A range: 1000-895 points	D range: 694-595 points
PS Worksheets: 200 points	A/A- cutoff at 925	D+/D cutoff at 655
Midterm: 125 points	B range: 894-795 points	F: 594 points and below
PS Response: 100 points	B+/B cutoff at 855	
Final Essay/Unessay: 225 points	B/B- cutoff at 825	
Participation: 150 points	C range: 794-695 points	
Total: 1000 points	C+/C cutoff at 755	
	C/C- cutoff at 725	

Course Schedule

Important: You need to come to class having already read the assigned reading for that day; in other words, readings are due the date listed.

Week 1: Course Introduction

Wednesday, Aug 31: Introductions, Class Expectations

Friday, Sept 2: What is Religious Studies? What is African American Religion?

Reading: "The Category of African American Religion" on blackboard

Week 2: Historical Grounding

Monday, Sept 5: No Class. Labor Day Holiday



Wednesday, Sept 7: Religions of West Africa

Reading: 1 “Traditional Ibo Religion and Culture” and 2 “African Religions in Colonial Jamaica” in *Documentary Witness (DW)*

Friday, Sept 9: The Atlantic Slave Trade

Reading: “Death of the African Gods” on blackboard

Week 3: Colonial Comparisons

Monday, Sept 12: Haitian Vodou

Reading: “Of Worlds Seen and Unseen” on blackboard

Wednesday, Sept 14: Colonial North America

Reading: 3 “Slave Conversion on the Carolina Frontier” in *DW*; and “Phillis Wheatley” on blackboard

Friday, Sept 16: Colonial North America

Reading: 4 “Address to the Negroes in the State of New York” in *DW*; and “Essay on Slavery” on blackboard

Week 4: Slavery and Protestantism

Monday, Sept 19: Slavery

Reading: “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel” on blackboard

Wednesday, Sept 21: Invisible Institution

Reading: 7 “Plantation Churches: Visible and Invisible” and 8 “Proud of That ‘Ole Time’ Religion” in *DW*

Friday, Sept 23: Invisible Institution

Reading: 13 “Slave Songs and Spirituals” in *DW*

Week 5: Creating Black Christianity

Monday, Sept 26: The African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reading: “Methodism” on blackboard; and 14 “Life Experience and Gospel Labors” in *DW*

Wednesday, Sept 28: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Gender

Reading: 16 “A Female Preacher Among the Methodists” in *DW*

Friday, Sept 30: Christianity and Public Calls for Equality

Reading: 12 “Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ” and 18 “David Walker’s Appeal,” in *DW*



Week 6: Christianity, Resistance, and Self-Determination

Monday, Oct 3: Nat Turner’s Rebellion

Reading: 11 “Religion and Slave Insurrection” in *DW*

Wednesday, Oct 5: Conjure and “Magic”

Reading: “Conjure and Christianity” on blackboard; and 9 “Conjuration and Witchcraft” in *DW*

Friday, Oct 7: Black Catholicism



Reading: “Minority Within a Minority” on blackboard; and 32 “The First African American Catholic Congress” in *DW*

Week 7: Christianity, Resistance, and Self-Determination

Monday, Oct 10: Post-Civil War Changes

Reading: 24 “Welcome to the Ransomed” and 29 “The Travail of a Female Colored Evangelist” in *DW*

Wednesday, Oct 12: The Long Civil Rights Movement

Reading: “How Far the Promised Land?": Black Religion and Black Protest” on blackboard

Friday, Oct 14: The Black Church of the Early 20th Century

Reading: 40 “Social Work at Olivet Baptist Church” and 45 “The Genius of the Negro Church”

Week 8: The “Black Church” and Beyond

Monday, Oct 17: The Great Migration

Reading: 48 “Organized Religion and the Cults” and 51 “Elder Lucy Smith” in *DW*

Wednesday, Oct 19: Father Divine

Reading: 50 “The Realness of God, to you-wards” in *DW*

Friday, Oct 21: No in-person class meeting. Work on your take-home midterm.

Take-Home Midterm Due by 12 pm, noon.

Week 9: The Era of Civil Rights

Monday, Oct 24: No Class. Founder’s Day Holiday

Wednesday, Oct 26: Religion and Civil Rights

Reading: 56 “The Anatomy of Segregation and Ground of Hope” in *DW*

Friday, Oct 28: Religion and Civil Rights

Reading: 54 “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in *DW*



Week 10: Black Nationalism, Black Power, and Black Theology

Monday, Oct 31: Nation of Islam

Reading: 52 “Self Government in the New World” in *DW*

Wednesday, Nov 2: Malcolm X

Reading: “The Ballot or the Bullet” and “Letters from Abroad” on blackboard

Friday, Nov 4: Black Power and Black Theology

Reading: 57 “Black Power Statement” and “Black Theology” and 58 “Black Theology and the Black Church” in *DW*

Week 11: Womanist Theology

Monday, Nov 7: Womanist Theology

Reading: 19 “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell” in *DW*; “The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness” on

blackboard

Wednesday, Nov 9: No Class. Dr. Clark will be presenting research on Black visionary and religious leader Rebecca Cox Jackson at a conference.

Friday, Nov 11: No Class. Dr. Clark will still be in Richmond for the conference.

Week 12: Religion and Hip Hop

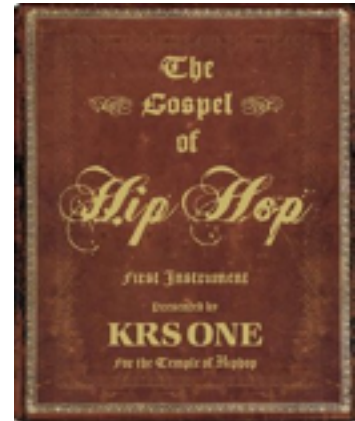
Monday, Nov 14: The Religion of Hip Hop

Reading: "Believe Me, This Pimp Game is Very Religious" on blackboard

Wednesday, Nov 16: The Religion in Hip Hop

Reading: "Hip Hop Lyrics" on blackboard (only counts as one reading for worksheets/primary source response paper)

Friday, Nov 19: No Class, COVID pending. Dr. Clark will be away at a conference.

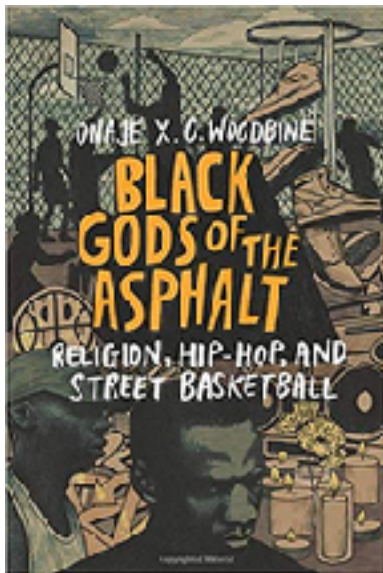


Week 13: No Class!

Monday, Nov 22: No Class, COVID pending. Dr. Clark will still be at a conference.

Wednesday, Nov 24: No Class. Thanksgiving Holiday

Friday, Nov 26: No Class. Thanksgiving Holiday



Week 14: Religion, Hip-Hop, and Street Basketball

Monday, Nov 28: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Black Gods of the Asphalt* (BGA)

Wednesday, Nov 30: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Chapter 2 in BGA

Friday, Dec 2: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Chapter 3 in BGA

Week 15: Religion, Hip-Hop, and Street Basketball

Monday, Dec 5: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Chapter 4 in BGA

Wednesday, Dec 7: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Chapter 5 in BGA

Friday, Dec 9: *Black Gods of the Asphalt*

Reading: Chapter 6 and Epilogue in BGA

Final Exam Week

10am Class: Tuesday, Dec 13th, 1:00-3:00 pm

11am Class: Thursday, Dec 15th, 8:00-10:00 am