

Your Professor

Dr. Emily Clark
clarke2@gonzaga.edu

Humanities 335
 Office Phone: 313-6781
Office Hours: MWF
 11:00-11:45 am and Fri 1:00
 pm-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 Canvas.

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.

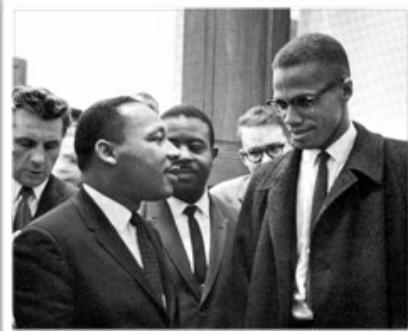
2. Students will be able to interpret and analyze sources of Christian tradition critically and creatively by employing contemporary scholarly methods that relate sources to historical contexts, to other sources, and to the experiences of faith.

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 quote to unpack, a discussion question for the class, and a quandary 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. **This includes the use of A.I technology.** Whether intentional or not, all plagiarized assignments will receive a zero. If you have questions or concerns about plagiarism, consult the guide on Canvas. [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 to 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 Canvas. Worth 125 points. (A general rubric for essays in this class is on Canvas 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 Canvas 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, Jan 17: Introductions, Class Expectations

Friday, Jan 19: What is Religious Studies? What is African American Religion?

Reading: “The Category of African American Religion” on Canvas



Week 2: Historical Grounding

Monday, Jan 22: Religions of West Africa

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

Wednesday, Jan 24: The Atlantic Slave Trade

Reading: “Death of the African Gods” on Canvas

Friday, Jan 26: Haitian Vodou

Reading: “Of Worlds Seen and Unseen” on Canvas

Week 3: Colonial Beginnings

Monday, Jan 29: Colonial North America

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

Wednesday, Jan 31: Colonial North America

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

Friday, Feb 2: Slavery

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



Week 4: Slavery and Protestantism

Monday, Feb 5: Invisible Institution

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

Wednesday, Feb 7: Invisible Institution

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

Friday, Feb 9: The African Methodist Episcopal Church

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

Week 5: Creating Black Christianity

Monday, Feb 12: The African Methodist Episcopal Church and Gender

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

Wednesday, Feb 14: Christianity and Public Calls for Equality

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

Friday, Feb 16: Nat Turner’s Rebellion

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



Week 6: Black Catholicism

Monday, Feb 19: No Class. Presidents’ Day.

Wednesday, Feb 21: Black Catholicism

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

Friday, Feb 23: Black Catholic Sisters

Reading: "No Cross, No Crown" on Canvas Black Catholicism

Week 7: Christianity, Resistance, and Self-Determination

Monday, Feb 26: Conjure and "Magic"

Reading: "Conjure and Christianity" on Canvas; and 9 "Conjuration and Witchcraft" in *DW*

Wednesday, Feb 28: Post-Civil War Changes

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

Friday, March 1: The Long Civil Rights Movement

Reading: "How Far the Promised Land?: Black Religion and Black Protest" on Canvas



Week 8: The "Black Church" and Beyond

Monday, March 4: The Black Church of the Early 20th Century

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

Wednesday, March 6: The Great Migration

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

Friday, March 8: No class. Dr. Clark will be at Princeton.

Take-Home Midterm Due by 12 pm, noon.

SPRING BREAK!! March 11 - March 15

Week 9: The "Black Church" and Beyond

Monday, March 18: Father Divine

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

Wednesday, March 20: The Moorish Science Temple

Reading: "MST FBI Files" on Canvas

Friday, March 22: Religion and Civil Rights

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



Week 10: The Era of Civil Rights

Monday, March 25: Religion and Civil Rights

Reading: 54 "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in *DW*

Wednesday, March 27: Nation of Islam

Reading: 52 "Self Government in the New World" in *DW*

Friday, March 29: No Class. Good Friday.

Week 11: Black Nationalism, Black Power, and Black Theology

Monday, April 1: No Class. Easter Monday.

Wednesday, April 3: Malcolm X

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

Friday, April 5: Malcolm X, Islam, and Hip Hop

Reading: “A Jihad of Words” on Canvas

Week 12: Theology from Black Perspectives

Monday, April 8: Black Power and Black Theology

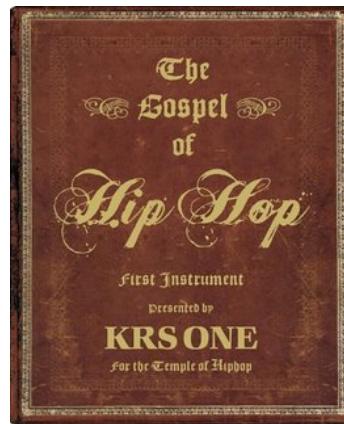
Reading: 57 “Black Power Statement” and ‘Black Theology’ and 58 “Black Theology and the Black Church” in *DW*

Wednesday, April 10: Womanist Theology

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

Friday, April 12: Black Queer Theology

Reading: “Our Lives Matter” on Canvas



Week 13: Religion and Hip Hop

Monday, April 15: The Religion of Hip Hop

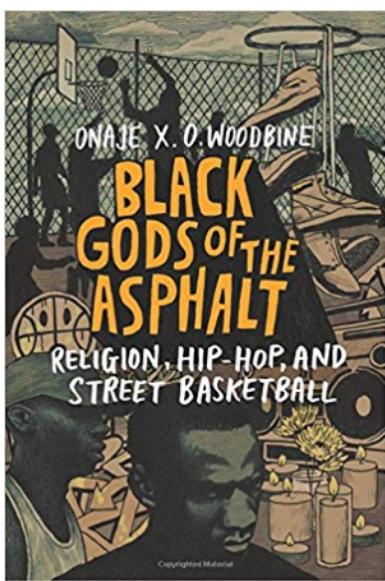
Reading: “Believe Me, This Pimp Game is Very Religious” on Canvas

Wednesday, April 17: The Religion in Hip Hop

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

Friday, April 19: Religion and Hip Hop or ?

Reading: TBA



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

Monday, April 22: Black Gods of the Asphalt

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

Wednesday, April 24: Black Gods of the Asphalt

Reading: Chapter 2 in BGA

Friday, April 26: Black Gods of the Asphalt

Reading: Chapter 3 in BGA

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

Monday, April 29: Black Gods of the Asphalt

Reading: Chapter 4 in BGA

Wednesday, May 1: Black Gods of the Asphalt

Reading: Chapter 5 in BGA

Friday, May 3: Black Gods of the Asphalt

Reading: Chapter 6 and Epilogue in BGA

Final Exam Week

Your final essay is due before the end of our final exam period