CH/TH601 History & Theology of the African-American Church
Fall Semester 2014 (Mondays, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.)
Professor: Carolynnne H. Brown, B.M. Ed., M.M., Th.D.
Email: carolynnne.brown@gordon.edu
Phone: 617.733.1962, available weekdays from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course covers the history of African American Christianity from its origins in Africa to the present, including theological, historical, and social issues in the development of the Black Church. It will explore the effects of urban migration on the development of the Church as social institution, and will further consider the implications of this development on Black protest movements. Throughout the course, music will be used as an interpretive tool to illustrate how African American Christians developed theology, expressed faith, and negotiated cultural and religious concerns. The course fulfills the core urban ministry course elective requirement.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Trace major historical developments in African American Christian tradition from the colonial period to the present day in relation to political, social, and cultural contexts. (M. Div. degree goals: 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 1, 4, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 1, 5, 6)
- Explore African religious views and practices with an eye to understanding the agency of African Americans in rejecting certain Christian messages while accepting others. (M. Div. degree goals: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 1, 2, 5, 6)
• Understand the significance the eighteenth-century evangelical awakening held for African Americans and the unique ways they interpreted its implications in order to uphold and shape African American identity. (M. Div. degree goals: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 1, 2, 6; MA Counseling degree goals: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)

• Recognize the autonomy of African American Christianity during slavery and oppression. (M. Div. degree goals: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 3, 4, 6; MA Counseling degree goals: 3, 6)

• Understand Black and white reciprocity in shaping evangelical religion and practice. (M. Div. degree goals: 6, 7, 8; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 6)

• Discuss and process important events and movements in the development of Black theology. (M. Div. degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; MA Counseling degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

• Consider the role of music in shaping and expressing Black theology. (M. Div. degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

• Analyze the contributions of some of the major figures of the past four hundred years of African American Christian experience including, but not limited to, an exploration of the role of Black preachers and women. (M. Div. degree goals: 3, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 3, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 3, 6)

• Examine the period between emancipation and the urban migration of the early twentieth century and its effect on urban Black churches. (M. Div. degree goals: 3, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 3, 6)

• Gain a broader perspective on contemporary African American Christian tradition through the lens of its historical development, with particular emphasis on enduring challenges to African American belief and practice. (M. Div. degree goals: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 3, 5, 6)

• Develop research and writing skills in the field of Religious Studies. (M. Div. degree goals: 3, 7; MA Urban Ministry degree goals: 3, 7; MA Counseling degree goals: 3, 5)

REQUIRED TEXTS


• Selected articles and essays (available on the course website or online)

ASSIGNMENTS

**Participation**

Total: 25 pts

Dialogue and reflection are key to helping you to digest and wrestle with information and materials in class. Remember that meaningful contribution is not just about how much you say but also the kinds of questions you raise, the intelligence and reasonableness of the insights you provide, the meaningfulness of the contributions you provoke in others, and the manner in which you handle disagreement. Having the “right” answers is less important than demonstrating that you are thinking and wrestling with the material. Regular attendance is key.

**Reading Quizzes**

Total: 100 pts

In order to ensure that you stay on task with the assigned reading and to prepare you for class lectures and discussions as well as the mid-term and final exams, there will be 6 *unannounced* reading quizzes throughout the semester. Each quiz is worth 20 points; your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. The quizzes will be on the assigned readings. *Important note*: There are *no* make-up quizzes for ANY reason. This means that regular attendance is important to a good overall grade on the reading quizzes.

**Practical Application Research Proposal**

Total: 50 pts

To assist you in learning to handle primary sources according to historical methodology, and to provide you with supervised experience using church history in a practical ministry situation, you will be divided into groups of 2-4 to conduct a research project at a local African American church using the church’s historical documents or artifacts. You may conduct research at your own church (if applicable), or you may contact a local African American church and request to use their historical sources. The professor will approve each project, and will be available to offer guidance and instruction until the project is completed. After you have identified a research project, you will turn in a 2-3 page proposal that states where the project will be done, what sources will be researched, questions you intend to pursue in your research, and what you hope to discover. Each student will turn in their own proposal, reflective of the group’s goals. You must plan to use your research to benefit the church you study. Use your creativity to decide how you will do this. For example, you might present your findings to the church through video, an article for their newsletter or bulletin, a presentation, or some other exciting yet-to-be-thought-of idea. You may wish to offer research services for a special event or purpose (anniversary, celebration, concert, etc.). The sky is the limit.

**Practical Application Research Project Report**

Total: 75 pts

After you and your group have completed the research proposed in your practical application research proposal, you will submit a 5-6 page report describing your discoveries, experience, and any pertinent background information relevant to your
findings. You will also include a description and/or sample of what you gave to or did for
the church as a result of your research discoveries. Each student will submit his or her
own report. Your report should be well organized and more formal than your proposal.
Consider using headings for various sections of your report, and be sure to properly
footnote and secondary sources you used in your research.

Primary Source Research Paper and Presentation Total: 50 pts

Each student will complete an 8-10 page research paper on a primary source (to
be selected by the third class meeting) from one of the African American religious
movements lined out in weeks eight through thirteen on the syllabus (i.e. The Great
Migration, Urban Mission, Black Protest, etc.). Students must also use two secondary
sources, and include historical, social, cultural and theological background on the
primary source. A good format would be to summarize the primary source, who the
document was written by and why it was written, and then provide subsequent
background sections. The best papers will assert an argument about the author’s claims,
and engage that argument through dialogue with the secondary sources, avoiding first
person references (“I” statements). The paper must conform to the Standards for Writing
included in this syllabus. Please include a copy of the primary source with the paper.
Students will present their papers to the class.

Mid-Term Exam Total: 75 pts

The mid-term exam will include both objective and essay components.

Final Exam Total: 75 pts

The final exam will include both objective and essay components.

GRADING

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STANDARDS FOR WRITING

All research papers must conform to Chicago (Turabian) style, as found in The Chicago
Manual of Style (16th ed) or Kate Turabian's Manual for Writers of Research Papers,
Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers. Papers should
adhere to the following: Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch
margin on all sides, and stapled prior to submission. Electronic submissions are
preferred.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

The Seminary considers all breaches of personal and academic integrity to be serious
offenses. As such, the seminary has a zero tolerance for such behaviors. Cheating
involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination. Duplication of course requirements involves the submission of the same (or substantially the same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person's distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one's own instead of giving proper credit to the source.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week 1**

M, Sep 8: Course Introduction; The Study of African American Christian History

   African Heritage and the Introduction of Christianity
   (Frey, Ch. 1, 3; Raboteau, Ch. 1; Sernett, pp. 25-33, “Slave Conversion on the Carolina Frontier; Albert J. Raboteau, excerpts from “Death of the Gods,” from *Slave Religion*, pp. 58-75 –course website; ”Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* – Ch. 1, available at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15399/15399-h/15399-h.html](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15399/15399-h/15399-h.html))

**Week 2**

M, Sep 15: The Great Awakening
   (Frey, Ch. 4-5; Cone, Introduction and Ch. 1-2; Sernett, pp. 44-51, “Letters from Pioneer Black Baptists;” Sernett, pp. 164-184, “Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel...Written by Herself” and Fredrika Bremer, excerpts from *America in the Fifties*, “Macon, Vineville, Georgia, May 7, 1850. At a Camp Meeting,” pp. 114-123, available at: [http://books.google.com/books?id=Y4clVBW2o74C&pg=PR2&dq=fredrika+bremer+digital&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c9PeU5mIOtWjyASFjoLQAQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=fredrika%20bremer%20digital&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Y4clVBW2o74C&pg=PR2&dq=fredrika+bremer+digital&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c9PeU5mIOtWjyASFjoLQAQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=fredrika%20bremer%20digital&f=false))

**Week 3**

M, Sep 22: The “Invisible Institution”
   (Frey, Ch. 2; Raboteau, Ch. 3; Cone, Ch. 3; Sernett, pp. 69-75, Sister Kelly, “Proud of that ‘Ole Time’ Religion;” W.E.B. DuBois, “The Sorrow Songs,” from *The Souls of Black Folks* –course website; Eileen Southern, from “The Music of Black Americans: A History,” –course website; The story of Clara C. Young, from *Prayin’ to Be Set Free*, available at: [http://books.google.com/books?id=ugTFrxLaNXgC&pg=PT4&dq=praying+to+be+set+free+digital&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XM7eU_z6JMShyATObLoLQAQ&ved=0CQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=praying%20to%20be%20set%20free%20digital&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ugTFrxLaNXgC&pg=PT4&dq=praying+to+be+set+free+digital&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XM7eU_z6JMShyATObLoLQAQ&ved=0CQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=praying%20to%20be%20set%20free%20digital&f=false))


Week 4
M, Sep 29: The Black Church Movement
(Raboteau, Ch. 2 and 4; Cone, Ch. 4; Sernett, pp. 139-154, Richard Allen, “Life Experience and Gospel Labors;” C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, “The Black Baptists: The First Black Churches in America” from The Black Church in the African American Experience –course website; Carolynne H. Brown, “Zoar M.E. Church, Philadelphia: A Case Study” –course website.)

Week 5
M, Oct 6: The Black Holiness Movement

*Practical Application Research Project Proposals Due

Week 6 October 13-17, Columbus Day and Reading Week, no class meetings

Week 7
M, Oct 20: MID-TERM EXAM
Black Catholics

Week 8
M, Oct 27: The Great Migration and Black Church Expansion
(Raboteau, Ch. 5; Sernett, 372-375, Lacy Kirk Williams, “Effects of Urbanization on Religious Life” and pp. 423-434, “The Genius of the Negro Church;” Carole Marks, “The Great Migration” from Farewell—We’re Good and Gone, Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, Sundays—Free At Last, in “This Work Had A’ End” from Living In, Living Out: African American Domestics and the Great Migration,–course website)

Week 9
T, Nov 5: The Pentecostal Movement; Asuza Street

**Week 10 November 10-15, Reading Week, no class meetings**

**Week 11**  
M, Nov 17: **Urban Mission and the Black Church as Social Institution**  

**Week 12**  
M, Nov 24: **Powerful Preachers**  

**Week 13**  
M, Dec 1: **Black Protest and the Civil Rights Movement**  

**Week 14**  
M, Dec 8: **The Hip Hop Church; Review and Project Discussion**  
(excerpts from Emmett G. Price, III, *The Black Church and Hip Hop: Toward Bridging the Generational Divide*, and Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson, *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture* –course website)

**FINAL EXAM: December 15th**