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 a 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, 4, 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 (in class handouts)

**ASSIGNMENTS**

*Participation* 

**Total: 25 pts**

Dialogue and reflection are key to helping you 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.

*Practical Application Research Project – Reflection Paper* 

**Total: 25 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, find a primary source at a local church using the church’s historical documents. You may conduct research at your own church (if applicable), or you may contact a local church or Christian organization to offer research services for a special event or purpose (anniversary, celebration, concert, etc.) Carefully make a copy or digital photograph of the source (all pages) and bring it to the professor for approval. Write a 3-4 page reflection paper on what you found, why the document or item is significant, where and how it was stored at the church, and what your experience obtaining the source was like. Provide a research proposal discussing how you would go about researching the source, and how you would use your findings to benefit the congregation or organization. You are not required to do the research project, although you can if you like. Please include a copy of the primary source with the paper. Primary sources should date from 1970 or earlier. The paper is due at the last class meeting.

*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 during the first class meeting) from one of the African American religious movements lined out in weeks three and four 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.
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.

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

IN CLASS READINGS:

Course Introduction; The Study of African American Christian History

African Heritage and the Introduction of Christianity

The “Invisible Institution”

The Great Awakening

Week 2

The Black Church Movement

The Black Holiness Movement

The Pentecostal Movement: Asuza Street

Week 3 *Class Presentations


The Great Migration and Black Church Expansion

Urban Mission and the Black Church as Social Institution

Week 4 *Class Presentations and Reflection Papers Due


Black Catholics

Powerful Preachers

Black Protest and the Civil Rights Movement