

Course Profile

Course # and Title CC/RHTH 414: BLACK LIVES MATTER: THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Instructor: LINDA E. THOMAS **Semester/Year:** FALL 2017

Course **Rationale** and Description:

This course explores #Black Lives Matter as a form of theological discourse about inequity, discrimination, and the death-dealing culture African Americans are subject to because of their black bodies.

It explores the relationship between race and Christianity in the history of the United States and explores the theological question: what difference do black bodies make for understanding Christian belief, institutions and practices? This course names race as a disruption and contradiction of Christian ideals and virtues. It investigates the changing constructions of racial and Christian identity with attention to the intersection of critical race theory, historical analysis, and contemporary theological thought about black bodies.

Students will gain historical standpoints that will guide and fortify both theological thinking and responsibility for seeking racial justice as religious scholars and ministerial leaders. In sum, this course examines how the #Black Lives Matters Movement has created fresh embodiments of a Christian theological anthropology and contributes to the public tasks of theology and the

Course Learning **Outcomes** (Learners will be able to):

(What *difference* will this course make to students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)

- Knowledge(s), skills, attitudes, and practices that students acquire in this course include:
- Learn to affirm the benefit of participating in a learning collective
- Engage critical thinking skills with which to understand important up-to-date events
- Intentionally strive to think intersectionally and trans-disciplinarily.
- Talk and write about difficult and complex issues that often trigger defensive reactions within themselves and others
- Practice engaging difficult and complex topics along a continuum ranging from ultra conservative to ultra progressive (family, congregation)

Strategies for Learning):

(How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?)

- Sharing our stories of exclusion or naming our privilege is crucial for our later critical development. It is important to share our stories, and equally important to be challenged by the stories of others. The interpretation of our own stories for ourselves must be done in relationship and not in isolation.
- With our shared stories, we will learn to engage critically. This is a strategy comprised of questioning and destabilizing normative structures of story-telling. Whose labor produced this? How does this theology act upon real human bodies? Is this an individual concern? What makes a human body black or white? These questions must be asked and will be asked in relationship to each other, with concern for our stories, and especially with respect to the power dynamics involved in these relationships.
- Having engaged our stories critically, it is then important to consider our stories as part of a collective set of stories, placing them in a trajectory of history. This strategy is where we will see the collective identities, which develop around blackness, and the antagonisms created by whiteness. While thinking intersectionally, we will be

forced to see similar historical trajectories concerning gender and class, and to consider the relationship that they have to one another historically, and again, in our own stories. Thus, we are neither looking at history or our own experiences in isolation, but with respect to both of them.

- Finally, we will consider theology and movements of resistance. In some cases, theology and resistance may be at odds with each other, and in others, theology may support necessary resistance, acting on behalf of excluded human bodies.

Assessment:

(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?)

Participation (Attendance, Engagement, and IDI):

Each session counts as two regular semester classes. Missing just one class without a proper excuse may significantly alter your grade. Please discuss with the professor if you have an emergency. This class invites and expects your full participating engagement in the course. Each student is required to take the Intercultural Development Inventory (\$11).

WE TALK. WE LISTEN. Blog. Each student will have space to write a blog post of 1000 to 1500 words. Go to LSTC Web page click on Quick Links and subscribe to blog. You are expected to give a comment on the weekly blog posts.

Readings and The Forum: You are expected to read all the required readings and engage with them in class and various assignments. Engagement with the readings is the way you engage with others and show respect to all participants in the class. The most immediate way you will show engagement with the readings is through a discussion forum on LSTCNet.

(Ethnography OR Public Outreach) + “Death Dealing” Research

Ethnographies: PhD Students are required to do the ethnography. More details on this project will be given out in class. Masters students have the option to do an ethnographic project or a Public Outreach Project.

Book Reviews and Presentations (PhD only) Each student is to complete 3 journal style book reviews from the required readings and at least two 10 minute in-class presentations of two books from the recommended readings or another approved book/source which interest you and are related to your research. According to your research, facilitators may ask you to present something else that may be beneficial for our learning collective. These assignments are to help form your research.

Final Group Multimedia Projects (Masters Students Only) Students will break into groups to complete a collaborative multimedia project. This project should be a piece of original research and composition and should draw from course themes. The final projects will be shared in a public reception at the end of the term. You can put together a video, documentary film, story, PowerPoint presentation, or other multimedia project that your group decides. These must be presented to the community before the end of the semester.

Bibliography: (subject to change)

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. ISBN-13: 978-1595586438; ISBN 10: 1595586431 (paperback)

Baldwin, James *Fire Next Time*. ISBN-13: 978-0679744726; ISBN-10: 06794472X (Paperback or Kindle)

Cone, James, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. ISBN 978-1-60833-001-0 (Paperback or Kindle).

Copeland, Shawn, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*.

Douglas, Kelly Brown, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. 978-1-62698-109-6 (Paperback or Kindle).

Gunning, Leah, Faith and Ferguson: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community. ISBN 978-0-8272-110506 (Paperback or Kindle).

Copeland, Shawn, Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being (Intersection in African American Theology) (Innovations, African American Religious Thought). ISBN-13: 978-0800662745; ISBN-10: 0800662741 (Paperback)

Lynch, Willie. The Willie Lynch Letter and the Making of A Slave. ISBN-13: 978-1592323067, ISBN-10:1592323065

Stevenson, Bryan. Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption. ISBN-13: 978-0812984965; ISBN-10: 081298496X

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta, From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation. ISBN-13: 978-1608465620; ISBN-10: 1608465624

Townes, Emilie, Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil, 2006.
ISBN-13: 978-1-4039-72730-6 (paperback); ISBN-10: 1-4039-7273-7 (paperback)

Additional information: Recommended books will be on the syllabus.