

Master of Arts (Religion) Concentration in Black Church Studies

This concentration enables students enrolled in the MA (Religion) in religious thought degree program to take graduate level courses in history, theology, ethics, religion, and Bible. Students enrolled in the Black Church Studies concentration can choose four elective courses in the BCS curriculum. In addition, students will be required to take three weekend intensive seminars. Upon graduation seminary students will receive both a Master of Arts diploma and a certificate in Black Church Studies. Area C courses in Black Church Studies cannot be used as BCS electives.

Black Church Studies Courses: The following courses meet the elective requirements for the concentration in Black Church Studies.

TH 218-3 Black Ecclesiology in Public and Pastoral Ministry

Williamson, Scott C.

This course will review the theological foundations and praxis origins of black ecclesiology. Scholarship from the fields of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology provide the resources and methods for this critical inquiry. Beginning with an evaluation of early preaching and pastoral care in black churches, we will examine the public debates over the traditional scope of pastoral ministries and the more radical voices of social justice. The course will trace the major movements within this controversy, extending from the antebellum period through the post-Civil Rights era of Black Theology. Objectives include: students will be able to identify the major thinkers and themes comprising both the traditional development of black ecclesiology and the prophetic appeals of religious ethics. Ultimately, students will develop a practical theological critique of this historical debate.

TH 219-3 The Moral and Religious Thought of Frederick Douglass and His Times

Williamson, Scott C.

This seminar is designed to introduce students to Frederick Douglass. Douglass was one of the most fascinating and influential figures of the nineteenth century. Remembered primarily as a dynamic abolitionist lecturer and candid editor, Douglass was also an important thinker. He was the nineteenth century's foremost spokesperson for social equality and racial assimilation. Douglass is among the first generation of black thinkers to combine elements of Protestantism, black nationalism and assimilationism into an effective model of social progress for blacks. The goal of the course is to discern Douglass's moral and religious point of view by reading autobiographical accounts, as well as the writings of several Douglass scholars.

TH 225-3 The Churches and Black America: Slavery, Reconstruction, and Civil Rights (1787-1989)

Williamson, Scott C.

This course provides a study of the relationship of both the Catholic and the Protestant churches to Blacks in the United States from 1789 (the departure of Richard Allen from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church) to 1989.

TH 234-3 Black Theology

Hill, Johnny B.

This course will review the historical development of Black Theology movement. Through a close reading of early texts of the movement and a review of the social context within which it arose, the seminar participants will be invited to a full engagement with this theological tradition. It will be our purpose to identify not only the discrete contours of the movement, but also to identify its place in late twentieth century theological discourse.

TH 235-3 African-American Christianity

Williamson, Scott C., Hill, Johnny B.

This course will review the historical development, and current state, of the African-American Christian movement. Through a close reading of texts of the movement and a review of the social context within which it arose the seminar participants will be invited to a full engagement with this ecclesial and theological tradition. It will be our purpose to identify not only the discrete contours of the movement, but also to identify its place in larger Christian movement in the United States.

TH 321-3 The Theology and Praxis of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Hill, Johnny B.

This course will explore the theology and witness of Martin Luther King, Jr., establishing King as a major theologian of reconciliation with a global vision. The course will center on the cultural and intellectual resources shaping King's work and his legacy in contemporary society. Fifty years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, there are renewed and intriguing conversations on King's work and the imprint of the Civil Rights Movement today. The course assumes a comprehensive approach to King's life and thought by considering both the role of the Protestant Liberal tradition and the African American Religious experience in funding his vision of the "beloved community." By reviewing his work, listening to sermons, documentaries, and speeches, we will critically engage the many trajectories of King's legacy, including nonviolence, war and peace, poverty, and the relationship between church and society.

TH 322-3 Feminist and Womanist Ethics

Pauw, Amy

This course will examine issues in contemporary feminist and womanist Christian ethics. Topics include family, sexuality, and justice in the church and larger society. Womanist work in biblical interpretation, theology, and sociology will complement the focus on ethics. The course will begin with a consideration of the relationship between feminist and womanist perspectives, and the intersections of race and class will receive continued attention throughout. The course objectives are to acquaint students with the distinctive emphases and controversies of contemporary feminist and womanist ethics, encourage students to assess the relevance of this ethical reflection for the contemporary church and world, and to help students hone their own theological and ethical perspectives in dialogue with these feminist and womanist scholars.

NT 402-3 African American New Testament Hermeneutics

Garrett, Susan

This course will briefly introduce important works of and about New Testament interpretation by African American New Testament scholars. Works to be read and discussed pertain especially to the following topics: the complex history of African Americans' encounter with the Bible; African and African imagery in the New Testament and Early Christian literature; the New Testament and the American debate over slavery; and interpretation of the Gospels and the Pauline epistles by African Americans. Throughout the course, attention will be given to the particular concerns and perspectives of Womanist biblical interpreters.

OT 510-3 Independent Studies in Old Testament

Bos, Johanna W. H.; Patricia K. Tull

Research on some problems in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, or other Near Eastern literature will be determined in consultation with the professor. This course can include aspects of Israel's history, literature, theology, study of the Aramaic in Ezra and Daniel, or advanced work in learning how to use the Hebrew Bible with facility.

NT 510-3 Independent Studies in the New Testament

Garrett, Susan, Soards, Marion

Advanced study of particular historical questions, theological themes, or NT texts are carried out independently following initial approval of the plan of study, including bibliography and form of reporting. Three or more students with a common interest may request periodic meetings with faculty as a seminar to share and discuss their research.

TH 510-3 Independent Study in Theology, History, or Ethics

Black Church Studies Faculty

This independent study provides an opportunity to concentrate on a topic of theological, historical, or ethical interest related to Black Church Studies after agreeing on a suitable subject with the instructor. The student produces a reading list from library research and meets with the instructor from time to time in individual conference to report on reading. A major paper on the chosen subject is required.