***REL 825: Foundational Texts in African American Theology***

**Department of Religious Studies**

**Brown University**

**FALL 2014**

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59 George Street #305

T-12:30-3 or by appointment

Books

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*

Major Jones, *The Color of God*

James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*

James Cone*, Black Theology and Black Power*

J. Deotis Roberts*, Liberation and Reconciliation*

William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?*

Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*

Jacqueline Grant, *White Women’s Christ, Black Women’s Jesus*

Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*

Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*

Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*

Overview:

This course discusses the central topics and foundational texts in the field of scholarship called African American theology. This discourse was born in the late 1960’s as African American academics in the field of religion prioritized race and culture as the point of departure for theology. The writings of these African American scholars was based on a strong commitment to black liberation, a vision of theology as context-based, and a firm sense of African American cultural/historical uniqueness. This course will investigate the concerns, approaches, and questions of the groundbreaking works that set this field of study in motion.

#### Objectives of the Course

This course aims to provide students with an introduction to the major thinkers, issues and methods of the field of African American Theology. Additionally, students will become familiar with reading primary source materials and develop the skills to do theological analysis.

Also, we should not take for granted that part of our experience here is to learn the following: how to communicate effectively in a group setting, how to be disciplined and thoughtful contributors difficult conversations; how to write effectively in standard white English, how to take criticism without feeling personally diminished, and, how to think and grow from our time together reflecting on these materials during this brief portion of our lives.

Background Expected

None

Course Requirements:

1. Weekly readings must be done by each member in a timely fashion.
2. Students must be prepared and attend each session.
3. Each student will choose from the following options for work.

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| Option A | Option B | Option C |
| Five papers (500 words each)  \*Essays must be submitted on Canvas website by 9am on the dates below | Midterm essay (30 pts. 1000 words)  Final essay (30 pts. 1000 words)  Book Review (20 pts. 500 words)  Oral Presentation (20 pts. 15 mins) | Weekly papers (do 10 @250 words each). Each paper is 10 points each.   * Essays must be posted on Canvas by Monday at Noon |

Course Schedule

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|  | TUESDAY | THURSDAY |
|  |  | Sept. 4  Introduction to the materials  Cone, *BTaBP*, p. 5-53 |
| Week 1 | 9  Cone, *BTaBP*, p. 62-90, 116-152 | 11  Cone, *ABToL*, p. 1-54 |
| 2 | 16  Cone, *ABToL*, p. 55-128 | 18  Jones, *TCoG*, p. |
| 3 | 23  **Option A: Paper #1 Due**  Jones, *TCoG*, p. | 25  Roberts, *LaR*, p. 1-50 |
| 4 | 30  Roberts, *LaR*, 51-107, p. | Oct. 2  WRJones, *IGaWR?*, p. 3-68 |
| 5 | 7  WRJones, *IGaWR?*, p. 71-78, 98-120, 132-166 | 9  **Option A: Paper #2 Due**  **Option B: Midterm Essay Due**  WRJones, *IGaWR?*, p. 169-214 |
| 6 | 14  Thurman*, J&tD*, p. 11-57 | 16  NO CLASS |
| 7 | 21  Thurman, *J&tD*, p. 58-112 | 23  Williams, *SitW* |
| 8 | 28  **Option A: Paper #3 Due**  Williams, SitW, | 30  Grant, *WWCBWJ*, p. 1-61 |
| 9 | Nov. 4  Grant, *WWCBWJ*, p.62-90, 177-230 | 6  Cannon, *BWE*, p. 1-58 |
| 10 | 11  Cannon, *BWE*, p. 59-98, 159-175 | 13  Douglas, SatBC, p. |
| 11 | 18  Douglas, SatBC, p. | 20  **Option A: Paper #4 Due**  **West, 15-44** |
| 12 | 25  NO CLASS | 27 Happy Thanksgiving  NO CLASS |
| 13 | Dec. 2  West, 47-65, 95-147 | 4  Closing Session |
|  | 9 | 11 |
|  | 16  **Option A: Paper #5 Due**  **Option B: Final Essay Due** |  |