

The Black Church in the African American Political Experience

Instructor: Professor Eric L. McDaniel

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine the political role of the Black church in the African American experience. Through the examination of the historical and contemporary scholarship on the Black church, this course will critically analyze how the church, its leaders, and members have used it to achieve the political goals of African Americans.

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

Instructional Format

The course is taught using a “flipped classroom” format. Most of the lectures will be pre-recorded as posted to students to watch before the class session. Students are expected to have watched the assigned video by the assigned date. The materials and information from the pre-recorded lectures will be used as content for the class activities.

Content Warning

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I’ll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

Required Texts

1. Sernett, Milton C., ed. 1999. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. Durham: Duke University Press.
2. McCaulley, Esau. 2020. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. **[This book is essential for answering the essay question for all of the take-home essays]**
3. Other readings and films can be found on Canvas or through the UT Library (lib.utexas.edu)

Coursework

All course assignments are to be typed, with proper citations, bibliography, and page numbers. All assignments are to be submitted through Canvas by the designated deadline. Late papers will not be accepted.

Class Activities and Perusall: worth 20%

To increase student engagement and skill development, the course will regularly have in class activities. These activities will be related to course material and course goals. In addition to the class activities, students will be expected to complete reading comprehension assignments using the Perusall tool in Canvas. There will be at least twenty (20) Class Activities and Perusall assignments total. The six (6) lowest grades will be dropped. The Perusall assignment dates will be posted in Canvas.

Discussion Papers: worth 25%

The purpose of these papers is to provide a forum to discuss some of the issues raised in the course. The discussion paper should be a response to a question based on a direct reflection of the course readings, lectures, films, and discussions. The discussion paper should be between 600-800 words. The discussion papers are due by 5 PM Central Daylight Savings Time of the date assigned. There will four (4) discussion paper assignments and the three (3) highest scores will be counted. More detailed guidelines will be posted on Canvas.

Discussion Paper 1: Given the readings and lectures thus far what are the important aspects of Black Politics, Religion and Politics and the Black church that people should be aware of?

Discussion Paper 2: Given the Muller and Opp's argument, can we argue that those who called for and led slave rebellions were rational? Further, were those who opposed slave rebellions rational?

Discussion Paper 3: How does Howard Thurman's thinking lend support to both the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement?

Discussion Paper 4: Can the religion ever become a way of healing racial wounds in America?

Take-Home Essays 45%

The take-home essays will provide the opportunity for students to provide a broader and deeper analysis of the course material. The essay questions will be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours before they are due. The take-home essay should be between 1,250-1,500 words. More detailed guidelines will be posted on Canvas.

Critical Movie Review Podcast 10%

To provide students with an alternative way of demonstrating their understanding and mastery of material, students will work in groups of 2-3 to create an 8–10-minute podcast episode. This podcast episode will offer a critical review of one of the movies listed below. This critical review is expected to provide a 2-4 minute summary followed by a discussion of how the film relates to specific aspects of the course. Students are expected to provide specific references from the film and link them to specific content from the course.

Please select one of the following films to review. Some are available through the UT library. Others can be accessed through YouTube, a streaming service, or can be rented.

1. Come Sunday
2. Honk for Jesus. Save Your Soul.
3. Malcolm X (1992)
4. Selma
5. The Color Purple (1985)
6. A Raisin in the Sun
7. Go Tell it on the Mountain
8. The Meeting
9. Red Hook Summer (2012)
10. 12 Years a Slave (2014)
11. Blackkkkiansman

Expectations

Preparation

Doing well in this class necessitates that students are informed and prepared. *Expect to spend 10-12 hours, including class sessions, working on the course.* Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to when class meets. This course covers a large amount of material in a short amount of time. If you do not keep up with the readings, your grade will reflect your preparation. Below are a set of questions you should be able to answer regarding each class reading.

Questions you should be able to answer about each reading.

1. What is the author's central question or statement?
2. What is the author's argument?
 - a. Are there any specific hypotheses?
 - b. Is the author refuting someone else's findings?
3. Is the author's argument valid?
4. What evidence does the author use to support her argument?
5. Is the author's evidence valid?
6. Is the author's argument and data similar or different from other readings?

7. Is the author able to support her argument?
 - a. Does the author confirm her hypotheses?
8. What questions are left unanswered?

Professionalism

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. This includes (but it is not limited to) side conversations, cell phone calls and pagers. If you come to class late or must leave early, please do so quietly. I also ask that you be proactive if any conflict occurs. This means notifying me ahead of time if you are unable to meet the requirements of the course.

Ground Rules

Because this course will sometimes deal with sensitive material, it is imperative that we set a series of ground rules.

1. Respect others. There will be times when you disagree with an idea that has been presented to the class. Although you have the right to disagree with someone, you must remember to challenge the idea and not the person.
2. Listen attentively. The purpose of this course is to present and discuss different ideas. To reap the benefits of such an exchange, you must be willing to pay attention to what others have to say.
3. Think before you speak. Refrain from making broad, general, and/or unsubstantiated comments. Make sure that you use evidence and provide a rationale for your statements.
4. Maintain the dignity of the academic environment. Your ideas should be presented using Standard English, minus the use of any profanity.
5. Raise your hand. This helps to maintain order in the classroom and helps to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk.
6. Be courteous. Refrain from interrupting or engaging in private conversation while others are speaking. Also, limit disruptive behavior, such as newspaper reading, personal grooming, etc.

Date	Topic	Reading	Video
8/26/2024	What is Black Politics?	Baldwin, James. 1993. "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation." In <i>The Fire Next Time</i>, ed. James Baldwin. New York: Vintage Books. McDonald, Soraya Nadia. 2021. "The Dangerous Magical Thinking of 'This Is Not Who We Are'." <i>The Undeclared</i>, https://theundefeated.com/features/capitol-attack-trump-the-dangerous-magical-thinking-of-this-is-not-who-we-are/.	Blaming President Donald Trump is Too Easy: This is Us. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKiB0APdxTo&t=75s
8/28/2024	Why Study the Black Church?	Sernett Chapter 45 Johnson, James Weldon. 1900. "Lift Every Voice and Sing." https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46549/lift-every-voice-and-sing (accessed January 16, 2021, Poetry Foundation).	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "The Black Atlantic." In <i>The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross</i>: PBS. 57. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/the-black-atlantic-1500-1800?source=autosuggest
9/2/2024	Labor Day		
9/4/2024	Black Church Origins		Tony Brown's Journal: The Jubilee God. Anonymous Tony Brown Productions, 2000. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/tony-brown-s-journal-the-jubilee-god Richard Allen Documentary https://vimeo.com/user5962963

9/9/2024	Black Church Origins	Sernett Chapters 3, 7, & 22	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "The Age of Slavery." In The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross: PBS. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/the-age-of-slavery-1800-1860?source=autosuggest
9/11/2024	Slavery	Sernett Chapters 12, 18, 23	J.W. Loguen's Letter to Mrs. Sarah Logue performed by Michael Ealy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ub9APQDw70&list=PLpQ9swMUgN5NJ7_GdRfwVcRd5WWhvOVlj Frederick Douglass' "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" performed by Brian Jones https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZPPdsV807A&list=PLpQ9swMUgN5NJ7_GdRfwVcRd5WWhvOVlj&index=5 David Walker's Appeal Performed by Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taAGSEz8q48&list=PLpQ9swMUgN5NJ7_GdRfwVcRd5WWhvOVlj&index=2 Alfre Woodard reads Maria Stewart https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPZEHW71EnQ&feature=emb_logo

9/16/2024	Slavery	Garnet, Henry Highland. 2001. "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America." In Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860, eds. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael and Phillip Lapansky. New York: Routledge.	Kenner, Robert. 2000. "John Brown's Holy War." In The American Experience. USA: PBS Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAm4pb61X6Y
9/18/2024	Slavery	Sernett Chapter 11	Christopher, Frank. 2002. "Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property." California Newsreel. 57:32. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/nat-turner-a-troublesome-property?utm_campaign=Video&utm_medium=MARC&utm_source=aspresolver Denmark Vesey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j05sCUvzKQ0
9/23/2024	Slavery	Sidbury, James. 2003. "Reading, Revelation and Rebellion: The Textual Communities of Gabriel, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner." In Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory, ed. Kenneth S. Greenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press. {Canvas}	

9/25/2024	Reconstruction	Sernett Chapters 24, 25 & 36	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "Into the Fire." In The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross: PBS. 57. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/into-the-fire-1861-1896?pass=truenull
9/30/2024	Reconstruction	Sernett Chapters 30 & 31 Block, Ray. 2011. What About Disillusionment? Exploring the Pathways to Black Nationalism. Political Behavior 33 (1): 27-51.	
10/2/2024	Reconstruction		Cross, June. 2003. "God Is a Negro." In This Far by Faith. USA: PBS Video. 60 minutes. https://vimeo.com/142295034
10/7/2024	Great Migration	Sernett Chapters 38, 40, 41, & 46	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "Making a Way out of No Way." In The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross: PBS. 57. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/making-a-way-out-of-no-way-1897-1940

10/9/2024	Great Migration	Sernett Chapter 42	Father Divine. Anonymous HBO, 1936. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/father-divine
10/14/2024	Black Freedom Movement	Sernett Chapter 53	Doblmeier, Martin. 2019. "Backs against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story." American Public Television. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVlirB59IM
10/16/2024	Black Freedom Movement	King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1967 "But if not" https://notoriousbiggins.blogspot.com/2010/01/but-if-not-sermon-by-martin-luther-king.html	King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1967 "But if not" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-kgeuNOB4
10/21/2024	Black Freedom Movement	Sernett Chapter 54	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "Rise!" In The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross: PBS. 57. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/rise-1940-1968#channel:the-african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross
10/23/2024	Black Power Movement	Williams, Delores S. 1998. "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices." In Black Theology A Documentary History Volume Two: 1980-1992, eds. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.	Massiah, Louis, and Terry Kay Rockefeller. 1990. "Power!" In Eyes on the Prize: PBS. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/power-1966-68?pass=truenuu
10/28/2024	Black Power	Sernett Chapters 57 & 58	

	Movement		
10/30/2024	Black Power Movement	Reese, Laura A., Ronald E. Brown, and James David Ivers. 2007. "Some Children See Him...: Political Participation and the Black Christ." Political Behavior 29: 517-37.	Black Nation: Urban Decay, Spiritual Renewal, and the African-American Community
11/4/2024	Contemporary Black Politics	Rustin, Bayard. 1971. "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement." In Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin, ed. Bayard Rustin. Chicago: Quadrangle Books. Sharpton, Al. 2004. "2004 Democratic National Convention Address." July 28. Obama, Barack. 2004. "2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address." July 27.	Streeter, Sabin. 2013. "A More Perfect Union." In The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross: PBS. 57. https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/watch/a-more-perfect-union-1968-2013
11/6/2024	Contemporary Black Politics	Wright, Jeremiah. 2003. "Confusing God and Government." https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/2008-rev-jeremiah-wright-confusing-god-and-government/ . Obama, Barack. 2008. "A More Perfect Union." BlackPast, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/2008-barack-obamas-speech-race/ .	

11/11/2024	Religion and Racial Attitudes	Hutchings, Vincent L. and Nicholas A. Valentino. 2004. "The Centrality of Race in American Politics." Annual Review of Political Science 7 (1):383-408.	
11/13/2024	Religion and Racial Attitudes	Johnson, Megan K., Wade C. Rowatt, and Jordan LaBouff. 2010. "Priming Christian Religious Concepts Increases Racial Prejudice." Social Psychological and Personality Science 1 (2):119-26. Bruenig, Elizabeth. 2020. "Racism Makes a Liar of God." New York Times, August 6. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/opinion/sunday/gloria-purvis-george-floyd-blm.html	
11/18/2024	Religion and Racial Attitudes	Emerson, Michael O., Christian Smith, and David Sikkink. 1999. Equal in Christ, but Not in the World: White Conservative Protestants and Explanations of Black-White Inequality. Social Problems 46 (3): 398-417.	Christopher, Aaron J. 2019. "White Savior: Racism in the American Church." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1GoL7v_oUk
11/20/2024	Religion and Black Political Behavior	McDaniel, Eric L., Maraam A. Dwidar, and Hadill Calderon. 2018. "The Faith of Black Politics: The Relationship between Black Religious and Political Beliefs." Journal of Black Studies 49: 256-83.	
11/25/2024	Thanksgiving Break		
11/27/2024			

12/2/2024	Religion and Black Political Behavior	Shaw, Todd C., and Eric L. McDaniel. 2007. 'Whosoever Will': Black Theology, Homosexuality, and the Black Political Church. National Political Science Review.	
12/4/2024	Religion and Black Political Behavior	Philpot, Tasha S., and Eric McDaniel. 2020. "Black Religious Belief Systems and Political Participation." National Review of Black Politics 1: 374-95.	
12/9/2024	Social Services	Owens, Michael Leo. 2006. Which Congregations will take Advantage of Charitable Choice? Explaining the Pursuit of Public Funding by Congregations. Social Science Quarterly 87 (1):55-75.	Camara, Jeremiah. 2013. "Contradiction: A Question of Faith." https://mobfitv.com/videos/contradiction-a-question-of-faith/
12/11/2024	Podcast Due		
12/14/2024	Take Home 2		