

Political Science 4000
Politics & The Black Church
Spring 2019

Instructor: Omar Safir

Office: Stubbs

Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday 1:30-2:50

Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Description & Objectives

The purpose of this course is to examine the role the Black Church has in influencing the political behavior of parishioners and the overall Black community in the United States. With special attention to theological views, organizational structures, and criticisms, this course will examine the ways in which the Black Church has been used as a political instrument within Black communities, and national politics.

There are three main goals of this course: (1) Gain a better understanding of how the Black Church positions itself within politics; (2) be able to articulate this verbally and in writing; and (3) learn how research is conducted within this field. It is important to note that this course does not require any prior experience and or knowledge about the Black Church. The goals previously mentioned are objective, and not predicated on personal positions or value judgements.

Required Texts (*No Purchases Necessary*)

(Main) McDaniel, E. L. (2009). *Politics in the Pews: The political mobilization of Black churches*. University of Michigan Press.

Raboteau, A. J. (2004). *Slave religion: The "invisible institution" in the antebellum South*. Oxford University Press.

Baldwin, J. (2013). *The fire next time*. Vintage.

Thurman, H. (1996). *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 1949. *Reprinted, Boston: Beacon*.

Cone, J. H. (1977). *God of the Oppressed*. Orbis Books.

Day, K. (2016). *Religious resistance to neoliberalism: Womanist and black feminist perspectives*. Springer.

Young III, J. U. (2015). Do Black Lives Matter to "God"? *black theology*, 13(3), 210-218.

Lloyd, V. (2018). How Religious Is #BlackLivesMatter?. In *Humanism and the Challenge of Difference* (pp. 215-237). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Quinn, K., Dickson-Gomez, J., & Young, S. (2016). The influence of pastors' ideologies of homosexuality on HIV prevention in the black church. *Journal of religion and health*, 55(5), 1700-1716.

Barnes, S. L. (2006). Whosoever will let her come: Social activism and gender inclusivity in the Black Church. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45(3), 371-387.

Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs, and Donn C. Worgs. "Black Morality Politics: Preachers, Politicians, and Voters in the Battle Over Same-Sex Marriage in Maryland." *Journal of Black Studies*, no. 4, 2014, p. 338.

Moore, S. E., Adedoyin, A. C., Robinson, M. A., & Boamah, D. A. (2015). The Black Church: responding to the drug-related mass incarceration of young Black males: "If you had been here my Brother would not have died!".

Brown, R. K., Kaiser, A., Rusch, L., & Brown, R. E. (2017). Immigrant-conscious congregations: Race, ethnicity, and the rejection of anti-immigrant frames. *Politics and Religion*, 10(4), 887-905.

Assignments

Weekly Memos (10) & Participation - 60%

Weekly memos are due **Monday at 11:59 PM on Moodle**. Memos should be two pages, double-spaced. These are not meant to be "literary masterpieces," but rather a sketch of overall thoughts and questions about the readings. At the end of each memo, a few questions (bulleted or numbered) should be included. These are questions that you or I may bring up during class discussions.

Book Review/Application Paper & Presentation - 18% & 7%

This is somewhat of a unique assignment due to the variety of readings in this course. There are two aspects of this paper. First, you will choose a book related to religion or theology and write a short review/summary. This will be no more than 3 pages. The next section will consist of applying the theories or arguments presented in the book to an actual political issue that the Black Church is trying (or not) to tackle. You will choose the political issue. This issue does not have to be confined to the U.S, nor does it have to be well publicized. Obviously, citations on other scholarly research will be required. The paper will be between 8-10 pages. There will be a more formal overview and handout on this assignment. I will also provide a list of potential authors and books that you can use. However, any author that is writing about religion or theology can be chosen as long as they are from the 20th Century or later. We will have at least one formal meeting on your rough draft in order to ensure you are on the right track. This

assignment allows you to be creative, and is more about application than summary. You should be getting into the chosen author's mind and applying their beliefs and positions to actual political issues. Separately, You will create a powerpoint and present your project during the last week of class.

Final - 15%

The final will consist of a few essay prompts. It will be take home (Yay!) Each question should be roughly 3-4 pages, double-spaced. I am looking for application, not regurgitation. I want to see how well you can apply the readings to real world issues. This does not have to be personal, nor do you have to truly believe in any of the positions. You will be using the critiques and positions we learned in class in order to solve these issues as the Black Church, which may or may not be the best approach to solving these issues overall.

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade will be based on the percentage of points gained, translated into a letter grade as follows: 97-100, A+; 93-96.9, A; 90-92.9, A-; 87-89.9, B+; 83-86.9, B; 80-82.9, B-; 77-79.9, C+; 73- 76.9, C; 70-72.9, C-; 67-69.9, D+; 63-66.9, D; 60-62.9, D-; 59.9 or lower, F

Attendance & Late Assignments

Attendance is required and part of your participation grade. Emergency absences, conference presentations, and medical concerns can be handled. Any planned absence needs to be communicated at least a week prior to the absence. Communication is key on these types of issues. As for late assignments, there are none. If an assignment is not turned in at the specified time, it is a zero.

Week	Date	Assignment (s)	Topic(s)	Readings
Week 1	1/10 Thursday	None	Introduction Syllabus	Syllabus
Week 2	1/15 & 1/17	Memo 1	What Is Black Politics, and how does the Church fit in?	McDaniel Chapters Intro, 1, 2
Week 3	1/22 & 1/24	Memo 2	Brief History of The Black Church in Politics	McDaniel Chapter 3 Raboteau Chapter 6 (Religion, Rebellion, and Docility)

Week 4	1/29 & 1/31	Memo 3	Black Political Theology	Cone (1975 Preface & Chapter 1-3)
Week 5	2/05 & 2/07	Memo 4	Black Political Theology	Thurman Chapter 1 Lloyd on Black Religion and Secularism: https://www.blackagenda.com/black-religion-black-radicalism Rev Jeremiah A. Wright Sermon: First 35 mins https://youtu.be/UUtZNQ0REFA Optional: Podcast with Lloyd matching the essay: https://www.blackagenda.com/black-agenda-radio-week-october-9-2017
Week 6	2/12 & 2/14	Memo 5	Political Churches in Practice	McDaniel Chapters 4 & 5
Week 7	2/19 & 2/21	Memo 6 Books and Topics Chosen (Will Discuss)	Mobilizing Parishioners Criticism (old?)	McDaniel Chapter 6 Baldwin "Down at the Cross"
Week 8	2/26 & 2/28	Memo 7	Criticism (Black Women & LGBT)	Barnes (article) Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs, and Donn C. Worgs (article)

Week 9	Mardi Gras (no class) & 3/7	none	Criticism (Black Women & LGBT)	Quinn, K., Dickson-Gomez, J., & Young, S. (article) Youtube video (short)
Week 10	3/12 & NCOBPS Conference (no class)	none	Current Issues (BLM)	Young (article) Lloyd (article)
Week 11	3/19 & 3/21	Memo 8	Current Issues (Neoliberalism & Capitalism)	Day (Intro, 1, and 2)
Week 12	3/26 & 3/28	Memo 9	Current Issues (Mass Incarceration & Immigration)	Moore, S. E., Adedoyin, A. C., Robinson, M. A., & Boamah, D. A.(article) https://abolitionjournal.org/mass-incarceration-is-religious-and-so-is-abolition/ Brown, R. K., Kaiser, A., Rusch, L., & Brown, R. E. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-romal-j-tune/does-the-black-church-still-relevant-as-an-instrument-in-the-future-of-the-black-church-up_b_507589.html
Week 13	4/2 & 4/4	Memo 10	Relevant? Memo: based on what you have learned do you (personally) feel that the Black Church is still relevant as an instrument in	Film

			politics? There are no right or wrong answers.	
Week 14	4/9 & 4/12	none	In person meetings with rough drafts (MANDATORY)	
Week 15	Spring Break			
Week 16	4/22 & 4/24	Paper Due 4/22 11:59PM	Class Presentations Final Prompts will be given 4/22	
Week 17 (Finals)	5/3 Finals due by 11:59 PM			