

**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**MIN 430 Advanced Praxis Seminar: Theology in Black and White**  
**Spring 2009**

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**Class Meeting:** Tuesdays, 1:00-3:50 p.m.; Kansas Winger 309

**Course Description:**

*Catalog Description:* The primary focus of the course is on God, anthropology, and ecclesiology with modest attention given to preaching, worship, pastoral care, and other related fields of ministry. The course is concerned with the theological construction of whiteness, critique of white theology, the construction of Black and Womanist theology/ethics, and the reconstruction of white theology. The course will explore interdisciplinary and theological methods by using theological and literary texts. Enrollment limit: 30 students. Prerequisite: CTX 402. Semester credit hours: 3.

*Theology in Black and White Topic:* Contemporary Black and Womanist theologies emerged by bringing the life of the Black Church and the history of marginalized and enslaved people into Christian scholarship. Communal and personal narratives, theological constructions, histories and liturgies, sociology and the arts, political analysis and ethical reflection come together in Black and Womanist theologies as part of the larger postmodern movement in Christian thought. Not until the emergence of Black and Womanist theologies did Christian scholarship recognize fully that what whites understood as abstract, universal doctrines were equally as reflective of the social, political, and religious contexts of dominant white Christianity.

As Black and Womanist scholars, clergy, and laity came to voice—claiming traditions, discovering identities, and formulating faith statements—they offered critique of and issued a call to white theology and ministry to reflect on the unacknowledged social location of dominant theology, which created and creates injustice in the Church and world. White theology

responded sometimes with dismissal, sometimes with refutation, and sometimes with new theological construction.

The Advanced Praxis Seminar undertakes the task of sorting out how “whiteness” gained theological privilege, how Black experience and ideas offer critique of white theology, how new voices construct Black and Womanist theology and ethics, and how white theology is reconstructed in a postmodern Civil Rights era. Considering the interface of Black and white theologies, the seminar focuses on particular doctrines—of God, humanity, and Church—and on implications for practical theology and the ministry of the church—in preaching, worship, pastoral care, and related fields.

The integrative character of the course leads to emphasis on praxis. Theology becomes a way of life when reflection and action are integrated. When we say that “theology is a way of life,” we mean that theology is not simply a set of static ideas that we memorize for confirmation or seminary credit, but a thoughtful way of uniquely situating ourselves in the world with Christ as center and guide so that every action and experience is a practice of justice and a reflection of Christ’s transformation of broken human relationships. A “practice of justice” is a particular action, such as use of liberating language, works of resistance to racism, honesty in truth-telling, courage in moral agency, spirituality of wholeness, commitment to survival, and openness to listening. Practices of justice are intentional spiritual practices expressing overt signs of justice-making. A key component of the course is the identification of the practices of justice that arise from theological reflection on the racial divide between Black and white communities and on the systemic forms of injustice that sustain racism.

The challenge of ministry is the balance of creativity and discipline, and clergy constantly synthesize the issues and needs of their communities and congregations with denominational, theological, scriptural, and ethical principles. Consequently the course emphasizes interdisciplinary and theological methods in service of the church and her ministries. The integrative nature of the course prepares students for the integrative tasks of ministry by using theological and literary texts and exemplars to model synthetic reflection. The course invites students to reflect on formation for ministry by developing their own theological positions on God, humanity, and the Church/church in response to the challenging conversations among Black and white Christians.

Note: In the preceding passage, Dr. Powe and Dr. Howell have chosen to capitalize the words *Black* and *Womanist* when the terms refer to the names of theological movements. The word *white* remains in lower case letters to signify that white theology is largely unacknowledged as a contextual theology with a particular social location.

Also, when we refer to “integrative thinking,” we are not referring to interracial integration or desegregation. By *integrative thinking*, we mean the scholarly ability to work with diverse disciplines to create coherent and constructive theological proposals, which have applications to ministry. Such thinking is interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary.

## Course Teaching-Learning Objectives

1. The priorities for teaching and learning in the course are (a) learning how theology and ministry are embedded in and accountable to the social location of black and white Christianity and (b) practicing the imaginative integration of theology and ministry disciplines as grounding for service in the church.
2. Teaching and learning begin with understanding method (how scholars investigate topics and draw conclusions), sources (what information scholars consult to form new ideas), and language (how scholars express ideas). Students should familiarize themselves with scholarly methods in theology and interdisciplinary reflection.
3. Teaching and learning depend on sophisticated reading of texts. Students should develop the skills of empathetic and critical reading. The diverse contexts that form postmodern theology create worldviews that may not be your own. Diverse worldviews demand charitable readings of texts for the sake of understanding the authors' points of view and with awareness that theology is neither abstracted from culture nor limited to singular "correct" forms of expression.
4. Teaching and learning involve critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. One pedagogical strategy for appropriating these skills is reading texts and writing assignments with awareness of perspectives marginalized by class, gender, race, theology, and sexual orientation.
5. Teaching and learning lead to praxis. The goal of the course is to consider applications of theology and integration and interdisciplinary integration in relation to ministry contexts. The course presupposes that theology entails practices of justice and explores theology as a way of life.
6. Teaching and learning concentrate on central questions to focus course processes and outcomes:

- How do course texts and other resources demonstrate integrative, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary thinking?
- What is the meaning of texts for Black theology and experience, for white theology and experience, and for the Church and her ministries? How can white theology be constructed with respect for and accountability to Black theology and experience?
- What practices of justice arise from theology constructed in the dialogue among Black, Womanist, and white theologians?

## **Curricular Outcomes Adopted by SPST Faculty**

- 1. Critical interpretation of authoritative sources in the Christian tradition**
  - Clarifications:
    - a) Sources include biblical, historical, and doctrinal traditions as well as experiential and practical dimensions of ecclesial life.
    - b) Critical interpretation necessarily implies an informed appreciation and coherent understanding of the sources.
    - c) The Christian tradition is inherently diverse.
  
- 2. Creative and critical integration of theory and practice in the praxis of Christian ministry**
  - Clarifications:
    - a) “Integration” of theory and practice implies a synthesis that forms a greater whole (praxis) while preserving the integrity of each element (e.g., theory, practice, experience).
    - b) “Theory” and “practice” are terms that are rather broad in scope, including content from explicitly theological sources as well as other theoretical and practical sources. So a question for assessment might read: do the APS projects evidence understandings of persons, nature, culture, and context as well as theological and ecclesiological content.
  
- 3. Conviction that Christian ministry address the exigencies of life, with special attention to peace and justice as signs of God’s Reign.**
  - Clarification: “Conviction”: In some of the APS final assignments, it will be impossible to assess whether students’ ministry has indeed contributed to peace and justice; rather, we might be better able to assess whether they have voiced a concern for and commitment to ministry that is attentive to peace and justice.
  
- 4. Clear sense of vocational identity for leadership and how leadership is exercised in the church**
  - Clarifications:
    - a) “Vocational identity” might include a sense of calling, an orientation of the elements of one’s personal life to a larger purpose, an awareness of one’s particular gifts and graces as they contribute to ecclesial life.
    - b) The exercise of leadership might be evidenced in plans and strategies for engaging others in ministry.
  
- 5. Articulation and demonstration of spiritual disciplines of personal and social holiness.**
  - Clarifications: Projects may not contain evidence of spiritually disciplined activity, but it may demonstrate attentiveness to sustaining spiritual vitality through love of God, neighbor, and oneself in a disciplined manner.

## **Required and Recommended Texts**

All required texts are on reserve at the Saint Paul School of Theology Dana Dawson Library.

### ***Essays to Introduce Theology and Method***

- Davis, Ossie. "The English Language Is My Enemy." *Negro History Bulletin* 30 (April 1967).  
Mitchem, Stephanie. *Introducing Womanist Theology*. (Chapter 3, "Womanist Theology.")  
Moltmann, Jürgen. *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*. (Chapter III.2, "Black Theology for Whites.")  
Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. (Definition of *womanist*.)  
West, Cornel. *Prophesy Deliverance!* (Chapter 2 required; Chapter 3 recommended.)

### ***Literature Exploring Black Experience and Ideas***

- Johnson, Charles. *Dreamer*.  
Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*.

### ***Theological Texts from Black and Womanist Theology***

- Cone, James H. *Malcolm & Martin & America*. (Chapter 9 recommended.)  
Hopkins, Dwight. *Shoes that Fit Our Feet*. (Introduction, Chapters 2-3, 5—but all chapters are recommended.)  
Thurman, Howard. *Disciplines of the Spirit*. (Recommended.)  
Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*.  
Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness*. (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7—but all chapters are recommended.)

### ***White Theological Construction in Response to Womanist Theology***

- Cobb, John B., Jr. *Postmodernism and Public Policy: Reframing Religion, Culture, Education, Sexuality, Class, Race, Politics, and the Economy*. (Chapter 7 recommended.)  
Moody, Linda A. *Women Encounter God: Theology across the Boundaries of Difference*. (Chapters 4-5 recommended.)  
See also Moltmann above.  
Thistlethwaite, Susan. *Sex, Race, and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White*, 1989. (Chapters 6 and 7 recommended.)

### ***Integrative, Interdisciplinary Essays by Instructors***

- Howell, Nancy R. "Race Relations at a Crossroad: Reflections on the Occasion of the Inauguration of Barack H. Obama," 20 March 2009, unpublished. [Available at [www.nancyrhowell.com](http://www.nancyrhowell.com).]  
Powe, F. Douglas, Jr. "Engaging Friendship." In *Just-us or Justice: Moving toward a Pan-Methodist Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, forthcoming 2009.

## Course Schedule: February 3-May 15, 2009

### February 3

Devotion: Ossie Davis  
Practice of Justice: Language  
Topic: Introduction to the course  
Required Reading: Course syllabus  
Class Activities: Read Davis, "The English Language Is My Enemy"  
View the film clip, *The Color Purple*

### February 10

Devotion: Walker, *The Color Purple*  
Practice of Justice: Resistance  
Topic: Introduction to Black women's experience  
Required Reading: Walker, *The Color Purple*  
Class Activities: View excerpts of the film, *The Color Purple*  
Read and discuss passages from *The Color Purple*  
Define *womanist* and review Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*  
Call Monica Coleman to discuss the term *womanist*  
Assignment Due: General idea for paper topic

### February 17

Devotion: Elizabeth Alexander, "Praise Song for the Day"  
Practice of Justice: Moral agency  
Topic: Introduction to Womanist theology  
Required Reading: Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Chapter 3)  
Moody, *Women Encounter God* (Chapters 4-5 recommended.)  
West, *Prophesy Deliverance!* (Chapter 2 required; Chapter 3 recommended)  
Cobb and Thistlethwaite recommended  
Class Activities: Explore the term *womanist* in relation to defining *Womanist theology*  
Call John B. Cobb, Jr. to discuss whiteness and white theology  
Assignment Due: Paper topic (posted on Moodle February 16)

### February 24

Devotion: *Jesus and the Disinherited*  
Practice of Justice: Truth-telling  
Topic: Introduction to Black theology  
Required Reading: Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*  
Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology* (Chapter III.2)  
Class Activities: Presentation on Howard Thurman  
Discussion of Thurman's book  
Assignment Due: Proposal and annotated bibliography (posted on Moodle by February 23)

March 3  
Advising Day

March 10  
Devotion: Hagar’s Story (Genesis 16:1-16; 21:9-21)  
Practice of Justice: Survival  
Topic: Womanist theology  
Required Reading: Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7)  
Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet* (Chapter 2-3)  
Class Activities: Discussion of Williams’ book  
Peer workshop on drafts  
Assignment Due: 3-5 page draft of paper (posted on Moodle by March 9)

March 17  
Devotion: *Dreamer*  
Practice of Justice: Wholeness  
Topic: Black theology  
Required Reading: Johnson, *Dreamer*  
Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet* (Introduction and Chapter 5)  
Cone, *Malcolm, Martin, & America* (Chapter 9 recommended)  
Class Activities: Discussion of the novel in light of the influence of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X on African American religiosity

March 24  
Reading Week

March 31  
Devotion: emilie townes  
Practice of Justice: Listening  
Topic: Ministry in black and white  
Required Reading: None  
Class Activities: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution” (link on Moodle)  
View the film, *Religion in Black and White*  
Discuss worship and ministry—reconciliation, segregation

April 7  
Practice of Justice: Selected from presentations  
Topic: Presentation of student seminar papers  
Required Reading: Student papers (posted on Moodle)  
Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

April 14

Practice of Justice: Selected from presentations  
Topic: Presentation of student seminar papers  
Required Reading: Student papers (posted on Moodle)  
Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

April 21

Practice of Justice: Selected from presentations  
Topic: Presentation of student seminar papers  
Required Reading: Student papers (posted on Moodle)  
Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

April 28

Practice of Justice: Selected from presentations  
Topic: Presentation of student seminar papers  
Required Reading: Student papers (posted on Moodle)  
Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

May 5

Practice of Justice: Selected from presentations  
Topic: Presentation of student seminar papers  
Required Reading: Student papers (posted on Moodle)  
Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

May 12

Devotion: TBA  
Practice of Justice: TBA  
Topic: Theological integration and practices of justice  
Summary of learning  
Required Reading: Howell and Powe

Class Activities: Discussion and critique of Howell and Powe  
Discussion of learning from seminar papers, including cross-cutting themes, implications for ministry, practices of justice

Assignment Due: Class-Participation Self-Evaluation (attached to syllabus)

## **Moodle**

The course is enhanced by use of course management software called Moodle. Students will be able to use Moodle:

- To find course information (syllabi, assignments, events, etc.),
- To post course assignments,
- To provide group feedback on assignments,
- To locate class plans prior to class, and
- To engage in threaded discussions following class meetings.

To enroll in the Moodle course, use the following instructions:

1. Visit <http://saintpaul.fishersnet.net/moodle>.
2. Select our course from the Spring 2009 menu: Theology Black and White (MIN430) Spring 2009.
3. On the login page, either use your existing username and password or, if you've never used Moodle, create a user name and password of your choosing (by clicking on Create new account).
4. You will be asked to enter an enrollment key, which is BW2009.
5. Start using the site. As the semester progresses, the site will grow—so you should visit the site weekly.

## Course Requirements

1. Class participation is expected of each student. By class participation, we mean that each student must attend class regularly and engage in discussions. Students seriously attempt all reading assignments, and the instructors expect that advanced students are capable of completing all reading and written assignments. This does not mean that students fully understand all material, but that they are familiar with the texts and know which passages are puzzling. Class participation allows students to raise questions and to achieve some understanding of course content. Good class participation in a seminar course includes active listening to and support for other students. At the end of the semester, students assess the quality of their class participation and assign themselves a letter grade using a self-evaluation worksheet, which makes explicit the criteria for good class participation. The instructors also assign a class participation grade. The **Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet** (attached to the syllabus) is **due no later than Tuesday, May 12**.
2. When the Saint Paul School of Theology faculty designed the Advanced Praxis Seminar, the intention of the course was professional formation of students for ministry through more challenging seminar work near the end of the degree program. Because ministry requires constant attention to the interdisciplinary integration of theology, biblical insight, and tradition with ministries, spiritual practices, and the needs of communities, the Advanced Praxis Seminar practices the skills of deep reflection in both oral and written scholarly projects.

Students in the current Advanced Praxis Seminar are assigned the central responsibility of designing and writing a seminar paper relevant to the topic of the course. A good seminar paper engages appropriate scholarly literature, undertakes critical thinking about one's own theological perspectives, constructs new theological reflections emerging from dialogue and critical thinking, explains the importance of the theological construction (what difference the theological construction makes for ministry and the struggles of the Church and for the advancement of Black, Womanist, and white theology), identifies relevant practices of justice, and understands the relevance of the theological construction for the student's practice of ministry. The seminar paper is expected to include a strong thesis statement, theological analysis of scholarly texts, critical thinking about theological problems, identification of practices of justice, and application to ministry.

The 20-page seminar paper should be double-spaced and printed with 11 or 12 point font and 1-inch margins. On matters of formatting (title pages, subheadings, etc.), content and form of footnotes or endnotes, and content and form of bibliography, the seminar paper must follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth or seventh edition). In cases where more complex writing questions arise, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Major seminar projects develop through deliberate stages of proposal, research, dialogue, and drafts. The course acknowledges and supports student writing at each stage of work:

- Exploration of a topic;

- Development of a proposal, which includes a working title, a research question, a brief description of the project, and an annotated bibliography of 5-7 relevant books;
- A 3-5-page draft for professor review and for peer review in a classroom workshop;
- A complete seminar paper draft for presentation and discussion in class;
- Response to another student’s paper; and
- Submission of the final paper.

Papers and drafts must be posted on Moodle as attachments in Word software. Each assignment must be properly assembled in a single document inclusive of title page, body, and bibliography. The seminar paper must be outlined as follows:

- Issue (expressed in thesis statement and research question)
- Doctrine\* [(with informing theologian(s)\*\*)]
- Practice of justice
- Application to ministry

Please see other details of assignment expectations and deadlines later in the syllabus.

\*A doctrine, in this setting, is a considered reflection on scripture and tradition that addresses particular topics and characterizes Christian movements. Doctrines interpret scripture and tradition so that they are relevant and accessible for contemporary Christians. In this course, the doctrines of God, humanity, and the Church are emphasized.

\*\*An “informing theologian” is a recognized scholar with expertise and credentials in theological studies. James Cone, Dwight Hopkins, Howard Thurman, and Delores Williams are examples.

3. Extra credit is possible in the course when important lecture or events are relevant to the course. To receive extra credit, submit a one- or two-page, double-spaced paper with the following content:
  - One paragraph summarizing the thesis and supporting points in the lecture and
  - A second paragraph discussing the relevance of the lecture to a theme or issue in the course (using specific references from required reading).

Extra credit papers never penalize student grades, but an accepted extra credit paper adds 0.1 point (on a 4-point scale) to the final grade. Post extra credit papers as Word attachments on Moodle. Extra Credit Options: The Cleaver conference on February 17 at 11:00 a.m. (Joseph Lowery) and 12:30 p.m. (Lowery and Wyatt Tee Walker).

## **Inclusive Language**

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and student should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially constructed categories, and changing language is part of bring justice to theological discourse. [See Ossie Davis, “The English Language Is My Enemy.”]

## Summary of Assignments

The ultimate goal of the course is a 20-page integrative paper, but to make the assignment more manageable, the project is staged in easily achievable parts. The steps, deadlines, and expectations are explained below.

<i>Steps and Deadlines</i>	<i>Expectations</i>
<b>Exploration of Topic February 16</b>	Beginning February 10, students are asked to think about a topic that fits the theme of the course. Starting early to devise a topic makes research and writing much easier later. A good topic promises opportunity to engage a number of theological and practical disciplines in dialogue, which is integrative thinking. The course focuses on Christian reflection on God, humanity, and the Church and invites constructive naming of a practice of justice. The instructors are especially interested in how to construct theology responsive to issues of racial privilege and discrimination. In order to be ready for the next stage, select the topic based on some initial library research. Post a very brief description (a few sentences) of the paper topic on Moodle by February 16.
<b>Proposal and Annotated Bibliography February 23</b>	The next stage of development is a proposal that builds on the topic selected. The proposal should include a research question, which expresses what the student hopes to explore and learn during the semester. An example of a research question is: How might Christian theology formulate a description of the power of God that models power as love and justice for human relationships and creates a model of church leadership for lay and ordained ministry? Once the research question is formulated, the topic is developed enough to support a short description of the project. A little research should inform development of the research question and description, so the proposal should easily include 5-7 sources in the bibliography with annotations explaining the basic content of the resource and how the book/article may inform the final paper. To summarize, the proposal should have the following outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research question</li> <li>• Short description of the project</li> <li>• Annotated bibliography (with 5-7 sources)</li> </ul> Our goal is for students to post the proposal on Moodle, where the professors and other students may read the proposal and offer helpful suggestions. The proposal must be posted on Moodle by February 23.
<b>3-5-page Draft March 9</b>	Because some research precedes and follows the proposal, the expectation is that students should be able to write a short initial draft by March 9. The 3-5-page draft may cover any part of the paper. For example, the draft might develop an introduction explaining the nature of the project and information from research that supports the research question. The introduction should include

	<p>a working thesis, which in one sentence summarizes the main point of the paper and integrates all topics in the paper. The draft otherwise might write a middle section of the paper describing research crucial to understanding the topic of the paper. The short draft creates an occasion for students to receive early feedback from the professors and peers, which should benefit the final paper later. The draft should be posted on Moodle and students should bring two printed copies of the draft to class, so that we may engage in a workshop on the papers.</p>
<p><b>Presentation and Draft April 4, 14, 21, 28, or May 5 Posted on Moodle three days before presentation</b></p>	<p>By late March, students should be developing drafts much closer to 20 pages. Weekly from April 4 through May 5, four or five students will present drafts that are posted on Moodle at least three days before the presentation (in order to give respondents and other students time to prepare). The drafts should be fairly complete, but need not be perfect because the purpose of the distribution and presentation of papers is to receive further feedback about developing the research and writing. Each student presentation is 10-12 minutes, and presenter may use the time to provide orientation to the paper, to raise particular issues or to request assistance with a particular problem. Feedback starts with a response from one student, but <b>all students are required to participate in discussion of the paper</b>. Students sign up for presentation dates in advance.</p>
<p><b>Response to Another Student's Paper April 4, 14, 21, 28, or May 5</b></p>	<p>Response to another student's paper accomplishes two goals. One is assisting another student with improving and developing her paper. The other is improving the respondent's critical thinking and editing skills, which translate into ability to self-assess her own work. Students must write a 1-2 page response. The response should be posted on Moodle on the date of its presentation in class. We expect that all members of the class have read the paper before the day of presentations, so responses should be designed to launch a discussion. Responses should be delivered in 5 minutes of class time. Students sign up in advance for responses and are encouraged not to deliver a draft paper and a response on the same day.</p>
<p><b>Final Paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Due two weeks after April 4 presentation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Due one week after April 14, 21, 28, and May 5 presentation</b></li> </ul>	<p>The final paper of 20 pages should be a polished assignment because of the process of writing and response conducted during the course. Be sure that the paper includes a thesis statement, theological analysis of scholarly texts, critical thinking about theological problems, and application to ministry. (See Course Requirements earlier in the syllabus for a fuller description.) The paper should follow Turabian's manual of style in all matters of formatting (title page, footnotes or endnotes, subheadings, bibliography, etc.). Remember that the goal of the paper is constructive integrative reflection on multiple theological disciplines and a practice of justice. Please post the paper on Moodle and provide two printed copies for the professors.</p>

## Grading

Students in consultation with the instructors determine how grading will be assessed. At the end of the term, students receive a letter grade in accordance with policies and description outlined in the current seminary catalog.

Class Participation		_____%
Self-evaluation	_____%	
Professor Evaluation	_____%	
Seminar Paper		_____%
Proposal	_____%	
3-5-page Draft	_____%	
Presentation	<u>  0  </u> %*	
Response	_____%	
Final Paper	_____%	

\*Presentation drafts receive comments to inform revision of the final paper, but no grade.

Submission of late papers, late postings on Moodle, and tardiness on presentation days result in a grade no higher than C.

## Criteria for Evaluating Course Work

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create an original project, the academic context requires that certain minimal requirements characterize your work. While there are subjective components in the grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in four basic qualities of excellent academic work:

1. ***Demonstration of an empathetic understanding of the content of texts and resources.*** Your topic should not only be well researched in the library, through interviews and observations, and/or from assigned readings and class discussions, but you should be able to provide a fair description and a clear understanding of texts and resources. This is apparent in the ability to describe and discuss precisely and accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said. Evaluation, response, and critique follow accurate representation of another's ideas—earn the privilege of criticizing a viewpoint by showing that you really understand it.
2. ***Clear critical thinking that provides appropriate specific evidence for conclusions.*** Use the most precise historical, empirical, or contemporary data or information to support the claims of your thesis and paragraphs. Conclusions follow from and are supported by evidence. Be sure that the evidence is relevant, accurate, and detailed. Adherence to clear critical thinking, relevant and accurate evidence, and logical organization constitute sound arguments. Even creative writing requires logical relationships among ideas to assist readers in following the plot or main point.
3. ***Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else's ideas.*** Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, applying, criticizing (positively or negatively), developing, or responding. You might see a connection between two or more ideas. You might see information from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly repeating what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition to unique insights, organization, correlations, and theses. Work to find your own scholarly and professional voice.
4. ***Flawless grammar, spelling, and form.*** Excellent written work is conscious of proofreading and good communication. Oral presentations are equally accountable for careful expression. A brilliant thesis can be lost in a paper or project that obscures its ideas with careless communication. Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean—help them by speaking and writing well.

## **Student Responsibilities**

Students must abide by policies established in the Saint Paul handbook and catalog. Pay special attention to the policies on Integrity of Work Submitted and Class Attendance. The instructors reserve the option to fail a student for a single instance of plagiarism. The professors reserve the option to fail a student strictly for habitual failure to attend class or for habitual tardiness. Students are invited to communicate with the instructors. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of illness, if you have emergency information to share with the instructors, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with us as soon as possible. Please see the instructors for any assistance with your learning and class attendance.

## **Professors' Responsibilities**

Our job is to teach with integrity the scholarship representative of our fields, to see that students learn as much as possible, and to create a comfortable environment for learning. These goals cannot be accomplished without genuine attention to the unique strengths, experiences, and expectations that both the professors and students bring to the classroom. Our goal is to provide encouragement and support for your learning. Sometimes flexible procedures and learning options are necessary to facilitate the kind of teaching and learning that should occur. We are anxious to hear what energizes you, what disappoints you, where you disagree, and what helps you learn. PLEASE SEE US IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

## **Learning-Disabling Conditions**

Saint Paul faculty are committed to facilitating the learning of students capable of graduate-level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of his/her abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities) should contact the office of the Dean of Students immediately to discuss evaluation and documentation of learning needs, alternative learning strategies that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually accountable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and fair evaluation in the course. Students with documented learning disabilities should consult the Saint Paul School of Theology Handbook and comply with institutional guidelines and policies. Similarly, mental or physical conditions must be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who is authorized to arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.

**Class Participation Self-Evaluation Work Sheet**  
**Saint Paul School of Theology**  
**Spring 2009**

**Nancy R. Howell**  
**F. Douglas Powe, Jr.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Course:** MIN430 Advanced Praxis Seminar

Circle the number that best describes your class participation in each category if 1 is excellent, 2 is very good, 3 is average, 4 is satisfactory, and 5 is poor.

**Preparation**

- I conscientiously attempted all reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I reflected seriously on reading assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I worked to bring depth to comments and questions by preparing more than superficially for class. 1 2 3 4 5
- I prepared written and online assignments on time and when they syllabus or my self-assigned deadlines required them. 1 2 3 4 5
- I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes/endnotes before submitting papers. 1 2 3 4 5
- I posted papers on Moodle by the deadlines for discussion. 1 2 3 4 5

**Class**

- I attended class weekly. 1 2 3 4 5
- I always attended class on time. 1 2 3 4 5
- I contributed to class discussions. 1 2 3 4 5
- When I talked in class, I remained focused on the topic of class discussion. 1 2 3 4 5
- I listened respectfully to comments and questions raised by other students. 1 2 3 4 5
- I brought my questions to class or to the professor. 1 2 3 4 5
- I expressed disagreement constructively. 1 2 3 4 5
- I shared my responsibilities for successful class discussions. 1 2 3 4 5
- I supported other students' efforts in class discussions or assignments. 1 2 3 4 5
- I contributed to Moodle discussions and commented constructively on other students' work. 1 2 3 4 5
- I prepared for and contributed to peer discussion of student presentations. 1 2 3 4 5

**Attitude**

- I remained involved and engaged in the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- I was constructive in relationships with others. 1 2 3 4 5
- I put extra effort into the course—such as study groups/partners, library research, recommended or supplemental reading. 1 2 3 4 5
- I contributed my share of the work in collaborative writing or projects. 1 2 3 4 5
- I made appointments with a professor when I needed assistance or wanted to discuss the course. 1 2 3 4 5
- I took responsibility for my learning. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of theology (especially theology as a way of life) has grown. 1 2 3 4 5
- My understanding of ministry has grown through integrative thinking and practices of justice. 1 2 3 4 5

I assign myself the following letter grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Enter A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F in the blank.)

Please submit any additional reflection on class participation that should affect your grade in writing on the back of this page. This work sheet is intended to assist you in thinking about the quality of your class participation. Any interpretations, additions, or connections of criteria should be included in your additional reflections.

**MIN430 Advanced Praxis Seminar: Theology in Black and White  
Spring 2009  
Syllabus Supplement**

**Grading Percentages**

By consensus on February 10, 2009, the class agreed to the following grading percentages:

Assignment	Option 3
Class Participation (evenly split between self-evaluation and professors' evaluation)	30%
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	15%
3-5-page Draft	15%
Presentation and Complete Draft	0%
Response	15%
Final Seminar Paper	25%

**Grading Rubrics**

The instructors assume that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade in each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included; the argument is internally coherent and clearly articulated.

A “B+” means that the assignment is also well crafted.

A “B-” means that the assignment is well developed, but addresses issues and offers insight in more general terms in a more or less coherent argument.

“B,” “B+,” and “B-” papers include a solid thesis, but clarity is lacking and something is missing or not undeveloped. Description and use of theology is informative, but not insightful. The work suggests inability to contextualize properly the work of Black and Womanist theology. In the proposal, the relevance of all sources to the proposed project is not demonstrated. In the seminar paper, the thesis statement does not fully govern the

coherence of the argument; the paper has the four required elements, but those elements are not consistently developed or connected.

*Examples of Thesis Statements:*

“B” Is there a balm to bring healing to the sin of racism found historically and currently in the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church? I will argue that there *is* a balm, and it is the Spirit of truth.

“B+” I will propose that storytelling, or the art of narrative, is an important act of justice in living out the lives to which God has called us.

“B-” I decided to examine the Christology’s of both churches (Black and white) to see if this is, in fact, the case. I chose to focus on Christology because it is only in Jesus Christ we see God interacting with humanity as a human himself. The life and work of Jesus gives us insight into God’s plan for how humanity should interact with one another.

An “A-” means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.

An “A” means that the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

“A” and “A-” papers express a clear thesis statement that includes an issue, a doctrine, a practice of justice, and an application to ministry. The thesis statement and argument make insightful use of Womanist or Black theologies. The proposal develops the coherence of the four paper components and properly places them in context. The seminar paper entails a more developed thesis statement and argument resulting in creativity and originality in approach and content.

*Examples of Thesis Statements:*

“A-” My thesis for this paper is that Delores S. Williams’ takes many risks in her womanist interpretation of the Hagar narrative found in Genesis 16 and 21, both follows and critiques Brueggemann’s hermeneutic of Biblical interpretation, and in taking these risks, provides a theological rationale for the lament as a practice of justice.

“A” In particular I will suggest how the practices and patterns surrounding pain can shape a theology of worship and theodicy that create between them that dangerous, unsettling, hope-full space in which Kin-dom reality *becomes*.

“A” In this paper, I propose that an exploration of the black Christ would challenge the white church to consider their Christology on a deeper level and could assist the white church in practicing justice through the development of a new consciousness.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate use or misuse of data and readings.

A “C-” means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A “D” means the individual needs to see the instructors.

An “F” means the individual needs to see the instructors immediately.