

Saint Paul School of Theology

MIN 430 Advanced Praxis Seminar: Theology in Black and White

Fall 2007

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Class Meeting: Tuesday, 1:00-3:50 p.m.
Kansas-Winger 507

Course Description

Catalog Description: The primary focus of this 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: 20 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 a critique 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 constructions.

The Advanced Praxis Seminar undertakes the task of sorting out how “whiteness” gained theological privilege, how Black experiences and ideas offer critique of white theology, how new voices constructed 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. 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 ministry. 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 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* because 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.



Course Teaching-Learning Objectives

1. The priorities for teaching and learning in this 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 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 experience and theology, for white experience and theology, and for the church and her ministries? How can white theology be constructed with respect for and accountability to Black experience and theology?
- What practices of justice arise from theology constructed in the dialogue among Black, womanist, and white theologies?

Required and Recommended Texts

All required texts are on reserve at the Saint Paul School of Theology library.

Essays to Introduce Theology and Method

Davis, Ossie. "The English Language Is My Enemy" from the *Negro History Bulletin* 30 (April 1967).

Mitchem, Stephanie Y. *Introducing Womanist Theology*. (Chapter 3, "Womanist Theology.")

Moltman, 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 2-3) (Recommended)

Literature Exploring Black Experiences and Ideas

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. (Recommended.)

Theological Texts from Black and Womanist Theology

Hopkins, Dwight. *Shoes that Fit Our Feet*.

Thurman, Howard. *Disciplines of the Spirit*. (Recommended)

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness*.

White Theological Construction in Response to Womanist Theology

Moody, Linda A. *Women Encounter God: Theology across the Boundaries of Difference*. (Chapters 3-5.)
(Recommended)

See also Moltmann above.

Integrative, Interdisciplinary Essays by Instructors

Howell, Nancy R. "Implications of Science for Religious Life" from the *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 27:3 (May/September 2006).

Powe, Jr., F. Douglas. "Chapter 2 Practicing Just-us," *Just-us or Justice: Moving toward a Pan-Methodist Theology*, unpublished.

Course Schedule: September 4-December 14, 2007

September 4

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, *The Color Purple*

September 11

Devotion: *The Color Purple*
Practice of Justice: Resistance
Topic: Introduction to Womanist Theology
Required Reading: Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Chapter 3)
Moody, *Women Encounter God* (Chapter 3)
West, *Prophesy Deliverance* (Chapter 3)
Class Activities: View the film, *The Color Purple*
Read passages from Walker, *The Color Purple*
Define *womanist* from Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* and explore definition of
Womanist theology
Assignment Due: General idea for paper topic

September 18

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)
Assignment Due: Paper topic (posted September 17)

September 25

Devotion: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Practice of Justice: Moral Agency
Topic: Literature by Hurston
Required Reading: Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Assignment Due: Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

October 2

Devotion: *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
Practice of Justice: Holiness/Wholeness
Topic: Black Theology by Hopkins and
Literature by Baldwin
Required Reading: Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet*
Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

October 9

Devotion: Hagar's Story (Genesis 16:1-16, 21:9-21)

Practice of Justice: Survival
Topic: Womanist Theology by Williams
Required Reading: Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*
Class Activities: Peer workshop on drafts
Assignment Due: 3-5-page draft of paper

October 16

Devotion: emilie townes
Practice of Justice: Listening
Topic: Ministry in Black and White
Class Activities: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution"
View the film, *Religion in Black and White*
Questions about presentations and papers

October 23

Reading Week No Class Meeting

October 30

Practices of Justice: Selected from Student Presentations
Topic: Presentation of Student Papers
Required Reading: Student papers
Presentations:

November 6

Practices of Justice: Selected from Student Presentations
Topic: Presentation of Student Papers
Required Reading: Student papers
Presentations:

November 13

Practices of Justice: Selected from Student Presentations
Topic: Presentation of Student Papers
Required Reading: Student papers

Presentations:

November 20

Thanksgiving Recess

No Class Meeting

November 27

Practices of Justice:

Selected from Student Presentations

Topic:

Presentation of Student Papers

Required Reading:

Student papers

Presentations:

December 4

Practices of Justice:

Selected from Student Presentations

Topic:

Presentation of Student Papers

Required Reading:

Student papers

Presentations:

December 11

Devotion:

TBA

Practice of Justice:

TBA

Topic:

Theological Integration and Practices of Justice
Summary of Learning

Required Reading:

Powe
Howell

Class Activities:

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

Assignment Due:

Class Participation Self-Evaluation (attached to
syllabus)

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 must attempt seriously all required 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 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 work sheet, 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, December 11.
2. When the Saint Paul School of Theology faculty designed the Advanced Praxis Seminars, the intention of the course was professional formation of students for ministry through more challenging seminar work near the end of the student degree program. Because ministry requires constant attention to the interdisciplinary integration of theology, biblical insights, 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 an 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 should follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (sixth 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: (a) exploration of a topic, (b) development of a proposal with a research question brief description of the project, and an annotated bibliography of 5-7 relevant books, (c) a 5-page draft for professor review and for peer review in a classroom workshop, (d) a complete seminar paper draft for presentation and discussion in class, (e) response to another student's paper, and (f) submission of the final paper. Please see details of assignment expectations and deadlines later in the syllabus.

3. Extra credit is possible in the course when important lectures or events are relevant to the course. To receive extra credit, submit a one- or two-page, double-spaced paper with one paragraph summarizing the main thesis and supporting points in the lecture and with a second paragraph discussing the relevance of the lecture to a theme or issue in the course. Extra credit papers never penalize student grades, but

an accepted extra credit paper may tip a borderline final grade to the higher grade. For example, if a student's grade is on the borderline between an A- and a B+, an accepted extra credit paper pushes the grade to A-.

Professorial Idiosyncrasies: (1) Please do not submit written work in binders or folders—a single staple in the upper left corner is preferred. (2) Consider submitting drafts of papers printed on the unused side of scratch paper or printed on both sides of a clean sheet of paper made from recycled fibers.

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 students 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 bringing justice to theological discourse. [See Ossie Davis, *The English Language Is My Enemy*.]

Grading

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

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

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

[N.B.: Submission of late papers, late postings on Moodle, and tardiness on presentation days result in grade penalties of at least one letter grade.]

Criteria for Evaluating Course Work

Regardless of whether you write a paper, answer an essay question, voice an oral presentation, or create any 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 your 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 your 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.

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 steps. The steps, deadlines, and expectations are explained below.

<i>Step and Deadline</i>	<i>Expectations</i>
Exploration of Topic September 17	Beginning September 11, 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 church and invites constructive naming of the practices of justice. The instructors are especially interested in how to construct theology responsive to issues of racial privilege and discrimination. Email a very brief description (a few sentence) of the paper topic to both professors no later than September 17.
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography September 25	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 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 a 5-7-source bibliography with annotations explaining the basic content of the book and how the book/article may inform the final paper. To summarize, the proposal should include a research question, a brief description of the project, and an annotated bibliography. Our goal is for students to post the proposal on Moodle (the course software), where the professors and other students may read the proposal and offer any helpful suggestions. The posting should be no later than September 25.

<p>Draft October 9</p>	<p>Because some research precedes and follows the proposal, the expectation is that students should be able to write a short initial draft by October 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 5-page 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 copies of the draft to class, so that we may engage in a workshop on the papers.</p>
<p>Presentation and Draft October 30, November 6, 13, 27, or December 4</p>	<p>By October, students should be developing drafts much closer to 20 pages. Weekly from October 30 through December 4, 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 presenters may use the time to provide orientation to the paper, to raise particular issues, or to quest assistance with a particular problem. Feedback starts with response from one student in the course, but other students discuss the paper in class, too. Students sign up for presentation dates in advance.</p>
<p>Response to Another Student's Paper October 30, November 6, 13, 27, or December 4</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 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>Final Paper Due within two weeks after presentation</p> <p>[Reminder: Class Participation Self- Evaluation Work Sheets are due no later than December 11.]</p>	<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 the syllabus for a fuller description.)</p> <p>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 the practice of justice. The final paper is due within two weeks of the presentation. Please post the paper on Moodle and email the final version as a Word attachment to both professors.</p>
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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 found in the catalog. 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 field, 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 here. 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 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 should be documented and discussed with the Dean of Students, who is authorized to arrange accommodations, and all handbook guidelines and policies apply.

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 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 assignments on time and when the syllabus or my self-assigned deadlines required them. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I checked spelling, grammar, quotations, and footnotes 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 sessions. | 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 |

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 has grown. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| My understanding of ministry has grown. | 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 participation in class. Any interpretations, additions, or connections of criteria should be included in your additional reflections.