

Course Number: 5391-012

Course Title: Backgrounds in Christian Theology and African American Literature

Instructor: Dr. Cedrick May

Room: TBD

Time: 1:00-2:00pm Wednesday

Credit Hours: 3

1. Course Description:

In this course we will study early Christian theology and its relationship to early African American literature. Each week we will meet to discuss the readings for the day and attempt to understand their theological and literary significance, as well as their historical context.

2. Course Objectives:

- To have students understand the distinctive elements of Christian thought within the writings of individual authors and how their thinking contributed to the creation of particular social conventions and mores within a variety of historical periods and populations.
- To develop a working knowledge of the currents in history and social theory which were the foundation of certain Christian movements.
- To develop an understanding of early African American literature and how it constructed an understanding of Christianity appropriate to the particular social reality of Black peoples.
- To write a series of papers which reveal a deep understanding of the literature being examined.

PAPERS

Papers will not be summaries, but substantive arguments that seek to reveal some underlying significance of a particular piece of writing to religious praxis. Augustine and Luther, for instance, approach Christian doctrine very differently, so a comparative analysis would be a good way to approach talking about them. In all, what might the writers we are reading be saying about Christianity (as an institution AND spiritual way of being) that might impact the lives of Africans and African Americans in the period of the Transatlantic Slave trade?

Each weekly reading assignment will be followed up with a 3 page written response addressing the questions mentioned above in some way. Responses will be kept in a small 3-ring binder. The final paper will be an article-length study that can after revision be submitted as a viable, publishable article that tackles some problem or set of problems we will discuss in class.

Final Paper:

The final paper in this course will be an original analysis of a previously unanthologized (or understudied) African American text of religious significance. The analysis will include a brief justification for the study of the text, a review of scholarship, and an explanation of its significance to the tradition of African American religious studies. One of the primary goals of this assignment is to give the student practical experience doing archival research.

Many of the readings for this course are scanned PDF documents that will require Adobe Acrobat or an equivalent PDF reader.

3. Required Reading:

- *On Christian Teaching* --Augustine
- *Confessions*--Augustine
- *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*--Edited by John Dillenger
- *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*--Edited by Walter A. Elwell
- *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors*—Carretta
- *The Negro Christianized*—Cotton Mather (Handout)
- *Two Letters of the Lord Bishop of London*—(Handout)
- *The Selling of Joseph*—Samuel Sewall (Handout)
- *America's First Negro Poet: The Complete Works of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island*—Hammon (Handout)
- *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*—Edited by John Shields
- *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic*—C. May

4. Course Requirements/Evaluation:

- **12 three-page commentaries on the main text for each week (30%)**
- **Discussion Points (30%)**
- **Final paper (40%)**

5. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours the first week of classes, or earlier if accommodations are needed immediately. Bring a copy of your Accommodation Memo and an Instructor verification Form to the meeting. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office for Students with Disabilities, 817-272-3364.

6. Assignment Schedule (Subject to Change):

Readings and writing assignments are due on the date recorded and should be completed before the beginning of class for that day.

Date	Class Activities/ Readings Due
Week 1 Wed 8/26	<i>Confessions</i> --Augustine
Week 2 Wed 9/2	<i>On Christian Teaching</i> --Augustine
Week 3 Wed 9/9	<i>Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings</i> — “Introduction”, “Preface to Latin Writings” “Selected Bible Prefaces”, “Freedom of a Christian” “Two Kinds of Righteousness”, “Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians”
Week 4 Wed 9/16	1) <i>The Negro Christianized</i> —Cotton Mather 2) Paul's Letter to Philemon— <i>Bible</i> 3) “Letter to Philemon” from <i>Exploring the Bible</i> by Stephen L. Harris— (Handout)

Week 5 Wed 9/23	<i>Two Letters of the Lord Bishop of London</i> —(Handout)
Week 6 Wed 9/30	<i>America's First Negro Poet: The Complete Works of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island</i> —Hammon (Handout)
Week 7 Wed 10/7	<i>The Selling of Joseph</i> —Samuel Sewall (Handout) <i>Unchained Voices</i> —“Boston King”
Week 8 Wed 10/14	<i>The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley</i> —Edited by John Shields
Week 9 Wed 10/21	<i>Unchained Voices</i> —“James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw”
Week 10 Wed 10/28	<i>Unchained Voices</i> —“John Marrant”
Week 11 Wed 11/4	<i>Unchained Voices</i> —“Olaudah Equiano”
Week 12 Wed 11/11	<i>Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic</i> —C. May
Week 13 Wed 11/18	Research Week
Week 14 Wed 11/25	Research Week
Week 15 Wed 12/2	Turn in Final Research Paper & Final Day of Class