

RS 356. CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS THOUGHT: RELIGION, RACE, AND COLONIALISM

Fall, 2017. Cal State Northridge.
T/TH, 12:30-1:45 PM
Sierra Hall 314

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Office Hours: T/TH: 10:30-12:00 pm, Santa Susana 229

Course Description

This course examines the intersection between religion, race, and colonialism. Through the semester, we will interrogate critically the different concepts, categories, ideas, and phenomena that constitute the intersection of religion, race, and colonialism. The main subject of inquiry will be the role that religion plays in the construction of the dominant ideas and politics of race and racial relations in the colonial/post-colonial social contexts. We will reflect on ways in which both religion and race (racialized subjects) are “created” and how they inform and shape power relations that constitute colonialism and colonial ideology. After reviewing the basic theoretical materials for analyzing race, colonialism, and religion, we will investigate the connection between them in the specific historical contexts—both within and outside the U.S. Additionally, we will examine some of the constructive visions that offer new insights for rethinking the relation between religion, race, and colonialism.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Gain familiarity with the key terms and topics in the critical study of race, study of religion, and colonialism
- Gain a comparative perspective on the interconnection between race, colonialism, and religion that includes both the Western/American/Christian context and the non-Western/global contexts.
- Identify and analyze the factors, events, thoughts, and discourses that played leading role in the formation of dominant racial/colonial ideology and the influence they had on religion.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance & Journal: Coming to class well prepared to engage in the conversation is the first and the foremost important step in order to successfully complete the course. For each class and reading, you need to bring your journal in which you will briefly answer the weekly reading questions to share with the rest of the class. Discussion will be an important component of this course, meaning, your participation is KEY.
2. Group presentation: Every student will pair up with another student for group presentation which consists of the following:
 - a) Spend 5 minutes (or less) briefly presenting the reading’s key points
 - b) Spend another 5 to 7 minutes presenting your critical analysis. This means, you raise questions, question the validity of the claim, and explore the implication it offers to the topic of race and religion. Use the following prompts as a guide (but you don’t need to rely on them or limit your presentation to them)
 - What kind of question or insight does the author raise?
 - What do their viewpoints suggest in terms of the play of religion in the construction of racialized and colonial others?

- What kind of possibility does religion offer?
 - In what ways do the authors trouble the dominant understanding of religion or/and race?
 - Do you have any objections or disagreements with the author? Do you see find weakness?
- c) Spend the next 5-10 minutes leading the discussions by sharing 1-2 well formulated questions and answering questions from the class.

3. **Examinations:** There will be two open book, take-home exams during the semester. The exams will be composed of essay questions in which you will demonstrate your understanding (along with the ability to critically analyze) of the readings and build a coherent connection between the different readings/topics reviewed through the semester.

Evaluations

Journal	15%	Examinations	50%
Participation	15%	Presentation	20%

Grading Scale

94-99=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B +, 83-86 =B, 80-82=B-, 76-79=C +, 73-75=C, 70-72=C-, 66-69=D +, 60-65=D, 0-59=F

Course Policy

1) Attendance

You are permitted to have up to 2 (two) unexcused absences during the semester. Starting from the fourth absence, you will lose 2 points (out of the final grade) each time you miss a class. If you have 6 unexcused absences, you automatically **FAIL** the course. In order for an absence to be excused, you need to **notify the instructor in advance** and present **proper documentation**. All other unverifiable absences should be covered by the two free passes. If you come to class three times late, it will count as an absence.

2) Communication

Make the best effort to be always prepared ahead of time so that you don't shoot me an email last minute. Please, follow the appropriate etiquette when you communicate with your instructor. For instance, beginning an email with "Hey," is only appropriate when you communicate with your buddies. Or, beginning an email without any greeting is also inappropriate. I'm not asking for any strict formality in your email, but just the basic etiquette you need to keep in mind when you communicate with others in the adult world.

3) Submission of Assignments

All written assignments must be uploaded on Canvas by 11:59pm of the due date. No excuse will be accepted for late submission and it will result in a deduction of 3 points per day. No writing assignment will be accepted after the fifth day past the deadline. **It is your responsibility to double check and make sure your submission has gone through on Canvas. No excuse will be accepted when your assignment is not posted on Canvas.**

4) Electronics

The use of electronic devises (including laptop computers) in the classroom is **strictly prohibited**. If you are caught using the cell phone during the class, your attendance will be automatically annulled.

5) Read the Syllabus before asking any question

If you email me with a question without consulting the syllabus, you will receive a short answer that reads: "Dear student, you can find the answer on the syllabus. Read the syllabus first and then write to me again if you need any further clarification."

6) Learning issues

Individuals with disabilities are guaranteed certain protections and rights of equal access to programs and activities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Therefore, California State University, Northridge recognizes the responsibility of the college community to provide equal educational access for otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Any student who needs classroom or testing accommodations is invited to present letters from the Office of Disability Resources and Educational Services. You can obtain more information about the procedure on their website: <https://www.csun.edu/dres/accommodation-procedures>

7) Academic Honesty

Any student who submits plagiarized work will be subject to the penalties described in CSUN's Academic Dishonesty Policy. **This code asks each student to do his/her own work in his/her own words.** <http://catalog.csun.edu/policies/academic-dishonesty/>

Students who take part in violations such as cheating or plagiarism are subject to grade penalty (F), and the case will be reported to the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs.

Note: Disciplinary records of any action of academic dishonesty are retained in the Office of Vice President for Student Affairs. **These records may be available to prospective employers and other educational institutions**, in accordance with federal and state regulations. In short, a student committing any act of academic dishonesty will run a serious risk of harming his or her future educational or employment opportunities.

Required Texts

- Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992)
- * All Additional Readings will be posted on course Canvas
- * The contents and the schedule indicated on the syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Course Schedule

UNIT I: Theoretical Foundation

Week 1 – Imperial Cartography: Colonialism, Modernity, and the Postcolonial Critique

- T: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, “Introduction” (Skip Part II)
- Th: Enrique Dussel, “World System and Transmodernity”

Week 2 – Inventing Race

- T: Th: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ch 5.
- Th: W.E.B. *The Soul of the Black Folk*, Ch1
- Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Ch 7

Week 3 – Intersection of Race and Religion

- T: Sylvester Johnson, *African American Religions 1500-2000*, 3-5; David Chidester, *Anchoring*

Religion in the World

Th: J. Cameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, Ch 2. "The Great Drama of Religion."

Week 4 – Race and the Invention of the "other:" Postcolonial Critique I

T: Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, "Introduction."

Th: David Chidester, *Empire of Religion*, Introduction

David Chidester, *Savage Religions*, Ch 1

UNIT II: Race, Religion, and Colonialism in Historical Context

Week 5 – Race and the Invention of the "other:" Postcolonial Critique II

T: Savages, Animals, and Animism. David Chidester, *Empire of Religion*, Ch 4

Th: Origins of Religion: Totem & Magic. Edward Tylor, "Primitive Culture"

James George Frazer & Max Mueller

Week 6 – Race, Colonialism, and Secularism

T: Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, Ch 1, Secularism and Religion

Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation."

Th: Talal Asad, *Is Critique Secular*, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, Secular Criticism."

Week 7 – Race and Religion in American History I

T: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Th: Paul Harvey. *Christianity and Race in the American South*, Ch 4

Week 8 – Race and Religion in American History II

T: Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, Ch 3, Ch 4.

Th: Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, Ch 5, Ch 6.

Week 9 – Race and Religion in American History III

T: Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, Ch 1, Ch 3.

Th: Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, Ch 5, Ch 6.

Week 10 – Violence and Resistance

T: *The Autobiography of Malcom X*

Th: *The Autobiography of Malcom X*

UNIT III: Constructive Vision

Week 11 – Re-Envisioning the Caribbean I

T: Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?"

Th: Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 1-8; Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 1-50

Week 12 – Re-Envisioning the Caribbean II

T: Paul Christopher Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions*, Conclusion

Th: Luis Rivera-Pagan, "Toward a Decolonial Theology"

Week 13 – No Class

T: Academic Conference (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting)

Th: Thanksgiving Recess

Week 14 – Re-appropriating and Reclaiming: Past and Present I

T: Santiago Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism* Ch 7

Th: James Cone, *Black Theology, Black Power*, 5-61

Week 15 – Re-appropriating and Reclaiming: Past and Present I

T: James Cone, *Black Theology, Black Power*, 116-151

Th: Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, Introduction & Ch 1.