Hartford Seminary, Spring 2019

Race, Religion and Politics (RS-631)

Preliminary Syllabus

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Class sessions: Wednesdays, 4:00 pm to 6:45 pm
Office hours: Mondays and Tuesdays from 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Course Description:

All Americans, wrote Derrick Bell, are “imprisoned by the history of racial subordination.” How have the dynamics of racialized class prejudice played out in American religious history? Is there a way out? While paying attention to global histories and theoretical reflections, students in this course will examine and draw lessons from case studies that highlight the problematic interweaving of race, religion and politics in the lives of human beings designated as minorities, including African-Americans, American Catholics, Jews, and Muslims.

Disclaimer/Note to Students:

This course is not a survey. For that, our subject is too vast, too varied, too visceral.

If we succeed, we will engage in in-depth and, gradually and carefully, more informed dialogues on the dilemmas of race, religion and politics – and several other interlinking undercurrents, all dealing with the enforcement of and resistance to the hierarchies of majority/minority constructions of power. Our readings and conversations – which must, crucially, reflect our experiences – will balance a range of interdisciplinary approaches that examine the dynamic entanglements of racial – and gender and class – hierarchies. The aim is to enable us to become better informed, more aware, respectful and careful allies and agents of change, within and beyond our fields, institutions and communities.

Therefore, on a pragmatic note, your work in this class may turn out to be of a hybrid type. Together and throughout the course, we will read, discuss and reflect. Your midterm will be a standard paper. But then, after that midpoint, some of you may want to consider alternative, non-strictly-academic final product/project. (“Theoretical approaches are important,” a friend of mine recently wrote, “but their retrospective character reminds me of a betrothed perpetually arriving too late for the wedding.” https://thewritelaunch.com/2018/10/quantum-solidarity-making-hajj-at-bear-lodge/) What that final product will be is up to you. Of course, you will need to demonstrate that you have read, processed and can productively use the material we have
The “up-to-you” part is the format and genre that might be effective in your line of work, beyond our classroom.

(If, still, after all of this, you wonder what this course is about, read James Baldwin’s “A Letter to My Nephew:” https://progressive.org/magazine/letter-nephew/. For some of us, this course might be a peculiar challenge, for it entails confronting our “innocence.”)

**Books**

The following texts are to be purchased, borrowed or accessed via Digital Theological Library (DTL):


Note: articles and book excerpts available in CANVAS.

**Schedule**

1) January 23

Read:

• James Baldwin, “A Letter to My Nephew” (https://progressive.org/magazine/letter-nephew/)


(Note: those joining this class late are still required to read these pieces.)

2) January 30
• Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things

3) February 6:
• Sylverster A. Johnson, African American Religions, pp. 1-158

(Note: Monday, February 11 is the last day to drop a class without academic or financial penalty)

4) February 13:
• Sylverster A. Johnson, African American Religions, pp. 159-406

5) February 20
• Timur Yuskaev, “Redemption,” from Timur Yuskaev, Speaking Qur’an: an America Scripture (University of South Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 69-110

6) February 27

7) March 6

• Dolores S. Williams, *Sisters in Wilderness*, pp. 127-212


(Note: Monday, March 11 is the last day to withdraw from a course without academic penalty)

8) March 13

Readings posted in CANVAS. Proceed in the following order:


• John T. McGreevy, “Catholicism, Slavery, and the Cause of Liberty,” from *Catholicism and American Freedom* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), pp. 43-68

• Joshua Paddison, “Anti-Catholicism and Race in Post-Civil War San Francisco,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (Fall 2009): 505-44

• McGreevy, “American Freedom and Catholic Power,” from *Catholicism and American Freedom*, pp. 166-188


9) March 20

• Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, pp. 1-164

10) March 27

• Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, pp. 165-240

11) April 3

- Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*
  (note: eBook available via DTI/HartSem library)

12) April 10

- midterm papers/essays due on April 10 (5-7 pages; email to yuskaev@hartsem.edu)
- prepare to present your papers in class

13) April 17


14) April 24


15) May 1 – Review and presentations of proposals for final papers or projects

- Nancy Fraser and Nancy A. Naples, “To Interpret the World and to Change It: An Interview with Nancy Fraser,” *Signs*, 29 (2004):1103-1124
- William E. Connolly, *Facing the Planetary* – excerpts TBD

**Final paper/project due on May 15**
(10-12 pages; email to yuskaev@hartsem.edu)