This course will examine the human condition in light of God's liberating activity. Liberation Theology, Womanist Theology, and the theologies of oppressed peoples will be explored as a method of investigating, explicating, and critiquing religious thought.

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Reading:**

Course objectives:
- To examine the development of Black Theology as a discipline and its impact on African American faith expression.
- To examine Black Theology as one of many theologies of oppressed people and their quest for personal and spiritual identity.
- To explicate the intricacies of Black Theology as a heterogeneous theological reaction to majority Christian perspective.
- To review its development and the current trends toward a theology of the oppressed inclusive of Liberation Theology, Womanist Theology and others.
• To examine the ways in which Black Theology influences Biblical interpretation/ hermeneutics and African American preaching.

Course Requirements
• Class attendance is a must. Excused absence will be granted, but more than two absences will result in a 10% lowering of the grade.
• Participation in class requires assigned readings and preparation to lead group discussion with a 15 minute overview of assigned topic.
• Two papers are required. Please see full outline for details. All written assignments must conform to Hartford Seminary writing guidelines. Please check: www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf.

Course Outline

September 17
Introduction and course overview.

September 24
The theology that arises from identification with the oppressed.
**Required reading:** God of the Oppressed (Cone).

October 1
The theology that arises from identification with the oppressed.
**Required reading:** Black Theology and Black Power (Cone).

October 8
Critical reflections: The current challenges of the Black Church and Black Theology.
**Required reading:** Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone’s Black Theology and Black Power (Hopkins)

October 15
Critical reflections: The current challenges of the Black Church and Black Theology (continued).
**Required reading:** Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone’s Black Theology and Black Power (Hopkins)

October 22
God’s liberation.
**Required reading:** Liberation and Reconciliation (Roberts)

October 29
The quest for systematic theological thought.
**Required reading:** Introduction to Black Theology of Liberation (Hopkins)
Assignment Due:

October 29
Each participant must write a comparative essay of two of James Cone’s books. Participants should think critically as they attempt to explore the emergence of Black Theology as an academic discipline in the late sixties and early seventies. How does Cone’s effort place in Biblical context the cultural and social upheaval that was being experienced in the United States at that time? This paper should be no more than 10 pages.

November 5
Womanist Theology and its response to Black Theology
Required reading: Katie’s Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community (Canon).

November 12
Toward a Black Biblical hermeneutic.
Required reading: Jesus and the Disinherited (Thurman)

November 26
Toward a Black Biblical hermeneutic.
Required reading: Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation (Felder)

December 3
The future of Black Theology
Required reading: Living Stones in the House of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology (Thomas)

December 10
Class Presentations

Assignment Due:

December 10
Each participant must present a final paper on one or more of the aspects of Black Theology and/or Womanist Theology. This paper should reflect cogent research and should bring together the various pieces of literature discovered during your process of study in this class. Students may use authors from the Selected Bibliography or may go outside the list with permission of the instructor. Your topic must be reviewed with the instructor prior to beginning.
ASSESSMENT
10% Attendance
20% Mid-semester paper
30% Class participation and engagement
40% Final integrated paper/project. Details to be distributed in class

Seminary Classroom Policies
**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one’s own previous work used in another course. See “Plagiarism” at [http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/](http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/).

**Appropriate Classroom etiquette and use of technology:** In order to respect the community within the classroom: 1) Mute all cell phones during class; 2) Utilize laptops for the sole purpose of taking class notes. Please do not surf the web, email, or other programs during class time. Such use of the computer during class is disrespectful of the class and professor, and may result in lowering your participation grade.

**Inclusive Language:**
Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another’s images of God.

**Extensions:** Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

**Official Handbooks:** For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook [http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/](http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/) and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at [http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/](http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/)

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Selected Bibliography


Dyson, Michael Eric, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black
Culture, Oxford University Press, 1996
Gilkes, Cheryl, If it wasn’t For the Women: Black Women’s Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books. 2001