

**FALL 2008 AFRS/RELI 105a:**  
**RELIGION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Tues/Th 3:10-4:25

Kenyon 133

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**INTRODUCTION:**

African American citizenship has long been a contested and bloody battlefield. This course uses the modern Civil Rights Movement to explore the roles that religion played in these battles over African American rights and liberties. In what ways have religious beliefs motivated Americans to uphold narrow definitions of citizenship that exclude people on the basis of race or moved them to boldly challenge those definitions? More broadly, what are the lessons to be learned from the CRM about the role that religion plays in American political life? Did religion work when it reinforced and upheld American liberal notions or did religion work to change and alter the very nature of American politics? We will explore these questions through examining theologies of segregation and non-violent resistance, religion and gender in the movement, and critiques of religiously motivated activism and non-violent resistance.

**BOOKS:**

Available at the Vassar College Bookstore

- David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* (Harper Perennial)
- Martin Luther King Jr., *Testament of Hope* (HarperOne)
- Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer* (Princeton U Press)
- Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X : As Told to Alex Haley* (Ballantine Books)
- David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope* (University of North Carolina Press)
- James Baldwin, *Fire Next Time* (Vintage)
- Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Orbis)

**OTHER READINGS:**

- Additional readings for the course, as marked on the syllabus, will be found on BlackBoard or on the web through links on the course syllabus on BlackBoard.
- You must bring the essays to class either. We recommend downloading them and printing them out. Less ideal is bringing your laptop to class and reading from it.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- Regular attendance and arrival in class on time.
- Timely and mindful completion of the reading assignments.
- Engaged participation in classroom discussion.

- 3 Critical Reflection papers (4-5 pages): see syllabus for due dates
- Take home final exam

### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:**

“Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please schedule an appointment with the instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course which have been approved by the Director of Disability and Support Services as indicated in your accommodation letter.”

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND CLASSES**

#### *Introduction*

Tues Sept 2

- “At Holt Street Baptist Church” - The Rosa Parks Protest Meeting: December 1955, Joe Azbell, in *Reporting Civil Rights—Part One: American Journalism 1941-1963*, (The Library of America: 2003), 228-231. [BB]

#### *African America, Religion, and Slavery*

Thurs Sept 4

- Albert Raboteau, “Death of the Gods” [BB]
- Gayraud Wilmore, Ch 1 *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*

Tues Sept 9

- Gayraud Wilmore, Ch 2-5 *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*

#### *White America, Religion, and Slavery*

Thurs Sept 11

- Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, 65-104 [BB]

Tues Sept 16

- Mathews, Donald G. “The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice.” *Journal of Southern Religion* 3, 2000: <http://jsr.fsu.edu/mathews.htm>
- Thornton Stringfellow, “A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery” (1841) <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/stringfellow/stringfellow.html>

#### *Uneasy Freedom: Reconstruction and its Aftermath*

Thurs Sept 18

- Harding, Chs. *There is a River* [BB]

### **MONDAY SEPT 22 – FIRST CRITICAL RESPONSE ESSAY DUE**

Tues Sept 23

- Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “The Black Church: A Gender Perspective” [BB]
- Wilmore, *BRBR*, Ch 6-7

#### *Historical Place-setters*

Thurs Sept 25

- August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, “The Boycott Movement Against Jim Crow Streetcars in the South, 1900-1906,” *The Journal of American History* 55:4 (March 1969): 756-775 [BB]
- A. Philip Randolph Urges Civil Disobedience Against a Jim Crow Army: Testimony before the Armed Services Committee (1948) [BB]
- Mamie Till-Bradley, “I Want You to Know What They Did to My Boy” [BB]
- Emmitt Till writings from *Eyes on the Prize Reader* [BB]

THURS NIGHT SEPT 25: 1ST "EYES ON THE PRIZE" SCREENING

*Approaches to Non-violence*

Tues Sept 30

- Gandhi, TBA
- Bayard Rustin, "...A Workable and Christian Technique for the Righting of Injustice" (1942); "The Negro and Non-Violence" (1942), "Letter to the Draft Board" (1943)
- CORE—"The Principles of Nonviolent Direct Action" and James Farmer on the early sit-ins [BB]
- James Lawson, "Speech at Shaw University," "We are Trying to Raise the Moral Issue" [BB]

*King and Non-Violence*

Thurs Oct 2

- Martin Luther King Jr., "An Experiment in Love," "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," "Where Do We Go From Here" (245-252) "Strength to Love" (491-517)

*Montgomery*

Tues Oct 7

- Adam Fairclough, "The Preachers and the People: The Origins and Early Years of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference: 1955-1959," *The Journal of Southern History* 52:3 (August 1986): 403-440 [BB]
- Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* 11-82
- Rustin, "Montgomery Diary"

*Albany*

Thurs Oct 9

- Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 127-230

**MONDAY OCT 13 – 2<sup>ND</sup> CRITICAL ESSAY DUE**

*Birmingham*

Tues Oct 14

- King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 518-555
- Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 231-285

TUES NIGHT: 2<sup>ND</sup> "EYES ON THE PRIZE" SCREENING

*March on Washington—Birmingham Bombing*

Thurs Oct 16

- Charles Morgan Jr., "Who Is Guilty in Birmingham?" [BB]
- Reverend George H. Woodard, "Some Important Differences" [BB]

**FALL BREAK**

*Vincent Harding*

Tues Oct 28

Harding-Hope and History

- Harding, Chs 3, 5, 10, 11 in *Hope and History* [BB]
- Harding, "The Religion of Black Power" [BB]

WEDS OCT 29 – REQUIRED WOODS LECTURE  
VINCENT HARDING

Thurs Oct 30 – Guest Lecturer—Vincent Harding

*Fannie Lou Hamer*

Tues Nov 4

- Hamer, “Untitled Speech” [BB]
- Marsh, *Gods Long Summer*, Intro and Ch 1
- Stephen Carter, “The Religious Resistance of Fannie Lou Hamer,” [BB]
- Chana Kai Lee, “Anger, Memory and Personal Power: Fannie Lou Hamer and Civil Rights Leadership” [BB]

*Malcolm’s Critique*

Thurs Nov 6

- *Autobiography of Malcolm X*

Tues Nov 11

- *Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- Farrah Jasmine Griffin, “ ‘Ironies of the Saint’: Malcolm X , Black Women, and the Price of Protection”

TUES NIGHT NOV 11: 3<sup>RD</sup> “EYES ON THE PRIZE” SCREENING

*Black Power’s Critique*

Thurs Nov 13

- Julius Lester, “The Angry Children of Malcolm X” [BB]
- Chicago Office of SNCC: “We must fill ourselves with hate of all things white” [BB]
- The Black Panther Program [BB]
- Interview with Huey Newton [BB]

THURS NIGHT: KEY NOTE ADDRESS—SECULARITY AND THE LIBERAL ARTS  
JEFFREY STOUT: “SECULAR NOT SECULARIST”

**MONDAY NOV 17 –3<sup>RD</sup> CRITICAL ESSAY DUE**

*Secular Critique*

Tues Nov 18

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

*Is Faith Possible?*

Thurs Nov 20

- Marsh, *God’s Long Summer*, Ch 5, Conclusion

*Black Theology*

Tues Nov 25

- James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969), chapter 2
- Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *The Black Messiah* (1968), chapter 7

TUES NIGHT NOV 25: “THIS FAR BY FAITH” SCREENING

**THANKSGIVING**

*Modern Re-evaluations*

Tues Dec 2

- Chappell, *Stone of Hope*

Thurs Dec 4

- Chappell, *Stone of Hope*

*Final Thoughts*  
Tues Dec 9

**TAKE HOME EXAM—DUE ON FIRST DAY OF EXAM PERIOD**