
• **RELI 330 Unquantifiable Goods: Religion, Race, and Democracy**

Vassar College

“Modern democratic theory has been an attempt to give an account of democracies as just, without the people that constitute such a society having the virtue of justice.” – Stanley Hauerwas

This seminar in religious ethics will examine the way certain goods and virtues potentially crucial to a just democracy—hope, reverence, other-regard, memory, community, beauty, and even love—resist easy quantification. Of particular interest will be the way that race in America is a crucial frame through which to look at this set of questions. How do democracies teach their citizens about the sorts of virtues that democratic existence may require? How do religious resources contribute to this conversation? Ultimately we want to consider whether democracy is capable of expressing and training its citizens in the sorts of virtues that the pluralistic conditions of democratic life—conditions rooted in conflict and ambiguity over the nature of justice—would seem to require.

Required texts

Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (Orbis)

Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (Kessinger Publishing)

David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal* (Hard Press)

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (California)

Ralph Ellison, *Juneteenth* (Vintage)

Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized* (Princeton University Press)

Stephen Carter, *Dissent of the Governed* (Harvard University Press)

Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope* (Harvard University Press)

Requirements and Grading

Papers (about 20 pages in all): 60%

Oral Presentation: 10%

Class Participation: 30%

Presentation Expectations

Your task, when making a presentation, is to identify two or three passages that would be good for the class to discuss and to frame those passages with appropriate introductory remarks and questions. You should also have a few additional passages in mind. The ideal presentation is one that is likely, because of its selection and framing of passages, to initiate an excellent discussion. Feel free to discuss your plan me ahead of time, either by email or in person.

January 21 - January 27

Weds, Jan 23--Intro

January 28 - February 3

Jan 30

- Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" <http://thoreau.eserver.org/default.html>
 - Stephen Carter, *Dissent of the Governed*
 - Romand Coles, "Introduction," from *Beyond Gated Politics*
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February 4 - February 10

February 6

- *David Walker's Appeal*
 - Henry Highland Garnet, *An Address*
 - Excerpt from Eddie Glaude, *Exodus*
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February 11 - February 17

February 13

- Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*
 - Stout excerpt from *Democracy and Tradition*, 1-41
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February 18 - February 24

February 20

- Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (Orbis)
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February 25 - March 3

February 27

- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope*
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March 4 - March 10

March 6: Democratic Ethics Without Foundations: Richard Rorty

- Selected Essays
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March 11 - March 17

Spring Break

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March 18 - March 24

Spring Break

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March 25 - March 31

March 27

Christianity and Civil Rights

- Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 67-102, 265-283
 - Fannie Lou Hamer in *Rhetoric, Religion, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 784-793
 - Charles Marsh, Introduction, Ch 1
 - David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*, 87-130
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April 1 - April 7

Christianity and Civil Rights

April 3

- Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 180-206, 236-264, 363-390
 - Ransby, Barbara, [*Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: a Radical Democratic Vision*](#), 170-195, 273-298
 - Romand Coles, “ ‘To Make This Tradition Articulate’: Practiced Receptivity Matters, Or Heading West of West with Cornel West and Ella Baker”
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April 8 - April 14

Radical Democracy and Religion: In Theory

April 10

- Sheldon Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy”
 - John Yoder, “The Kingdom as Social Ethics,” *The Christian Case for Democracy*,” “Civil Religion in America”
 - Romand Coles, “The Wild Patience of John Howard Yoder”
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April 15 - April 21

Radical Democracy and Religion: In Practice

April 17

- Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized*, preface, 1-5, 8-20
 - Bernice Johnson Reagon, “Coalition Politics”
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April 22 - April 28

April 24 – Ralph Ellison, *Juneteenth*, 3-197

April 29 - May 5

May 1--Ralph Ellison, *Juneteenth*, 198-end

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