



**ERSKINE**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*For Christ and His Church*

**PM 786CO: Black Studies**  
Beginning January 30, 2012  
Mondays, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Columbia, S.C.  
Spring Semester 2012  
Toney C. Parks, D. Min

Office (864) 379-6693; Cell (864) 350-8409; Home (864) 268-2199 before 10 p.m.

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ETS FAX (864) 379-3171

P. O. Box 668, Due West, SC 29639

[McCain Library](#) (toll free) 1-877-876-4348

**Course Description:**

This course is a survey of the experiences of black persons in America in their efforts to minimize or eliminate legal, social, political, educational, economic, and psychological limitations or boundaries imposed upon them by institutions and persons of the majority race. From this survey, focus is placed upon ways and means of structuring black and white experiences, which will be a moral corrective and healing influence on the conditions and circumstances resulting from boundary issues and experiences. *Required for S.C. Conference United Methodist M.Div. students. Open to others. Alternate years. Three hours.*

**Addendum to Course Description:**

Special emphasis is given to the exploration of historical foundations, cultural traditions, and social issues that define Theology in the Black Church. Specific attention is focused on the cultural experiences of black people in America as various social, political, economic and educational institutions attempted to limit both the physical and spiritual emancipation of African American Christians. The intent of this course is to bridge the cultural and intellectual myths that distract the true theological understanding of the African American religious experience. Students taking this course will walk away with a better understanding of "Black Theology." This course will facilitate opportunities for intellectual, professional and spiritual development for students interested in developing a collaborative ministry with churches of different cultural and racial ethnicity. *Elective 3 Hours.*

### Course Objectives:

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary (ETS) is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church. Our goal is to introduce historical and theological insights that explain the spirited passion and fervor involving the style of worship that exists in the Black Church. This course will show how the Black Church has and continues to embrace Reformed theology from the lens of a different cultural intellect. In taking this course, students will see that the Black Church's doctrinal views are driven by systematic theological standards like that of the Reformed tradition. This course will attempt to build a better understanding for diversity among congregations of various denominations. One of the Seminary's goals is that graduates will be prepared to minister and understand the cultural passion of the African American congregation. Understanding the history of the Black church in relation to its past is the key to the acceptance of the worship practices of the Black Church. It is important to understand Black Theology as a passionate experience that only can be explained by those who have experienced generational oppression. The course will attempt to focus on the following goals:

1. Development of a theological understanding of the life of Black people throughout slavery, the Civil Rights movement and the role Black Theology has played in the structure of the Black Church as an institution.
2. Analysis of the historical progress of various Black Church denominations, their pastors, and ministries. Discussion includes the progress and success experienced while facing various challenging cultural and social issues of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. A look at the effects of various institutions such as politics, education, and religion on race relations in America during the past 300 years.
4. Development of critical ministerial, exegetical and hermeneutical skills that will help students as future ETS graduates to apply practical pastoral skills to congregations of diverse cultural and denominational origins.

### Required Texts:

Evans, James H. *We have Been Believers: An African -American Systematic Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992. ISBN: 0-8006-2672-9

King, Martin L. *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. Class handout provided.

Historical documentaries of various video and audio sources.

### Supplemental Reading:

Barna, George, and Harry R. Jackson. *High Impact African American Churches: Leadership Concepts from Some of Today's Most Effective Churches*. Ventura CA: Regal Books, 2004. ISBN: 0-8307-8265-9.

### Guidelines/Requirements for Assignments:

1. Read and discuss Dr. Martin Luther King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. This letter is the primary thesis of class discussion. Students will write a final paper summarizing your assessment of the "Climate of Race Relations in America Today" as it relates to the social, political, economic, and theological message conveyed by Dr. King at the time this letter was written. Students will present oral presentations on the last two days of class. Students are expected to take a position and defend it from a theological position.
2. Select a Negro Spiritual, song by an African American Artist. Reflect on the theological message being presented in the music. Write a one-to-three page paper reflecting the message in the music.
3. Write a two-to-three page historical review of a major civil rights event that played a significant role in the shaping of American history. (Please select your event prior to class and have approved by the professor.)
4. Select a major Civil Rights leader and write a two-to-three page biographical review of his/her significant contribution to or involvement in the Civil Rights movement.

### Class Schedule

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| February 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Introduction to class participants and course material.   |
| February 13 <sup>th</sup> | Discuss Biblical passages/narratives significant to the plight of Blacks in America from slavery to the Civil Rights era. |
| February 20 <sup>th</sup> | Read/Listen to the <i>Letter from the Birmingham Jail</i> by Martin Luther King   |
| February 27 <sup>th</sup> | Review a Black History Documentary of the Civil Rights Movement   |
| March 5 <sup>th</sup>     | Select a Negro Spiritual song by an African American artist. Reflect on the theological message presented in              |

the music. Bring your selection and reflection paper to class.

- March 12<sup>th</sup> Lecture on Evans' "We Have Been Believers"
- March 19<sup>th</sup> Discussion of written review of a major historical Civil Rights event that played a significant role in the shaping of American History.
- March 26<sup>th</sup> Lecture on the significance of Education and the Church in Black America
- April 2<sup>nd</sup> Easter Break
- April 9<sup>th</sup> Select a major Civil Rights leader and write a two page biographical portrait of their significant contribution to or involvement in the Civil Rights movement.
- April 16<sup>th</sup> Class Lecture: History of the Black Church, Education and Civil Rights Organizations
- April 23<sup>rd</sup> Class Lecture: History of the Black Church, Education and Civil Rights Organizations
- April 30<sup>th</sup> Class Presentations: Students' responses to Martin Luther King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* and assessments of Race Relations in America today.
- May 7<sup>th</sup> Class Presentations: Students' responses to Martin Luther King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* and assessments of Race Relations in America today.

**SEMINARY POLICIES:** Click this link and read carefully as part of this syllabus contract: [http://seminary.erskine.edu/content\\_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSstudents.pdf](http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSstudents.pdf)