



**ERSKINE**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*For Christ and His Church*

## **Black Studies (PM 786)**

**Columbia SC. Summer 2010**

**June 7, 8, 9, 10, 11**

**9 AM-5 PM**

**3 Semester Hours**

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### **Course Description**

This course is an exploration of the historical foundation, cultural traditions, and social issues that defines Theology in the Black Church. This course will look at 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. It is the intent of this course 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 collaborating ministry with churches of different cultural and racial ethnicities. *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. As we study this course, students will see that Black Church 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 Erskine Seminary's goals is for graduates to 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 can only be explained by those who have experienced generational oppression. The course will provide the student with an opportunity to:

1. Develop 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. Analyze the historical progress of various Black Church denominations, their pastors, and ministries. We will discuss the progress and success experienced while facing various challenging cultural and social issues of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. Look at the effects of various institutions such as politics, education, and religion on race relation in America during the past 300 years.
4. Develop critical ministerial, exegetical and hermeneutical skills that will help students with the application of practical pastoral skills to congregations of diverse cultural and denominational origins.

### **Required Texts (2)**

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

Mason, Larry. *The Black Church at Its Best: A Man, His Story and the Black Church*. Saint Paul Press, 2009. ISBN 9780982530368

King, Martin L. "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" posted on Eden.

### **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 from Gospel Light , 2004. ISBN: 0-8307-8265-9.

## Class Schedule

1. June 7<sup>th</sup> Introduction to Class Participants & Course, Lectures: We will read and discuss Dr. Martin Luther King's, "Letter to the Birmingham Jail". This letter will be the primary "Thesis" of our class discussion.
2. June 8<sup>th</sup> Discussion of Evan's Lectures: After reading and hearing the class discussion on "We Have Been Believers," we will discuss the author's definition of theology, as it relates to the black experience.
3. June 8<sup>th</sup> Select a Negro Spiritual sung by an African American Artist; reflect on the theological message being presented in the music. Write a 1-2 page paper reflecting the message in the music, as it relates to your Christian experience. **(Due June 8<sup>th</sup>) 25%**
4. June 9<sup>th</sup> Write a 2 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 **(Due June 9<sup>th</sup>) 20%**
5. June 10<sup>th</sup> Select a major Civil Rights leader and write a 2 page biographical review of their significant contribution or involvement in the civil rights movement. **(Due June 10<sup>th</sup>) 20%**
6. June 11<sup>th</sup> "Letter to the Birmingham Jail" You are expected to make a presentation and to discuss your summary of the letter. You are expected to 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. This will be an oral presentation on the last day of class. **(Due June 11<sup>th</sup>) 25%**
7. **Class Attendance 10%**  
**You must attend all sessions of this course. No exceptions will be permitted.**

# ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES

**Drop/Add/Withdrawal:** Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

## **Office Hours**

My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you call or e-mail to schedule an appointment.

## **Required Textbooks**

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students’ and professors’ purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

## **Language about God and Humanity**

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church’s historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing “humanity” rather than “man” or “people” rather than “men”).

### **Conduct in Theological Discussions**

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

### **Incompletes**

The grade of “I” or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of “I” is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An “I” in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become “F.”

### **Official Seminary Class Attendance Policy:**

Class participation is considered an important part of the total educational experience at Erskine Seminary. Students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis and are responsible for the mastery of all materials required in the course. Each professor will indicate in writing the specific class attendance policy at the beginning of each course. In general, students are allowed up to three hours of unexcused absence without penalty. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course.

### **Policy Regarding Absences (SAMPLE FOR 4-SESSION CLASSES)**

Students are required to attend all class sessions. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course. Students who cannot attend the first course meeting should not register for the course or, if already registered, should drop the course and complete the drop/add form. (If the drop/add form is not completed and turned in to the Registrar, the student will still be charged for the course and will receive an “F” grade.) If students have to be absent for part or all of another class meeting

day, they are still responsible for all work missed and all work due. A student who misses as much as one full class day or its equivalent in late arrival or early departure should consult with the professor to see whether it is still possible to pass the course.

### **Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements**

All papers must be typed/processed (12-point type, double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the “Style and Form Standards” (Erskine Seminary). In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper’s cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements.

### **PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS**

If your course contains a paper or project required as a portfolio submission, star or highlight the project and inform students it is their responsibility to submit the graded and polished document to the appropriate administrative person for filing in their portfolio.