



ERSKINE
S E M I N A R Y

Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning

Black Studies (PM 786)

Erskine Seminary, Due West, SC.

Toney C. Parks, D. Min

Office Hours: Please call to schedule appointments 30 minutes prior to class meeting.

Office (864) 977-7122; Cell (864) 350-8409; Home (864)-268-2199 after 9 P.M

E-mail: tcpee@aol.com; or parks@erskine.edu

ETS FAX (864) 379-3171; P. O. Box 668, Due West, SC 29639

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

This course will meet Monday –Friday, June 9th -13th, 2008.

I. 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.

Elective 3 Hours.

II. 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 theology from the lens of a different cultural intellect. As we study 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 can only be explained by those who have experienced generational oppression. The course will attempt to focus on the following issues.

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 21st century.
3. Look at the effects of various institutions such as politics, education, and religion on race relations in America during the past 300 years.
4. Develop critical ministerial, exegetical and hermeneutical skills that will help students leave Erskine Theological Seminary and apply practical pastoral skills to congregations of diverse cultural and denominational origins.

III. Required Texts (2)

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

Martin Luther King Jr. “*Letter From the Birmingham Jail*” Copy can be found online at <http://www.kingpapers.org/>

You may purchase your text book from the following book stores: Fortress Press, Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com.

IV. Course Requirements & Expectations

Attendance – Your presence, preparation, and participation in all class sessions are assumed for a passing grade. Each student, therefore, is expected to arrive on time, including following class breaks, and to attend all class meetings for their duration. In the event that an absence is necessary—for whatever reason, including pastoral duties, work, or family responsibilities—the student is responsible for all assignments and all work done in class. Absences in excess of three (3) hours, may limit one’s final grade to no higher than a "B." Absences in excess of seven (7) hours will result in receiving no credit for the course. Any student who misses seven or more cumulative hours of class should contact the registrar in writing and withdraw from the course rather than fail it. Students who miss more than three hours of class are required to do extra work and are expected to take the initiative to secure the assignments from the professor. Failure to complete extra work by the final day of class will result in the reduction of one’s final course grade by one full letter grade.

Assignments – All assignments are due on the designated date. An absence does not negate this requirement unless prior arrangements have been made. Late work will be accepted up to one week after the assignment is due but will receive a penalty of up to one letter grade. All make-up work is due by the last day of class. Written work should conform to Erskine Seminary's "Style and Form Standards for Master's Level Programs." Essential guidelines to assist in formatting papers are available from the professor. Do NOT submit work in folders; simply supply a cover/title sheet and staple pages (numbered!) together. Give careful attention to spelling, grammar, syntax, style, and

form; these items are considered in grading. Proofread all papers before submission! Permission **may** be granted for one below average paper (< C) to be re-done one time to improve one's grade (limited to a maximum of a "B+"). This option does not exist for any papers turned in the final day of class.

Inclusive Language – The seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. It is the mark of a good communicator to build bridges rather than barriers; therefore, such language should be used in all written work and oral presentations. The Seminary Catalog stands as an example of recommended usage.

Other Seminary Policies – Students should familiarize themselves with, and abide by, policies regarding plagiarism, the payment of accounts, the granting of an "Incomplete," library privileges, etc. as set forth in the Erskine Theological Seminary Catalog and the Student Handbook. NOTE: Students guilty of plagiarism may receive a failing grade for the entire course with a notation of such in their permanent academic record!

NOTE: Once you have completed, signed, and submitted your registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a BINDING CONTRACT, and your billing will be based upon this registration. If you decide not to take this class, you must complete a “drop/add” form with the appropriate signatures. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in receiving a grade of “F” for the course and full tuition charges will apply. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE TO THIS POLICY.**

To tape a lecture the student must acquire my signature on the proper form. You are not authorized to audio/video tape my lectures without written permission.

All papers are to be turned in at the beginning of class. ***All Late papers will be penalized one letter grade***

V. Guidelines/Requirements for Assignments:

1) *We have Been Believers: An African –American Systematic Theology*. Before beginning to read, ask God to help you see and understand the true theology of the Black Church. As you read, seek to understand the history, culture and worship styles of African American congregants. Seek to understand to what extent Systematic Theology plays a role in the life and history of the Black Church. Can the spiritual passion of the Black Church be protected from the infiltration of postmodernism? Seek to reflect on these thoughts as you read, and be prepared to discuss during class.

2) “Martin Luther King “Letter From the Birmingham Jail”. Before beginning to read, ask God to help you see how race relations have progressed through the 21st century, and how the religious, social, economic and political ideologies have changed over the last forty years. Describe the state of America today in relation to the climate that existed at the time of Dr. Martin Luther King’s letter. As you read this letter, look at the different issues presented, and notice the various theological and biblical themes used to describe the plight of America during this period of social unrest. Notice the imagery and

passionate use of the gospel to respond to his critics. After you have read the letter several times, you are to write a response to this letter based on your view of the progress that has been made in America since this letter was written. Conclude your response by assessing the state of race relations in 2008 verses the conditions stated in the Letter from the Birmingham Jail in 1963. What ministries or methods do you plan to use to ensure equality and justice for all? This paper is to be a critical response to the social injustices that affect all citizens living America. Be prepared to discuss your reasoning during our last class period. **(Due June 13th)**

3) ***Demonstration of Ministry Skills*** - Working in assigned small groups as well as the larger classroom setting, students will demonstrate their ability to understand cultural diversity among different denominations. Class discussion will focus on building an understanding of the tradition behind passionate worship practices of the Black Church. Each student is expected to walk away with a theological view that helps him/her understand the spiritual wounds that affect the life of the Black Church worship style.

VI. Course Grading

Regular attendance and appropriate, active participation in class are assumed for a passing grade. Failing to attend class and actively participate will affect one's final grade. Otherwise, the final grade will be calculated on the standard seminary scale as follows:

Reports (5), Skill Demonstration and in-class assignments, and Final Presentation

- Attendance 10%
- Liberation (Black) theology Paper 15% (1-3 pages)
- Biography (African American Pastor) 15% (1-3 pages)
- Negro Spiritual (Reflection) 15% (1-3 pages)
- Civil Rights Events 15% (1-3 pages)
- Letter from Birmingham Jail (Reflection Paper and Presentation) 30% (5-8 pages)

VII. Class Schedule

June 9th - Introduction to Class Participants and Course, Lectures

Black Church Historical Overview, Discussion of Evans' textbook, Class Lectures, Define Liberation or Black Theology **(Due June 10th)**

June 10th - Discuss Martin Luther King's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail"

Research a significant African American pastor and the impact they played in the history of religion, race, economic, or political change. (Must be approved by Professor) **(Due June 11th)**

June 11th – Lectures on "We have Been Believers" Movie, Eyes On The Prize

Discuss African American Pastors (Be prepared to discuss in class)

Select a "Negro Spiritual Song" (Must be approved by Professor)

- Identify the Artist, Biblical theme, scripture and or narrative passage/s throughout the song. Bring your selection to class and be prepared to present your findings. As you listen to the song notice the passion of the artist, and reflect on the song's meaning and significance, based on your relationship to Christ. **(Due June 12th)**

June 12th – “*Historical Civil Rights Event*” (Must be approved by Professor)

- Report on an important historical event that occurred in American History during the Civil Rights movement. Research the event, the nature of the event, the key player/s and the outcome. To be turned in at the beginning of class. **(Due June 13th)**

June 13th -*Presentation of MLK reflection papers.*

- This paper is to be presented on the last day of class. You are to present your position as outlined in “Assignment Section 2”. You are to present a written reflection paper and a summary sheet to be given to your class mates during your presentation. ***Your presentation will be your final grade.***