

Online: AFA 3357 Online/ Civil Rights and Religion Spring 2025

For Cross Listing

Dr. Rik Stevenson-Instructor

Contact Information:

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Office Hours :Tues. & Thurs.
16:00-1730 or via zoom appt.

Class Meeting Times:
Online

Course Description:

Examination of the role of religion in the African American Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s. No pillar of the African American community has been more central to its history, identity, and social justice vision than the “Black Church.”¹ This course examines the centrality of religious activists, organizations, institutions, intellectuals, clergy, and laypeople to the work of civil rights activism in twentieth-century United States history. Students will explore/analyze the theologies of African American Protestants, liberal religious thinkers, and Gandhi’s influence on nonviolence Byard Rustin, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the SCLC’s challenge against racial segregation, violence, and disfranchisement in American politics and society. In-class discussions encourage students to engage the religious sermons, speeches, memoirs, music, and visual protest strategies of movement. Other noted activists like, Bishop Richard Allen, Jerena Lee, Pauli Murray, John Robert Lewis, and The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker will be discussed as those who also risked their lives pursuing a nonviolent end to America’s violent Jim Crow reality.

Modules I, II and III focus on the historical backdrop and theological foundations of civil rights work for twentieth-century religious activists. Module IV shifts the course focus to the mid-century period of civil rights activism, 1955-1968. The semester will culminate with reflections on the legacies of religious activism for civil rights causes and the need for further and continued engagement.

Note: This syllabus is a general outline of the course, but it is subject to change. I will let you know if modifications are made.

Course Objectives

Our main objective is to help students gain an increased awareness of the most important issues facing the Black church in America. One of the objectives is to emphasize the importance of religion as an intimate aspect of African existence, on the continent of Africa and in the American context. We will refute the notion that African culture was lost during the Transatlantic Trade and illuminate the idea that African beliefs still lived beneath visible Christianity.”² The African does not separate their secular and religious views from their daily lives thus supporting the notion that freedom, liberty and

¹ Gates Jr., Henry Louis, The Black Church: This is our story This is our Song: An American History (p. 1). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² Mitchell, Henry H.. Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

justice was always the goal of the enslaved and pseudo-freed African American. Students will realize that the church and other black motivated religious views were the primary solution to their political and civic issues. Finally course's objectives to offer an alternative view of the traditional narratives of the Black religious and civic experience that neglects to emphasize the role of political and economic disenfranchisement.

General Education Requirements and Objectives: (H) (WR).

The course fulfills the General Education requirements for the humanities (H) and diversity (D). It also fulfills the Gordon Rule 6 requirement. This means that the major writing assignments will amount to a total of 6,000 words, and that students will receive feedback on their research proposals so that they can improve their writing skills.

Upon completing the course, students will:

- Be able to describe and articulate the significance of this body of knowledge particularly as it relates to radicalization and other forms of difference and social inequality that operate in conjunction with processes of race making.
- Explain how the Black church religious experience challenged slavery, reconstruction, civil rights and social constructions of ethnicity/race and gender became a safe place that helped to shape today's social, civic and cultural environment.
- To provide students with a basic introduction to the African American religious connection to social discourse.
- Be able to name some of the key personalities who have shaped the Civil Rights Movement through their religious views.
- Explain how historical mis-information affects society and culture, by examining primary sources and secondary sources, for the purposes of comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation.
- Analyze some of the social, cultural, political, and economic issues that have shaped the African American religious experience in North America.
- Evaluate historical events through the examination of various human endeavors, such as marches, sermons, speeches and non-violent civic action.
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts common in discourse about the African American religious experience.
- Enhance their critical analysis and research skills.

Required Texts:

Gates, Henry, Louis, *The Black Church: This is Our Story This is Our Song: An American History*. Articles will be assigned throughout the semester as well. Students will be expected to access those readings online or using the UF library catalog.

Course Assignments and Assessments:

All courses assignments have firm deadlines for submissions. This includes exams, and research paper submission dates. While most deadlines are 11:59 pm, **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUBMIT WORK AS YOU RISK NOT HAVING YOUR WORK PROPERLY SUBMITTED FOR CREDIT.**

Discussion Posts-(20%): Each student is expected to participate in course discussions. You are expected to reply and respond to discussion questions assigned to each module. There are multiple required posts please check Canvas regularly; each post must be a minimum of 150 words in length. (Due:Varies by module)

Please note responses are graded based on:

Historical content incorporated in one's posts

Ability to critically engage the material & support one's arguments with facts

Response to at least TWO of your classmates' discussion posts

Research proposal & paper (35%):

1. Proposal - 15% Select a topic and ask a research question related to some aspect of the African American religious and political experience. The proposal must include a.) tentative title, b.) a clear research question, c.) an outline, d.) bibliography with no fewer than six references – **only scholarly sources and journal articles will be accepted.**(Please **DO NOT** site Wikipedia.)

The finished product should consist of 300-600 words. (You may change your topic but you must submit a new proposal and get clearance from the instructor) **(Due: 2/3/25)**

2. Research Paper Presentation- 20%: Beginning on,(**Dates 2/10/25**) each student must give an approximately 6-8 minute video power-point presentation. In the presentation, describe your research topic, explain its significance to the discipline of African American Studies, provide a literature review, and explain the methods you used to acquire and analyze your sources. We will go in alphabetical order and you will receive a zero if you are not prepared to give your presentation when your name is called. There will be three presentations per class until all have presented. **(Date: TBA)**

Midterm- (15%) The midterm will test your knowledge of various course lectures, readings and videos as we progress through the semester. (Due: TBA)

Learning from the past: Implementing the Town and Gown Concept (20%) (1500-1800 words)

One of the missions of AFA is to commit itself to its community. In this project select a concept, idea or an interesting event from the lectures, videos or reading and share how it could be or should be implemented in class for today. The paper should thoroughly exam one of the events we've encountered and explain why knowing this information it is still relevant for the liberation of Black people and Black youth in particular.

(Due: 3/10/25)

Final Exam- (15%) Exam will assess your knowledge of the material engaged over the semester.

(Due: TBA)

Note: More specific guidelines for writing assignments will be given as their due dates approach.

Make-up exams will be permitted ONLY at the instructor's discretion

Grading Scale

94-100=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64-66=D, 60-63=D-, Below 60 = E.

Course Policies (Policies adapted from <http://ufonline.ufl.edu/academics/>)

You should expect to devote as much time to this class as traditional on-campus students spend on their course work. This means that in addition to time spent on Canvas participating in online activities, students should expect to spend at least 3 hours of study time per credit hour per week. This includes reading materials (textbooks, eTexts, etc.), problem sets, researching and writing papers, and other assignments from your course instructor.

There are also documentaries and films that accompany each weekly module. It is imperative that you view this material as students will be tested on this information too.

Attendance Policy: After three unexcused classes are missed, you will not receive the percentage points for class participation (and will not have the option of submitting an optional paper). It is your responsibility to be on time before I complete the attendance roster which begins at the beginning of each class session. Also, try to get to class on time. The policy for missed work in this class is consistent with the university's policy (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>).

Communication: Contact me through Canvas. I do my best to respond to your comments/emails in a timely manner during business hours (evenings are excluded). **Allow 24 hours** during the week for a response to course concerns/emails. ***Weekends, I do not check email, so it is imperative that you submit any questions to me before noon on Fridays.*** I will also set-up a Groupme for the class as well.

Written work format and submission:

All assignments should be

Written in standard English and demonstrate competence of grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph structure

Typed, double-spaced with Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1" margins

Information with your name, date, and course should be in the top corner, single-spaced, on the first page only or on a cover page

All work must be properly documented. Students may use APA, MLA, or Turabian.

I will provide feedback on all written assignments; these comments are intended to strengthen your writing skills.

They should be taken as constructive feedback, as I am evaluating clarity, content, structure, and sources.

Five Short Papers

Write a two page paper on the five topics below. In the paper summarize the main points the paper.

The first paper is due on 1/17//2025. Reverend Absalom Jones)

The second paper is due 1/31/2025. Jerena Lee

The third paper is due on 2/14/2025. Zilpha Elaw

The fourth paper is due on 3/5//2025. Daniel Alexander Payne

The Fifth paper is due 3/23/2025. Julia A.J.Foote

Gordon Rule: “The Writing Requirement (Gordon Rule) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.” This is a Gordon Rule course with a 4000-word minimum writing requirement. Your writing will be evaluated and you will receive feedback on assignments that are intended to fulfill this writing requirement. You will be evaluated based on grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.

According to University policy, a C- will not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule or College Basic Distribution credit.

Policy on late/make-up work: Given the brevity of the term and the fact that all assignments are known well in advance, **LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED UNLESS THERE ARE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** (i.e. death of a close family member or hospitalization). Documentation will be required to prove those circumstances.

Academic Honesty: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Extra Credit Policy: Extra Credit opportunities are offered during the semester at the instructor’s discretion. Reference course modules for specific activities. All extra points earned will be added to a grade the lecturer selects at the end of the term.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access

GatorEvals

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens,

and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.a.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Campus Resources:

- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Course Expectations and Etiquette:

Courteous and appropriate behavior is expected. Therefore, please be mindful that we are dealing with material that may be sensitive in terms of race, gender, class, sexuality, violence, and/or political perspective.

By remaining enrolled in the course, you are agreeing to complete all assignments and participate during discussions. **PLEASE KEEP THE DIALOG RESPECTFUL AND RELEVANT.** I encourage students to keep an open mind, and I expect you to **COMMUNICATE YOUR IDEAS WITHOUT HARSHLY OFFENDING YOUR PEERS. ALL ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES WILL BE RESPECTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR AND BY ALL CLASS MEMBERS AT ALL TIMES.**

Course Outline

Note: Articles, documentaries, and films may accompany a weekly module.
Consult the Canvas Modules for the exact titles.

Module/Week 1 January 13th-

Course Overview: Will be a video introduction done by Dr. Stevenson.

Introduction to Religion and Civil Rights

Read Chapter 1 of Gates Jr., Henry Louis, *The Black Church: This is our story This is our Song: An American History*

Module/Week 2 January 20th

Faith that has been bathed in Prayer: Chapter 1 of Gates: *The Freedom Faith*

Lecture: *The role of prayer in the church and the lives of the faithful.*

Module/Week 3 January 27th

Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings* Chapter 2: Slave Population and Conversions: The Silent Years of 1619-1750.

Lecture: The Black Church, The Invisible Institution.

Module/Week 4 February 3rd Henry Louis Gates: Chapter 2 *A Nation within a Nation:*

Lecture: How the Black Church fits within a segregated society.

Module/Week 5 February 10th Read Chapter 4 of Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings:*

Trends Impacting the Early Black Churches up to 1900

Lecture: Internal Struggles, with class, caste inside Northern and Southern Churches.

Module/Week 6 February 17th Henry Louis Gates: Chapter 3: *God Will Make A Way.*

	Lecture: The Black Preacher's role as leaders towards Social Justice and Civil Rights.
Module/Week 7	February 24th Henry Louis Gates, Chapter 4: Crisis of Faith. Lecture: The Paradox of Christianity: The oppressors religion becomes the religion of liberation.
Module/Week 8	March 3rd Henry Mitchell, Chapter 5: The Spread of the African American Churches, 1801-1840 Lecture: The proliferation of churches in the midst of poverty, fear and the need for spiritual solace.
Module/Week 9	March 10th Henry Mitchell, Chapter 6: African American Church Expansion, 1841-1865 and Denomination Bodies. Lecture: How oppression helped Black Church growth.
Module/Week 10	March 17th Henry Mitchell Black Church Beginnings, Chapter 7 Social Activism in the Early Black Church
Module/Week 11	March 24th Review of previous 10 weeks of lectures and readings.
Module/Week 12	March 31st Henry Mitchell: Chapter 8 African American Schools and Churches; New Roles in Reconstruction.
Module/Week 13	April 7th Any late assignments or missed assignment due.
Module/Week 14	April 14th Research Papers are due
Module/Week 15	April 21st Final Exam Prep
Module/Week 16	April 28th Finals Week

Final Exam:

Due by 11:59 pm on Tuesday on April 28th

Note: Students will be able to access the exam beginning on April 28th