

McCormick Theological Seminary

Redemption’s Call: Race, Reparations and The Church

Course Syllabus – Summer 2022

Iva E. Carruthers, PhD – Faculty godiva@orita.org

Antonia R. Coleman, MDiv – EA acoleman@mccormick.edu

“While no amount of gold could provide adequate compensation for the exploitation of the Negro American down through the centuries, a price could be place on unpaid wages.”

- Dr. Martin L. King (Why We Can’t Wait, 1968)

INTRODUCTION

And decades before that, in 1894, the Mother of the Reparations Movement, Ms. Callie House, and Rev. Isiah H. Dickerson founded the National Ex-Slave and Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association.

Through centuries, the demands for and resistance to reparations have persisted. To be sure, the evidence is overwhelming- the Euro-Western global slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean was a crime against humanity by any definition. Its transgenerational impact and consequences are evident by every measurement of quality of life on the continent and throughout the Diaspora. And now, in the shadow of Dr. King’s prophetic witness, reparations for people of African descent in the United States have hit their highest mark of potential realization.

“Reparations is a process to remember, repair, restore, rejoin, replenish, set right, make amends and reconcile. And always, true reparations is a matter of justice.” (Carruthers) **Reparations can never be reduced just to monetary terms.** To do so makes a mockery of the real significance of reparations as an end in the process of justice, human atonement, and redemption. And if there is one watchtower from which the case for reparations ought to be seen and heard, it is from the vantage point of the Church. Of its own soul and vital force, the Church is called to raise up and repair the breach – to be a restorer of justice. The perspective and actions of “the Church” are consequential.

There are at least three major reasons why the Church and its believers must interrogate themselves in the discourse on reparations: (1) The Church has blood on its hands by its protracted legitimation, culpability, and participation in the trading of human cargo. (2) The Church purports to represent the voice of God in the human community. (3) The consequences of the Church’s continued silence in the moment of Kairos – God’s time and opportunity – contribute to the undoing of itself.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the historical trajectory outlining the case for and demand for reparations and the role of religious institutions, the church, and voices of moral agency in its evolution. In everything, there is a season, including a due season. In the U.S., we now see cities, states, institutions of higher education, and denominations publicly entertaining processes of reparatory justice.

COURSE OUTCOMES

With both a national and global lens, upon completion of the course, students will be able to think critically, construct theological meaning using Christian traditions, exhibit cross-cultural competence, and communicate effectively on:

- What are basic tenets/principles/constructs that frame reparatory justice/reparations in a socio-political-economic sense?
- What are basic theological tenets/principles/constructs that frame reparatory justice/reparations from an OT and NT perspective?
- What have been the concrete histories of reparations, focusing on the U.S?
- Why does this issue, as it relates to people of African descent, especially those in the Diaspora, get such resistance in Euro-American centers of power?
- What compels and commands people of African descent to continue to demand reparatory justice and reparations in both theological and sociological contexts?
- What are we learning from the current active moves of stakeholders and case studies of actual on-the-ground initiatives?

PEDAGOGICAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Please consider the course and your participation as an opportunity to engage in a learning community with learning goals as inquiry and learning as knowledge creation.

All students should commit to being present for scheduled class days unless otherwise notified. Peer-to-peer learning and engagement are a part of the inquiry process and completion of group assignments. Alexandria will house some of the required articles/chapters to be read and other ancillary materials.

The following outline frames the learning pillars:

1. Redemption’s Call to the Church: What are reparations? The Case for and Against
2. The Harm Done: Undoing Myths – Facts vs. Fiction (Doctrine of Discovery, Papal Bulls, Global Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade System)
3. Theological Accounting (Text, Interpretation, and Praxis)
4. Sociological Consequences (Trans generationally mapping the Harm and Trauma -e.g., Family structures, Gender-based Violence, Black Codes, Lynchings, Land Theft, Wealth and Income Degradation, Health Disparities, Environmental Ecosystem Injustice, Debts of African States)
5. Mapping the Demands of the Reparations Movement, legally and sociologically, and Models of Remedy – Real and Envisioned with Theological Imagination

KEY ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS

As a learning community engaged in knowledge creation, using shared inquiry, discovery, and storytelling processes, we will collectively identify and graph the history of U.S. reparations and class subsidies with these questions guiding our excavation of each case study: Reparations given to whom? For what? What was the nature of acknowledgment/apology? We will also collectively share information on the role of the church/religious institutional expression of harm done to people of African descent and indigenous communities.

DUE JUNE 6, 2022

- Prepare a commentary on Remembrance – Towards Righteousness and Reparations (Carruthers, The Ecumenical Journal, World Council of Churches, 2020) **2pp max**
- Select an OT AND NT scripture related to what you believe speaks to the process of reparatory justice and redemption, with a written exegesis and eisegesis. **2pp max**
- Viewed the following uploaded videos and prepared for full engagement:
 - Elaine, AR Massacre, the Tulsa Massacre/Destruction of Black Wall Street
 - Lecture by Sir Hillary Beckles, economist, Chancellor University of West Indies, and chair of CARICOM Reparations Commission
 - Dr. Iva Carruthers at UN/WCC Forum on Afrophobia
 - Previous course recordings and lectures
 - Odyssey Impact Video and Faith Guide

Throughout the class, each student is expected to complete the following additional assignments:

DUE JUNE 30, 2022

- A personal narrative of a family genealogy on how, when, and where you entered the US and how you characterize your family’s journey as individual/collective harm and beneficial gain. **2pp max** [states are now banning the teaching of “critical race theory” and have attempted to mandate educational textbook publishers convey that people of African descent are identified as “immigrants for agricultural work.”]
- Submit a briefly abstracted/annotated bibliography of **5-7 entries** at the intersection of Reparations, Christianity/Church/Religious Histories (articles, books, videos, websites). You can use this site as an example [Reparations Syllabus](#).
- Paper/Project **8-10pp max** – An Apologia on Reparations (For or Against) that includes:
 - a. A theological reflection.
 - b. A transgenerational sociological analysis of the consequences of the global Manifest Destiny Proclamations and the Transatlantic Slave Trade System upon the development of “institutional life, systems and the soul of America.”
 - c. A forward-looking envisioning of how to effect processes of reparatory justice and reparations towards the dismantling of systems of white racism and hegemony.
 - d. Include exhibits to support your Apologia with 3-5 social media infographics, Instagram posts, and memes to convey your point of view. **2pp max**

COMMUNAL CIRCLE ACTIVITIES:

Currently being reimaged...stay tuned

COURSE POLICIES AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Class Dates & Times

Monday, June 6, 2022, 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Friday, June 10, 2022, 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Saturday, June 11, 2022, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Classes will meet at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor office, located at 4445 S. King Dr. for each session. An accessible parking lot is available and there is easy public transportation access.

Attendance

Regular participation is expected. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to make a seminar, please contact me.

Late Assignments

Assignments handed in after 11:59 p.m. on their due dates will be docked one-third of a letter grade. That is to say: a project handed in at 12:00 a.m. the following day will be docked from an A to an A-, and so on down the line. The letter grade will go down by one-third for each added day that it is late.

Academic Integrity

Please be sure that you are familiar with McCormick’s statement on academic integrity:

<https://mccormick.edu/content/academic-and-personal-integrity>

Technology use

Select readings and all writing prompts will be posted on Alexandria. You will need to log in with your McCormick username and Password. You should plan to use the course site intermittently.

Accommodations

Please let me know if you believe you may need any unique accommodation when attending class or completing an assignment. I will be sure to connect you with the appropriate offices at McCormick so that we will be able to arrange accommodations as quickly as possible.

REQUIRED READINGS:

My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations, Berry

Chapter 4 Voices of Ex-Slaves pp 93-121

Chapter 8 Jailed for Justice pp 188 – 211

Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance, Villanueva

Chapter 1 Stolen and sold, pp 17-35

Chapter 7 and Conclusion Repair and Conclusion, pp 159-181

Should America Pay? Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations, Winbush

Chapter 1 The African American Warrant for Reparations – The Crime of European Enslavement of Africans and Its Consequences Molefi Kete Asante pp 3-13

The Debt What America Owes to Blacks, Randall Robinson

Chapter 7 The Cost of Ignoring the Race Problem in America pp 161 – 178 CHPT 7 **The Atlantic**, June 2014 **Ta-Nehisi Coates** The Case for Reparations,

Reconciliation and Reparation: Preaching Economic Justice, Joseph Evans 2018

Chapter 4 The Word of Reconciliation Reconsidered: Matthew 5-7, 2 Corinthians 5: 16- 20, and Crating a New Consciousness (63-79)

Chapter 5 Passover, Our Collective Liberation Narrative Exodus 12, Luke 19: 1-10, and Shaping a Claim for Justice (91-110)

Chapter 6 Fallible Humanity: The Double Consciousness of Thomas Jefferson (111-134)

Britain's Black Debt, Hilary McD. Beckles 2013

Chapter 8 Dividends from the Devil: Church of England Chattels in Barbados pp109-120 (11)

Chapter 6 Prostituting Enslaved Caribbean Women 76-81 (5)

Chapter 11 Twenty Million Pounds: Slave Owners' Reparations 143 – 162 (19)

Chapter 12 The Case for Reparations 163- 171 (8)

Epigenetics: The Controversial Science Behind Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Janell Ross, March 20, 14, National Journal, (7)

Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism, Allan Boesak and Curtiss DeYoung, 2012 (Total 36pp)

Chapter 7 When Prophets Are Silenced, Injustice Prevails 115-130 (15)

Additional Pre-reading

Accra Confession (3)

Belhar Confession (5)

What Does the Lord Require? World Alliances of Reformed Churches (19)

Council of World Missions Confession 2020

The Church & Reparations: African American Perspectives, Carruthers, Durban 2001

THE EVALUATION GUIDELINES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Pre-class assignments’ completion (15%)
2. Participation in communal learning circle (15%)
3. Final Paper (30%)
4. Evidence of off-line engagement with readings as assigned and reflected by class participation and other written assignments (30%)
5. Self-evaluation Submission (10%)

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Section currently being reimagined...stay tuned

PRAXIS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION (BONUS)

Redemption’s Call: With Vision, By Faith, Through Action Listening Voyage

We will share in the experience and beauty of ecumenical unity as we explore:

- Practice mutual learning alongside a South African Delegation led by Dr. Allan Boesak and Dean Jerry Pillay along with Dr. Iva Carruthers and Dr. David Daniels.
- Why the Church and its believers must interrogate themselves in the discourse on reparations: (1) The Church has blood on its hands by its protracted legitimization, culpability, and participation in trading human cargo. (2) The Church purports to represent the voice of God in the human community. (3) The consequences of the Church’s continued silence in the moment of Kairos – God’s time and opportunity – contribute to the undoing of itself.
- Reflect upon the theology and work of the church in building reparatory models of praxis in the USA and SA.
- Develop ideas of ministry in each context.
- Creation of a travel journal is encouraged but not required.

Cost: TBD (**excluding** tuition)

Date: July 26-31, 2022

Preliminary Plans:

- Arrive in Atlanta, GA, to greet the SA delegation.
- Travel to Montgomery, AL, for a day and a half to visit the Equal Justice Institute.
- Return to Atlanta, GA, for worship at Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Return to Chicago, IL

Please note that this is an add-on to the current class and is not required for current students registered as of May 5, 2022. Students who registered before May 5, 2022, and those wishing not to take the voyage will still have full experiential access to the course.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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