Course Title: Faith and Justice in Freedom Narratives:
Lessons in Ethics from the Slave Quarters

Course Description:
This course is an interdisciplinary inquiry into the moral issues related to enslaved Africans who worked as chattel property in the economies of North America. We will examine theological expressions of faith and ethical issues of justice confronting the church community from the time of slavocracy to the present, especially how religion both empowered and disenfranchised African Americans in the struggle to actualize sacred embodiment.

Objectives:

a) to examine theological themes and contemporary ethical issues in the freedom narratives of enslaved African Americans;

b) to interrogate moral agency in a variety of antebellum contexts regarding “how are we to live and for what;”

c) to think creatively about the ways people of faith understand character, consequences, and obligations in relations to “a moral universe encompassing the whole community of life;”

d) to become knowledgeable of literature in the field;

e) to demonstrate facility in the skills of argumentation in order to become conversant with theological language so that members of contemporary confessing communities can live as authentic disciples in relation to the church’s mission and the meaning of the Gospel.

Requirements and Procedures:

- Regular class attendance and reading that is complete, careful and on schedule are essential for this seminar.

- To help promote lively, meaningful exchange, everyone is required to complete the five steps in writing the Epistolary Journal Entry, beginning with Tuesday, June 23, 2015, and each class session thereafter.

- In the mornings, 8:45 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., devotion leaders will open with a centering litany, prayer, etc., followed by seminar participants watching a clip from a slave documentary that jump-starts a conscientization free-write in the form of a cinquain:

  Guidelines for writing a cinquain:
  
  Line 1: Title – one word – a noun
  Line 2: two words that describe the noun – two adjectives
  Line 3: three action words or an active phrase about the title
  Line 4: describe a feeling about the title – four words
  Line 5: one word – a synonym for the title noun
• 9:45 to 10 a.m. Break
• Next, from 10 – 11 a.m., discussion facilitators will circulate photocopies of their Epistolary Journal Entry and walk us through their entries. Colleagues will share written feedback/evaluation with each facilitator.
• 11 to 11:30 Lecture by Professor
• 11:30 to 11:45 Sending Forth

Criteria for Evaluation:
--- clarity of oral and written presentation
--- completion of assignments on the due dates
--- contribution to the group process of inquiry and discussion
--- creativity, critical judgment, and imagination

Guidelines for Epistolary Journal Writing (due: each morning at 8:45 a.m.)
The purpose of epistolary journaling is to reflect upon, learn from, and discover patterns of theoethical meaning in our experiences as embodied social-selves.

Step 1: Conscientization: For each class session, write a letter to a friend with whom you have covenanted. Write quickly (3-5 minutes) your first reaction to the require reading in The Price of a Child by Lorene Cary for week #1 and in the novel, The Infamous Rosalie for week #2. Write without critical constraint; do not edit. In other words, write in free-style your “felt sense” of the values, attitudes, habits, ideas, expectations, questions and/or experiences you bring to today’s reading. When you finish your free-style writing, edit your reflections. (maximum 15 points)

Step 2: Emancipatory Historiography: Next, answer the designated question in accordance with the due date in the syllabus. (maximum 40 points)

Step 3: Theological Resource: As succinctly as possible, discuss a sentence in the required reading in Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives that surprises you, excites you, disturbs you, and/or causes you to stumble. In relations to this quotation, identify an ethical dilemma or moral question you genuinely would like to research. Articulate your theoethical problem in the rhetorical format of the Anatomy of the Idea (WHAT/ HOW/ WHY and WHY CRISIS (maximum 25 points)

Step 4: Norm Clarification: Consider the titles listed in the background and supplementary reading. Select a title that may shed light on your future research topic, enabling you to unmask slavocracy, so that new understanding might be revealed regarding codes of ethics in freedom narratives.(maximum 10 points)

Step 5: Annunciation and Celebration: Create a ritual of annunciation and celebration (i.e. painting, poetry, drawing, textile art, photography, music, sculpture, fiction, essay, political cartoon, poster, banner, drama, dance, cinquain, etc.) that uncovers the lost voice of an
enslaved woman, man, or child. (10 points)

Everyone should make two copies of each epistolary journal entry, one for a seminar colleague or a friend via cyberspace or snail-mail who has covenanted to read and respond to your entries, and a PDF copy emailed to the professor’s file, kcannon@upsem.edu. The reader of the epistolary journal entry should write her/his response to your reflections. The responses can include questions, ideas you liked, disagreements, analogies to other readings, bibliographical suggestions, etc.

Required Textbooks (4)
   ISBN: 978-0679744672
2. Crew, Spencer, Cynthia Goodman, and Henry L. Gates, Jr., *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives* (Bullfinch 2003, hardcover)
   ISBN: 978-0821228425
   ISBN: 978-0195174120
4. Touillot, Evelyne. *The Infamous Rosalie.* Foreword by Edwidge Danticat, Translated by Marjorie Attignol Salvodon (Univ. of Nebraska Pr., 2013, paperback)
   ISBN: 978-0803240261

Prerequisite Books: (2)
   ISBN: 978-1400033416
2. Wilder, Craig Steven. *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (Bloomsbury Pr., rpt. 2014)
   ISBN: 978-1608194025

Highly Recommended Resources
   ISBN: 978-0465002962
4. *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* can now be found at the Library of Congress. The e-book that showcases all of the interviews can be found at

http://thegrio.com/2015/02/01/slavery-portraits-library-of-congress/#s:freed01
SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

6/22  Monday  Introduction to Content and Process of Seminar

6/23 Tuesday 8:30 a.m. – “Bodiless Souls and Soulless Bodies”

Leader of Devotion _________________________________________________________
Facilitator(s) ____________________________________________________________

Required Reading:

Q: Using the playwriting format, write a dialogue between Albert J. Raboteau, a character in The Price of a Child, and you on the topic, The African Diaspora. Make certain that the
conversation you construct requires you to draw upon at least three insights learned from each of the required readings.

Supplementary Texts

6/24 Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Structural Sin and Radicalized Freedom
Leader of Devotion __________________________________________________
Facilitator(s)________________________________________________________________________

Required Reading:


Q: Write a persuasive letter about Death of the Gods from the point of view of one the following persons: 1) an enslaved person who is spirit-possessed 2) an itinerant evangelist 3) Melvin J. Herskovits 4) E. Franklin Frazier 5) Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne 6) Priestess Marie Laveau 7) a free African 8) Harriet Jacob, 9) a child on the plantation or 10) a minister in your faith tradition. In a paragraph or two, explain why the angle of this letter might be written more effectively from one of the other person’s points of view.

Supplementary Texts

Alterning Malestream Knowledge about God and Self


Leader of Devotion ________________________________________________________
Facilitator(s) _____________________________________________________________

Required Reading:

Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South. pp. 95 – 150; The Price of a Child (novel), pp. 175-244; and Unchained Memories, pp. 36 – 51.

Q: Imagine that you are a plantation catechist, denominational executive, a missionary, a runaway slave, the wife of the slaveholder, an agent for the Propagation of the Gospel, a revivalist preacher, or an enslaved teenager. Incorporating details in the readings that stand out particularly for you along with your creative imagination, explain chattel slavery and faith formation to your local youth group.

Supplementary Texts


**6/26** Friday 8:30 a.m  
**Doing Justice: “Changing Socio-Cultural and Communal-Religious Structures of Domination and Exploitation”**


**Leader of Devotion ___________________________**

**Facilitators(s) __________________________________________**

**Required Reading:**  

**Q:** Taking examples from today’s readings, what do you think that we lose and gain based on the distinguishing features between African American and European American socio-cultural attitudes, as well as distinguishing features between female and male participating in and/or resisting *The Rule of Gospel Order*?
Supplementary Texts


6/29 Monday 8:30 a.m. Moving from Is to Ought – Choice and Agency in Emancipatory Ministries

Leader of Devotion
Facilitator(s)

Required Reading:
Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South, pp. 211-266; The Infamous Rosalie (a novel) pp.1-43; and Unchained Memories, pp. 67 – 85.

Q: In a careful thought-out opening paragraph, sum up what you believe are the essential characteristics of religious life in the slave community. Next, identify the ethical values held by enslaved Africans. In a final paragraph, analyze the significance of African values embedded in the novel, The Infamous Rosalie for your faith community in the 21st century.

Supplementary Texts
Hucks, Tracey E. Yoruba Traditions and African American Religious Nationalism (Univ. of New Mexico Pr., 2012).
Washington, James M. Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power. Macon,

6/30 Tuesday 8:30 a.m. **Diasporic Circles of Sacredness**


Leader of Devotion __________________________________________________________
Facilitator(s) ______________________________________________________________

Required Reading:
Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South, pp. 266-288; The Infamous Rosalie (a novel) pp.44-103; and Unchained Memories, pp.87 – 101.

Q: Based on your understanding of the required readings, write a brief account of a plantation conversion experience from two quite different, contrasting points of view, the enslaver and the enslaved. Then summarize what you understand about conjuring, both as a power to destroy and also as a power to heal.

**Supplementary Reading**


7/1 Wednesday 8:30 a.m. **The Spiritual Evolution of Soul Power**


Leader of Devotion _______________________________________

Initiator(s) __________________________________________________________

Required Reading:


Q: Based on your assessment of *religion, rebellion and docility*, summarize the point of view of *Frederick Douglass, Charles Ball, Emily Burke, John Brown, William Wells Brown, Charles Colcock Jones, William Grimes, Irving Lowery, or Candance Richardson and* a character in *The Infamous Rosalie*. 

12
Supplementary Texts

7/2    Thursday 8:30 a.m.    Closure and Evaluation
Leader of Devotion _____________________________________________________
Initiator(s) __________________________________________________________
Required Reading: Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South, pp. 320-334; and Unchained Memories, pp.128 – 152.
Q: Discuss an issue that strikes you as particularly memorable in these texts that is relevant when interfaced with today’s headline news.