California Institute of Integral Studies

Womanist Theology and Restorative Justice

Course Details

Course Title: Womanist Theology and Restorative Justice  Course Number: PARW 6187

Semester: Fall 2013  Units: 2  Room: Mission 311  Day: Thursday Time 6:15- 8:15 PM

Instructor: Cheryl Dawson MA, M.Div.  E-mail Address: cheryl.dawson@gmail.com

Phone: 510-677-4669  Office Hours: Wednesday 5PM – 8PM; By Appointment

Grading Options: WS Students: Letter Grade; Non WS Students: Student Option

Level Of Instruction: BA, MA, Ph.D  Class Size: Maximum 20

Enrollment Limitations: No Prerequisites; Open to all Students

Instructor's Bio

Ms. Dawson is a generous, courageous and spirit filled woman whose life clearly demonstrates her commitment to serve others. Specifically, she has developed programs that have impacted a multitude of women. Her vocation is known and appreciated locally, and internationally as well. Ms. Dawson’s work stands on a strong principal of restoration and it offers a second chance, as many times as it takes, for women who have been vanquished by life, and who are in fact in need of rescue as well as a break through.

The work offers a gender specific modality for women. Culturally specific paradigms address the over representation of African American women in the criminal justice system, while affording women of all ethnicities and traditions an opportunity for transformation and the acquisition of a life style in which one can truly afford healing and hope.

She has served as a consultant for the State Department of Public Health in Louisiana, The Federal Bureau of Prisons in Dublin California and she has provided leadership as a trainer and a clinician for the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department. Additionally, she has contributed as adjunct faculty at JFK University in Pleasanton, in the department of Graduate Psychology as well as The San Francisco Community College in the Department of Health.
Ms. Dawson has facilitated womanist restorative justice workshops in Kampala Uganda, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Gonaives Haiti.

Ms. Cheryl Dawson is the recipient of the 2012 NAACP Justice and Community Service Award.

**Course Description**

This class will offer students an opportunity to consider how restorative justice and spiritual praxis can serve disenfranchised women. We will examine the social and spiritual lives of women who are marginalized by poverty, health disparities, and broken opportunities.

The course content is focused on clinical and social alternatives for women who are marginalized and underserved due to poverty, poor education, dissipating social networks, failed support systems, and health disparities. We will lift the veil to see the nuances of history reflected in the women as well as the failures of our society to embrace them as necessary and valuable members of our general community.

Through scholarship based in womanist theology, we will address how important knowledge can be produced by exegeting the lives of those on the margins. Most importantly, we will address critical issues of justice and ask how women’s wholeness can be restored.

Our class readings, discussions and subsequent assignments will inspire us. It will assist in critical discourse required to deconstruct stereotypical myths used to foster institutions and information which is counter productive, and life threatening. Perceptions of restoration combined with womanist scholarship will offer a cornerstone of critical reflection and a paradigm of cultural honesty sculptured for a relevant healing and it will examine strategies for community healing.

In this class there is an emphasis on cultural information generated in the African American community as it relates heritage, womanist thought, and African American female engagement in the Black church. Cultural historical information will be a tool that will assist our critical evaluation as well as the interrelationship of restorative justice and the womanist perspective.

**Learning Activities**

1. Cognitive/Didactic (Lecture, Discussion): 40%
2. Experiential (Movement, Group Process, Meditation): 15%
3. Practical/Applied (Research, Case Presentation, Fieldwork): 45%

**Objectives**

At the end of this class, students will be able to:
• Identify at least three challenges confronting women who are engaged in patriarchal religious institutions.
• Identify three common problems when patriarchal religious institutions and the women who are engaged in them are critiqued from an outside vantage point.
• Identify at least three cultural considerations relevant to womanist theological perspective.
• Develop a critical analysis of restorative justice.
• Consider cultural implication and its interrelationship to restorative justice.
• Consider theological foundations of restorative justice.
• Consider the archetype of forgiveness and the correlation to restorative justice.

Criteria for Evaluation:

I. Reading Assignments/Presentations 20%
Class discussions will be based in part on student presentations of the reading assignments. Readings to be discussed in class will be highlighted in bold print. At times the readings will be assigned to a student or to a group of students. Students scheduled for presentation must create an altar to depict their personal and/or collective spiritual perspective as it pertains to the reading assigned. Students may present according to their creative interpretation. Please discuss alternative formats for presentation with me prior to the scheduled date of presentation.

II. Book Critique 25%
Due November 21
Students will submit a 5-7 page critique of one of the required texts. The critique shall demonstrate a genuine knowledge of the following:
• The social location of the author
• Student social location and ways it may impact interpretation of the text
• The major themes and ideas of the text
• Related themes that have been discussed and/or presented in class
• Themes of gender, race and diversity
• Who is the targeted audience for the text and why
• Does the book support a liberatory agenda

III. Final Paper 35%
Due December 19
The final paper must be 10-15 pages. Each student must select two books from the list of “Required Texts” and reflect on the life experiences of women about whom we have read. Please discuss this selection with me **prior to writing the paper**.

In this paper students must demonstrate in depth knowledge of restorative justice as well as womanist theology. One must demonstrate knowledge of the history of both in relation to the chosen text for the final paper. Knowledge of the history of both fields, along with contemporary praxis must be discussed in this paper. Questions about the relevancy of contemporary interpretation must be confronted and thoroughly examined to produce a paradigm of productive praxis.

The paper should also incorporate relevant writings from the required reader and/or other required texts, as well as independent research. Feel free to draw from the book critique also. A well-crafted paper must exemplify competence in the concepts of restorative justice and womanist theology. Students must cite at least 10 references for this paper.

### IV. Final Class Presentation

**Due December 5-12**

35%

Each student will be expected to make a final oral presentation in the class. This presentation integrates all that we have discussed about the marginalization of African American women in this country. I will expect an illustration of cultural norms, womanist theological precepts and restorative justice. Contemporary blending of these paradigmatic constructs must be the central theme of this offering. Class presentations may discuss the final paper, the book critique and/or revelations subsequent to our class experience.

* **WSE Writing Guidelines**

Writing assignments for a two unit class require at least 15 pages for MA students. The page length is divided between the two assignments for the semester. Research papers should include a minimum of 10 sources (MA). These sources must be knowledgeably discussed, integrated into the paper and/or critiqued by the students. WS students must use Chicago style formatting with footnotes. Papers that do not meet graduate level standards of English composition will be returned to the student: if uncorrected they will jeopardize the student’s ability to obtain a passing grade in the course.

**Class Participation**

Students must attend class regularly and they must contact me re: absences. More than two absences may jeopardize the student’s grade. Students in attendance must be ready to contribute to class discussions.

**Required Reading:**


**Required Reader:**
To Be Purchased First Day of Class

**Recommended Reading**


**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 August 29, 2013**

**OVERVIEW**

Introductions, Ground Rules/CIIS Principles of Community, Opening Ritual

Discussion: Womanism – definitions, history, controversies; Womanist Principles and ethics; Why we have gathered; Class Requirements and Expectations
Required Readings:  
*The Womanist Reader: Introduction*

Reader Purchase

**Week 2 September 5, 2013***  
INTRODUCTION TO WOMANIST THEORY

Discussion: Different definitions of womanism; Christianity and womanist thought; conflicts, controversies and beginnings

**Required Readings:**  
*The Womanist Reader:* Part I: 3-54; pp 117-154  
*Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society:* Introduction: pp 1-14

**Required Reader:**  
1. St. Clair, Raquel A. “The View Through a Womanist Cultural Lens”

**Week 3 September 12, 2013***  
INTRODUCTION TO WOMANIST THEORY CONT’’: GENDER, RACE, CLASS, RELIGION AND SEXUALITY

Discussion: Womanist approaches to intersectionality or multiple oppressions; gender, race, class and sexuality in the Academy and outside of it;

**Required Readings:**  
*Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society:* Part 1 pp 17-76

**Required Reader:**  
2. “Black Women, Race Gender and Class”

**Handout:**  
Roundtable Discussion: Must I be Womanist?

**Week 4 September 19, 2013***  
“WOMANIST KINFOLK”

Discussion: naming and the power of naming; womanism from a variety of socio-cultural locations and geographic locations; Black women’s liberatory activism; “a Black feminist or feminist of color”

**Required Readings:**
The Womanist Reader: Part II: pp 57-96
Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society: Part II: pp 80-128;
Part V pp 251-291

Required Reader:

Week 5 September 26, 2013 WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Discussion: is womanism still relevant; evolution of the concept; contemporary reflections; use in academia

Required Readings:
The Womanist Reader: Part IV pp 361-379; selections from Part IV
Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society: Part III pp 143-206,

Week 6 October 3, 2013 BLACK WOMEN’S HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Discussion: the African background; slavery and Black women;

Film: Sankofa

Required Reader:
5. Hooks Bell. “Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience”
6. Davis, Angela, “The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood”

Activity:
Process on the Mid-Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 7 October 10, 2013 BLACK WOMEN’S HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE, CONT’

Discussion: oppression, internalized oppression, Contemporary expressions of the enduring legacy of slavery and marginalization;

Required Readings:
Morrison, Toni. The Bluest Eye
Required Reader:
7. “Stereotypes, False Images, Terrorism: The White Assault Upon Black Sexuality”
8. “From Mammy to Welfare Queen: Images of Black Women in Public Policy Formations”

Week 8 October 17, 2013 GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN

Discussion: Black women resisting oppression: artists, activists, healers, and others; womanism as healing praxis for individuals and communities

Required Readings:
The Womanist Reader: Part III, Chapters 8-11 pp 173-233  
Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society: Part III

Required Reader:
10. “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”

Week 9 October 24, 2013 GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN (CONTINUED)

Further Discussion: Themes relevant to oppression and resistance.

Required Readings:
The Womanist Reader: Part III, Chapters 12, 13, 15

Required Reader:
11. Canon, Katie, Katie’s Canon, Chapter 6 pp., “Resources for a Constructive Ethic; The Life And Work of Zora Neale Hurston”

Week 10 October 31, 2013 PREVAILING AND PRESERVERANCE

Discussion: Going forward and building new paradigms with expanded vision and a capacity for healing.
Required Readings:
The Womanist Reader: Part IV, Chapter 18 pp 361-380
Deeper Shades of Purple, Womanism in Religion and Society: Part IV

Required Reader:
12. Harris, Melanie L, “Values to Hold On”.

Week 11 November 7, 2013

JUSTICE MAY BE PROBLEMATIC

Discussion: No justice and no love, the peril of retributive justice in North America.

Required Readings:

*The New Jim Crow* Chapters 1, 2, 3,

Required Reader:

16. Larson, Jennifer Sawin and Howard Zehr. “The Ideas of Engagement And Empowerment”
17. Pranis, Kay. “Restorative Values”
18. Roche, Declan. “Retribution and Restorative Justice”

Week 12 November 14, 2013 - WHERE HAVE ALL THE PEOPLE GONE?

Discussion: Implications of Mass Incarceration and the subsequent circumstances in depleted communities. We will define the restorative justice process.

Required Readings:

*The New Jim Crow* Chapters 4, 5 & 6

Required Reader:


**Week 13 November 21, 2013 - BRINGING THEORY TO PRACTICE**

Discussion: A Womanist Application of Restorative Justice.

**Required Reader:**

**Required Readings:**

*Critical Issues in Restorative Justice*  Part I, Part II Chapters 10, 11, 12, 14

**Handouts**

Various selections on Women and Patterns of Incarceration.

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**Week 14 December 5, 2013**

**IS THERE A SPACE FOR PROCESS?**

Discussion: Summary Discussions
Final Presentations

**Required Reading:**

*Critical Issues in Restorative Justice*  Part IV

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**WEEK 15 DECEMBER 12, 2013**

**OUR INQUIRY AND OUR CONCLUSIONS**

Final Presentations
Summary Discussions

**The Womanist Reader:** Required Reader:


