

**California State University Fullerton  
Comparative Religion Department**

**AFAM/CPRL 325 –Afro-American Religions and Spirituality**

**Unit: 3.0**

Term: Spring 2014

Professor: Zakyi Ibrahim

Day and Time: MoWe 11:30 –12:45 pm

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**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

African-American belief systems and denominations. A study of Folk beliefs among Blacks, African-American religious groups, and the role of the Black Church in politics and social change in the Black community.

Prerequisite: completion of General Education Category D.1.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

Based on the belief that African-American Religions and Spirituality (AARS) is intimately related to the African Traditional Religions (ATR), this course begins with a survey of the major themes in ATR. Topics include creation and origins, divinity and humanity, and ritual expressions. Some of these themes are treated under Afro-American Spirituality as well. Also discussed are the role of the slave experience in shaping AARS, and the significance of religion in informing the resistance, empowerment and organization of the African-American communities. Notable socio-political leaders with spiritual and theological dimensions are studied. Personalities include, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X.

**GENERAL EDUCATION**

This course fulfills GE requirement D.5 Explorations in the Social Sciences & Z Cultural Diversity (The “home” department for this course is AFAM; it is cross-listed with CPRL. Thus, if you are pursuing a Major in Religious Studies you can double count this course with GE and as one course toward your upper division “Development of Non-western Religious Thought” major requirement, because CPRL is not the home department. However, if you are a Major in Ethnic Studies you may count this course toward your upper-division elective units for the major, but it cannot count for GE. If you are a Minor in Religious Studies, or a Minor in Afro-American

Studies you can “double count” this course for GE and the minor—up to nine units of GE courses from one department may be used to meet minor requirements.)

## **GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING GOALS**

Learning Goals for GE. Area D.5 Explorations in Social Sciences

1. Examine problems, issues, and themes in the social sciences in greater depth; in a variety of cultural, historical, and geographical contexts; and from different disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.
2. Analyze and critically evaluate the application of social science concepts and theories to particular historical, contemporary, and future problems or themes, such as economic and environmental sustainability, globalization, poverty and social justice.
3. Analyze and critically evaluate constructs of cultural differentiation, including ethnicity, gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, and their effects on the individual and society.
4. Apply theories and concepts from the social sciences to address historical, contemporary and future problems confronting communities at different geographical scales, from local to global.

*This course also fulfills the learning goals for GE Z Cultural Diversity:*

1. Demonstrate understanding that culture is socially constructed and fundamental to social interaction.
2. Demonstrate appreciation of the complex relationships that various factors such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, and class bring to a discussion of society and culture.
3. Demonstrate understanding that because we live in an inter-connected world, we need to understand the diversity and relationships within and among cultures.
4. Recognize and evaluate how one’s cultural history affects one’s sense of self and relationship to others.

## **DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

### **A. Skills**

- Learning Goal: Students possess the ability to perform research and interpret materials related to the study of religion.
  - Outcome 1: Students can analyze written materials related to the study of religion.
  - Outcome 2: Students have acquired information literacy in the study of religion.
- Learning Goal: Students can effectively communicate in written and spoken mediums.

- Outcome 3: Students are able to write well-organized critical and analytical research papers related to the study of religion.
- Outcome 4: Students are able to speak clearly and effectively using relevant and adequate supporting evidence. *Not applied to this course.*

### **B. Knowledge**

- Learning Goal: Students can demonstrate an understanding of the beliefs, rituals, texts, and figures related to a variety of religious traditions.
  - Outcome 5: Students can describe the basic teachings and practices of major religious traditions and can compare and contrast the principal similarities and differences between them.
  - Outcome 6: Students are able to identify the history and development of specific religions and their contemporary relevance.
  - Outcome 7: Students can compare key theories and theorists in the study of religion. *Not applied to this course.*
  - Outcome 8: Students can interpret key thinkers and figures within religious traditions.

### **SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To facilitate an insight into the major beliefs and practices of African and African-American Religions and Spirituality
- To expose students to the Spiritual and intellectual dimensions as lived and practiced by African and African-American for centuries.
- To contextualize certain Traditional African beliefs and practices for a clearer understanding on the part of students.
- To contextualize certain African-American beliefs and practices for a clearer understanding on the part of students.
- To prepare the students and provide them with more intellectual tools for further research about African-American Spirituality
- To highlight some of the contemporary problems facing African-Americans.

### **PERSONAL PROMISES (The 7 Ps):**

In addition to the GE learning goals and the specific learning objectives, I will aspire to meeting these personal teaching goals and promises, based on which I hope to be evaluated:

- - I will prepare well for every class
- - I will always begin class on time
- - I will organize the class well
- - I will communicate the material clearly
- - I will answer any question effectively
- - I will be helpful to all student
- - I will be the Professor but friendly to all.

**READINGS:** (Books available at Little Professor Book Center (714) 996-3133; address: 725 N. Placentia Avenue.)

**Required:**

1. Bridges, Flora Wilson. *Resurrection Song: African-American Spirituality*. New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2001.
2. Curtis, Edward E. *Islam in Black America*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2002.
3. Ray, Benjamin C. *African Religions: Symbols, Rituals, and Community*. Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 2000.
4. Other relevant readings will be posted on TITANium

Websites are NOT included here because they are part of the assignments.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

1. Although this is a lecture class, about half the time may be spent in discussing questions that will either be asked constantly or provided regularly. Therefore, students are advised to do their readings and actively participate in such discussions. Unquantifiable marks will be awarded to students who make informed and intelligent contributions to class discussions.

2. Minor Book Review: **Due in class on Feb. 5, 2014**

In the first two weeks, each student must read the two (2) chapters: African Islam (chp. 7) and African Christianity (chp. 8) from: (Ray, Benjamin C. *African Religions: Symbols, Rituals, and Community*. Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 2000.), and in the third week, provide two (2) pages report consisting of three (3) detailed and interesting points that have been learned (refer to their pages). (The book is available at Little Professor Book Center (714) 996-3133; address: 725 N. Placentia Avenue).

3. Major Book Review: **Due on Apr. 16, 2014**

Each student must submit a review of the following book: (Curtis, Edward E. *Islam in Black America*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2002). The review must be 5 pages (typed, double spaced text, 1250 words; criticism and observation included: sample book review is on BlackBoard under “course documents”).

4. There will be two exams: mid-term and final.

5. There will also be minor assignments (observations from readings; analysis of internet contents on specific topics; and quizzes).
6. Class participation is a requirement (active discussion and attendance).
7. **Course information** and other materials are found on **TITANIum**.

**GRADE POINTS AND DUE DATES:**

*NO extra credit.* A total of 200 points will be available for assessment based upon the following:

20 points:	Minor Book Review	(10%)	<b><u>Feb. 5, 2014</u></b>
40 points:	Mid-Term Exam	(20%)	<b><u>March 5, 2014</u></b>
40 points:	Major Book Review	(20%)	<b><u>April 16, 2014</u></b>
20 points:	Class Participation	(10%)	
20 points:	Minor assignments	(10%)	
60 points:	Final Exam	(30%)	<b><u>May 16, 2013 (Friday at 12 – 1:50 pm)</u></b>

**GRADING SCALE (using plus-minus +/- style)**

A+	97.0-100%	194- 200 points
A	93.0-96.9%	186- 193 points
A-	90.0-92.9%	180- 185 points
B+	87.0-89.9%	174- 179 points
B	83.0-86.9%	166- 173 points
B-	80.0-82.9%	160- 165 points
C+	77.0-79.9%	154- 159 points
C	73.0-76.9%	146- 153 points
C-	70.0-72.9%	140- 145 points
D+	67.0-69.9%	134- 139 points
D	60.0-66.9%	120- 133 points (no D-)
F	0-59.9%	0- 119 points

**NOTES:**

1. Students are advised to:

a. be punctual and regular in class attendance;

- Attendance is part of class participation.

- Two or more Absences may lower the final grade.

b. avoid being late and leaving early (grades may be affected).

c. avoid any type of disturbance and stop making any form of noise during class (cell phone should be turned off);

d. only use LAPTOPS strictly for taking notes, so there is ABSOLUTELY NO web surfing.

e. submit HARDCOPIES of any assignment to me on time; and upload it to Turnitin on the TITANIUM by 9: 00 pm of the due date. (this is to ensure that your paper is free of plagiarism). Failure to submit papers to “Turnitin” will result in zero (0) marks.

2. It is the student’s responsibility to retain a photocopy or computer copy of ALL assignments submitted for grading; in the event of lost or theft, a duplicate copy is required.

3. Students are advised to read the 2013/2014 *Catalog* for the rules and policies regarding **registration, Voluntary Withdrawals, Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals.** Make sure you pay special attention to them and understand them well.

4. Please note that registering in this course commits you to the date and time of the course final examination. If you are aware of possible conflicts with that date, please see me immediately during the first week of the course, in case you need to register in another course to accommodate the conflict. For appeals for deferred exams, please see the Calendar.

5. Late assignment and exams penalties: Except with a legitimate excuse, a day late equals a letter grade lower (eg., from A to A-; or from B+ to B). No make-up exam will be given except on 24 hours notice for a legitimate excuse.

6. **SPECIAL NEEDS:** During the first week of classes, inform me of any disabilities or special needs that you have that may require special arrangements. Students with disabilities need to document their disability at the Disability Support Services office in UH 101. <http://www.fullerton.edu/disabledservices>

7. **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

<http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS3000021.pdf>

“Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inventing false information or citations, plagiarism, and helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty” (UPS 300.021).

Cheating: “Cheating is defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to, the following: using notes or aides or the help of other students on tests and examinations in ways other than those expressly permitted by the instructor” (UPS 300.021).

Plagiarism: “Plagiarism is defined as the act of taking the work of another and offering it as one’s own without giving credit to that source. When sources are used in a paper, acknowledgement of the original author or source must be made through appropriate references and, if directly quoted, quotation marks or indentations must be used” (UPS 300.021).

Penalties: The minimum penalty for cheating on an examination or for plagiarism will be an “F” on the assignment (zero points), without the possibility to re-do the work. In addition, the final course grade will be no higher than a “C” regardless of the final point total. Depending upon the severity of the offense, a final course grade of “F” may be assigned. In all cases the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs will be notified. Plagiarism is a serious issue. It is the student’s responsibility to be clear of the meaning of plagiarism. See the “Student Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism at <http://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/judicial/Plagiarism.htm>

### **Emergency Procedures:**

[http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep\\_students.html](http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html);

<http://prepare.fullerton.edu>

### **COURSE OUTLINE (NB: All topics and videos may not be covered)**

Week 1. Jan. 20-22 (**Jan. 20: MLKJ Day, NO CLASSES**)

Introductory Remarks

African Religion or Religions?

Historical background

(Ray, pp. ix-xvi)

Week 2. Jan. 27-29

Creation and Origins:

A Genesis Story

Separation from God

Origins of Rituals

Mythical and Ritual time

(Ray, pp. 1- 23)

**Video**

Week 3. Feb. 3-5

Divinity and humanity:

Monotheism, polytheism, Pantheism

Supreme Gods

Gods as symbols of Experience

The One and the many

(Ray, pp. 25- 45)

**Minor Book Review Due in class: Feb. 5, 2014**

Week 4. Feb. 10- 12

Ritual Expression and Control:

Animal sacrifice

Festivals

Healing Rituals

Rites of Passage

(Ray, pp. 47- 70)

**Analysis of African websites: (for diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds).**

Week 5. Feb. 17-19 (**Monday, Feb. 17: Presidents' Day; Campus closed**)

The African Legacy: A Unified Worldview

The Building Blocks of a Unified African Worldview

African traditional religion

African Traditional Morals and values

Conclusion

(Bridges, pp. 9- 42).

Week 6. Feb. 24- 26



African American Spirituality:  
 The Quest for Identity:  
 African Retentions  
 The Worldview of the Enslaved Community

(Bridges, pp. 43- 69)

Week 7. Mar. 3- 5

The Quest for Identity:  
 The Black Church and the Enslaved  
 The Values of the Enslaved

(Bridges, pp. 69- 82)

**Video and Discussion**

### **Mid-term Exam: March 5, 2014**

Week 8. Mar. 10- 12

The Call to Protest: Spirituality Embodied.  
 Harriet Tubman  
 William Edmundson

(Bridges, pp. 83- 97)

Week 9. Mar. 17- 19

The Call to Protest: Spirituality Embodied.  
 Fannie Lou Hamer  
 Ruby Bridges

(Bridges, pp. 97- 106)

**Analysis of Afro-American websites: (on portrayal of African-Americans' culture, way of life and spirituality)**

Week 10. March 24- 26

The Community:

Building

Setting

Preservation of Birth Customs and Rituals

Belief of the Universe

Child Rearing Practices

Moral Hospitality

(Bridges, pp. 107- 120)

**Video and discussions**

March 31: **Cesar Chavez Day; NO CLASSES**

April 1- 6: **Spring Recess; NO CLASSES**

Week 11. Apr. 7- 9

Scaling the Peaks of Spirituality:

Howard Thurman

Martin Luther King Junior

(Bridges, pp. 121- 141)

Week 12. Apr. 14- 16

Scaling the Peaks of Spirituality:

Malcom X (El-Hajj Malik Shabazz)

(Bridges, pp. 141- 150)

**Major Book Review Due: April 16, 2014**

Week 13. Apr. 21- 23

African Americans and Islam

**Group Discussion: from, (Edward E. Curtis)  
Video and Discussion**

Week 14. April. 28- 30

Black Film as Theology

(Bridges, pp. 151- 164)

Week 15. May 5- 7

African-American Spirituality:  
A Definition and Effects.

(Bridges, pp. 165- 172)

**FINAL EXAMS: Friday, MAY 12, 2014.  
(12:00 – 1:50 pm)**

**RADING RUBRICS FOR PAPER**

**Table 5 Grading Rubrics for Paper**

Criteria	Excellent A+/A/A-	Good B+/B/B-	Average C+/C/C-	Poor D+/D/D-	Failure F
<b>Content</b>					
The writing contains all necessary information of the topic as related to the assignment.	Information is complete and clearly relates to the assignment.	Information is mostly complete and clearly relates to the assignment.	Information is somewhat complete and mostly relates to the assignment.	Information has little to do with the assignment or consists of some misstatements.	Information does not relate to the assignment and consists of many misstatements.

The writing contains an identifiable, central focus.	Central focus is clear and consistent throughout.	Central focus is apparent.	Focus is somewhat unclear or inconsistent.	The writing wanders in many directions.	No identifiable focus.
<b>Development and Organization</b>					
The writing fully develops each idea in a clear, logical sequence and, when appropriate, offers evidence supporting the thesis or central focus.	There is a logical progression of ideas that is unified and complete. Supporting evidence is presented as needed.	There is a logical progression of ideas that is relatively complete, although a few minor lapses may be present. Supporting evidence is presented.	Many minor lapses in the logical progression of ideas are evident. Limited supporting evidence is presented.	Major lapses in the logical progression of ideas are evident. Limited supporting evidence is presented.	Ideas are presented in a random fashion. No supporting evidence is presented.
The writing effectively uses transitions to connect sentences and paragraphs.	Transitions between sentences and paragraphs are flowing and varied.	Transitions between sentences and paragraphs are varied.	A few transitions between sentences and paragraphs are choppy or disconnected.	Many short, choppy, or disconnected sentences and paragraphs.	No clear use of transitions between sentences and paragraphs.
The writing demonstrates an ability to share ideas or information in the author's own words.	Ideas or information are expressed elegantly in the author's own words.	Ideas or information are expressed clearly in the author's own words.	For the most part, ideas or information are expressed in the author's own words.	Minimal ability to express ideas or information in the author's own words.	No clear ability to express ideas or information in the author's own words.
<b>Format, Style, and Mechanics</b>					
The writing uses credible sources effectively and with proper citations.	Credible sources are properly cited and woven seamlessly into the writing.	Credible sources are properly cited and used in the writing.	Sources are mostly credible and properly cited.	Minimal use of credible sources or proper citations.	Most sources are not credible and/or most sources are not properly cited.
The writing contains few if any errors of spelling, syntax, word usage or punctuation.	No errors in spelling, syntax, word usage or punctuation.	A few minor errors in spelling, syntax, word usage or punctuation.	Many minor errors in spelling, syntax, word usage or punctuation.	Major errors in spelling, syntax, word usage or punctuation.	The number of errors makes the writing almost unreadable.
The writer strives to achieve an original voice where appropriate.	An original writing style that is a joy to read.	An informative and interesting writing style.	A readable presentation.	Writing is tedious to read.	Writing is extremely difficult to comprehend.