

RE101H Exploring Religion: RACE

Langenberg/Fall 2019/SIEBERT 208/Office Hours M 5-6, W 10-12, TR 9:30-11:30, and by appointment



Course Description:

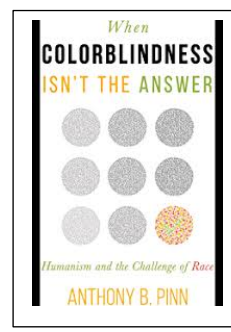
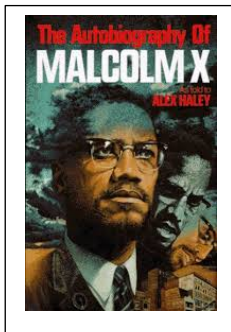
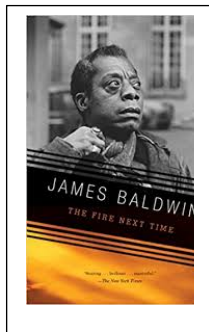
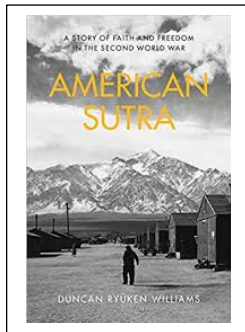
What does religion have to do with race? As the slippage between categories of race and religion in contemporary controversies surrounding the “Muslim Ban” demonstrate, religion has quite a lot to do with race. In fact, the social scientific and humanistic study of world religions was born in the crucible of colonialism. European attempts to come to terms with religious plurality and difference have long been intertwined with ideas about race. This course is a deep dive into the intersection of religion and race, with a special focus on religion in North America. We will explore American ideologies of Christian white supremacy; black spirituality, black liberation, and the black church; the Nation of Islam and its offshoots; and recent discussions about racism and whiteness in American Buddhism. Students will read accessible scholarship on these topics as well as the original writings of Alice Walker, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, bell hooks, and others. This course will use a student-centered pedagogy, with an emphasis on active student participation and engagement. Assignments will include personal reflective essays, student-led discussion, and a community discussion event, co-sponsored with the Office of Service-Learning.

Course Objectives:

- My major objective for this course is to introduce you to the humanistic study of religion and help you develop religious literacy, an essential fluency in this religiously tense and diverse world.
- Other objectives are:
 - That you will think critically and in an informed manner about the category of race.
 - That you will explore the intersection of race and religion in history, in your own life, and in our contemporary context.
 - That we will be a safe and inclusive learning community in which you can further develop yourselves as writers, thinkers, speakers, and readers. These are highly transferable skills, no matter your intended career trajectory.
- *What are yours?*

Required Texts (all other readings available on Moodle):

- Anthony Pinn, *When Colorblindness Isn't the Answer*
- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as told to Alex Haley, Ballantine Books
- Duncan Ryūken Williams, *American Sutra*



Graded Assignments:

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Reading Reflections (8 total)	20%	see class schedule
Class Participation	20% for attendance and participation; 5% for in-class assignments, quizzes, etc.)	ongoing
Personal Reflective Essay on Race	7%	9.22 at midnight
Personal Reflective Essay on the Intersection of Religion and Race	10%	10.27 at midnight
Final Analytic Essay	15%	12.8 at midnight
Student Discussion Leading Assignment	10%	To be scheduled
Media presentation	3%	On volunteer basis
Community Discussion on Race and Religion (Class Project)	5%	12.3 during class
Midterm	5%	10.10 during class



SCHEDULE of TOPICS and READINGS

Tues. 9.3

- Introductions

I. Defining Terms

Thurs. 9.5

- Pinn, *When Colorblindness Isn't the Answer*, 19-66

Tues. 9.10

- Pinn, 69-106

Due: Reading Response 1. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class.

Thurs. 9.12

- Pinn, 107-140
- Bruce Lincoln's definition of religion [Moodle]

Tues. 9.17

- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formations" [Moodle]

Due: Reading Response 2. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class.

I. God's Favor and Christian White Supremacy in America

Thurs. 9.20

- Douglas Cowen, "Theologizing Race: The Construction of 'Christian Identity'" from *Religion and the Creation of Race and Identity: An Introduction* [Moodle]
- Pankaj Mishra, "The Religion of Whiteness Becomes a Suicide Cult" <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/30/opinion/race-politics-whiteness.html> [Moodle]
- Optional: Sylvester Johnson, "Religion, Race, and the American Empire" from *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History* [Moodle]

Sunday 9.22 Due at midnight: Personal Reflective Essay on Race (see syllabus for assignment details)

Tues. 9.24

- Michael Gerson, "The Last Temptation," *The Atlantic*, April 2018 [Moodle]
- Nancy Wadsworth, "The Racial Demons That Help Evangelical Support for Trump," *Vox*, April 30, 2018 [Moodle]
- Rachel Held Evans, "'It may not look like it but Resistance is winning': An excerpt from *Inspired*," <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/inspired-excerpt-resistance-stories> [Moodle]
- Eliza Griswold, "The Radically Inclusive Christianity of Rachel Held Evans," *The New Yorker*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/postscript/the-radically-inclusive-christianity-of-rachel-held-evans> [Moodle]

Due: Reading Response 3. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class.

II. Black Spirituality, Black Identity, and the Black Church

Thurs. 9.27

- Eddie Glaude, "Myth and African American Self-Identity" from *Religion and the Creation of Race and Identity: An Introduction* [Moodle]
- Exodus [bible.oremus.org]
- Sylvester Johnson, "The Black Church," from *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America* [Moodle]

Tues. 10.1

- "Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen" in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Vol. One*. [Moodle]
- James Cone, "The White Church and Black Power," from *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Vol. One*. [Moodle]
- M. L. King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" [Moodle]

Due: Reading Response 4. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class.

Thurs. 10.3

- James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in my Mind," from *The Fire Next Time*, 15-57
- In-class viewing of "I Am Not Your Negro"

Tues. 10.8

- James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in my Mind," from *The Fire Next Time*, 57-106

Thurs. 10.10: Midterm Exam

Tues. 10.15 FALL BREAK (I strongly suggest you begin Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*)

Thurs. 10.17

- Anthea Butler, "Only a Woman Would Do: Bible Reading and African American Women's Organizing Work" [Moodle]
- Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Garden" [Moodle]

Tues. 10.22

- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, at least half

Due: Reading Response 5. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

Thurs. 10.24

- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, finish

Sun. 10.27 Due at midnight: Personal Reflective Essay on the Intersection of Religion and Race. Please post your essay to Moodle.



III. Race and American Buddhism

Tues. 10.29

- Williams, *American Sutra*, 1-38, 55-84

Due: Reading Response 6. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

Thurs. 10.31

- Williams, *American Sutra*, 85-148

Tues. 11.5

- Hase, Meadows, and Budge, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the White Space" [Moodle]
- bell hooks, "Waking up to Racism" [Moodle]

Due: Reading Response 7. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

Wed. 11.6, 7:30 pm, Fox Hall: Dr. Gleig's CPS talk. Attendance is mandatory!

Title: "Building the Beloved Community: Racism in American Buddhism"

Thurs. 11.7 Dr. Gleig's visit to class

- Ann Gleig, "The Dukkha of Racism: Racial Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice Work," from *American Buddhism After Modernity* [Moodle]
- Lama Rod Owens, "Do You Know Your True Face?" *Lion's Roar*, July 30, 2018, <https://www.lionsroar.com/do-you-know-your-true-face/> [Moodle]

Tues. 11.12 Race and yoga

- Shreena Gandhi and Lillie Wolf, "Yoga and the Roots of Cultural Appropriation" at <https://www.kzoo.edu/praxis/yoga/> [Moodle]
- "Yoga and the Maintenance of White Womanhood" at <http://rumyaputchcha.com/115-2/> [Moodle]
- Explore SAAPYA's website: <https://saapya.wordpress.com/>

Due: Reading Response 8. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

IV. African American Islam and Beyond

Thurs. 11.14

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Legacy of Malcolm X," in *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2011 [Moodle]
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1-167
- Recommended: Juliane Hammer, "Islam and Race in American History," *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*

Due: Reading Response 9. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

Tues. 11.19

- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 168-318

Thurs. 11.21

- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 318-382.

Due: Reading Response 10. Please post to Moodle before the beginning of class

Tues. 11.26

- Michael Muhammed Knight, "The Five Percenters," *The Oxford Handbook of African American Islam* [Moodle]

V. Last Week of Class Stuff

Tues. 12.3 Community Discussion on Race and Religion

Thurs 12.5 Final Thoughts

Sun. 12.8 Due at midnight: Final Essay. Please post your essay to Moodle.



GRADED WORK

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

The success of the class requires that I fulfill my responsibilities, but also that you fulfill yours. This means that you come to class prepared. "Prepared" means that you have completed the readings, taken notes, looked up words or concepts that are unfamiliar to you, and marked out the themes that you feel are the most relevant to our course. Participation in class begins with thorough preparation of the material outside of class. You are expected to bring your reading material and syllabus with you to class each day.

Even if you are shy person, speak up! We are a learning community. We can't learn from each other if we don't talk to each other. I also reserve the right to gently "call people in" to the discussion. Not all class discussions and activities will involve the entire group. We will break up into small groups on a regular basis, so those not as comfortable with speaking in front of the larger group will also encounter less nerve-racking situations in which

to share their thoughts. And there are lots of other ways to show engagement. Be visibly awake and alert. Make eye contact with speakers. Pay attention and take notes. Bring your closely read and amply annotated texts to class. Approach me with questions or comments before or after class.

Your participation grade is a reflection of your verbal, mental, and bodily engagement with the course, but attendance is also a major component of participation. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences during the course of the semester. If you have excellent attendance (perfect, perfect minus 1, or perfect minus 2), you will start with a base grade of a solid B+. Every unexcused absence will lower your basic attendance grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example from a B+ to a B). Only written excuses from a doctor or a dean will be accepted as an excused absence. When I assess your final attendance and participation grade, I will raise or lower your grade depending on your participation in class. If you are a class leader, your grade will be bumped up to an "A." If you are a solid citizen but not a leader, you will probably receive a "B+" or an "A-" If you contribute little but also show no blatant signs of disengagement or disaffection, your grade will hover around the "B" range. If you sleep in the corner, are late on a regular basis, attempt to text behind your backpack throughout class, regularly come to class unprepared, fail to bring your readings to class, chat continuously with your neighbor, and/or make no attempt to take notes, you cannot reasonably expect a solid attendance and participation grade, even if you attend all classes. **Phone-users will be asked to leave.**

READING RESPONSES

Periodically, you must share your thoughts on and analysis of class readings online. Prompts will be posted on Moodle for each reading response. Reading responses should be well written, closely engage the reading, and be a minimum of 350 words long. **Reading responses are due at the beginning of class. See syllabus for dates.** You must complete **eight** of ten possible reading responses.

Reading responses are graded on a scale of 0-2. In order to receive a good grade, your reading response must:

- Be submitted on time
- Be at least 350 words long
- Contain at least 3 direct references to the text
- Include citations (page number in parenthesis) for any quotes or direct references to the text
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the text
- Be well written (proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation)

LEADING DISCUSSION:

Once during the semester, you and several other students will lead discussion on a class text. You must come to my office hours at some point during the week previous to your discussion time in order to discuss your discussion question and your strategies for encouraging engagement/discussion. You will be graded on: 1) your preparation (i.e. preparing for and following through on your office visit); 2) the quality of your efforts (i.e. you tried and came up with good ideas); 3) the success of your efforts (you engaged the class).

CURRENT EVENTS/MEDIA REPORT:

This is a small, low-stakes, pass/fail assignment intended to help you relate what we are learning in class to what you encounter on social media and in the news. All you have to do is find and bring to class a news or media piece relevant to the intersection of race and religion. You will introduce your piece to the class, talk a bit about why you think it is relevant, how it connects to class materials, what questions it raises for you, etc. You will then lead a short causal class discussion, which I can help you with as well. Please contact me a day or two prior to class if you would like to be the current event/media reporter. I won't schedule your day for you or chase you around asking you when you are going to do it. You must take the initiative on this one.

PERSONAL REFLECTIVE ESSAY ON RACE

Please reflect on race, racial projects, racial formation, racial identity, racism, and color-blindness in your own life. These are all concepts that Omi and Winant or Pimm define and discuss. What concept of race has been important to your identity? Or have you been “color-blind”? What are the racial formations that have affected you or that surround you or that you are part of propagating? What sort of racial identity do you or your family members and relatives embrace, if any? What about your friends? What are the racial projects that touch you or that you are an active part of? How do you experience racism in your community or in experiences farther afield? How do you observe racism affecting others? **Reflect upon these questions in 1200-1500 words. Your essay is due Sunday, 9.22 at midnight. Please post your essay to Moodle.**

This is a personal reflective essay, so you do not need an argument, *per se*. You do, however, need to be clear about your thoughts and ideas, write in specific and accurate ways about the concepts Omi/Winant and Pimm discuss, and provide examples and details to flesh out your points. You also need to use proper spelling, grammar, word choice, punctuation, and capitalization. Strive for clarity and elegance in your writing. You should submit your essay as a Word document to Moodle. It should be double spaced with 1” margins. Any source you use (for instance, Omi and Winant) should be properly cited using MLA or APA citation style. If you cite a source, please include a “works cited” list at the end of your essay.

Your essay will be graded on the basis of:

- Clean, clear, and correct writing style
- Meeting the basic requirements of the assignment in terms of length and due date and formatting
- A cogent and precise discussion of race, racial projects, racial formation, racial identity, racism and color-blindness, using Omi and Winant’s definitions and Pimm’s discussion.
- A thoughtful discussion of your own encounters with racial projects, racial formation, racial identity, racism, and color-blindness.
- Compelling use of detail and specific examples to illustrate your points.
- Proper use and citation of sources.



OTHER IMPORTANT CLASS POLICIES

Electronics: Students may pull up readings on their laptops or tablets or phones during class when necessary and when I give permission. Otherwise, **laptops and tablets should be shut. Except for cases in which I give express permission, no phones are allowed in class** except mine, which I only use as a time-telling device. Unless you have a specific accommodation of some kind, you should plan to take notes by hand in this class, so bring a notebook and a pencil/pen

Late Assignments: I do not grant extensions on written assignments unless a very serious emergency has arisen. Late assignments will receive lower grades on the order of ONE letter grade per day. These policies exist out of fairness to other students who, despite jammed schedules and personal crises, complete their work on time.

Reading Class Emails: Part of your obligation as a student in this class is to read and, if necessary, respond to emails I or anyone else in the class sends to you regarding course goings-on. Check your email regularly!

Students with Disabilities: Students with physical, cognitive, or psychological disabilities must contact Accessible Education Services to discuss potential accommodations or other helpful services. All information will be kept confidential. Special considerations cannot be made retroactively, so please visit AES at your earliest opportunity to ensure that your documentation is in order.

The Eckerd College Honor Code: Students will adhere strictly to the Eckerd College Honor Code and will pledge their

honesty by writing the following statement on all examinations and papers: "On my honor, as an Eckerd College Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to tolerate these behaviors in others" or simply "Pledged" and your signature. Violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the EC Academic Honor Council (AHC). Typically, a first offense violation of the Honor Code will result in failure in the course and a letter documenting academic dishonesty in the student's file. In this course, violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: 1) failure to cite all sources used in the preparation of written work according to MLA, Harvard, or Chicago style guidelines; 2) use of another's written work unless specifically authorized by me; 3) lying about your reasons for being absent to class or delinquent with an assignment, or providing fraudulent written excuses.

Use of the Internet: As a general rule, the internet should not be used as a source for reliable scholarly information, unless you can be sure that the on-line material is a reproduction from a scholarly journal or unless the website itself originates from a well-established academic venue (e.g. academic journals that publish on-line, scholarly conference proceedings that are posted electronically, and *in some cases* even lectures posted on-line by professors at other colleges or universities). If, however, you do choose to consult the internet in the preparation of essays, blogs, or other written or oral assignments, you must cite the web resource specifically, just as you would cite a book or an article in hard-copy format. Please understand that using internet material, whether directly quoted or merely summarized, without the proper citation constitutes a violation of the honor code.

Title IX Reporting Policy: Eckerd College is committed to fostering a campus community based on respect and nonviolence. To this end, we recognize that all Eckerd community members are responsible for ensuring that our community is free from discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In accordance with Title IX, Eckerd is legally obligated to investigate incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault that occur on our campus. **Faculty who become aware of an incident of sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking, are required by law to notify Eckerd's Title IX Coordinator.** The purpose of this disclosure is to ensure that students are made aware of their reporting options and resources for support. For more information about your rights and reporting options at Eckerd, including confidential and anonymous reporting options, please visit <http://www.eckerd.edu/titleix/>.

Hurricane Contingency: Students who leave campus for overnight stays or longer should bring all course materials with them, to include: class notes, syllabus, and books. This provision will ensure that we can continue our course work together if the college should close for any reason. If the college does close, I will email the class with further instructions and will post materials on Moodle to be completed during the period of closure. In the event of a hurricane, I will also post lecture notes and slides. Be sure that you maintain email contact with me in the event of such an emergency.

GRADING SCALE:

Letter Grades*	
A.....	93% - 100%
A-.....	90% - 92%
B+.....	87% - 89%
B.....	83% - 86%
B-.....	80% - 82%
C+.....	77% - 79%
C.....	73% - 76%
C-.....	70% - 72%
D+.....	67% - 69%
D.....	60% - 66%
F.....	0% - 59%

