Race Religion and Rebellion  
REL: 3179 – Section 6763  
AFA: 3930 – Section 8623  
Spring 2013  
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 6th (12:50 to 1:40) period Little Hall 121

General Description:

This course is an interdisciplinary theoretical examination of the interplay of religion, race and rebellion in the organization and execution of the various revolts, insurrections and social movements of black people in the U.S. from the slavery period through the Civil Rights and Black Power Eras of the 60s, 70s and 80s. We will utilize the writings of historians, sociologists and theologians in our examination of the role of religion in these revolts, insurrections and rebellions. The class will study biographical material, written as well as documented on film, video and audiotapes, on the lives of prominent activists in these struggles. Those lives we will examine most closely include: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Gabriel Prosser, three men who planned and executed daring North American slave revolts; David Walker and his audacious Appeal and its call for armed revolt if need be to end slavery. Rev. Henry McNeil Turner was a minister and politician who was a fierce critic of white supremacy and racial oppression. He chided blacks for worshipping a white image of Jesus saying they should see Jesus as a black person like themselves. Also considered will be the influence of religion on John Brown, the radical white abolitionist who led a heroic military raid on Harper’s Ferry in 1859 to end slavery.

We will also learn about religious 20th century blacks who rebelled against the racist status quo: For example, Marcus Garvey and his movement – The Negro Improvement Association - a religiously influenced international back to Africa Movement – which was the largest mass movement of blacks ever to be organized in the world. We will also investigate the religious as well as political dimensions of the great Muslim leader Malcolm X whose life – second only to Garvey - most clearly demonstrates the road to freedom via racial separation and nation building – one of the two recurrent themes in the long African American freedom struggle. To understand Malcolm X and his legacy, we must understand the Nation of Islam (NOI), built by his mentor and father figure, Mr. Elijah Muhammad, and his ideology. During Malcolm X’s tenure in the organization, he catapulted it into a formidable international religious and social uplift black organization. Also examined will be the role and work of the Deacons for Defense, The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Black Panther Party (BPP), the three most militant movements of the Civil Rights and Black Power periods. While these groups were not religious ones, most of the members of SNCC and the Deacons were deeply ingrained in the culture and religious ethos of the African American community, which they consistently used in their efforts to rally the troops.

In summary our main goal throughout this semester is to investigate the role that religions– Traditional African Religion, Islam & Christianity - have played in the long African American struggle for freedom, justice, and equality. These struggles have influenced all the other peoples of color as well as for women’s struggle for justice here in the U.S. and many other parts of the world.
Course Requirements:

1.) **Reading the Assigned Selections Each Week:** This is a reading intensive course. Therefore reading the assigned texts thoroughly is the first and primary requirement for this course. A reading of the assigned material that is complete, careful and on schedule is essential for this course since our seminar format will be based on comprehension and discussion of what we have read, seen or heard. Also each student will be required to make presentations before the class of selected assigned readings. Each student is asked to write out three important points (or questions) they learned from each of the assigned readings scheduled for that class date. You will be asked to share those verbally with the class during our discussion periods.

2.) **Regular Attendance Is Required:** Role will be taken at each class session. Each person gets three unexcused absences without penalty. Unexcused absences after that will negatively impact your final grade. A number of unexcused absences (above the two you get without penalty) can hurt your final grade (each unexcused absence will take 2 pts off of your final grade.) Being chronically late for class (without alerting me beforehand) or coming to class, signing in and then leaving before the class ends, without giving me a valid reason and getting prior approval, will be marked absent for that class.

3.) **Four Reaction Papers:** We do not have quizzes or exams in this class. Your grade is based on written assignments and class participation. Each student is to write four (6 page minimum) reaction papers during the term on the assigned readings. In these reaction papers you are to briefly summarize the content of the assigned readings, listing at least three new things you learned in each of the chapters of the assigned readings. Additionally, you will address several questions about the readings that will be found in the Guidelines for Reaction Papers. (Guidelines for reaction Papers will be sent via e-mail early in the semester.) These papers will be graded and make up 30% of your grade. I will ask you to select your four dates for each of your reaction papers early in the term (generally by the fourth class) from the list of class readings which will be distributed in the second meeting of the class and sent to you via e-mail also.

4.) **Student In-Class Presentation of Class Readings:** By the fourth class, a sheet will be circulated for students to sign up for the class reading(s) they want to present to the class. (Dependent on the number of students in the class more than one such presentation may be required). These class presentations will be on the same date as one (or two) of your Reaction Papers. Each student in preparation for his or her presentation is to develop an outline or synopsis of their assigned reading, photocopy it and distribute it to the class at the time of their presentation or send to me 24 hours ahead of class to send out via our class e-mail list. During this oral presentation, each student is expected to present the main themes and arguments in the readings assigned for that class. Also any questions that arose in your mind while reading the assignment should be shared with the class for discussion. You may also develop questions for your classmates. You are the teacher for this class and you can chose to present the material as you like. Powerpoint presentations
are encouraged but not required. These presentations should be 15 to 20 minutes, followed by classroom discussion. These presentations plus the student handouts make up 10% of the student’s grade for the term.

4.) **End of Term Research Paper:** A minimum 12 page research paper is due at the end of the semester on a topic agreed on by both the instructor and the student. I hope that you will find interesting topics to write about. You might want to write a biographical paper on one of the leaders we will meet via writings and documentaries and discuss in this class. They include men mentioned in the Course Description: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, & Marcus Garvey. There are also heroic women who have played important roles in the freedom struggle who could be selected as a person to write about in your research paper. They include, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida Wells Barnett and others. In more contemporary times, we have had Miss Fannie Lou Hammer, Miss Ella Baker, Diane Nash Bevel and numerous others. Of course you can select the topic that interests you the most. The deadline for **Topic Approval** and the 4 or more sources that you plan to use in preparing the research paper will be listed in our **Course Outline**. The sources on these people can be books, journal articles and academic or profession web articles. (At least three of your sources should not be materials we have read and discussed in this class but can be from our list of Recommended Texts I share with you below if applicable to your project) The topic and the sources must be approved before you write your paper. Deadlines for Topics and research sources are to be typewritten and turned in to me by the date listed on the Course Outline. During the term, each student will update the class on their research. These dates will be found on the **Course Outline** also. Toward the end of the term, each student will present a 5 to 8 minute oral synopsis of his or her research paper to the class. The oral presentation is to be accompanied by a brief class handout that is either an outline of the student’s research or a synopsis of that research with a bibliography of the sources you are using in your paper. The Research Paper accounts for 30% of the grade for the term. Your oral presentation and handout on your Research Paper will count for 10% of your grade. You can see the importance of this Research Project because it represents 40% of the grade in this class.

I urge you to utilize the excellent library resources we have at the University of Florida. We have two expert librarians for both the African American Program and the Religion Department who can help you with sources for your Research Projects. They are: For African American Studies—Dr. Jana Ronan,[ironan@ufl.edu](mailto:ironan@ufl.edu). Her direct phone number is 273-2629. The library specialist for the Religion Department is: Dr. Blake Landor,[blaland@uflib.ufl](mailto:blaland@uflib.ufl). His phone number is 273-2644. I will be sending this syllabus to them and alerting them that you will be in touch for help with your Research Projects.

5.) **Attendance and participation in one class outing** to an African American Church service or some other important event here on campus or in the African American community during the semester will be required. Attendance and participation in this event will count for 10% of your grade.
Grades will be based on six things:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction Papers (Four)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Class Presentation of one</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assigned Reading w/ Handout</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper Presentation w/ Handout</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation in an event</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Classroom Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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This is intended to be a lively, student friendly course, as we will work together to understand the role of religion in the insurrections, revolts, rebellions and social movements of African Americans in their resistance to slavery, racism and oppression. All opinions will be valued and respected. We will be reading and viewing controversial and sensitive material about classism, racism, and sexism. I expect everyone to discuss these materials in a mature way.

**Extensions on Writing Assignments**

Students will be allowed an extension of a due date if they provide documentation of a reasonable problem including illness, death in family, university related activities and others deemed appropriate by the teacher. **Students are expected to manage their time to meet deadlines.** While there will be penalties for unexcused late submissions, it is better to submit written assignments late rather than not at all.

**Academic Honesty**

An implied honor code is observed in all academic work at the University. Every student must operate according to an implied pledge that “any work submitted for credit the student has neither received nor been given unauthorized aid.” In other words, cheating and plagiarism are breaches of academic honesty subject to disciplinary action, which may include a failing grade for the course. For more details, consult the website: [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php#studenthonorcode](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php#studenthonorcode)

**Accommodations to Students with Disabilities**

Students needing classroom accommodation should register with the Dean of Students Office, where the necessary documentation will be issued. Students must submit that documentation to the professor when requesting accommodation.

**Required Textbooks**


We will view several film documentaries in this class. Also if there is interest, I would like for the class to go as a group to see *Django Unchained* in lieu of one of our classes with discussion to follow. I will see if there is interest during the first or second class of the semester.

Additional Readings will be listed in the Class Outline and will be placed on E-Reserves or sent as a pdf file. They include among others, chapters from:

**THE BOOKS BELOW ARE NOT REQUIRED**

**TEXTBOOKS** that may be of INTEREST for Your RESEARCH PAPERS

These texts may be of interest because they are classics on the topic we are covering in this class. Additionally, we may read a chapter or more from some of them. When we do, these will be in the Sakai site for this class or sent to you as a pdf file. Also, these are sources that will provide more in depth coverage of some of the topics that we will cover this semester. They are also excellent resources for the research papers you will be writing for this class. Please Note: All of these books, except for the Joanne Grant book you will be writing for this class. **You are not required to purchase these books and some may be found in UF’s Library if you plan to use in your Research Projects.**


**Instructor:**

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Wednesdays: 2:30 – 4:30 & by Appointment
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