Religion and Social Constructions of Race  
Religion 391, Af Am 280, Am St 297

Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:20-2:40  
Room Location: Fisk 413  
Instructor: Elizabeth McAlister  
Email address: emcalister@wesleyan.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00 to 5:00 and by appointment  
Office Location: Religion room 103

Overview  
In this course we examine intersections between "race" and "religion" in a number of historical and social contexts in the Americas. We place at the center of our discussions the question of how race and religion are co-constructed categories that function as a prism through which people come to understand and experience their own identities and those of others. We will privilege interpretations that emphasize: a) the intersections of "race" and "religion" as a process in which power plays a pivotal role; and b) a means through which groups form collective identities.

We will read a range of historical analysis and primary source materials from the U.S. and the Caribbean. After a set of theory readings, we will examine a captivity narrative, missionary works, analyses of anti-Semitism, Rastafari, Jonestown, as well as Islamophobia and the contemporary U.S. relationship to the Middle East.

Requirements: Attendance at all classes, completion of the reading assignments, class discussion and weekly 1-page response papers constitute essential components of the course and count for 25% of the grade. Response papers must be posted on Moodle by 11:00 sharp the day of class so that I can read them before our discussion. Late response papers will not be accepted and cannot be made up (but you do get one pass). Response papers will be evaluated on a check system, with average work equaling a ✔, excellent work ✔+, below average ✔-.

During the course of the semester you will give an oral presentation to start class discussion. You get to write three 5-7 page papers for another 75% of the grade. (I will take of a third of a letter grade for each day a paper is late, unless you have asked for an extension at least one day before the due date.) Remember that we
are operating under the Honor Code at Wesleyan. Please do not use laptops or tablets in class (but see me if you need one for a specific reason). I don’t mind eating and drinking or lateness (within reason). I DO mind seeing you on your phone, so put it away and on silent. Please email me if you will be or have been absent, and briefly state a reason.

**Grading**
Participation, response papers, class presentation: 25%
First Essay: 25%
Second Essay: 25%
Third Essay: 25%

Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/Student/index.html

**Readings**
Most class readings are in article form and will be available to download from Moodle. Two required books are available from Broad Street Books. **You are required to bring each reading to class on paper, in print form.**


Sept 5 Introduction to the Course

Sept 7 **Religious Systems of Meaning**


Sept 12 **Race as Social Construction**

Sept 14  *Christianity Basics*


Sept 19  *Colonial Encounters: European and Native American*

--James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Cultural Origins of North America*, Chapter 7 (pp. 131-178)

Sept 21  *Christian and Savage: Primary source*

-- The Captivity Narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, in *So Dreadful a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677*, edited by Richard Slotkin, pp 314-369

Sept 26  *Africans in the Americas*


Sept 28  *Atlantic Slavery: Historical Primary Sources*


Oct 3  *Whiteness and Religion: 19th Century Formations*

Oct 5       Racial Formations in Change


Oct 10       Asians, African Americans, and Missionaries


Oct 12       Race, “Hindus” and the Law


Oct 17       Ethiopianism and Rastafari


Oct 19       Changing Self-Representations and Passing

--Long Lance (Film in class)
--No reading--work on paper

Paper #1 Due by Thursday at 5:00 to Moodle

Oct 24       Fall break no class

Oct 26:     Paranoia and Evil
--Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” in The Fear of
Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the
Present, pp 2-9.

--Judith Weisenfeld, “Difference as Evil” in Dixie and West, eds, The Courage to
Hope pp 86-102.

Oct 27 panel at 4:30: REQUIRED
4:30 Panel on Religion and the Elections. Location TBA

Oct 31 No class

Nov 2 A History of Racism

--George Fredrickson, Racism: A Short History, Ch. 1 (pp 1-47).

Nov 7 Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism

--Sander Gilman, The Jew's Body, Ch 7 (169-193); Ch 10 (pp. 234-243).

Nov 9 Anti-Judiasm without Jews

--McAlister, “The Jew in the Haitian Imagination” in H. Goldschmidt and E.
McAlister, eds. Race, Nation and Religion in the Americas, Oxford University

Nov 14 Racialized Eschatologies

--David Chidester, Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the
People's Temple, and Jonestown. Preface through Chapter two

Nov 16 Race traitor

--David Chidester, Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the
People's Temple, and Jonestown. Chapter Three through Epilogue

Nov 21 No class Prof at AAR
--Paper # 2 Due by 5:00 to Moodle

Nov 23 No class; Thanksgiving

Nov 28  Race, The Middle East and US Cultural Politics

--Melani McAlister, Epic Encounters, Preface, Intro, Ch. 2

Nov 30  Multiculturalism and the Terrorist Threat

--Melani McAlister, Epic Encounters, Ch 5, 6, Conc.

Dec 5  Racing Religion, Muslims, and the Law since September 11th


Dec 7  Ideology-based Racialization and Islamophobia


Reading Period begins December 10 and ends December 13, 5 p.m.

Final Paper Due December 15 at 5:00, to Moodle