

THE WAYS OF RELIGION

A cross-cultural survey of common patterns in religious experience and expression, with specific consideration of creative adaptations to American culture made by African Americans.

Religious Studies 102MNS
 First Semester 2007-8
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Texts:

Ways of Being Religious, Streng, Lloyd, and Allen (rental)
Equus, Peter Shaffer (purchase)
Siddhartha, Herman Hesse (purchase)
Black Culture and Black Consciousness, Lawrence Levine (rental)
The Color Purple, Alice Walker (purchase)
Electronic Reserve: UWSP Homepage – Library Resources – “Electronic Reserves” (or “My E-Reserve List” on top of Library page)
PowerPoint Presentations: available after class session in course file: Outlook – Public Folders – All Public Folders – Course Information – 200710 – Philosophy – PF Rel 102

Course Requirements:

Class Participation – Reading Quizzes, Reflection Papers, and Videos (100pts):

Reading Quizzes (60pts, 4pts each):

A one-question quiz on the assigned reading will be given at the start of many (at least 15) class sessions; graded: 4pts (excellent), 3.5pts (adequate), 3pts (inadequate but not completely incorrect); incorrect answers will still result in 2pts, for attendance; make-up quizzes will be worth 2pts maximum (unless for a university sponsored event {with excuse}, in which case they will count for up to 3pts). All make-ups must be taken within a week and before the corresponding exam. Occasional bonus quizzes, worth 2pts if answered correctly, will be given as well; these may not be made up after the class session.

Reflection Papers (30pts, 10pts each):

A personal but thoughtful response to a selected reading or topic, 1.5-2 pages in length typed (12pt). Due in class on the day the selected reading or topic is assigned. Papers handed in at other times will get ½ credit. Graded on thoughtfulness, relevance, and clarity (9.5pts – excellent, 8.5pts – adequate, 7.5pts. – {barely} acceptable, etc).

Videos (10pts)

Attendance will be taken on days that feature videos for all or most of the class period (indicated in **underlined bold** in the syllabus; each absence on these days will result in a loss of 2pts of the 10-point total (students with university sanctioned excuses may make arrangements for an alternative viewing of a missed video).

Two Mid-Term Essay Exams (200pts)

Final Exam (100pts)

The final will be partially accumulative, expecting knowledge of the primary conceptual categories guiding this course of study as well as of material considered in the last section of the class.

Course Outline:

Prologue: On Religious Experience

Part I: Four Archetypal Ways of Being Religious

Type 1: Creating Community through Myth and Ritual
FIRST EXAM

Type 2: Rebirth through Personal Encounter with the Holy

Type 3: Living Harmoniously through Conformity with the Cosmic Law

Type 4: Spiritual Freedom through Discipline (Mysticism)
SECOND EXAM

Part II: African-American Ways of Being Religious
FINAL EXAM

Class Assignments: [Study Directions – “**Note:**” fair game for quizzes but background rather than potential questions for exams; “**Remember:**” material that could well be the basis for exam questions; “**Think about it:**” questions that are likely to come up in class; the material they ask about may also appear in quizzes or exams.]

Prologue: On Religious Experience

T (9/4) Beginnings:

Note: (1) the question addressed by this course and the two ways we will seek to answer the question, (2) the four “ways of being religious” we will consider.

R (9/6) “Introduction: What is Religion?” (**WBR** { *Ways of Being Religious* } 1-6 {through “Guidelines for a Venture”})

1. Reading:

Note: (1) Max Mueller’s statement about understanding religion; (2) questions to consider on the way to formulating a definition of “religion.” **Remember:** the definition of religion guiding this study? **Think About It:** How is the text’s approach similar to or different from your current view about what it is that marks something as “religious”?

2. Lecture:

Remember: (1) the basic (three-fold) movement (dynamics) of religious faith/experience; (2) how this is like scientific reasoning and, accordingly, how faith can accommodate doubt; (3) the two meanings given to the term “ultimate transformation.”

F (9/7) “Autobiography and Story,” from: *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove* by Michael Novak
(**Electronic Reserve**)

1. Reading:

Note: (1) three senses of the word “religious” (when life is understood as an enacted autobiography); (2) the importance of cultural stories; (3) the experience of “nothingness” or “formlessness.”

2. Lecture:

Remember: (1) the three components of a “standpoint” and two motives for a movement from one standpoint to another; (2) the meaning and significance of the terms "personal story," "cultural story," and "myth"; (3) the manner in which stories give meaning to human experience (especially in regard to events that otherwise could appear quite random).

T (9/11) **Video:** "Zulu Zion" (from: *The Long Search*)

Note: (1) how Grace Shabalala's (older woman who is asked to sing) religious experience helped to transform her (marginal) social situation; (2) healing techniques; (3) the Zulu prophet, Isaiah Shembe's, revelations and rituals; (4) the three characteristics of African religion, according to the narrator's sum-up; **Think about it:** What seems to be the function of the “living dead” in traditional Zulu experience and thought?

R (9/13) “The Sacred and the Profane” by J. E. Smith (WBR 145-148)

1. Reading:

Note: (1) meaning given to the experience of “celebration”; (2) the importance of “times of crisis”; (3) characteristics of “profane existence,” “the holy,” and their relation.

2. Lecture:

Remember: (1) “sacred” and “profane” in the context of Grace Shabalala’s experience (from Zulu Zion video); (2) the process represented by the terms "imaginative extension of reality" and "lure to transformation"; **Note:** (1) how “profane reality” can threaten “sacred reality”; (2) how our basic definition of religion could be rephrased using the term “sacred reality.”

F (9/14) **Video:** “The Way of the Ancestors” (from: *The Long Search*, featuring the Toraja People from Indonesia)

Part I: Four Archetypal Ways of Being Religious

[Reflection Paper #1: 9/25]

Type 1: Creating Community through Myth and Ritual

T (9/18) "The Mythic Structure of Judaism" by Jacob Neusner (WBR 113-119); video: *Ritual*

Reading:

Note: (1) Neusner’s definition of “myth”; (2) how the marriage ritual transforms the coming together of a man and a woman into a mythic event; **Remember:** How the festival of Passover shapes the sense of identity of Jewish people; **Think about it:** What do you suppose Neusner means by the statement that “The myth of [sacred, “chosen”] peoplehood transforms *difference* into *destiny*”?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) the title of our first way of being religious and its meaning in terms of *goal* and *means*; (2) the "sacred direction" characteristic of this "way"; and (3) how Jewish myth (Passover) provides a “lure to transformation” for Jews long after the original events celebrated.

Video:

Note: (1) comments on the value of communal rituals; (2) ways in which the celebration of Sukkoth reminds people of what it means to be Jewish.

R (9/20) "Periodic Worship of the Zunis" by Ruth Benedict (WBR 106-112); "Day of Atonement Ritual," Leviticus 16 (<http://www.bible.org/netbible/> – Leviticus – chapter 16)

Readings:

1. Zuni:

Note: (1) what is supposed to happen when everything in a Zuni ceremony is done properly and how people react if something goes wrong; (2) "imitative magic"; (3) the nature of Zuni prayers; (4) how Zuni ceremonial life is organized; (5) how "medicine bundles" are treated. **Think about it:** How can a masked dancer suppose that he becomes the god (*kachina*)?

2. Day of Atonement:

Note: (1) what happened to the "sons of Aaron"; (2) the proper way for Aaron (high priest) to come before the "mercy seat" in the "Holy Place" (later the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple); (3) how "Aaron" and the people are to be cleansed of sin; (4) what happens to the live goat.

Lecture:

Note: how the architecture of the Jewish temple protected what was sacred to the nation from profanation; **Remember:** types of rituals (and how they work): (1) commemoration ("foundation myth"), (2) invoking Power ("recovery by reiteration"), (3) sacrifice, and (4) scapegoating; **Think about it:** How do sacrifices and scapegoating help to create and maintain community?

F (9/21) WBR 100-106: J. Mbiti, "Initiation and Puberty Rites"; video: Dogon Funeral (from *Millennium*)

Reading:

Note: (1) the meaning and function of initiation rites have in tribal life; (2) what the cutting of the sexual organs symbolizes in Akamba rites; (3) what the significance of wife sharing is among the Maasai.

Lecture:

Remember: types of rituals (cont.): (5) rites of passage; **Think about it:** Could we, should we have puberty-initiation rites in contemporary America? Does our handling of death typically reflect the wisdom of deep tradition?

Video:

Note: (1) how the Dogon understand and celebrate their relations with the dead; (2) the role of the masked dancers; **Think about it:** Why is the man who lost his uncle so grateful to his community?

T (9/25) "Myth, Ritual and National History as Seen to Two American Sacred Ceremonies" by Conrad Cherry (WBR 132-40)

[Reflection Paper #1], possible topics (reflections must be informed by the reading) – (1) Is it useful for understanding the USA for scholars like Cherry to identify a "religious" dimension to the American heritage? (2) Have there been more recent occasions that evoked a religious response like that described for the assassination of Robert Kennedy? Note similarities and differences. (3) Must there be a "religious" aspect to its national life for the USA to survive and prosper as a nation? (4) Should the USA identify itself as a specifically "Christian" nation? (5) Might there be negative effects stemming from the "religious" dimension of the national identity of the USA? (6) If you are not a US citizen, you might want to ask whether there is anything similar to what the author describes for the US in your country of origin.

Reading:

Note: the characteristics of Memorial Day and Robert Kennedy's funeral that lead Cherry to call them "religious" rituals; **Remember:** (1) the "religion" they are celebrating; (2)

the "myths" that sustain this religion; **Think about it:** How does the funeral ritual for a slain leader provide "passage" for a community over times or experiences of crisis/chaos?
Lecture:

Remember: (1) the pattern of rituals that transform moments of communal crisis into occasions for reaffirming the "ties that bind" a community together; (2) the "temptation to distortion" characteristic of our first way of being religious.

R (9/27) **First Exam** (Prologue and Type #1)

Type 2: Rebirth through Personal Encounter with the Holy

F (9/28) WBR 26-28, 31-33, 47-50, 59

Readings:

1. "I am Blessed but You are Damned" (26-28)
Remember: how Morte's sense of self and his relation to his master were changed by his encounter with God
2. "Miki's Divine Experience" (31-33)
Note: how Miki happened to become a channel for the "Heavenly General"; (2) what the "General" demanded of Miki and her family before he would bless them;
Think about it: How was Miki changed by this experience?
3. Joseph Smith, "An Account of Divine Revelation" (47-50)
Note: how God answered Smith's questions; **Remember:** how Smith responded to those who ridiculed his claims.
4. "Amazing Grace" (59)
Think about it: What is so "amazing" about the "Grace" celebrated in this song?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) the title of our second way of being religious and its meaning in terms of *goal* and *means*; (2) its "sacred direction"; (3) typical pattern of change from "before" to "after" standpoint (with Morte as prime example), including the idea of a "cognitive minority" and the 4 aspects of the resulting "sense of reality" (with Joseph Smith as prime example).

T (10/2) **Video:** *Joy Unspeakable* (Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians)

Note: (1) attitude toward the "world"; (2) rules on women's dress and role; (3) descriptions of the experience of "speaking in tongues" and its value; (4) example of tongues and alter call at camp meeting.

R (10/4) "The Inner Ecstasy" by Marcus Bach (WBR 50-54); Joseph Campbell, "The Great Kwakiutl Shaman Named Fool" (Electronic Reserve)

Reading:

1. "Inner Ecstasy":
Remember: (1) the main obstacle that Bach had to overcome before he could receive the "baptism of the Holy Spirit"; (2) how he describes the experience; (3) how it made him feel afterwards.
2. "Fool":
Remember (a) Fool's story, noting his change from a skeptic to a practitioner of shamanic arts, (b) the form that his spiritual helper took, (c) how his helper communicated with Fool, (d) how he gave Fool power, and (e) what treatment Fool was told to give the chief. **Think about it:** Why do you suppose that this shaman called himself "Fool"?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) dynamics of "possession cults" (be able to relate to Miki's story); (2) the dynamics of "empowerment" and "authorization" as expressed in this type of religion (with examples).

F (10/5) WBR 43-47, 64-67

Readings:

1. "Experience of the Divine Mother" by Sri Ramakrishna (43-47)

Note: (1) the form or image taken by the Holy Power in Ramakrishna's experience; (2) how this way of imagining sacred reality shaped his behavior; **Think about it:** What is the significance for understanding the religious imagination of the following phrase, "The appalling Power that makes and unmakes the universe may also be known in the aspect of an indulgent Mother whom one can laugh with and pester for favours like a child" (46).

2. "In Praise of Krishna" (64-67)

Think about it: How love imagery can be used in this and other contexts to imagine the relationship between a human person and a Divine Person.

Lecture:

Remember: (1) the meaning of the phrase, "We grasp and shape reality through (root) metaphors"; (2) the root metaphor operative in our second way of being religious.

T (10/9) *Equus* by Peter Shaffer, Act One

Reading:

Note: the psychological tensions that seem to have led Alan to create his "Equus religion" and the ways in which this (strange) "religion" empowers him; **Think about it:** (1) What is the meaning of Dysart's dream? (2) What is the significance of the phrase "Equus, my God-Slave"? (3) Why are the "Hosts of Pifco," etc. included among Alan's enemies?

Lecture:

Remember: ways in which Alan's experience exemplifies aspects of our second way of being religious, especially the dynamics of "authorization" and "empowerment."

R (10/11) *Equus*, Act Two

[Reflection Paper #2: possible topics (try to make connections with more ordinary religious experiences): (1) Why the focus on eyes in this story? (note positive and negative aspects of Alan's being seen by Equus) (2) Why/How does Alan's liberator (Equus) become his oppressor? (3) Are Dysart's expectations for Alan's life without Equus realistic? (relation to Dysart's sense of being a priest to the "normal" and, perhaps, his dream), (4) How does Dysart's final speech at the end of Act 2 relate back to his words at the very beginning of Act 1? (or, What is the chain in Dysart's mouth? What does he long for and why can't he get it?)]

Reading:

Note: (1) Mom's explanation for what happened to Alan; (2) the discoveries that seem to free Alan of his dependency on Equus; **Think about it:** What does this suggest about a "temptation to distortion" in our second way of being religious? **Note:** what Alan does to his "God" in the end; **Think about it:** (1) Why does he do this? (2) Is Dysart right about what way of life is likely to await Alan now that he has been "cured"? (3) What is the "chain" in the mouth of Dysart?

Type #3: "**Living Harmoniously through Conformity with the Cosmic Law**"
(or, with "Nature's Way")

F (10/12) "How Many Sheep Will It Hold?" by Barre Toelken, (**Electronic Reserve**); Video: Navajo Healer Billy Yellow (from *Millennium*)

Reading:

Note: (1) what the stress on straight lines in modern technological societies shows about our attitudes toward Nature; (2) what, by way of contrast, the Native Americans' preference for circles reveals about their attitudes; **Think about it:** How do "ghost beads" and weaving represent the idea of "sacred reciprocity"? **Remember:** what makes for health among Navajos.

Video (last session) and reading:

Remember: How a sand painting heals.

Lecture:

Remember: (1) the title of our third way of being religious and its meaning in terms of *goal* and *means*; (2) its "root metaphor" and "sacred directions"; eco-consciousness (as in Chief Seattle's Speech) as a contemporary expression of this "way."

M (10/15) Extra Credit Opportunity (5pts): attend performance by Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (19th century women's rights advocate) and write a reflection paper in response, focused especially on Stanton's thoughts on religion, due by 10/18. **7:00 PM Michelson Concert Hall, NFAC.**

T (10/16) "The Song of the Place," Sean Kane (electronic reserve, listed as from Rel 105 Reader); video: "Chief's Seattle's Speech"

Reading:

Think about it: (a) What are the implications of seeing the salmon as "people" for the Haida? (b) Why have a goddess (Creek Woman) in charge of the rivers? (c) How did the boys offend her? (d) How are story (myth) and land related for the Haida? (e) What, according to the author, is the consequence of desacralizing the environment?

Video:

Note: ecological implications of the speech attributed to Seattle.

Lecture:

Note: origins of this way of being religious in the experience of direct dependency on Nature for subsistence, **Remember:** characteristics of "eco-consciousness"

R (10/18) **Video:** "Taoism: A Question of Balance" (*Long Search*)

F (10/20) "Chinese Religions" by Laurence G. Thompson, WBR 203-10;

Reading:

Note: what is meant by calling Chinese religion "naturalistic"; **Remember:** (1) the meaning of the "Tao" and the "Yin/Yang" symbol; (3) the basis of Confucian morality; (4) the value of "Jen."

Lecture:

Remember: the two concepts central to the Chinese understanding of reality and corresponding keys to the good life.

T (10/23) "What Karma Explains" by Christmas Humphreys (WBR 219-24) and "Laws of Manu" (WBR 189-91 through #108)

Readings:

1. Karma (219-24):

Note: (1) explanation of the "Law of Karma"; (2) how karma explains suffering; (3) the advantages of working with the Law of Karma; **Think about it:** How might a karmic interpretation of a serious illness help the sick person?

2. Manu (189-91) (through #108)

Note: the four castes (*varna*) and how they are identified; **Think about it:** Which caste do you suppose composed this document?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) how the Law of Karma is like and unlike the golden rule; (2) how karma might enable someone to explain, predict, and control the events in their lives; (3) "metaphoric truth" of Karma; (4) the "temptation to distortion" for this way of being religious

R (10/25) "Unwise and Untimely?" by Martin Luther King, Jr. (WBR 197-202)

Reading and Lecture:

Remember: the significance of the following phrases for King's argument and for understanding our third type of religion: "an inescapable network of mutuality," "just and unjust laws," "moving with a sense of cosmic urgency"; **Think about it:** How is King able to overcome "stay-in-your-place-ism" while using a model that is often thought to support it?

Type #4: "**Spiritual Freedom through Discipline**" (Mysticism)

F (10/26) **Video:** "Footsteps of the Buddha" (*Long Search*)

Note: (1) life story of the Buddha; (2) discussion of Buddhist view of the nature of reality; **Think about it:** What would it mean to live in a world that is nothing but "vibrations"?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) the title of our fourth way of being religious and its meaning in terms of *goal* and *means*; (2) its "sacred direction."

T (10/30) *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, 1-34

Reading:

Note: (1) what Siddhartha is seeking and why he suppose that he must leave home to find it; (2) his attraction him to the Samanas; (3) his "sense of reality" as a Samana? (3) the disciplines he undertakes as a Samana; **Think about it:** What are these disciplines designed to teach? **Note:** (1) the reason he decides to leave the Samanas; (2) what attracts Sid to Gotama Buddha; **Think about it:** (1) What is the "flaw" that Sid finds in Gotama's teaching? (2) Why does Sid choose not to become a disciple of the Buddha? **Note:** (1) the insight that leads him to become a "man of the world"; (2) his experience of "formlessness"

Lecture:

Remember: (1) Initial elements in Siddhartha's "world, especially the experience of meditation and his conviction that "Atman is Brahman"; (2) the process of Siddhartha's change in standpoints; (3) Gotama's story, his "Four Noble Truths," the "8-fold path."

R (11/1) *Siddhartha*, 37-69

Reading:

Note: (1) Siddhartha's new "sense of reality"; (2) the role of his "inner voice"; (3) "samsara" and how Siddhartha comes to express it in gambling. **Think about it:** What is the "secret" of Siddhartha's and Kamala's extraordinary power and success? What have they sacrificed for these qualities that ordinary people have not?

Lecture:

Remember: (1) defining moments in Siddhartha's journey; (2) experience of "samsara."

Note: the tension between goal-seeking and love.

F (11/2) *Siddhartha*, 70-94

Reading and lecture:

Remember: (1) the new insight into his past life that Siddhartha gains from hearing "OM" again; (2) the metaphoric meaning of the River and the "secrets" it reveals to Siddhartha; **Think about it:** How is Sid's new "sense of reality" (secrets of the River) expressed in his response to Kamala's death?

T (11/6) *Siddhartha*, 95-122

[**Reflection Paper #3, 1st option:** topic - "think about it" #1 or 2]

Reading and lecture:

Reading:

Remember: (1) the new experience Siddhartha's son brings to him; (2) how the River teaches him to deal with the loss of his son; (3) what Siddhartha has learned about goal seeking; (4) how Siddhartha describes his final "sense of reality" to Govinda; **Think about it:** (1) How can Siddhartha say that "everything is good" (remember the hurricane, etc.)? (2) What is the significance of his "love" for that stone? (3) What is the significance of Govinda's experience at the end when he kisses Siddhartha?

R (11/8) "Buddhism in Thailand" (from: *The Justus Men Owe Women* by John C. Raines) (**Electronic Reserve**); video: Discipline of Poverty

[**Reflection Paper #3, 2nd option:** topics – (1) Is the inaction of Tibetan Buddhist monks in regard to the exploitation of women in keeping with the final sense of reality articulated by Siddhartha? If so, does this represent an inadequacy in that vision? (2) What do you think about the claim that one can identify a "the religion of the market"? (What are the "religious" aspects of global capitalism?) (3) How is the solution proposed by Tavivat, the author's guide to Tibetan Buddhism, to the economic upheavals helpful? What, if any, inadequacies do you see in his proposal?]

Reading:

Note: (1) story of the Buddha's aunt, Gotami; (2) the Eight Important Rules; (3) the situation now facing rural Thai women; (4) Max Weber's two systems of religious thought; (5) effects of the global economy on traditional rural economics; (6) causes of the prostituting of young daughters; **Remember:** (1) characteristics of the "religion of the market" (David Loy); (2) Buddhist critique of this "religion"

F (11/9) **Second Exam**

PART II: AFRICAN-AMERICAN WAYS OF BEING RELIGIOUS

[**Reflection Paper #4: (5 pts extra credit)** write a thoughtful response to *Narrative on the Life of Frederick Douglass* (e-book: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DouNarr.html>).

A few copies might also be available in the bookstore. (It's a quick and engaging read.) All papers due on or before Nov. 27th.

T (11/13) "Africa" (from *Santeria* by Joseph Murphy) (**Electronic Reserve**); Video: "Yoruba Traditional Religion" (*Dancing*)

Reading:

Remember: the following terms – *Ashe* (inc., the three ways of *ashe*), *Egungun*, a person's *ori* (inc., relation to the ancestors), the *orishas* (inc., manner in which they make their presence known and what they do for human beings), *ebo*, *Ifa*, the *babalawos* (inc., what do they do); **Note:** the work of Ogun, Oshun, and Shango.

Lecture:

Remember: sacred cosmos aspects of Yoruba religion

R (11/15) Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, pp. 3-19; video: *Amazing Grace*

Reading:

Note: (1) how Levine (author) understands the African-ness of the "culture" of American slaves; (2) mechanisms for releasing social tensions in West Africa; (3) importance of music and dance

F (11/16) *Black Culture*, pp. 25(first full paragraph)-39(end of first full paragraph)

Reading:

Note: (1) the processes by which slave songs were created and transmitted; (2) effects on white observers; (3) how spirituals helped the slaves create a "world" for themselves that was other than that imposed on them by whites; (4) most persistent image in slave songs; (5) adopted heroes; (6) expectations for the future.

Lecture:

Remember: (1) significance of the spiritual "Over My Head" (played in class); (2) ingredients (past, present, future) of the religious world created by slaves.

T (11/20) *Black Culture*, 39(last full paragraph)-55; video: *The Songs are Free*

Reading:

Note: (1) sense of the person and of God expressed in spirituals; (2) "hush harbors"; (3) the tone of slave worship; **Remember:** (1) how the Christianity of the slaves differed from that favored by their masters; (2) the significance of the Old Testament bias of the spirituals.

Thanksgiving Break

T (11/27) *Black Culture*, 58(first full paragraph)-74(top of page) [**Extra Credit Reflection Paper due**]

Reading:

Note: how the African way of looking at Nature allows people to exercise greater control over life; (2) when, according to Malenowski, magical practices are most likely to develop; (3) how the slaves used Nature for healing and signs; (3) protective charms, Douglass case in particular; (4) bewitching whites; **Remember:** how knowledge of magical techniques enabled slaves to feel superior to their masters.

R (11/29) *Black Culture*, pp. 102-121

Reading:

Note the following stories: Rabbit and the tar-baby; Rabbit, Wolf, and the hollow tree; Rabbit in well; Farmer Rabbit and the butter; Rabbit, Fox and the pig pen; **Remember:** (1) Rabbit rides Wolf; (2) how whites were represented in Trickster stories; (3) the view of the world represented in Trickster tales.

F (11/30) *Black Culture*, 121-135, 320-330 (top of page); video: This Far by Faith #2

Readings:

1. 121-135

Note: (1) the attitudes of the slaves toward lying to and stealing from their masters; (2) the following stories: the pigs who die of "malitis"; possum tender as chicken; how much Christmas?

2. 320-330

Note: (1) Freud's view of "tendentious humor"; (2) ways in which humor allowed African-Americans to laugh at their situation in the US; (3) jokes at preachers, religion **Think about it:** What are your favorite jokes in the reading? Why?

Lecture:

Remember: the legacies of the spiritual and the trickster after emancipation.

T (12/4) *Black Culture*, pp. 174-189; video *This Far by Faith* #3

Reading:

Note: (1) reasons good folks were initially opposed to "ragtime" music; (2) the stories of Thomas A. Dorsey and Mahalia Jackson; (3) why Gospel music was published in different forms for White and Black use; **Remember:** the similarities and differences between Spirituals and Gospel music?

R (12/6) Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. 1-97

Think about it: (1) Why does Celie write to God? (2) How might one *understand* the behavior of the men in the story toward women, even if one does not *condone* it? (3) What is it that attracts Celie to Shug? (4) Why does Celie have trouble sleeping after advising Harpo in regard to Sofia? (5) Why did she give Harpo that advice? (6) Why does the Mayor's wife offer Sofia a job? (7) Why do the white officials react so strongly to Sofia's response? (8) What is the significance of "Squeak" telling Harpo to call her "Mary Agnes"? **Note:** (1) Celie's plan for getting Sofia out of jail; (2) the plan adopted by the group (Why does their strategy sound familiar?)

F (12/7) *Color Purple*, pp. 98-154

Note: (1) what we learn about Celie's girlhood trauma when Shug "hears her into speech"; (2) the story behind Olinka reverence for the roof leaf ; (3) what do we learn about "Mister" (Albert) as Shug tells her story to Celie; **Think about it:** (1) Why, do you suppose, Nettie finds her interest in Africa growing after she hears about what happened to Sofia? (2) What kind of religious sentiments are expressed in the Olinka roof leaf ceremony? (3) How were the guilty chief's actions like those of the white colonists? What attitudes toward life are expressed in these actions?

T (12/11) *Color Purple*, pp. 155-191

Note: what Nettie learns about Olinka attitudes toward women and their way of dealing with nonconformists? **Think about it:** (1) What understanding of their life (type of religion) lies behind this approach? (2) How does awareness of this help Nettie and Samuel answer their agonizing question: How could their African relatives have sold them into slavery? **Note:** the revelation about her family Celie learns from Nettie?

R (12/13) *Color Purple*, 192-225

Do at Home Quiz: (1) What is it about Celie's old religious standpoint that she now realizes makes it inappropriate for her? What is it about Shug's religious standpoint that speaks to her needs?

Reading:

Note: (1) Celie's curse on Mister and its effects; **Think about it:** Why does her curse work? (2) What is the significance for Celie of the business she starts? What is so special about her product?

Lecture:

Remember: how Celie's new religious standpoint, while it has affinities with types #3 & 4, is an expression of a genuinely new "way of being religious."

F (12/14) *Color Purple*, 226-288

Think about it: (1) What enables Mister finally to become a "natural man"? What new understanding of life does he come to? (Note his reflections on "wonder" and "mystery") (2) What is it that enables Celie finally to call him "Albert"? (3) What does Celie learn from dealing with Shug's "last Fling"? (4) What is the point of the Olinka myth of the origins of white people?

Final Exam: W (12/19), 12:30-2:30