

DePaul University School for New Learning

Course: HC 265 Black Women in the Church and Society

Oak Forest Campus –Winter 2008

Instructor: Cynthia R. Milsap

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Competencies: H1F, H2A, H3B, H4

Course description: Students will explore the religious, social, economic, and political history of African American women. This history will be analyzed within the context of the Black Christian Church and the role it plays in shaping the views of spirituality and leadership among African American women. Focus will be placed on the intersection between religious involvement, spiritual development and social change/activism. Students will discuss how these factors impact the African American woman's perception of herself and how these perceptions influence her involvement in fight for social justice. We will use readings, class discussions, oral presentations, guest speakers, videos, group research (case study), and papers to foster student learning.

Women discussed will include Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, and current day women who are religious and social leaders. Students will learn about the historical role of the Black Church in leadership development and social action. Students will also learn about how African American interpretations of religion impact individual achievement and one's involvement in social/political movements.

Principal topics covered: Key topics will include the history and role of the Black Women in America, profiles of Black women religious and social leaders, history of the Black Church and its role in meeting social needs, and the role of Black Women in social movements (Civil War to present), and the relationship between spiritual and social activism.

Required Textbooks

1) Paula Giddings. *When and Where I Enter: The impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984 or most current edition. ISBN: 0-688-14650-3

2) Jeanne Porter. *Leading Ladies: Transformative Biblical Images for Women's Leadership*. Philadelphia: Innisfree Press Inc., 2000 (136 Roumfort Rd, 19119) ISBN: 1-880913-45-3

3) Cheryl Townsend Gilkes. *If it wasn't for the women*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 2001. ISBN: 1-57075-343-1

Course Evaluation: Students will be assessed based on class attendance, participation in class discussions, feedback papers, a group case study and a final research paper. For the group case study, 3 to 4 students will select a woman-led church, organization, or business. Students will visit the organization and gather information about its leadership, organizational history, services, and neighborhood context. Each student will be required to do a research paper and to participate in the group case study and presentation. Final paper topics will vary based on competency, but generally will focus on the life of a woman leader and/or issues in women's leadership.

Evaluation criteria and course assignments

All assignments will be graded based on the clarity of ideas expressed, the ability of students to both describe and analyze the topics covered, and the student's progress in acquiring new knowledge about the history and leadership roles of the Black women in America. Special learning emphasis will be on the Black Church and its role in fostering spirituality, leadership development, and community social change and development.

Grading

Attendance/class discussion--30 percent

Feedback papers--10 percent

Church/Organizational Group case study-- 35 percent

Final paper-- 25 percent

Attendance/class -- Regular class attendance is expected since students will receive points for class discussion and for being present. Students should come prepared to discuss readings and topics for each session.

Feedback papers -- Students will write periodic one-page opinion papers on various topics/questions related to class readings or discussions. These are graded in a nonjudgmental way and designed to solicit student response and participation in a more personal manner. Students receive credit but no letter grade for these assignments.

Group Case study - Students will select and visit a church or organization that is lead by an African American woman. This is a group assignment where three or four students will work together to gather information on their chosen organization (church, business, or service agency). The group will then present its findings in a 30-minute class presentation and a two to three page handout that provides background information on the leader and organization. Presentations may include videos, music, transparencies, or other materials which enhance the group's presentation. All group members must participate in the data collection, church/organization visit, and presentation. For the group case study, students will gather information on: the church or organization's history and structure; the leader's background and vision for the organization; its community of service; its stated or written vision, mission, and services; its community outreach activities; key demographics; and the role of women in the organization. The objective is to provide students with a first-hand learning experience that will help them to gain a comprehensive view of the church or organization's role in society, the leader's vision for action, and the method of teaching and leading others in achieving the mission.

Final Research Paper

The final research paper should be a minimum of 7 pages not including the cover and reference pages. The paper should include a reference page citing the sources used (books, interviews, etc.). Final paper topics will vary based on competency, but generally will focus on the life of a woman leader and/or issues in women's leadership. Final paper topics will be discussed with and approved by the instructor.

Weekly Course Outline and Readings

Week 1 -- Introduction to the course and Black Women's Leadership roles:

What is leadership? How do Women lead? When and Where?

Reading: Porter, p. 1-30; Gilkes, p. 1-28

Week 2 -- Social History of Black Women/Roles of Ordinary Women

Readings: p. Giddings, p. 1-55, Porter, p. 31-92;

Week 3 -- Roles of Black Women in the Church (Family/Social)

Readings: Black women in the church handout

Gilkes p. 43-120, Giddings, p. 57-131, Porter, 95-120

Week 4 -- Black Women's Club/Self-Help Movement (Activism)

Readings: Gilkes, p. 121-Giddings, p. 135-197

Week 5 --Women's Faith in Action: Profiles of Black Women leaders

Readings: Gilkes p. 121-180, Giddings, p. 199-258 (M. McLeod Bethune)

Week 6 --Black Women: Images, Self-esteem, and Empowerment

"Are Black Women too strong or not strong enough?"

Readings: Gilkes, p. 180-212, Giddings, p. 325-335

(Moynihan Report/Family Relationships)

Week 7 -- Group Presentations (Case studies)

Black Women and the Civil/Political Rights

Readings: Giddings, p. 261-324, 337-357

Week 8 -- Group Presentations (Case studies)

Week 9 -- Group Presentations (Case studies)

Week 10 -- Final Class: Black Women and the future: What next?

(Final wrap-up discussion, class evaluation, etc.)

***Final Paper Due: One week after the last class session**

Faculty: Cynthia R. Milsap has been a Visiting Faculty at the School for New Learning for 12 years. She currently serves as Director of Nurturing the Call, a program which prepares ministers and church leaders for urban ministry and community leadership, that is operated by SCUPE, the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago. She has previously served as Executive Director for The Night Ministry, a nonprofit organization founded by a coalition of North side congregations for the purpose of providing pastoral care, healthcare, and housing services to homeless youth and adults. She has served as coordinator of Faith-based educational programs at DePaul University's Egan Urban Center and is co-author of the study *The Black Churches of West Humboldt Park*. She is completing her doctoral work at Northern Illinois University where her research focus is the role of women in community and church leadership. She has a masters degree in journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and a bachelor's degree in English/French from Knox College in Galesburg IL.