

RS 114 for JRD credit
Statement of Rationale

JRD Certification criteria. Courses satisfying this GE will...

1. develop biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. These will enable students to understand justice and reconciliation in terms of the gospel and appropriate disciplinary frameworks, recognize sin, rebellion, and brokenness as such, and discern their responsibility in the work of justice and reconciliation within their own local context;

The entire class is shaped toward fulfilling this certification criteria. In this class, we will engage with biblical texts concerning slavery, which are inherently concerned with questions of justice and reconciliation. We will read these texts alongside interpreters from the African American church, learning from hermeneutical approaches developed within slavery to combat its injustices and enact justice and reconciliation.

The Text Analysis Worksheets, for instance, require students to explore biblical texts concerned with slavery, freedom, and justice. Developing contextual understandings of the texts and practicing hermeneutical strategies (especially douological interpretation, justice-oriented interpretation, and interpretation influenced by the preaching traditions of the African American church) give students opportunity to explore the concepts of justice, reconciliation, and diversity in the Bible and in contemporary society.

2. examine personal actions, social norms, and systemic practices involving race and racism in the United States as they relate to historic and contemporary patterns of belonging and exclusion, attending to how historical particularities and differences in power shape the responsibilities different parties have in the work of justice and reconciliation in light of God's kingdom;

Beyond the legal and social institution of slavery, New Testament texts concerned with slavery include Paul's theological metaphor of the enslavement of God's creation to the domination of sin and death, giving us opportunity to explicitly connect Christian tradition with the recognition of racism as both personal, individual sin and institutional, structural sin. As representatives of God's new creation, it is a Christian privilege and responsibility to participate in the "work of justice and reconciliation" as we live in God's kingdom on earth.

A specific example of this work is represented by the Interpreters, Theologians, and Church Leaders assignment. By researching and presenting the stories, hermeneutics, and theologies of Americans who have contributed to racial justice and reconciliation, students will have the opportunity to analyze the practices of race and racism. Their work will give them an appreciation for the theological contributions of different people to the difficult work of reconciliation and justice in the Church in the United States.

The major research project fits within the framework of the first two certification criteria. This project continues to develop 'biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity' as students consider the fraught history and contemporary practice of justice and reconciliation through the research of hermeneutics within marginalized communities.

3. model Christlike dialogue reflecting God's desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers, especially when confronting challenging or sensitive issues.

This class primarily operates as a seminar. We will practice the hard work of engaging in difficult conversations around biblical texts, hermeneutics, and racism and justice. I will introduce the LARA method for conducting effective conversations and debates at the beginning of the semester. The professor and all students will be expected to practice hospitality in the classroom.