

RS 114
The World of the New Testament: Slavery
Spring 2026

Whoever wishes to become great among you must take your orders, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.

Mark 10:43-44 (NRSVue, modified)

That slave who knew what his master wanted but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating.

Luke 12:47-48 (NRSVue)

Urge slaves to be submissive to their masters in everything, to be pleasing, not talking back, not stealing, but showing complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the teaching of God our Savior.

Titus 2:9-10 (NRSVue)

Slavery represents one of more difficult ethical questions of the New Testament. We hear throughout the Old Testament that God saved the people of God from slavery. Jesus's first message in Luke's Gospel announces freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:14-21). Paul proclaims that, in Christ, "there is no enslaved person or free person" (Galatians 3:28). At the same time, the people of Israel owned slaves. Jesus's parables narrate extreme violence against enslaved people (e.g., Mark 12:1-11). The letters to the churches instruct enslaved people to obey their (human) enslavers, even when their enslavers are also part of the church—and enslavers are not told to free the enslaved people they own (e.g., Ephesians 6:5-9). Slavery is recognized as injustice (e.g., 1 Pet 2:18-21), but no New Testament text endorses the abolition of slavery. In this class, we will explore the tension between slavery and freedom in the Bible. We will question how the metaphors, imagery, and instructions concerning slavery relate to the lived experiences of enslaved people in the first century. We will wonder how enslaved people may have participated in and contributed to Christian community and theology. We will ask what it might mean, theologically and practically, for enslaved people and enslavers to be "one in Christ."

These questions become only more urgent when we consider our own location as readers and interpreters. In the history of the United States, both abolitionists and advocates of slavery found support for their positions in the Bible. In church and at home, enslaved Africans were told to obey their enslavers—their obedience was God's will. For their part, White enslavers were told they had the God-given responsibility to instruct and discipline the slaves they owned. The legacies of slavery remain evident today in economic, educational, professional, and health disparities between African Americans and White Americans; in the ongoing struggle for civil rights; in the practical segregation in our churches; in our prisons and courts; in challenges to voting rights; and so much more. Slavery itself is a living concern in the illegal and unjust practices of human trafficking. In this class, we will investigate the competing interpretations of pro-slavery and abolitionist interpreters. We will listen to and learn from the hermeneutical practices of the African American church. We will consider the ways that racism continues to enslave us (see Romans 6-8!). We will consider the problem of human trafficking. Through this work, we will seek to live out our responsibility as new creations to represent "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (8:21 NRSVue).

Course Details

Professor: Caryn Reeder, creeder@westmont.edu, Porter Center room 13

Class Times: 3:15-5:05 on Monday and Wednesday, VL 203

Student Hours: 1:00-3:00 on Monday and Wednesday; 11-12 on Thursday; and by appointment

Course learning outcomes

RS 114 counts towards the RS major and minor as an upper division New Testament course. In addition, this course fulfills the Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity component of Westmont's General Education. As such, in this course:

1. Students will demonstrate their hermeneutical competence in the analysis of New Testament texts concerning enslavement in their historic, cultural, and rhetorical contexts (RS department).
 - o This learning outcome will be developed through Text Analysis Worksheets and in-class discussions.
 - o This learning outcome will be assessed by the Reading Biblical Texts research project.
2. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways (GE JRD).
 - o This learning outcome will be developed through course readings (noted in the schedule below), lectures, and class discussions.
 - o This learning outcome will be assessed by in-class writing responses; the Interpreters, Theologians, and Church Leaders presentation; and the Reading Biblical Texts research project.
3. Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (GE JRD).
 - o This learning outcome will be developed through course readings (Powery and Sadler, as well as additional readings noted in the schedule below), lectures, and class discussions.
 - o This learning outcome will be assessed by in-class writing responses; the Interpreters, Theologians, and Church Leaders presentation; and the Reading Biblical Texts research project.

Required texts

A physical copy of the Bible (CEB or NRSVue preferred).

Moss, Candida. 2024. *God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible*. New York: Little, Brown and Co.

Powery, Emerson B., and Rodney S. Sadler. 2016. *The Genesis of Liberation: Biblical Interpretation in the Antebellum Narratives of the Enslaved*. Westminster John Knox.

Additional required readings and recommended resources will be available on Canvas:

Baergen, Rene A. 2006. "Servant, Manager or Slave? Reading the Parable of the Rich Man and His Steward (Luke 16:1-8a) through the Lens of Ancient Slavery." *SR* 35:25-38.

Blake, Sarah. 2012. "Now You See Them: Slaves and Other Objects as Elements of the Roman Master." *Helios* 39:193-211.

Bonar, Chance Everett. 2025. "Manumission." Pages 66-82 in *Ancient Slavery and its New Testament Contexts*. Edited by Christy Cobb and Katherine A. Shaner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Bradley, Keith. 2000. "Animalizing the Slave: The Truth of Fiction." *JRS* 90:110-25.

Fitzgerald, John T. 2010. "The Stoics and the Early Christians on the Treatment of Slaves." Pages 141-75 in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*. Edited by Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Gäckle, Volker. 2021. "Jesus, the Slaves, and the Servant(s) in 1 Peter 2:18-25." Pages 273-93 in *Isaiah's Servants in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Edited by Michael A. Lyons and Jacob Stromberg. WUNT 554. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

-----, 2008. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 26:1-14.

-----, 2020. "Near a Church at Dusk." Pages 102-3 in *Cahiers d'Art*. Edited by Arthur Jafa. Paris.

Johnson, Matthew V., James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams. 2012. *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Slavery in Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Johnson, Walter. 2003. "On Agency." *Journal of Social History* 37:113-24.

Jones, Robert P. 2020. *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Commented [cr1]: This JRD SLO will be approached in a variety of specific ways detailed in the descriptions of assignments and the class schedule below. In general, I conceive of this class's contribution to this SLO from several frameworks: 1) NT and classics scholars often draw on the personal records of people enslaved in the United States to illuminate the lived experience of enslavement in the New Testament world, giving the opportunity to consider the history of slavery in the US and listen to Black American voices; 2) Although Roman slavery was not racial in the same way US slavery was, recent work has argued it was "racialized" in the sense that, as in European and American slavery, enslavers dehumanized and infantilized the peoples they enslaved, giving us opportunity to consider what race and racialization mean and what a Christian response might be.

Commented [cr2]: Again, the class addresses this SLO in various ways. In general, I conceive of the contribution of this class to the SLO with: 1) an exploration of the ways NT texts on slavery were important in pro-slavery and abolitionist discourse in the 19th century (especially for Black American Christianity), with extensive reading in Black Christian hermeneutics; 2) the analysis of NT texts concerned with "slavery" as structural sin, and human reconciliation as a Christian responsibility in God's just "new creation"; and 3) the contemporary concerns of slavery in (for instance) racial injustice and human trafficking (with its racial dimensions), and Christian responses (including mission and social action).

Commented [cr3]: In support of the JRD GE, I have incorporated as much scholarship from non-White American scholars as I can (noted with bold type in the list below).

Commented [cr4]: Moss's conversation-shifting book on the involvement and contribution of enslaved Christians to the writing, distribution, interpretation, and preservation of the New Testament is cogently and convincingly argued. Our analysis and discussion of the book addresses both JRD SLOs, giving students a framework for reconsidering the biblical concepts of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. We will consider how the book contributes to a framework for addressing racial justice today.

Commented [cr5]: Powery and Sadler introduce historic African American practices of interpretation in response to slavery. This book was selected to contribute to the second JRD SLO: Students will explore Christian perspectives on justice and reconciliation in response to the oppressive system of slavery, reading diverse voices to understand how African American Christians historically have understood "God's loving reign" and our responsibility to "pursue justice and reconciliation."

- Joshel, Sandra R., and Lauren Hackworth Petersen. 2014. *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Clarice J.** 2005. "The Eyes Have It: Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers." Pages 221-39 in *A People's History of Christianity, Volume 1: Christian Origins*. Edited by Richard A. Horsley. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- McKeown, Niall. 2012. "Magic, Religion, and the Roman Slave: Resistance, Control and Community." Pages 279-308 in *Slaves and Religions in Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Modern Brazil*. Edited by Stephen Hodkinson and Dick Geary. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars.
- Padilla Peralta, Dan-el.** 2024. "The Affects of Manumission: Racial Melancholy and Roman Freed Persons." Pages 242-77 in *Freed Persons in the Roman World: Status, Diversity, and Representation*. Edited by Sinclair W. Bell, Dorian Borbonus, and Rose MacLean. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pargas, Damian A. "Slavery in the US South." Pages 441-57 in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History*. Edited by Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Patterson, Orlando.** 1982. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Powery, Emerson B.** 2022. "Reading with the Enslaved: Placing Human Bondage at the Center of the Early Christian Story." Pages 71-90 in *Bitter the Chastening Rod: Africana Biblical Interpretation after Stony the Road We Trod in the Age of BLM, SayHerName, and MeToo*. Lanham: Lexington / Fortress Academic.
- Ramelli, Ilaria L. E. 2016. *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reeder, Caryn A. *Slaves of Christ*. Forthcoming with Baker Academic.
- Rhodes, Michael J. 2023. *Just Discipleship: Biblical Justice in an Unjust World*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- Schipper, Jeremy. 2011. *Disability & Isaiah's Suffering Servant*. Biblical Refigurations. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Severy-Hoven, Beth. 2012. "Master Narratives and the Wall Painting of the House of the Vettii, Pompeii." *Gender & History* 24:540-80.
- Shaner, Katherine A. 2017. "Seeing Rape and Robbery: ἀρπαγμός and the Philippians Christ Hymn (Phil. 2:5-11)." *BibInt* 25:342-63.
- Smith, Abraham.** 2023. "Visualizing Oppression: Slavery and the Arts of Domination." Pages 175-201 in *Divided Worlds? Challenges in Classics and New Testament Studies*. Edited by Caroline Johnson Hodge, Timothy A. Joseph, and Tat-Siong Benny Liew. SemeiaSt 100. Atlanta: SBL.
- Smith, Mitzi J.** 2022. "Abolitionist Messiah: A Man Named Jesus Born of a Doulē." Pages 53-70 in *Bitter the Chastening Rod: Africana Biblical Interpretation after Stony the Road We Trod in the Age of BLM, SayHerName, and MeToo*. Lanham: Lexington / Fortress Academic.
- Velden, Nina Müller van. 2019. "When Gender Performance Is Not Straightforward: Feet, Masculinity and Power in John 13:1-11." *Neot* 53:291-309.
- Williams, Jeremy L.** 2025. "Race and Ethnicity." Pages 101-18 in *Ancient Slavery and its New Testament Contexts*. Edited by Christy Cobb and Katherine A. Shaner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Class policies

Hospitality and mutual respect

According to Westmont's Community Life statement, "our social and intellectual growth needs freedom for exploration complemented by a commitment to good will and graciousness." We will practice both freedom and commitment in RS 114 by listening to each other carefully; by asking questions as we seek to understand each other; by being open to the exploration of different interpretations of biblical texts and Christian traditions; with intellectual honesty as we evaluate varying perspectives; and by engaging in discussion with respect and civility.

Commented [cr6]: JRD Certification Criterion 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.

Disagreement is a good and useful element in social and intellectual growth. As we all know, though, disagreements often become acrimonious, and can actually prevent growth. In this class, we'll try to disagree constructively, with respect for the viewpoints of others. All participants in the class are expected to avoid the ridicule, abuse, or harassment of other students, your professor, or guest lecturers. I hope you will engage fully in class—but do so in the recognition that words matter. Practice kindness and generosity as you participate in the classroom and beyond.

Academic accommodations

Students should be aware of Westmont College's Accessibility Resource Office (aro@westmont.edu). The following statement is provided by the director, Seth Miller: "Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities."

Emergency accommodations are also possible for students without documentation. In particular, illness, injuries, and stress related to travel, academics, work, family life, pandemics, and personal relationships can happen to anyone. If you feel you need a short-term emergency accommodation to manage coursework, please speak to your professor to work out an appropriate plan.

Academic integrity, technology, and generative AI

Westmont College is committed to the highest standards of academic honesty. Take the time to read the college's policies on academic integrity thoroughly (it's linked through the Canvas page for the class). Please reflect this commitment in your work: avoid cheating, falsification, and plagiarism. These standards also apply to AI tools (like ChatGPT), which have some productive uses but also dangerously diminish your own participation in your education—in thinking, engaging, communicating, and developing. According to the college's policies, you cannot use AI to produce original academic work. That means you should not use AI to spark ideas, summarize research, or write essays.

So, even though you have the resources of the internet at your fingertips, I ask that you take these policies seriously in this class. Follow instructions for what resources you are allowed to use for assignments and quizzes. Thoroughly cite anything you take from someone else – quotes, phrases, words, facts, theories, ideas – even if I know what source you're using. If you didn't think it, don't take credit for it. When in doubt, cite! In written work, reference biblical passages by book, chapter, and verse (Mark 15:51-52). Cite your secondary sources in an acceptable style (SBL, MLA, APA, etc.); at a minimum, you must provide the author's name and page number for each quote, phrase, word, or idea you use.

I take academic honesty very seriously. To help you treat this concern seriously, for the assignments submitted on Canvas, Turnitin will be enabled. Be sure to check your "similarity score" and "AI percentage" in Turnitin's analysis of your work; if either number is higher than 10%, you must explain why (see further instructions in specific assignments). If you plagiarize, cheat on, or falsify any work in this class, you will receive a 0 for the assignment, and a severe offense may result in failure of the course. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter; please don't do it.

Attendance, evacuations, and quarantines

Attending class means being present physically and mentally: during class, you should be seated on time, with all assigned readings completed, prepared to contribute to class discussions. Habitual tardiness, absence of body or mind, and unpreparedness may result in loss of points.

There are good reasons to miss class. In the case of illness, family emergency, an approved extra-curricular activity, or an overwhelming sense of pandemic loss and pain, please let me know by email (creeder@westmont.edu), before class if possible. Be sure to get notes from an attentive student, and remember you're always welcome to stop by during my student hours to discuss any material you missed.

In the case of campus closures, students should plan to complete all required work scheduled for the day. I will provide online resources to compensate for missed in-class time, including scheduled quizzes. A class Zoom session or additional assignments may also be incorporated to support student learning.

I encourage you to stay home (or at least wear a mask) when you're sick, whether it's a cold, the flu, Covid, or another virus. Do your best keep up with the readings and activities assigned for the class day on Canvas. Be sure to get notes from an attentive student, and remember you're always welcome to stop by during student hours to discuss any material you missed.

Student hours

During scheduled student hours, you'll find me in or near my office (Porter Center, room 13), waiting for you to stop by and discuss the New Testament, the church, current events, movies, books, life experience, travel... You are warmly invited to stop by to ask questions about course material, to talk about study skills, or simply to hang out.

You do not need to make an appointment for in-person student hours—just drop by! My student hours for spring 2026 are as follows: 1:00-3:00 on Monday and Wednesday, 11-12 on Thursday, and by appointment (if the scheduled times don't work for you).

Submitting assignments and making up missed work

All readings and assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus. To be prepared to complete your readings and submit your assignments on time, read the syllabus and any assignment requirements carefully so you can plan your approach ahead of schedule. Factor in time to balance any computing problems (which are not an adequate reason to miss an assignment, or submit work late).

If you miss a deadline for submitting your work, you can always turn it in late (but note that there may be penalties for excessive amounts of late work). I want to recognize the particular stressors of deadlines and workloads, but I also want to keep you on track so you don't fall behind - so if you find yourself struggling to keep up, please let me know. We can always work out a plan for completing the class!

Grade definitions

Westmont has an extensive description of what it means to get an A, B, C, D, or F (available on Canvas). Here is my own brief summary of the policy:

- A: Exceptional. Engages with course material critically, grasps its wider implications, and applies it creatively. Submitted work is superior in content and presentation.
- B: Very good. Demonstrates interest in and comprehension of the material and the associated scholarship. Submitted work is neat and mostly free of errors.
- C: Satisfactory. Meets the course requirements and shows adequate knowledge and understanding of the material. Submitted work is presented according to expectations.
- D: Poor. Completes course requirements, but submitted work does not show understanding of the material.
- F: Failing. Course requirements are not met and submitted work indicates a lack of understanding.

The course assessment rubric available on Canvas gives a more detailed explanation of my expectations for your progress. Note that grades will be entered on Canvas so that you can track your progress in the class. But also keep in mind that grades are not everything—your learning matters more than the points earned.

Grading scale

A 94-100	B 84-86	C 74-76	D 64-66
A- 90-93	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	D- 60-63
B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59

Course components

1. Daily Preparation (30%)

This class will operate primarily as a seminar. To make the class profitable for yourself and everyone else (see Phil 2:4), you should complete readings and research before class, bring your Bible, textbooks or other readings, and notes with you, and be ready to participate in a meaningful way in class discussions. Your grade will be hurt by lack of preparation, lack of participation, misuse of technology (texting, watching movies, etc.), and excessive absence or tardiness.

The readings for this class allow you to engage with the concepts, histories, and experiences of slavery and its intersection with theology more deeply, giving you the tools and information you need to begin to become proficient interpreters of scripture. All assigned work should be completed before class. Being prepared to discuss an assigned reading requires deep thought. Read carefully and intentionally, noting literary elements of biblical texts; key words and ideas; theological development; and the constructions of slavery and freedom. Be able to summarize and critically evaluate course readings. Is the argument logical? Is the supporting evidence adequate? Are alternate interpretations considered? Also consider how the particular readings assigned for the day connect with other course readings and discussions, other courses you've taken, and your own experience of the church and world.

To prepare for class discussions and assignments, prepare a brief analysis of assigned secondary readings: (a) summarize the main point of each assigned reading in 3-5 sentences; (b) identify 1-3 contributions toward your understanding of course material; (c) list 1-3 questions, concerns, or critiques you have after completing the reading; and (d) connect the reading to the class as a whole (conceived of in very broad terms!).

In-class discussions, occasional writing assignments, and small group work will help develop your ability to consider, analyze, criticize, and appreciate the course readings.

2. Text Analysis Worksheets (30%)

This semester we will dig deeply into texts concerning enslavement across the New Testament. We will practice and develop skills of close reading, giving attention to grammar, wording, literary structure, and theology. We will venture behind the text to understand historical, cultural, and rhetorical contexts. We will trace the text forward in search of the church's interpretation of it through time, especially in the context of slavery, racial injustice, and reconciliation in the United States. Finally, we will stand in front of the text to hear its challenge for us.

To facilitate your participation in this process, you will complete regular analysis worksheets on assigned texts. These worksheets will ask you to study the text, research specific elements of the text, consult commentaries, and read occasional articles as assigned. You will use your work in class, and worksheets will be graded irregularly throughout the semester; worksheets submitted after the class period in which they are collected will be counted late.

3. Slavery, Freedom, and the Life of the Church (40%)

These two research projects give you opportunity to analyze, appreciate, critique, and develop particular elements of Church life with respect to the concerns of slavery and freedom. The details for each project are available on Canvas.

A) Interpreters, Theologians, and Church Leaders (variable due dates, 15%)

Commented [cr7]: *JRD Certification Criterion 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.*

JRD SLO 1: Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways. The Text Analysis Worksheets 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.

Commented [cr8]: *JRD Certification Criterion 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.*

JRD SLO 1
JRD SLO 2: Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. 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.

Student presentations will be scattered through the semester.

The interpretation of slavery in the New Testament is difficult in historic context. Given our own historic context, it is also fraught with the debates over slavery in the United States, the legacies of slavery in the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras, and our own inheritance of the institutional sins of racism. For this project, you will research an American interpreter, theologian, or church leader involved in the work of racial justice and reconciliation (see [the list of possibilities](#) on Canvas; if you would like to research someone not on the list, please consult the professor). Prepare a short presentation to your chosen person's life, hermeneutical approaches, and theological contributions to the realization of God's justice in our society.

B) Reading Biblical Texts (due during the final exam period, 25%)

What do New Testament texts concerned with enslavement in the Roman Empire have to do with the world in which we live? How do we read and interpret slavery in the New Testament well, given the legacies of slavery and racial injustice in our society? How do these texts challenge us to pursue and enact justice on behalf of the oppressed? Your research project for this semester asks you to engage in a detailed study of a relevant New Testament text, explore interpretations of your text within marginalized communities (or, alternatively, using the hermeneutical approaches developed within marginalized communities), and connect your text with race, racism, and racial justice in the United States.

The project involves several components:

- An initial choice of text and discussion of research concerns (due in February)
- An annotated bibliography (due in late March)
- A draft paper (due in early April) and peer review (due late April)
- A final paper including commentary on your text and reflection on your text's contribution to justice, reconciliation, and diversity (due during the final exam period)

Course schedule

Schedule, readings, and assignments may be modified. Canvas will be updated to reflect any changes.

Topic	Readings / Assignments	RS / JRD SLOs
Introduction (weeks 1-2)		
The study of slavery: the New Testament and the United States	C. Martin, "The Eyes Have It" D. Pargas, "Slavery in the US South"	JRD: SLO 1, 2
The study of slavery in antiquity	S. Joshel and L. Petersen, <i>The Material Life of Roman Slaves</i> , chs. 1-2	
Interpreting slavery in the New Testament	Powery and Sadler, chs. 1-2	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 2
Slavery today	Guest lecture: Jim Wright on human trafficking in Santa Barbara Reading Biblical Texts research proposal	JRD: SLO 2
Definitions (weeks 3-5)		
Categories of enslavement	Primary Sources 1 E. Powery, "Reading with the Enslaved"	JRD: SLO 1, 2
Slavery as social death	O. Patterson, <i>Slavery and Social Death</i> , ch. 2	JRD: SLO 1
Slavery and agency	W. Johnson, "On Agency" S. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts"	JRD: SLO 1, 2
Race and racialization	Text Analysis Worksheet: Genesis 9:22-27 Powery & Sadler, ch. 4 J. Williams, "Race and Ethnicity"	JRD: SLO 1

Commented [cr9]: The list (in development) includes historic and contemporary figures from the African American church, for instance:

- Virginia Broughton (a Black missionary in the post-slavery South)
- Frederick Douglass
- Brenda Salter McNeil (professor at Seattle Pacific University)
- Luke Powery (dean of Duke University Chapel and professor of African American Studies)
- Amanda Berry Smith (evangelist in the African Methodist Episcopal Church)
- Howard Thurman
- Sojourner Truth
- John-Howard Wesley (pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia)

Commented [cr10]: *JRD Certification Criteria 1 and 2, and SLO 1 and 2.*

The major research project continues to develop 'biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity' and consider the fraught history and contemporary practice of justice and reconciliation through the research of hermeneutics within marginalized communities.

Commented [cr11]: Pargas's introduction to the history of slavery in the USA reviews key developments, lived realities, and consequences of the slave system. Martin's chapter introduces the study of slavery in the New Testament from an African American lens. She ...

Commented [cr12]: See above on Powery & Sadler's book.

Commented [cr13]: Learning about the issues of human trafficking in our own time and space gives students a way to understand the continued significance of the semester's work for the church's participation in enacting God's justice.

Commented [cr14]: The study of slavery, whether in the Roman Empire or the United States, necessarily addresses the core concepts of the JRD GE: the sin and brokenness of human relationships; institutional ...

Commented [cr15]: Powery's chapter centers slavery in the New Testament as a way to recognize marginalized perspectives, develop hermeneutical sensitivity to texts that can be misused to oppress or ...

Commented [cr16]: Patterson's work on slavery changed the way New Testament scholars understand slavery in the Roman world, facilitating the connections between the analysis of slavery as a system of natal alienation in the ancient world and in US history.

Commented [cr17]: Johnson's article addresses the historical approaches to the study of slavery as social death vs. "slave agency" (New Social History) in slavery in the Americas. He proposes a way forward to thread between the extremes, recognizing "social solidarities" ...

Commented [cr18]: This class will address the definitions of race and racialization; the applicability of these concepts in different historic and cultural periods (the Roman Empire and the United States, both historically and contemporarily); and the ways that ...

	S. Hartman, "Near a Church at Dusk"	
Freedom	Text Analysis Worksheet: Defining Freedom C. Bonar, "Manumission"	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 1
Slavery and Israel (weeks 5-6)		
The exodus narrative	Powery & Sadler, ch. 3	JRD: SLO 2
The torah	Text Analysis Worksheet: Deuteronomy	RS: Hermeneutics
Isaiah's "servant"	Text Analysis Worksheet: Isa 52:13-53:12 Choice of readings (Schipper, <i>Disability and Isaiah's Suffering Servant</i> ; Gäckle, "Jesus, the Slaves, and the Servant(s)")	RS: Hermeneutics
Roman Slavery and the New Testament (weeks 7-13)		
Slavery and the New Testament (2 classes)	Moss, <i>God's Ghostwriters</i>	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 1 & 2
Household life	Primary sources 2 Reeder, <i>Slaves of Christ</i> , chs. 2-3	
Household codes	Powery & Sadler, ch. 5 Text Analysis Worksheet: Eph 6:5-9, Col 3:22-4:1, 1 Pet 2:18-25	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 2
Experiences of slavery	Primary sources 3 Choice of readings (B. Severy-Hoven, "Master Narratives"; K. Bradley, "Animalizing the Slave"; S. Blake, "Now You See Them") S. Hartman, <i>Lose Your Mother</i> , ch. 9	JRD: SLO 1
Parables 1	Text Analysis Worksheet: Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 12:35-48 Reading Biblical Texts annotated bibliography due	RS: Hermeneutics
Slave resistance	Primary sources 4 Joshel and Peterson, <i>Material Life</i> , ch. 3 N. McKeown, "Magic, Religion, and the Roman Slave"	JRD: SLO 2
Parables 2	Text Analysis Worksheet: Luke 16:1-13 R. Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?"	RS: Hermeneutics
Philosophy	Primary sources 5 J. Fitzgerald, "The Stoics"	
Metaphors of slavery	Text Analysis Worksheet: Romans R. Jones, <i>White Too Long</i> , selections	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 1 & 2
Manumission	Primary sources 6 D. Padilla Peralta, "The Affects of Manumission" Powery & Sadler, excursus	JRD: SLO 1
Slavery and the church	Text Analysis Worksheet: Luke 4:16-21, 1 Cor 7:21-24, and Rev 18:11-17 Choice of readings (M. Smith, "Abolitionist Messiah"; A. Smith, "Visualizing Oppression"; I. Ramelli, "Gregory Nyssen") M. Rhodes, <i>Just Discipleship</i> , chs. 3 & 8	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 2

Commented [cr19]: The work on defining freedom in terms of New Testament theology contributes to students' understanding of "God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ."

Commented [cr20]: See above on Moss's book.

Commented [cr21]: The dehumanization of enslaved people in the Roman context of the New Testament reverberates with slavery in the history of the US, and therefore also with contemporary racial stereotypes and slurs, and the consequences of these stereotypes and slurs in the structures of racial injustice. Hartman's work again provides a framework for connecting American experiences of slavery with contemporary realities of racism and racialized affect.

Commented [cr22]: The study of the ways enslaved people resisted the dehumanization, oppression, and violence of enslavement will be used to support a discussion of Christian responsibility to pursue justice and reconciliation.

Commented [cr23]: Paul's metaphor of the enslavement of all creation to the oppressive domination of sin and death gives us opportunity to explore race, racism, and racialization as institutional sin, as well as the Christian responsibility to live out the hope of new creation by enacting God's eschatological justice in the here-and-now. Selections of readings from Jones's *White Too Long* provides an analysis of the intersections of white supremacy and American Christianity to frame our discussion of our contemporary context.

Commented [cr24]: Padilla Peralta's chapter explores the concept of "racial melancholy" and race as an "affective system", connecting Roman slavery with racialized systems of slavery in the Americas.

Commented [cr25]: The work for today (on biblical texts and secondary readings) explore the theological foundations of the work of reconciliation and justice, and emphasizes the divine call to pursue justice and freedom. Selections of readings from Rhodes's *Just Discipleship* connect biblical ethics with contemporary US politics and society to frame our discussion.

Text Studies (weeks 14-15)		
Luke 22 and John 13	Text Analysis Worksheet Choice of readings (N. Velden, "Feet, Masculinity and Power"; Reeder, <i>Slaves of Christ</i> , ch. 5) Reading Biblical Texts draft due	RS: Hermeneutics
Philippians	Text Analysis Worksheet K. Shaner, "Rape and Robbery"	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 2
1 Peter	Text Analysis Worksheet Reading Biblical Texts peer review due	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 1
Philemon	Text Analysis Worksheet Choice of readings from M. Johnson, J. Noel, and D. Williams, <i>Onesimus Our Brother</i>	RS: Hermeneutics JRD: SLO 2
Reading Biblical Texts final paper (due during the final exam period)		

Commented [cr26]: The representation of Jesus as "slave" in Philippians grounds Christian identity and practice: self-humiliation, placing the good of others above one's self, mutuality. We will use our work in Philippians to address

Commented [cr27]: The "instructions" to enslaved people in 1 Peter became part of pro-slavery messages in the church in the US. A class lecture and in-class discussion will explore a selection of sermons and letters encouraging enslavers to discipline their enslaved people on the basis of 1 Peter, and we will address both the significance of such messages for understanding the sin of racism and hermeneutical strategies to counter such interpretations in pursuit of God's justice.

Commented [cr28]: The collection of studies of Philemon in *Onesimus Our Brother*, almost all written by descendants of people enslaved in the United States, adopt a variety of hermeneutical approaches centering racial justice and the work of reconciliation.