

Statement of Rationale: Race and Gender on the American Stage (TA-140)

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;

- **Readings:**

- *Faithful Anti-Racism* excerpt, Edmonson & Brennan (Week 1)
- *Racism as a Christian Problem* excerpt, Teel (Week 3)
- “Multiplying Masculinities” in *Sex, Gender, and Christianity*, Allen (Week 6)

- **Final Performance Project**

- This project is broken down into 4 parts to scaffold the intense process of constructing a performance into manageable pieces. In part II, students must reflect on their lived experiences of race and/or gender in order to identify experiences they might want to explore in their final performance. They answer a series of 15 questions to help them begin structuring fragments into a cohesive narrative. This list asks them to reflect on the sociocultural context of their experience, their role in the experience, the feelings of others in the experience, perceptions of the body, and the ethics of storytelling.¹ They are also asked to answer the question “How does your faith intersect with and inform the story you are going to tell?”

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

- **Critical questions**

- Each week, students are tasked with writing an open-ended discussion question which dialogically engages the week’s assigned readings. Typically, this will mean connecting a play with one or more theoretical, historical, or critical texts related to the play’s themes or the sociocultural moment of its initial production. These questions are then used to structure class discussions.

¹ Full guidelines for this project including the comprehensive list of questions for part II is included as an addendum on this proposal.

- **Discussion of Readings**
 - In class discussion of weekly readings, which include both plays and theoretical writings on race, gender, faith, and performance, is the backbone of the course. There is very little formal lecture to allow for student reflection, questioning, and critical engagement with the central questions of the course: “How do theater and performance reify, subvert, and even create cultural ideas of race and gender? And What is my role as Christ-following creative in the ongoing kingdom work of justice, diversity, and reconciliation?”²
- **Final Performance Project:**
 - In part III of the project, students add research to their script. They are required to find 1 outside academic source that connects to the themes and issues explored in the creative piece as well as 3 quotations from critical sources on the course reading list. In this way, the creative, expressive element of the work is in conversation with research on “social norms and systemic practices” around race and gender in the contemporary US context.

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

- **Establishing collective code of conduct**
 - On the first day of the semester, we collectively establish a code of conduct for classroom discussions. This code is printed and distributed to all students in the class. Though a seemingly small activity, the collective dialogue required to establish a respectful space for challenging discussions is truly the heart of the course. Beginning the course in this way models practices for Christlike dialogue inside the classroom and beyond.
- **Performance of final project**
 - The final assessment is a public performance of students’ original autoethnographic performance projects which engage their lived experience and faith, creative expression, as well as critical & theoretical texts. Not only do students construct the final performance as a collective, fostering dialogue and compromise, but performing these pieces publicly encourages dialogue among the broader campus community.
- **Daily discussions of course material**
 - In class discussion of weekly readings, which include both plays and theoretical writings on race, gender, faith, and performance, is the backbone of the course. Discussions are structured around student generated discussion questions, allowing opportunities for practicing curiosity, engaging in productive dialogue, and growing in understanding of how others think about the issues of the course.

² See page 1 of the course syllabus.

JDR SLO's:

1. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.
 - Critical Questions
 - Each week, students are tasked with writing an open-ended discussion question which dialogically engages the week's assigned readings. These questions are then used to structure class discussions of reconciliation, justice, and diversity.
 - Reading and discussion
 - Edmonson, Christina Barland and Chad Brennan. "Faithful Antiracists Have Wisdom," in *Faithful Antiracism: Moving Past Talk to Systemic Change*. Intersity Press, 2022. (Week 1)
 - Teel, Karen. "Racism as a Christian Problem." *Racism and the Image of God*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. (Week 3)
 - Allen, David G. "Multiplying Masculinities: An Overview of Contemporary Theories of Masculinity" in *Sex, Gender, and Christianity*, edited by Priscilla Pope-Levinson and John R. Levinson. Wipf and Stock, 2012. (Week 6)
 1. Class discussion is the backbone of this course. Analysis of relevant issues happens in community as the diverse perspectives of the class and assigned readings are shared and debated.
 - Final project
 - In part II, students must reflect on their lived experiences of race and/or gender in order to identify experiences they might want to explore in their final performance. They answer a series of 15 questions to help them begin structuring fragments into a cohesive narrative. This list asks them to reflect on the sociocultural context of their experience, their role in the experience, the feelings of others in the experience, perceptions of the body, and the ethics of storytelling.³ They are also asked to answer the question "How does your faith intersect with and inform the story you are going to tell?"
 - Additionally, the entire final project is informed by a theological perspective on identity and artistry, as presented in Prescott, "Who do you say I am? Artist and Christian: Two Identities, One Person."⁴

³ Full guidelines for this project including the comprehensive list of questions for part II is included as an addendum on this proposal.

⁴ Prescott, Theodore. "Who do you say I am? Artist and Christian: Two Identities, One Person," in *It Was Good: Making Art to the Glory of God*, edited by Ned Bustard. Square HaloBooks, 2000.

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.
 - Readings and discussion
 - Edmonson, Christina Barland and Chad Brennan. "Faithful Antiracists Have Wisdom," in *Faithful Antiracism: Moving Past Talk to Systemic Change*. Intersity Press, 2022. (Week 1)
 - Teel, Karen. "Racism as a Christian Problem." *Racism and the Image of God*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. (Week 3)
 - Allen, David G. "Multiplying Masculinities: An Overview of Contemporary Theories of Masculinity" in *Sex, Gender, and Christianity*, edited by Priscilla Pope-Levinson and John R. Levinson. Wipf and Stock, 2012. (Week 6)
 - Prescott, Theodore. "Who do you say I am? Artist and Christian: Two Identities, One Person," in *It Was Good: Making Art to the Glory of God*, edited by Ned Bustard. Square HaloBooks, 2000. (Weeks 1 & 7)
 1. These texts are included at key intervals in the course to ensure that a faithful perspective is continuously engaged with in discussions and Critical Questions.
 - Final Project
 - This project fosters reflection and analysis of personal identity as a raced and gendered subject - but also as a Christian and role of each artist in the kingdom work of justice, reconciliation, and diversity.
 1. The project is also a collaborative one. Once students have composed their scripts, the class must create a cohesive performance using the diverse personal narratives, positionalities, and perspectives of the group.

Addendum I: Final Performance Project Description & Guidelines

Part 1: DUE Oct 22, 2025

1. List of experiences:

For this initial stage of the project, you will create two lists:

- a. a list of 8-10 moments, memories, or observations about your lived experience of race and gender that feel significant to you/that you might want to explore in writing and performance (think firsts, turning points, realizations, failures, wins etc.)

****** You do NOT need to dig into your traumas to find these memories - unless you really want to. Memories do not need to be traumatic in order to be significant. Moments of joy are perfectly appropriate!*

******Please keep in mind that I am a mandated reporter and if you disclose any instances of abuse to me, whether past or ongoing, I am legally obligated to report them.*

- b. Short descriptions are sufficient, i.e. “being catcalled on state street” or “the hope I felt protesting against ICE raids alongside such a diverse crowd of people” or “the first time I really felt my privilege - June 2009” etc. etc.

Worth 20 points

Part II: DUE Oct 31, 2025

Answer the abbreviated questionnaire from the Spry reading listed below.

Read through the list of questions before you begin writing. Notice which experience/experiences from Part I are coming to mind as you review the questions. Narrow the experiences to just 1 or 2 - do not try to answer all these questions for every experience you listed in part 1.

1. What are the expectations or norms, or “single stories” about gender, religion, success, etc. that impact your performance of self within the experience/experiences you brainstormed?
2. What social hierarchies and power relations are involved (i.e. class, gender, race, religion) and how do norms and expectations of the sociocultural context affect you and the choices you have made?
3. What are the major critiques of these systems of power/dominant narratives?

4. Where are you situated within these structures and why? (Am I a cultural insider? outsider? Or something else entirely?)
5. In what ways have I been rewarded or punished for meeting or not meeting the expectations of these systems?
6. How do the norms and expectations identified in the sociocultural context affect *others* in these structures as relates to my experience?
7. Where and when do I have cultural privilege? Lack of privilege? How is privilege or lack of it connected to these power systems?
8. What interactions with others most affected your experience? Why? (who are the other characters in your story and what is their role?)
9. Identify any patterns of words, language use, slang, phrases, or conversations that emerged in interactions with others.
10. How is your body “read” by others within the sociocultural context of the experience?
11. Does the color, gender, size, shape, clothing, of your body meet or differ from cultural norms and dominant narratives operating within the sociocultural context of your experience? How do you fulfill or purposefully work against the readings or cultural expectations of your body in this instance or otherwise?
12. What does your body “feel” in relation to interactions with others? (think bodily sensations)
13. Were there particular physical occurrences that were significant to your experience? Sports? Gestures, habits, physical interactions - positive or negative? trauma, or abuse?****again, not required and remember I am a mandated reporter.*
14. What are my motivations for writing this story/why do I want to write this story? And what ethical pitfalls do I need to be aware of? (See pages 13-16)
15. If not yet addressed through sociocultural context questions above, choose one question and expand on it further by asking yourself: How does my faith intersect with this element of the story?

Worth 30 points

**Questions 1-14 adapted from “Composing Autoethnography: Writing Bodies Into Being” in Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography by Tami Spry.*

Spry, Tami. “Writing Bodies into Being,” in *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2011.

Part III: DUE Nov 14, 2025

Expand on the questions from Part II. Add research and begin writing your script.

Step 1: Research and cite 1 critical source not included in the course reading list that you will integrate into the script.

Step 2: Choose 3-5 quotations from Weeks 1-10 reading materials that relate to the experience/s you've decided to write about.

Step 3: Write a Rough Draft of your script: And I mean rough - messy, ugly, and significant revisions away from what it will ultimately become. I say this to take the pressure off! Just get it down on the paper in kindasorta way you might want to say/do it. All that a rough draft has to do is exist.

Put together Part II with the above research and expand into the rough draft.

Final Stage:

Final Script: DUE Dec 8, 2025

After this point, the focus shifts to creating the performance. As a class, we will construct the total performance. In rehearsal, we will work to create a visual and physical vocabulary to complement the texts you have composed.

Final Performance:

The final performance will take place in front of an invited audience determined by our collective.

Nuts and bolts for Grading:

- Final script is assessed as part of the final performance grade
- Final performance must be completely memorized

Worth 100 points.