

St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute
Fall 2021

Course Name & Number: MT631/PT631 Violence & the City

Instructors: Rev. Dr. Chris Dreisbach & Rev. Dr. C. Anthony Hunt

Day(s): Various Saturdays: 9/4, 9/25, 10/9, 10/30, 11/13, 11/20, 12/4
(Class meets from 9:00 am-1:00 pm)

Course Description: From Cain (Gen. 4) to Freddie Gray (2015) and beyond, violence is regularly associated with the city. Christians committed to truth and peace with justice must question that perception and resist that reality. By focusing on Baltimore, this course will analyze and engage the dynamics of violence and the city. The course will use empirical, theoretical, and theological frames to evaluate how and why violence is perceived and represented as an urban phenomenon. By synthesizing wisdom from the Christian moral tradition with the insights of social science, the course will develop a comprehensive definition of violence (in all its dimensions of violence—physical, emotional, economic, spiritual, etc.). The class will then analyze examples of different levels (e.g., personal interpersonal, social, institutional) and types (e.g., crime, human trafficking, gentrification...) of violence in Baltimore. The course will culminate in evaluating and/or creating best practices for addressing violence within the context of Baltimore and every city.

Course Requirements:

- **Reading:** Students should expect to read *at most* 800 pages of required reading.
- **Videos:** Watch 3-4 videos, totaling up to 4 hours of course content. Be prepared to discuss videos in class.
- **Writing:** Students should expect to write *at most* 22 double-spaced pages. These will be comprised of the following:

First Assignment (20% of final grade) - Personal reflection paper, 4-5 pages (not to exceed 1250 words) in length focusing on insights on the student's personal observations and experience with violence and the city.

Second Assignment (20% of final grade) - Reflection paper, 4-5 pages (not to exceed 1250 words) in length in the form of a "letter" on the model of *Between the World and Me* (Coates), focusing on the student's impressions the importance of matters related to the city, violence and the prospects of peace.

Third (Final) Assignment (35% of final grade) - Integrative theological reflection paper, and is to be 10-12 pages (not to exceed 3000 words) in length.

Other activities contributing to final grade:

- **Class Attendance/Discussion** 15%
- **Site Visits** 10%

Required Texts:

- Breuggemann, Walter. *Peace: Understanding Biblical Themes*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001. (ISBN: 0-8272-3828-2)
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015. (ISBN: 978-0-8129-9354-7)
- Francis, Leah Gunning. *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015. (ISBN: 978-0-827211-05-6)
- Hauerwas, Stanley, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983. (ISBN: 13-978-0-268-01554-1)
- Williams, Chad, Kidada Williams, Keisha Blain, eds. *Charleston Syllabus: Readings on Race, Racism and Racial Violence*. Athens, GA: The University Georgia Press, 2016. (ISBN: 978-0-8203-4957-2)

Supplemental Readings

Several supplemental texts will be assigned by the instructors that will be considered required reading.

Recommended

Watch season one of “The Wire” (12 episodes), which can be viewed on the internet HBOGO.com or may be purchased at www.amazon.com. DVD’s might also be borrowed from certain public libraries.

MAT Degree Outcome(s) Addressed by This Course:

- Primary - interpret the world in all its dimensions theologically
- Secondary - analyze Christian texts, convictions, and practices within the major developments and diversities of Christian tradition

MACM Degree Outcome(s) Addressed by This Course:

- Primary - an ability to contextualize practical skills in ministry, as appropriate to a student's locus of ministry (e.g., team building, conflict mediation, planning, resource location, mentoring, preaching, etc.)
- Secondary - evidence of growth in spiritual wisdom (greater awareness of self, others, and God) through self-reflection that demonstrates increasing commitment to one's faith, both individually and communally (with its attendant accountability)