



Course Syllabus  
RELI157x  
**RELIGION AND HIP HOP CULTURE**

## Scope and Sequence

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Understanding religion as traditions with doctrines and practices, but more importantly as the “Quest for Complex Subjectivity” or more simply the effort to make life meaningful in complex ways, this course explores the relationship between hip hop culture and religion. That is to say, this course is concerned with discussion of the ways in which hip hop culture provides life meaning. This will be accomplished by: (1) discussion of the history and content of rap music; (2) examination of religion in rap music; (3) exploration of the religious sensibilities of rap artists; and (4) exploration of the implications of the connection between rap and religion.

**Goal:** Assuming no prior knowledge, this course is meant to provide a general audience with an introduction to the intersections of religion and hip hop culture in the United States.

**Objectives:** There are four objectives that undergird the goal for this course. At the conclusion of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Develop a general sense of hip hop cultural development and purpose by demonstrating the ability to interpret and discuss this history in writing.
- Identify and synthesizes key concepts, terms, and developments related to the nature and meaning of religion with attention to (a) traditions such as Christianity and Islam, and (b) the fundamental questions of human existence and life meaning.
- Identify and critique key examples of rap music’s influence on hip hop culture and religious traditions such as Christianity.
- Illustrate “the quest for complex subjectivity” within an analysis that outlines how hip hop culture serves as a religious orientation.

**Organization:** The course is organized into six self-paced sessions that should be completed within six weeks. To ensure productive dialogue and foster a sense of community, we will focus on each session, in order, spending one week per session.

| <b>Session</b>   | <b>Timeframe</b>                                  |
|--|---|
| Session One--What is Religion? What is Hip Hop?              | <i>March 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup></i>    |
| Session Two--What Do Religion and Hip Hop Have in Common?    | <i>Mar. 31<sup>st</sup> – Apr. 6<sup>th</sup></i> |
| Session Three--Hip Hop and Religious Traditions: Islam       | <i>April 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup></i>       |
| Session Four--Hip Hop and Religious Traditions: Christianity | <i>April 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup></i>      |
| Session Five--When Hip Hop Challenges Traditional Religion   | <i>April 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup></i>      |
| Session Six--Hip Hop as Religion                             | <i>April 28<sup>th</sup>-May 4<sup>th</sup></i>   |
| <i>Due date for all assignments</i>                          | <b><i>May 5<sup>th</sup></i></b>                  |

**Time and Workload:** The estimated workload is 3-5 hours per week, depending on your background level and working style.

**Textbook:** No textbook is required, but we have provided chapters from the following books and articles as required readings. Please note that you are only responsible for material provided through the course on this site.

Anthony Pinn, *Noise and Spirit: The Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music* (New York: NYU Press, 2003)

Anthony Pinn, *Terror and Triumph* (Fortress Press, 2003)

Monica Miller, Anthony Pinn and Bernard “Bun B” Freeman, *Religion in Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the US* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015)

CERCL Writing Collective, *Breaking Bread, Breaking Beats: Churches and Hip Hop—A Basic Guide to Key Issues* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014)

Anthony Pinn and Paul Easterling, *Black Theology: An International Journal*, (2009) Vol. 7, No 1:31-44.

If you would like to purchase *Breaking Bread, Breaking Beats*, Fortress Press is offering special reduced rates on the eBook to you as a student in the course.

Buy *Breaking Bread, Breaking Beats* for the special price of \$6.99 –a 75% discount! at [Amazon](#).

## Course Assessment

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**Certificate:** To earn a certificate for this course requires achieving an overall grade of 60% or higher.

### **Grading Rubric:**

| Activity (number)   | % of Grade  |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Check Yourself (6)  | 10%         |
| Session Quizzes (6) | 40%         |
| 50 Words (3)        | 30%         |
| Mixtape Project (1) | 20%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

**Assignments:** There are four types of graded assignments for the course (listed below).

**All assignments are due on Tuesday, May 5th at 23:00 UTC** (6:00 PM US CDT). However, you can complete the assignments before the due date. This [link](#) provides information on conversion of UTC to your time zone!

**Check Yourself:** You are allowed two attempts to answer these questions.

**Session Quizzes:** You are allowed one try for each quiz question.

**50 Words:** This written assignment is designed to stimulate some deep thought about the material. The assignment is not long, but hopefully it will provide an opportunity to turn the information you have learned over in your mind and experience new insights! The self-grading process lets you reflect and analyze your strengths and weaknesses concerning the material.

**Mixtape Project:** Your interpretations of each session's main points culminate with a final self-reviewed project at the end of the course that interprets the relationship between Hip Hop and religion.

## Course Etiquette

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**Communication Ground Rules:** Issues related to religion and hip hop culture can be charged, and can generate energetic responses. We encourage you to ask questions and critically engage the materials we provide as part of this course. We encourage you to share ideas and opinions as a dimension of the course. However, please keep in mind the ground rules for our interactions during the course.

We are committed to fostering an environment of productive engagement and intellectual growth, and all interactions must reflect this commitment. In taking this course you are agreeing to safeguard this commitment to productive engagement and intellectual growth. In order for this to be the case: (1) You must approach the professors, course team members, facilitators, community TAs, and fellow students with respect and in a thoughtful manner, and (2) You must avoid personal attacks or the making of statements that denigrate individuals, groups or any religious tradition.

**Honor Code:** The edX Honor Code forms a solid base from which the courses offered to the larger community can be effective and useful. While we encourage collaboration and learning communities — ask your questions in the Discussion! — please avoid asking for or posting answers to the graded assignments.

**Collaboration Guidelines:** Interacting with fellow students is a great way to learn material and to hear other perspectives, but it is important the work you do in the graded portions of this course is your own.

*A note on plagiarism:* Plagiarism is a form of theft. It is the unacknowledged use or misrepresentation of ideas or work of another as your own. Please submit only original work for this course. Tips for avoiding plagiarism, can be found at [Avoiding Plagiarism](#) on the Purdue OWL site.

**Discussion Forum:** The discussion forum provides a link between you as a student, other students and course staff. This forum is designed to be a useful resource to engage one another. The course staff will be proactive in monitoring this forum and will remove inappropriate posts and responses. The edX Honor Code applies both inside and outside the forum to anything relevant to this course. Repeated violations may result in your progress being erased and/or your account being disabled.

### **Guidelines for the Discussion Forum**

- Use the established forum categories. Making your own categories ends

up confusing the conversation.

- Search before asking. Your question may already have been addressed in the Discussion, so try to see if there is an answer in place before creating a new post.
- Write clearly and provide a concise and descriptive title for your post. Provide sufficient information for others to understand your question or problem. Which assignment are you discussing, what part of the assignment, what is unclear? Correct spelling and grammar will help others understand and enable useful responses. Avoid abbreviations, excessive punctuation, and ALL CAPS to make your post clear.
- Upvote helpful posts. You can click on the green “plus” button so that effective posts and/or responses can be found readily, *and* you can search by these votes to find the most interesting posts.
- Technical issues and bugs in the platform. If you experience technical issues or bugs such as error messages or difficulty submitting assignments, please click on the edX help tab to notify edX staff of any courseware-related problems.
- Use the discussion forum to facilitate learning. We encourage questions, clarification requests, contributions to the conversation, but focusing the dialogue on the topics related to course content will make this forum most effective.
- Be polite. This forum is effectively a global classroom, with students from around the world and with very different backgrounds. This setting is the opportunity to create a positive community, so please report any posts that are inappropriate, abusive, offensive, may infringe on copyright, or in any other manner violate the edX Honor Code that applies to this course.