

# Forgiveness Is Freedom Academy: a Knowledge for Freedom Program

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Meeting Times: 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Meeting Location: Multicultural Center Hardge Forum

All course material can be found on the course Google Drive

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## **Seminar Description**

This course starts by examining the film *Emanuel* which recounts the shooting of Black Americans in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015. A young white man walked into the African Methodist Episcopal Church and killed nine people while injuring more. The film explores how slavery, the Civil War, and the continuing legacy of race and class in America can help us explore the connections between past and contemporary violence.

The film examines forgiveness after violence, using interviews with survivors and the families of those killed. Some highlight the importance of forgiveness as a tenet of the Christian faith. Others ask how they can forgive when the perpetrator does not express remorse. Still, others wonder if forgiveness is warranted when an individual engages in acts of violence and hate.

Using readings drawn from history, philosophy, Africana studies, and human rights, the seminar will grapple with forgiveness in the wake of contemporary and historical racial violence, systemic racism, and police brutality. At the end of the course, we will re-examine *Emanuel*. You will explore how the seminar has changed how you understand the film.

This seminar is an introduction to academic life. You will explore some of our time's most pressing and difficult issues. We will focus on these questions and examine them through the humanities lens, giving you tools to help make sense of what can often seem like senseless violence.

Your participation is an integral part of the seminar. Your experiences, questions, reactions, and emotions will shape the discussions in the seminar. The professors are not here to lecture or teach you the "right" answer. Instead, they will provide you with academic tools to focus the discussion. You will have control over your learning, and your professor will be there to help and learn alongside you. While each professor is an expert in their area, we will all be learning something new and introducing you to how academics explore difficult questions.

## **Reading Material**

All reading materials will be provided to you. The academy will be made up of books, excerpts, and articles that are considered important within their field. Some of this may be confusing, filled with jargon, and use language and tools we do not expect you to know. Part of the intention of this academy is to help you understand and translate complex scholarly ideas into plain language. We will also discuss how to interpret language and readings in the context of the time it was written and how our understanding of such topics may have changed over time.

You are expected to complete the assigned readings *before* each seminar. So, a reading listed under Seminar 2 should be read before the seminar meets. We have built time to read into the seminar schedule, and you must take this time to engage with the readings and ask questions where you need help. If you have a question about the readings, others likely do as well. These readings are difficult, and our aim is to introduce you to the best strategies for understanding and engaging with the texts.

## **Additional Considerations**

If you have anything that might prevent you from excelling in this academy or presents a constraint on your time or well-being, please let us know as far in advance as possible. This includes an illness, familial obligations, car trouble, work, or other aspects of your life which we understand may interfere with your ability to give your full attention to the program. If we know in advance, we can help you plan for interruptions and ensure you get the most out of the course. Please let us know if you need special accommodations due to a disability

## **Mental and Physical Wellbeing**

We encourage anyone struggling with mental health issues to recognize that you are not alone. Mental health issues can be treated and should not be considered an individual failing. We will be touching on topics of violence, systemic discrimination, hate, and other topics which may be difficult to discuss. We will provide regular check-ins to make sure you are doing okay, as well as several resources that may be helpful.

If you struggle to stay above water, please reach out, and we can devise a strategy to help you get through the academy. We are here to help you all learn and thrive, and we take this responsibility seriously. We do not want this academy to cause anyone undue stress. We also encourage anyone struggling to reach out to us or to consult some of the sources below:

URI provides several services through Mental Health and Wellness:

<https://web.uri.edu/healthservices/mental-health-and-wellness/>

URI also provides health education: <https://web.uri.edu/healthservices/health-education/>

There are also non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Active Minds which provide resources and advice for students. The link below describes several signs and symptoms of mental illness that you should be familiar with, both for yourself and your classmates.

<https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/signs-and-symptoms/>

## **Classroom etiquette**

While in class, we expect you to pay attention and be actively engaged. Please refrain from playing on your phone or computer or chatting amongst yourselves about issues unrelated to the course during seminars. If there is an emergency and you need to take a call, please leave the classroom to do so.

We expect all participation to be civil and respectful. There is no room for racism, sexism, xenophobia, or any other inherent biases or aggression in this classroom. We can discuss these as a scientific phenomenon worthy of study. Still, we expect everyone to refrain from engaging in behavior or speech that will harm fellow students and the classroom experience. Free speech is an important human right. However, there are also consequences for speech that are harmful or offensive to others. While you have the right to speak your mind, we also have the right to remove students from the classroom who engage in inappropriate behavior.

## **Course Work**

**Participation** - This course centers on participation, active discussion, and active listening. Your participation is required for this seminar to succeed. This is the most important part of the course. If you have trouble talking in class, that is okay. The seminar requires engagement in the classroom, and we will provide several opportunities for people to participate. Participation is worth 30% of your course grade.

**Study Questions for Class Discussion** - Each reading will include several questions to help highlight important issues for discussion in class. Carefully thinking about these questions while you read and before coming to class will help ensure you can actively participate. We encourage you to take notes about the readings. We will provide some examples of notetaking and how to read academic texts.

**Study Questions** - You will have five assignments during the seminar. First, we will ask you to write about the *Emanuel* film and tell us your thoughts at the beginning of the seminar. The next three assignments ask you to explore a passage from one of the readings: human rights (days 2, 6, 9), philosophy (days 3, 5, 10), and history (days 4, 7, 8). You will write 400-500 words exploring how the passages apply to a given study question. On the final day, you will re-write the first assignment and explore how your thoughts have (or haven't) changed using some of the readings and discussion from the seminar. These are worth 10% each.

You will be asked to:

- 1.) Respond to the question 'Who is forgiving who'?
- 2.) Take a quotation from the text and include the text and page number.
- 3.) Paraphrase the quotation in your own words.
- 4.) Explain why/how this passage helps to understand violence and forgiveness.
- 5.) Describe your reflection on the passage and how you understand it.

**Study Reflection Journal** - You will create journal entries every day. These will be viewable by your instructor/s. You can reflect on the discussion, ask questions, point out confusing things, or respond to the study questions. These are meant to be a dialogue between you and the professors. These are worth 20% of your grade.

<i>Readings</i>	
<i>Day</i>	Readings
<b>Day 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Film: Emmanuel</b></li> <li>● MLK Jr, section 1 from “Loving Your Enemies” pp. 56-59 in <i>The Radical King</i></li> <li>● Augustine’s “Confessions”</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2 - Philosophy Human Motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thomas Hobbes’s <i>Leviathan</i>, Chapter 13 “On the Natural Condition of Mankind Concerning their Felicity and Misery”</li> <li>● Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s <i>The Social Contract</i>, Chapter 6 “The Social Compact”</li> <li>● Niccolo Machiavelli’s <i>The Prince</i>, Chapter XVII “Concerning Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether it is Better to Be Loved than Feared”</li> </ul>
<b>Day 3 - Africana Studies Human Motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cheikh Anta Diop’s “Origin of the Ancient Egyptians”</li> <li>● Oba T’Shaka’s “African Philosophy and Cosmology” (chapter) from <i>Return to the African Mother Principle of Male and Female Equality</i></li> </ul>
<b>Day 4 - History Human Motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vesey Conspiracy’s “Official Report” (Narrative sections)</li> <li>● Selection of Bible Verses (as quoted in Vesey and Walker)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 5 - Africana Studies Anger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Audre Lorde’s “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism” in <i>Sister Outsider: Essays &amp; Speeches</i></li> <li>● Music: Goodie Mob’s <i>Soul Food</i> Hip Hop Album (1995)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 6- Human Rights Anger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Christian Davenport’s <i>The Domestic Democratic Peace</i> (selections)</li> <li>● Elizabeth Hinton’s <i>American on Fire</i> (selections)</li> <li>● Music: The Mighty Sparrow “Human Rights” Song (1981)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 7 - History Anger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● David Walker’s <i>Appeal</i> (preamble)</li> <li>● Marques’s “Slave Trading in a New World: The Strategies of North American Slave Traders in the Age of Abolition”</li> </ul>
<b>Day 8 – History Forgiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Film: <i>The Time Has Come: Eyes on the Prize</i> (Season 2 Episode 1)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 9 - Human Rights Forgiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr’s <i>Ethnic Conflict in World Politics</i> (selections)</li> <li>● Teresa Godwin Phelps’s <i>Shattered Voices: Language, Violence, and the Work of Truth Commissions</i> (selections)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 10 - Philosophy Forgiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Loving Your Enemies,” pp. 56-59 in <i>The Radical King</i></li> <li>● Hannah Arendt’s <i>The Human Condition</i>, Section 33 “Irreversibility &amp; the Power to Forgive”</li> </ul>
<b>Day 11 - Putting it all together</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Reviewing and synthesizing the readings</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 12 - 12 Putting it all together</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Film: Emmanuel</b></li> <li>● Martin Luther King Jr.’s “What is your life’s blueprint?” chapter 5 in <i>The Radical King</i></li> </ul>

## *Daily Schedule*

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
<b>8:00-9:00am</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>
<b>9:00-10:00am</b>	Writing assignment discussion
<b>10:00-11:15</b>	Seminar 1
<b>11:15-11:30</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11:30-12:15</b>	Seminar 2
<b>12:15-1:00pm</b>	Discussion
<b>1:00-2:15pm</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>2:15-3:00pm</b>	Reflection time
<b>3:00-4:00pm</b>	Teaching Assistant Guided Reading
<b>4:00-4:30</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>4:30-5:45pm</b>	Discussion and Writing Session
<b>5:45-6:30pm</b>	<b>Study/Free time</b>
<b>6:30-8:00pm</b>	<b>Dinner</b>
<b>8:00-10:00</b>	Multicultural Room Activity
<b>10:00-11:00pm</b>	<b>Quiet Hour</b>
<b>11:00pm</b>	Lights Out

## *CALENDAR FOR August 2023: URI*

<i>SUNDAY</i>	<i>MONDAY</i>	<i>TUESDAY</i>	<i>WEDNESDAY</i>	<i>THURSDAY</i>	<i>FRIDAY</i>	<i>SATURDAY</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
	Day 1 introductions  Film: Emmanuel	Seminar 1	Seminar 2	Seminar 3	Seminar 4	Seminar 5  Field Trip
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	
<i>Seminar 6</i>  Field Trip	Seminar 7	Seminar 8	Seminar 9	Seminar 10	Concluding Seminar  Film: Emmanuel re-interpreted	