



2025 Master of Theology Degree Program

Associate Director, C. Vanessa White, D.Min.

The IBCS Master of Theology Program (Th.M.) is the one graduate theology program in the U.S. taught from Black Catholic perspectives. Its curriculum is interdisciplinary. Courses focus on Black approaches, critiques, and contributions to systematic and pastoral theologies, family and pastoral ministry, aesthetics, philosophy, and education. Established in 1980 in historic New Orleans on the campus of Xavier University of Louisiana, the IBCS is dedicated to academics, prayer, worship, and community-building. The Th.M. program forms students for theologically and culturally competent service as ordained, religious, or lay ecclesial ministers in the Black community, church, and community at-large. The Degree program also welcomes scholars seeking on-going religious study, visiting graduate students and ministers who desire to expand, enhance, and enrich their general theological studies by exploring the Catholic theological tradition and its particular meaning for the social and spiritual experiences of Black people in the U.S. and beyond.

2025 DEGREE COURSE OFFERINGS JUNE 29 - JULY 18, 2025

IBTH 5010 Black Approaches to Theology. Stresses the nature, methods, and sources of Black Theology; the reasons justifying its existence and its relationship to other theologies within the Roman Catholic Tradition.
Modeste Nyimi Malu, Ph.D.
Requirement for all new students M-F, 8:45-11:45am (3 units)

IBTH 5020 History of Black Catholicism. Explores the role played by Blacks in Catholicism from the beginning of the Church, with special emphasis on the presence and contributions of Blacks to Roman Catholicism in the United States.

Cecilia A. Moore, Ph.D.
Core Course M-F, 1:45-4:45pm (3 units)

IBTH 5060 Black Psychology. Constructs effective pastoral communication with Black congregations by review of major interpersonal, social, and systematic issues from a perspective based upon sound analysis stemming from recognition of cultural differences.

Brian Turner, Ph.D.
Core Course M-F, 8:45-11:45am (3 units)

IBTH 5081 Christology. Studies the Kingdom of God as announced in the teaching, healing ministry, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, particularly as these are understood in the African American community from the perspective of liberation and black theologies.

Byron Wratee, Ph.D.
Area Requirement M-F, 1:45-4:45pm (3 units)

IBTH 5425 Slave Narratives. The course begins with the earliest documents, tracing most especially the themes of transcendence, self-determination, and cultural transmissions outside the ordinary avenues of traditional culture. From the classic slave narratives to the more recent manifestations of African American imaginative work, there is an unbroken thread of cultural awareness and human dignity that serves as the guide to understanding African American culture and religious sensibilities.

Ernest Gibson, Ph.D.
Area Requirement M-F, 8:45-11:45am (3 units)

IBTH 5625 Catholic Education in the Black Community. This course looks at learning styles among Black children and provides methodologies for a culturally inclusive curriculum.

Rachel Davis, Ph.D.
Elective M-F, 1:45-4:45pm (3 units)

For IBCS Program information:
www.xula.edu/ibcs

For IBCS 2025 Applications:
<https://gradapply.xula.edu/apply/>



IBCS 2025 Summer Session

Institute for Black Catholic Studies
Xavier University of Louisiana



"I will never leave you nor forsake you"
~ Heb 13:5



Greetings from Xavier University of Louisiana!

In this Jubilee Year of 2025, Pope Francis reminds us that Jesus "revealed Himself as the face of God on earth, sent to redeem the poor, free captives, and manifest the Father's compassion for the wounded, the fallen, and the hopeless." The IBCS was established to carry out Jesus' mission by forming pastoral ministers and scholars in Black Catholic theology to share the Good News in today's Church and society. The Institute community of learners - lay and ordained - is culturally diverse and intergenerational, immersed in the unique environment of Xavier University in New Orleans. Consider a Jubilee Year investment in the IBCS, graduate or continuing education study supported by a rich community life - worthy preparation for Christian disciples called to teach, preach and advocate for justice and peace in the world. Ashé!!

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, D.Min.,
IBCS Director



2025 Continuing Education and Enrichment (C&E) Course Offerings

Valerie Shields, M.A.R.S.,
Interim Associate Director

IBCS SUMMER SESSION 2025 JUNE 29 - JULY 18, 2025

C&E Programs provide lifelong learning and spiritual formation for pastoral leaders, clergy, religious, administrators, teachers and others who minister with Black communities or serve in multi-cultural settings. These featured courses offer unique opportunities for students to grow in their understandings of Black Catholicism and its impact on their ministry, community and the Church at-large. Students are graded on a pass/fail basis and will receive 1.5 CEUs for each course successfully completed. There is a limit of 15 students per class unless otherwise noted. Check the IBCS website <https://www.xula.edu/ibcs/> for other program updates. Applicants can access the 2025 C&E program application at <https://gradapply.xula.edu/apply/>.

WEEK 1: JUNE 30 - JULY 4, 2025

CORE 0003K Africana Reading of Exodus. Investigate use of the exodus tradition in 1) biblical and post biblical sources; 2) the "freedom narratives" that chronicle the movement from enslavement of the "middle passage" to "freedom", and 3) later Black literature and the civil rights movement and in the new African diaspora.
Stephen Breck Reid, Ph.D. (M-F 8:45-11:45am)

CATF 20 Black Approaches to Catechesis. This course will focus on catechesis - faith formation - using Black cultural expressions (ritual, storytelling, music, imagery), Sacred Scripture and religious education texts of the Catholic Church.
Cassandra Will, Th.M. (M-F 8:45-11:45am)

CORE 0002E Tracing the Color Purple: Exploring Womanist Theology. More than 40 years ago, Alice Walker birthed the term womanism and provided one of the earliest demonstrations of womanist spirit through her novel turned film "The Color Purple." Since then, womanism has gone through several waves. Each wave deepens the commitments of womanists in religious studies and theology to center the experience, knowledge, and liberation of Black people.

Nicole Symmonds, Ph.D. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

BRES 0005 Black Religious Expression: Holistic and Holy. Learn here how to effectively incorporate the arts - spoken word, drama and song - in pastoral ministry, presentation and classroom settings. Celebrating the Black aesthetic in community encourages dialogue, healing and remembrance.
Sunni Patterson, B.A. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

WEEK 2: JULY 7 - JULY 11, 2025

CORE 0008B Preaching from the Pews. Ineffective preaching is a challenge in our communities. Study ways that the laity can help clergy become better preachers and strategies that help clergy reinforce their preaching skills! We hope to rekindle the fire in the pulpit with the fire in the pews!

Fr. Manuel Williams, C.R., Th.M. (M-F 8:45-11:45am)

CORE 0004K Black Celebration. Explores the rich theological, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of Black Catholic liturgical practice through an embodied, celebratory lens. Students will

engage the matter of worship as a profound act of spiritual resistance, cultural affirmation, and communal healing for Black Catholics through the exploration of key texts, visual cultures, and interactive exercises.

Nicole Symmonds, Ph.D. (M-F 8:45-11:45am)

CORE 0004J How We Worship Is What We Believe. Explore how inculturation of the Eucharistic Liturgy requires that Black Catholic worship reflect what we believe and inform how we live. We who believe are called to be committed disciples of Christ. Our daily lives must correspond with our Eucharistic celebration.

Fr. Roy A. Lee, Ph.D. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

CORE 0002G Faith, Health and Justice. How do our faith traditions and concepts of justice impact decisions about the health of individuals and communities today? Informed by Catholic Social Teaching, Christian theologians, and medical ethicists, students will learn foundational concepts of healthcare and justice.

LaShaunda Reese, Ph.D. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

WEEK 3: JULY 14 - JULY 18, 2025

CORE 0001I Facing the Racialization of America. Catholic Social Teaching affirms the dignity of the human person and asserts that we are all one human family. This course will bring awareness to the sin of racism in the context of U.S. Catholicism by delving into the pastoral letter *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love* and other works written by leading Black theologians.

Joyce Jones, Th.M. (M-F, 8:45-11:45am)

LDER 0041 Give Us This Day: Evangelization for These Times. What do people of God do to get through the challenges

and changes of our world? How do we help others to encounter Jesus, to grow in relationship with God? The playbook for outreach and evangelization is found in the Acts of The Apostles. We will journey through the Acts for practical insights for evangelizing in these times.

Therese Wilson Favors, M.A. (M-F, 8:45-11:45am)

CORE 0002H Sexuality, Gender, Race and a New Theology of Black Embodiment. Participants will engage a number of questions: How are the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons changing our understanding of God and ministry formation? On these questions, what does a welcoming Church look like to Gen Z? What difference does our shared Blackness make when we are divided on these topics?

Craig Ford, Ph.D. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

CORE 0004H Music Ministry. Explore the rich history of music ministry in the church and its relevance to biblical teachings. Introducing practical techniques and strategies, students will learn to create worship experiences that engage and spiritually uplift the assembly.

Kim Harris, Ph.D. (M-F 1:45-4:45pm)

SREP 0001 Elders Retreat: Renewed - Revived- Ready! African American Elders (age 62+) spend the week in prayer, reflection, discussion and recreation. Come celebrate the legacy of eldership in the Black Catholic community. Let the Spirit renew, revive, and get you ready in the spirit of wisdom that continues to sustain our community. Limit 15 retreatants.

Chaplain Thelma Lucas, Th.M. and Fr. John Odeyemi, Ph.D. (M-F 9:00-11am and 2:00-4pm)