PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY **COURSE NO.** PC 466

THE CONTENT OF THIS DESCRIPTION IS NOT A LEARNING CONTRACT AND THE INSTRUCTOR IS NOT BOUND TO IT. IT IS OFFERED IN GOOD FAITH AND INTENDED AS A HELPFUL GUIDE TO THE STUDENT.

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TITLE: Religious Trauma & Spiritual Abuse **TERM:** January 2026-2027

PROFESSOR: Danjuma Gibson **CREDIT HOURS:** 3

REGISTRATION: LIMITED TO: # UNLIMITED X
AUDITORS: # NO AUDITORS X

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
PC466 is an overview of religious violence, religious trauma, and spiritual abuse. The course will help students begin to recognize, undermine and/or prevent spiritual abuse within their associated religious organizations and institutions and develop some tools to help undermine and/or prevent it. Focusing on the etiology and outgrowth of violence and abuse within religious communities, coupled with imagining healing and restorative practices, this course provides a practical theological framework for creating safe and just spaces while fostering leadership that promotes justice, accountability, and emotional recovery for individuals and communities ravaged by religious violence, and spiritual abuse and trauma.

CLASS OBJECTIVES:
- Students will be equipped with a scholarly and practical theological understanding of how religious violence and spiritual abuse are antithetical to a healthy Christian imagination and the Gospel message of redemption and hope.

- Students will be compelled to engage in a robust exercise of self-reflexivity to assess how they may be complicit in a system of spiritual abuse that harms (or has harmed) others. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on how they may need to engage in healing-work from past repressed spiritual abuse, and how they may presently be at risk of being spiritually manipulated, abused, or traumatized in their current and future ministry environment.

- Students will understand how history, social location, culture, and the practices and tradition(s) of religious communities all collude in a manner to inform and cultivate systems of spiritual abuse, and the prospect of justice and healing.

- Students will be equipped to understand, assess, and identify the precipitants and dynamic nature of spiritual abuse within a given context, and to use practical theological methodology to imagine and construct a healthy religious praxis that undermines religious violence and precipitates healing and recovery.

PREREQUISITES: N/A

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS/READING:
- *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct* by Ruth Everhart | | ISBN: 978-0830845828, $12.33
- *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem* by James Newton Poling | ISBN: 978-0687006847, $9.00
- *Truth and Repair: How Trauma Survivors Envision Justice* by Judith Lewis Herman, MD | ISBN: 978-1541600553, $15.49

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING: TBD

ATTENDANCE: Required.