

Sociocultural Foundations: Pastoral Psychologies of Liberation

Fall 2025, Tuesdays, 1:00 pm–4:00 pm

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

This advanced graduate course explores the intersection of pastoral theology, liberatory psychology, and social justice-oriented therapeutic praxis. Students will engage with foundational and contemporary liberationist thinkers (e.g., Ignacio Martín-Baró, Paulo Freire, Gloria Anzaldúa, James Cone, and Emilie Townes), while critically assessing the integration of psychological theory and pastoral care practices in contexts shaped by race, gender, sexuality, class, and coloniality. Emphasis is placed on decolonizing pastoral care, trauma-informed community work, and cultivating liberative healing relationships within ecclesial and clinical contexts.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. **Articulate** the key principles of liberation psychology and their application to pastoral theology and care.
2. **Critically examine** how systems of oppression (e.g., racism, colonialism, cisheteropatriarchy) influence psychological and spiritual distress.
3. **Integrate** theological reflection with liberatory psychological frameworks in pastoral counseling and community praxis.
4. **Develop** culturally responsive and socially just pastoral care strategies.
5. **Engage** in reflexive practice, attending to their own social locations and ethical commitments.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

Students will be able to:

1. **Synthesize** theological and psychological approaches that prioritize liberation, resilience, and transformation.
(CACREP 2.F.5.a, 2.F.5.c)
2. **Apply** liberation psychological concepts to case studies involving trauma, oppression, and spiritual care.
(CACREP 2.F.5.e, 2.F.5.f)

3. **Demonstrate** cultural humility and awareness of client sociocultural identities in their pastoral assessment and interventions.
(CACREP 2.F.2.a, 2.F.2.c, 2.F.2.d)
4. **Critique** traditional Eurocentric models of pastoral counseling through the lens of decolonial and liberatory theories.
(CACREP 2.F.3.f, 2.F.3.g)
5. **Design** a liberatory, trauma-informed pastoral care plan that is contextually grounded and ethically sound.
(CACREP 2.F.5.j, 2.F.1.i)
6. **Reflect** on their own formation as pastoral caregivers through the development of a theological-psychological liberation narrative.
(CACREP 2.F.1.k, 2.F.1.g)

Required Texts:

1. Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Well-Being (3rd ed.)

Authors: Manuel Riemer, Stephanie M. Reich, Scotney D. Evans, Geoffrey Nelson, and Isaac Prilleltensky

Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic, March 28, 2020

ISBN-13: 978-1137464095

- **Amazon Purchase Price** \$37.75.
- **VitalSource eBook Price:** \$48.99

2. Liberation Psychology: Theory, Method, Practice, and Social Justice

Editors: Lillian Comas-Díaz and Edil Torres Rivera

Publisher: American Psychological Association, July 28, 2020

ISBN-13: 978-1433832086

- **Amazon Purchase Price:** \$60.85
- **Amazon Kindle eBook Price:** \$34.20
- **VitalSource eBook Price:** \$49.99

Week 1 – Introduction to Pastoral Psychologies of Liberation

Theme: Foundations and Frameworks

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:** Ch. 1 – *Community Psychology: Research and Action for Social Change and Wellbeing*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Introduction – *Liberation Psychology: Theory, Method, Practice, and Social Justice*

Supplementary Works:

- Paulo Freire – *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Excerpts)
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Week 2 – Historical Contexts and Values

Theme: Evolution and Core Principles

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 2 – *Highlights of the History of Community Psychology*
 - Ch. 3 – *Community Psychology Values and Vision*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 1 – *Liberation Psychology: Origins and Development*

Supplementary Works:

- Ignacio Martín-Baró – *Writings for a Liberation Psychology* (Excerpts)
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Week 3 – Power Dynamics and Systemic Thinking

Theme: Empowerment and Ecological Perspectives

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 4 – *Power, Empowerment and Depowerment*
 - Ch. 5 – *Thinking Like a System: Ecology and Complexity in a Globalized World*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 2 – *Concepts of Liberation Psychology*

Supplementary Works:

- Emilie Townes – *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (Excerpts)
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Week 4 – Prevention and Community Engagement

Theme: Strategies for Social Change

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 6 – *Prevention, Promotion, and Social Change*
 - Ch. 7 – *Community, Connection, and Participation*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 3 – *Liberation Psychology and Racism*
- Supplementary Works:**
- James Cone – *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Excerpts)
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Week 5 – Intervention Strategies in Community Psychology

Theme: Approaches to Community Interventions

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 8 – *An Overview of Community Psychology Interventions*
 - Ch. 9 – *Social Interventions*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 4 – *From Freud to Fanon to Freire: Psychoanalysis as a Liberation Method*
- Supplementary Works:**
- Resmaa Menakem – *My Grandmother's Hands* (Excerpts)
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Week 6 – Organizational and Individual Interventions

Theme: Multi-Level Approaches

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 10 – *Organizational and Community Interventions*
 - Ch. 11 – *Individual and Small Group Interventions*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 5 – *Liberation Psychology of and for Transformative Justice: Centering Acompañamiento in Participatory Action Research*
- Supplementary Works:**
- Gloria Anzaldúa – *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Excerpts)
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Week 7 – Community-Engaged Research

Theme: Participatory Methods and Ethics

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 12 – *Framing Community-Engaged Research*
 - Ch. 13 – *The Research Cycle*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 6 – *Feminist Participatory Action Research: Coconstructing Liberation Psychological Praxis Through Dialogic Relationality and Critical Reflexivity*

Supplementary Works:

- María Lugones – *The Coloniality of Gender*
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Week 8 – Globalization, Colonization, and Social Justice

Theme: Addressing Macro-Level Challenges

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 14 – *Globalization, Poverty, and Social Justice*
 - Ch. 15 – *Colonization*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 7 – *Testimonios*

Supplementary Works:

- bell hooks – *Talking Back* (Excerpts)
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Week 9 – Gender Equity and Family Wellbeing

Theme: Intersectional Approaches

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 16 – *How Can Community Psychologists Best Work Towards Gender Equity?*
 - Ch. 17 – *Building Wellbeing in Families*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 8 – *Urban Liberation: Postcolonial Intersectional Feminism and Developing a Socially Conscious Therapeutic Practice*

Supplementary Works:

- Vandana Shiva – *Earth Democracy* (Excerpts)
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Week 10 – LGBTQ Issues and Disability

Theme: Inclusive Practices

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 18 – *LGBTQ Issues in Community Psychology*
 - Ch. 19 – *Ableism, Physical Disability and Community Living*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 9 – *Liberation Psychotherapy*
- Supplementary Works:**
- Subcomandante Marcos – *Our Word is Our Weapon* (Excerpts)
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Week 11 – Mental Health and Aging

Theme: Addressing Diverse Community Needs

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 20 – *Addressing Community-Based Challenges Arising from Mental Health Problems*
 - Ch. 21 – *Aging and Older Adults*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 10 – *Black Minds Matter: Applying Liberation Psychology to Black Americans*
- Supplementary Works:**
- Frantz Fanon – *The Wretched of the Earth* (Selected Chapter)
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Week 12 – Integrative Praxis and Ethics of Liberation

Theme: Ethical Responsibility and Reflexivity

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 22 – *Ethics and Values in Community Psychology*
 - Ch. 23 – *Reflexivity in Community Psychology*
 - **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** Ch. 11 – *Ethical and Liberation-Based Healing Practices*
- Supplementary Works:**
- Hollander – *Love in a Time of Hate* (Excerpts)
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Week 13 – Visions Forward: Reimagining Healing and Liberation

Theme: Future Challenges and Collective Wisdom

Readings:

- **Riemer et al.:**
 - Ch. 24 – *The Future of Community Psychology*
- **Comas-Díaz & Rivera:** No new chapter; student integration

Supplementary Works:

- Lillian Comas-Díaz – *Ethnocultural Psychotherapy and Healing* (Article)