

**Statement of Rationale**  
**COM-138 GE Certification for**  
**Justice, Reconciliation and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds**

**Certification Criteria**

*Students will be able to:*

*1. develop biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. These will enable students to understand justice and reconciliation in terms of the gospel and appropriate disciplinary frameworks, recognize sin, rebellion, and brokenness as such, and discern their responsibility in the work of justice and reconciliation within their own local context;*

This certification criteria will be met primarily through several readings that use explicit biblical and theological language and tools. Some lecture material will also engage biblical/theological responses, even when the reading content is not specifically biblical or theological. These readings include:

- ☐ Crouch, excerpt from *Playing God*
- ☐ Charles & Rah, “The Doctrine of Discovery and Why It Matters”
- ☐ Chao Romero, “The ‘Glory and Honor of the Nations’”
- ☐ Richards & O’Brien, excerpt from *Misreading Scripture*
- ☐ Edmondson & Brennan, excerpt from *Faithful Anti-Racism*
- ☐ Volf, excerpt from *The Home of God* (for lecture only)

Students will respond to these readings and course lecture material in a midterm and final exam essay question in which they are prompted to recall and reflect upon key biblical and theological principles in relation to justice, diversity, and reconciliation. Additionally, the Cultural Rhetoric Project assignment requires that students integrate biblical and theological principles around justice, diversity, and reconciliation in their executive summary.

*2. examine personal actions, social norms, and systemic practices involving race and racism in the United States as they relate to historic and contemporary patterns of belonging and exclusion, attending to how historical particularities and differences in power shape the responsibilities different parties have in the work of justice and reconciliation in light of God’s kingdom;*

This certification criteria will be met with readings and lectures that focus more specifically on disciplinary tools, although some will incorporate biblical and theological reflection. The first three weeks of class establish a frame for understanding the relationship between representation and meaning, which sets students up to engage in productive conversation about race and ethnicity (e.g., historical development, discourse, power, culture). One full class session is dedicated to the discussion of race and ethnicity, though race/ethnicity also figures prominently into several other class discussions, including on colonialism and postcolonialism, language, culture, and nationalism. Related readings include:

- ☐ Lopez, “The Social Construction of Race” (191-203)

- ☐ Tatum “The Complexity of Identity” (18-29)
- ☐ Lyons, “Rhetorical Sovereignty” (1-12)
- ☐ Black, “The ‘Mascotting’ of Native America”
- ☐ Achebe, *Home and Exile*
- ☐ Henrich, excerpt from *The Weirdest People in the World*
- ☐ Collier and Muneri, “A Call for Critical Reflexivity”
- ☐ Royster, “When the 1<sup>st</sup> Voice You Hear”

Students will engage with these readings in class discussions and will be assessed via the midterm and final exam essay prompt.

*3. model Christ-like dialogue reflecting God’s desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers, especially when confronting challenging or sensitive issues.*

The following text on classroom behavior expectations is in the syllabus:

Participation: I’m looking forward to the conversations that we will have. The communication scholar John Durham Peters argues that communication is the project of reconciliation of self and other. If as a group we’re not willing to contribute, engage, interact, ask questions, and try out ideas, this course is going to fall short of our course goals and the project of communication. We’re dealing with a new and potentially contentious content area (e.g., race), so we might misstep along the way. Therefore, we need to cultivate humility and grace as we learn about rhetoric beyond our own norms. To pave the way for open and fruitful discussions, though, we also need to establish a foundation of mutual respect. We’ll be analyzing potentially controversial topics. It’s good to challenge each other, but we should first listen and always be prepared to provide evidence and reasons to support the claims we’re making. In all things, we need to be sure *always* to treat each other as we would like to be treated. Whether addressing our peers in class or engaging with authors through their readings, I would like our class to consider Romans 12:10 - “Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.”

A theme throughout our course will be learning and practicing ways to recognize our own positionality and to honor and respect those who come from different cultural and racial backgrounds while recognizing how we all participate in the beauty of God’s diverse creation.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

*1. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.*

*2. Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God’s loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.*

In addition to these two learning outcomes, specific to JRD, the COM-138 course learning outcomes (below) are aligned with the intent of the JRD.

- Students will be able to recognize rhetoric as a cultural practice that develops and functions in a situated context.
- Students will be able to reflexively identify the ways in which their own background affects their communicative interactions in order to thoughtfully and respectfully approach and engage rhetorics beyond their own.
- Students will be able to recognize global inequities and injustices and commit themselves to thoughtfully respond in line with their Christian faith.