Office:

Saint Louis University

Theological Studies

Secondary Appointment, African American Studies

3800 Lindell Boulevard Home:

Adorjan Hall, 304 1546 Fairmount Avenue

Saint Louis, MO 63108 St. Louis, MO 63139

314.977.5072 (o)

312.813.5040 (m)

leonard.mckinnis@slu.edu

# EDUCATION

**Loyola University of Chicago |** Chicago, IL

**Doctor of Philosophy|** Constructive Theology (With Distinction)

Dissertation: “I am Black and Beautiful: An Examination of the Black Coptic Church as the Manifestation of Liberation Theology”

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Jon Nilson (Chair), Dr. Loraine Mosley, Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins (The University of Chicago Divinity School)

**Harvard University |** Cambridge, MA

**Master of Theological Studies |** ConstructiveTheology and African American Religion

**Lewis University |** Romeoville, IL

# Bachelor of Science| Government and History

**Kingston University |** London, England

# International Politics

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Race and Religion

Imaginative Communities

Black Religions

Black Theology

Great Migration New Religious Movements

# ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

**Saint Louis University | Saint Louis, MO**

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track) of Constructive Theology and African-American Religions, 2017 -

*Primary Appointment Theological Studies; Secondary Appointment, African American Studies*

**Saint Louis University | Saint Louis, MO**

University Lecturer (Non-Tenure Track), Theological Studies, 2015 – 2017

# DePaul University | Chicago, IL

Lecturer of Religious Studies (adjunct), 2012 - 2015

# Loyola University of Chicago | Chicago, IL

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Loyola University Chicago, 2010-2012

# COURSES

*Undergraduate*

* Race and Religion in America: The Search for Identity During the Great Migration
* Religion and Social Change in Black America: Ethics and Theologies of Resistance
* The African-American Religious Experience
* Black Intellectual Traditions: Suffering and Evil in Black Religion
* Black and Womanist Theologies: An Introduction
* Seeking God: Augustine, Clairvaux, Weil, and Cone
* Social Justice
* History of Christian Thought to 1500
* History of Christian Thought Since 1500
* Introduction to Liberation Theologies
* The Black Experience in America
* Theories and Methods in African American Studies

*Graduate*

* Race, Body, and ~~Being~~ in the Study of Black Religious Thought (PhD Seminar)
* Black Theology and its Critics (PhD seminar)
* Social Conflict in America: Black Theology and the Politics of Meaning
* American Prophet: Theological and Ethical Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.

# PUBLICATIONS

**Monographs**

* *Divine Blackness: Performative Imagination and the Formation of Identity in Black Religion* (forthcoming)
* *Blackontology: On Mysticism and the Ground of Being in Black Theology* (in progress)

**Peer-Reviewed Articles**

* “Race, Religion, Imagination: Introducing the Black Copts,” (revise and resubmit, *Nova Religio)*
* “Something Within: The Spirit in the Religion of the Slaves,” (under review)
* “From Christ to Black Jesus: Black Theology’s Christological move as operative in the Black Coptic Church,” *Black Theology: An International Journal,* vol. 14, No. 3, 2016.(Autumn 2016).

**Online**

* “From Selma to St. Louis: 50 Years Since the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” with Julie Rubio and Rachel Lindsey, Forthcoming, *Syndicate,* April 2018.
* “Liberating the Incarnation of the Word: Michael Brown, Ferguson, and the Problem of the Normative Gaze,” *Syndicate* July/August 2014: 124-129, Print.

**Book reviews**

* Review of *The Urban Church Imagined: Religion, Race, and Authenticity in the City,* by Jessica M. Barron and Rhys H. Williams, in *Journal of Religion,* (invited, accepted, forthcoming, 2020)

**In progress**

* “King Peter Banks: The Other Black God of the Metropolis”
* “Going Beyond: Transcendence and the Possibility of Existence Otherwise in the Religion of the Slaves”

# TALKS

# Invited (Academic)

# Blakcontology: On Mysticism and Black Being, Link Auditorium, St. Louis, February, 2020

# Racialized Symbols in the American Imagination, Loyola Academy, St. Louis, MO, 2018

# Divine Images: Race and Religion in the American Imagination, St. Francis Xavier College Church, Saint Louis University, November, 2018

# Research Methods in African-American Theological Studies, Saint Louis University, October 2017

* Beyond the Categorical: Constructing an Ontology of the Person in Black Theology, Saint Louis University, African American Studies, February 2016
* Theological Praxis in an Age of Contested Bodies: Martin, Brown, Garner, and the Echoes of Strange Fruit, Theological Convocation, Wesleyan College, Macon, GA, February 2015
* Toward a Freeing Pneumatology: Karl Rahner’s Theological Anthropology in Black Theology, invited lecturer, Lewis University, February 2011
* A Black God in the Metropolis: Revisiting Arthur Fausett *Black Gods*, Religion Convivium, DePaul University, August, 2010
* The Christology of Chalcedon in Contextual Theology, Loyola University Chicago, invited lecturer in Theology 318, March 2010
* Reading Irenaeus as a Liberationist, Department of Religion Faculty Colloquium, DePaul University, March 2010
* History and Development of Black Theology, Loyola University of Chicago, March 2008
* Humiliating Deaths: The Relationship between the Crucifixion and the Lynched Black Bodies – A review of James Cone, Lewis University, Romeoville, IL, February 2007
* Jesus and the Poor: Reading the Infancy Narratives from the Underside, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN, December 2006
* Panelist, Broadening the Vision: The Challenges of Black and Womanist Theologies, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, November 2006
* Panelist, Community, Courage, and, Love: Lecture and Panel with Dr. Cornel West and Dr. Julius Bailey, Main Street Church of God, Decatur, IL, April 2005

**Conference Participation**

* What is the Black in Black Religion?, Society for the Study of Black Religion, Atlanta, March 2020
* Presider, Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, 2019
* World Without End? Cosmology and Existential Absurdity in *Black Theology and Black Power*, Black Theology Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Diego, CA, November, 2019

# What has Ethiopia to do with Chicago? Performative Imagination and *Otherwise* in Black Religious Spaces, Lived Religion symposium, Saint Louis University, October, 2019

* Hail to the Queens of Ethiopia: Religion and the Shaping of Identity in the Black Coptic Church, New Religious Movements Unit, American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, November, 2018
* Minority Scholars in Religion and Theology, Graduate Student Conference, paper session moderator, Covenant Seminary St. Louis, March, 2018
* Re-claiming Heritage: Religion and the Politics of Identity in the Black Coptic Church, Oxford University Religious Studies Symposium, Oxford, July 2018
* “Personhood, Conscience, and the Law: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Theological Ethical of Resistance in the Age of ’45,’”Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., American Academy of Religion, Boston, 2017
* “The Black Coptic Church of Chicago: Advancing Arthur Fausett’s *Black Gods of the Metropolis,* Afro-American Religion Section, American Academy of Religion, Chicago 2012
* “Jesus on the Margins: Examining the Paradox of Liberation in light of Human Sexuality in the Black Church,” Student Theological Conference, Garrett Evangelical Seminary, April 2010
* Deconstructing Diversity: Examining the Ideal of the Post-Racial Society, Lewis University, November 2009

# Conferences Organized

* Convener, Minority Scholars in Religion and Theology, Graduate Student Conference, Saint Louis University, March, 2019
* From Selma to St. Louis: Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. 50 Years Later, St. Louis University, April, 2018

Panelists and Speakers: Drs. Dwight Hopkins, M. Shawn Copleand, J. Kameron Carter, Kelly Brown Douglas, Jeffrey McCune

* Co-sponsor, Graduate Students of Color in the Study of Religion and Theology, Saint Louis, March, 2018
* Race, Religion, and Justice: Religion and Social Change in Black America, DePaul University, 10 November 2010

Panelists: Father Michael Pfleger (St. Sabina, Chicago), Minister Ishmael Muhammad (Assistant Minister, Nation of Islam), and Royal Priest Meshach Gardiner (Spiritual Leader, Black Coptic Church)

**Invited (Religious Communities)**

* “African American Religious History,” Central Baptist Church, St. Louis, MO, September 2018
* “The Gospel of Love and Social Engagement,” Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN, October 2017
* “The Black Coptic Church: From Atlanta to Chicago,” Coptic Nation Temple, Chicago, IL July, 2017
* “Introduction to Black Liberation Theology,” St. Johns United Church of Christ, St. Louis, February, 2017
* “Symbol and Iconography in the Black Coptic Church,” Coptic Church of Faith, Chicago, IL, November, 2016
* “Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Social Gospel,” St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, Mobile, AL, March, 2016
* “African American Religion and Slavery,” Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, Chicago, IL, February, 2016
* “Black Youth Crisis” (panelist), Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN, October, 2015

# GRANTS AND AWARDS

* Louisville Institute Sabbatical Grant for Researchers, Academic Year 2020-2021, $40,000
* Saint Louis University, Co-Curricular Grant, $500
* Saint Louis University Faculty Research Leave, Fall 2019
* Saint Louis University Faculty Mellon Award, $4,750 | 2018
* Saint Louis University bicentennial grant for MLK Symposium, $20,000 | 2018
* Summer Research Award, Saint Louis University, $10,755.00 | 2017
* Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Colleges and Universities Fellowship (DFI) | 2006-2010

Full tuition and $12,000 annual stipend

* Harvard Divinity School Tuition Fellowship | 2003-2005
* Chicago Humanities Fellowship | 2000-2001
* Lewis University LaSallian Scholarship | 1999-2003

**SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

* Chair, Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. Unit, American Academy of Religion 2020 -
* Executive Committee, Society for the Study of Black Religion, 2019 -
* Steering Committee, Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. unit, American Academy of Religion, 2017 - 2020

**UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

**University Committees**

* College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Council (Undergraduate Curriculum sub-committee), 2017-2019

**Department Committees**

* Religion and Complex Issues Committee, Saint Louis University, 2017 -
* Undergraduate Studies Committee, Saint Louis University, 2016 –2017
* Committee on Hiring for Diversity, Saint Louis University, 2016-2018

**PhD Students**

* David Justice, 2018 – (director)
* Deepan Rajarnatam, Committee member

**M.A. Thesis Committees**

* David Justice, 2018 (director); Kevin Seahy, 2018

**Comprehensive Exams Committees**

* Creighton Coleman (M.A.), 2017

**Senior Thesis Advisor (B.A.)**

* Thomas Neiers, “Slavery, the Bible, and Religion”
* Paige Pearson, “Race and Theology: A Contextual Investigation of Theological Activism in St. Louis,” 2018
* Maria Yamnitz, “Method in Liberation Theology,” 2017
* Liz Vestal, “What’s the Intention? The Praxis of Womanist Theology in the Catholic Community at Saint Louis University,” 2016
* Andrew Sullivan, “Economics, Social Justice, and Public Choice,” 2016
* Caroline Belden, “Denying Denial, “Towards a Theology of White Liberation,” 2016

**Campus Sponsored Panels/Lectures**

* Racial and Social Progress since Occupy SLU, moderator, October, 2018
* University Mission and Identity, panelist, New Faculty Orientation, August, 2018
* Black and Free: The Mystical, February, 2018
* Free Speech, Academic Freedom: A Theological Response, February, 2018
* Race and Religion, panelist, Saint Louis University, February, 2018
* Work/Life Balance in the Academy, Saint Louis University, October, 2017
* Incoming Student Panel, Saint Louis University, September, 2017
* The intersection of Faith and Vocation, Agape Latte, Saint Louis University, April 2017
* The Election of Donald Trump and its Theological Implications on Black America, keynote speaker, Black Student Alliance Black History Month, February, 2017
* Bad Theology: Queer Struggles for Identity and Recognition in Religious Communities, Saint Louis University, November, 2016
* Religious Diversity in America and Abroad, panel, Saint Louis University, April 2016
* Intersection of Faith, Race and Justice: Black Theology and the Black Lives Matter Movement, Free to [be] panel, Saint Louis University, March 2016
* Heart and Head: The Impact of Jesuit Heritage on Scholarship, Saint Louis University, February, 2016
* My Brother’s Keeper: A Dialogue on the Progress of President Obama Blake Male Initiative, Saint Louis University, October 2015

**Student Organization Advisor**

* LUCHA: Latinx Student Organization, Saint Louis University, 2016 –

# PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING

**Loyola University Chicago**

Certificate in Theological Pedagogy | 2008

# PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

* Society for the Study of Black Religion, 2018 -
* American Academy of Religion, 2009 -

# NON-ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

* **National Policy Director |** 2011 - 15

Center for Labor and Community Research

* **Mayoral Fellow (**crime prevention policies) **|** 2005 - 07

City of Chicago, Office of the Mayor (Richard M. Daley)

* **Secretary of Labor Senior Policy Fellow** | 2004 – 05

United States Department of Labor, Office of the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao

* **White House Intern |** 2002 - 03 Executive Office of the President, George W. Bush Administration

# RESEARCH LANGUAGES

French (reading and speaking proficiency)

German (reading)

**REFERENCES**

Marla Frederick, PhD

Asa Griggs Professor of Religion and Culture

Emory University

[Marla.frederick@emory.edu](mailto:Marla.frederick@emory.edu)

617.312.8483

Dwight N. Hopkins, PhD

Alexander Campbell Professor of Theology

The University of Chicago Divinity School

[dhopkins@uchicago.edu](mailto:dhopkins@uchicago.edu)

773.834.0006

Vincent Lloyd

Associate Professor of Theology and Religious Studies

Villanova University

[Vincent.lloyd@villanova.edu](mailto:Vincent.lloyd@villanova.edu)

507.261.8335