

**Michele E. Watkins, Ph.D.**  
**Assistant Professor of Theology**  
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## **EDUCATION**

- Ph.D. Theology and Ethics, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2017.  
Dissertation Title: *A Sacralization to Be Fostered: Democratic Womanism as a Construal of the Doctrine of Theosis*, Ph.D. thesis, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2017.
- M.Div. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2010.
- B.S. Phi Beta Kappa, *Summa Cum Laude*, Howard University, 2006.  
Major: Psychology; Minors: Afro-American Studies & Spanish
- CERT. Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, 2013.  
Area: Non-Profit Management
- CERT. Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University, 2022.  
Area: Higher Education Teaching

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### Books

*Deification of the Desacralized: Critical Correlations Among Womanist & Orthodox Theologies* (Manuscript under review, Fordham University Press).

Co-authored: *Unmasking Racism: Coloring with Love*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church, 2023.

### Articles & Chapters

“Malcolm X and the Political Promise of An Islamic Praxis of African Humanism,” in *Bloomsbury Religion in North America*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.

“Even the Demons Believe and Shudder: A Conversation Between Paul Tillich and Delores Williams on the Political Nature of Evil, in *Paul Tillich and Political Theology*, ed. Rachel Baard, Lexington Press, 2024.

“Differentiation as Disfigurement: A Womanist Polemic on the Co-Option of Divinity,” in *Faith, Reason, and Theosis*, eds. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, Fordham University Press, 2023.

“Race and Gender Conscious Trauma Informed Pedagogy,” *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* Vol. 3 No.1 (2022)

“Does Suicide Exempt the Deceased from the Hope of Future Redemption?” in *Research and Writing in the Seminary*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2014.

### Forthcoming and Works-in-Progress

“Exorcising Demonarchy: Abolitionist Spirituality in Mark 5 and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*,” in *Theology, Abolition, Liberation, and Economic Justice* ed. Joshua S. Bartholomew and Jeremy L. Williams, Lexington Press (Submitted and accepted for publication)

“Book Review: Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice by Kirk R. MacGregor,” *International Yearbook for Tillich Research/Internationales Jahrbuch für die Tillich-Forschung / Annales internationales de recherches sur Tillich* (Submitted and accepted for publication)

“Theotic Resistance: A Black Christian Womanist Perspective on Deification.” *Religions* (Special issue: “Christian Theologies of Deification,” ed. Stephen Finlan. *Religions*. (in-progress))

*Immaculate Misconceptions: A Black Mariology*, Amey Victoria Adkins-Hones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025, in *Religious Studies Review* (in-progress)

## **PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS**

### St. John’s University, Queens, NY

Assistant Professor of Theology

September 2023 – Present

*Courses:* Jesus in Christian Faith (asynchronous)  
Feminist & Womanist Theologies (residential)  
Perspectives on Christianity (residential and asynchronous)  
Women and Theology (asynchronous)

#### *Administrative Committees:*

Undergraduate Educational Policy Committee (Fall 2024- Present)

Liberal Arts Faculty Council (Fall 2025 – Present)

Theta Alpha Kappa, Moderator (Spring 2025 – Present)

### University of San Diego, San Diego CA

Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies

September 2018- August 2023

*Courses:* Christianity & Its Practice (residential)  
Black & Womanist Theologies (residential and online – synchronous)  
Religion & Hip-Hop (residential and online – synchronous)  
Womanist Theology & Literature (residential)

#### *Administrative Committees:*

COA Diversity Postdoctoral Faculty Committee

THRS Visiting Professor Search Committee

THRS Elections Committee

THRS Curriculum Committee

THRS Faculty Salon Organizer, “Teaching Race”

University-wide Black Faculty Committee (Summer 2020-Present)

University Curriculum Committee (Fall 2019- Spring 2021)

University All Faiths Service Planning Committee (Fall 2019- Spring 2021)

### Iliff School of Theology, Denver CO

Assistant Professor of Theology and Gerald L. Schlessman Professorship of Methodist Studies,

January 2016- June 2018

*Courses:* Introduction to Christian Theology (residential)  
Theology of Paul Tillich (residential)  
Feminist & Womanist Theologies (residential)

Post-Theism in Moral Theology (hybrid)  
United Methodist History (online – asynchronous)  
United Methodist Doctrine (residential and online – asynchronous)

*Administrative Committees:*

Curriculum Committee (2016-2017)  
Accreditation Self-Study Subcommittee on Curriculum (2017-2018)  
Dir. of Office of Professional Formation Search Committee (2017-2018)

Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond VA

Summer Term, July 2021-August 2021

*Course:* “Womanist Theology: A Primer” (online, synchronous)

Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago IL

Fall 2020 (residential) and Fall 2021 (online, asynchronous)

*Course:* “Augustine, Niebuhr, and Malcolm X on Salvation & Sin,”

Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, OH 43015

September 2018 – December 2018

*Course:* United Methodist Doctrine (online, synchronous, and asynchronous)

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL

June 2020 – September 2021 (online, asynchronous)

June 2014 – September 2015 (residential)

*Course:* Introduction to Christian Theology (residential)

## **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

American Academy of Religion

Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit

Co-Chair, Steering Committee, 2021- 2023

Member, 2017-Present

Black Theology Unit

Member, Steering Committee, 2018-Present

Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group

Member, Steering Committee, 2012-2019

Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race

Planning Committee: 2025-Present

Member, 2010-Present

North American Paul Tillich Society

Member of the Board, 2025-Present

Member, 2012 – Present

Duke University, Divinity School, Black Pastoral Leadership Collaboration Workgroup

Research & Essay Contributor, June 2021-Present

Gammon Theological Seminary

Member of the Board of Trustees, Jan 2026 - Present

Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership, Union Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Advisory Board Member, 2020- Present

### Society for the Study of Black Religion

Executive Director, Fall 2020-Spring 2023

Induction, Spring 2017

### Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Member of the Board of Visitors, Center for the Church and the Black Experience, 2009-Present

President's Assessment Task Force, 2013- 2014

Consultant, Racial and Cultural Healing Task Force, 2011-2016

Member of the Board of Trustees, Academic Affairs & Development Committees, 2008-2010

### 1517 Media, Augsburg Fortress Press

Board Member, 2016- 2020

## **FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS**

### Fellowships and Grants

- 2025 Wabash Center, African Diasporic Teaching Cohort
- 2022-23 Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Peer Mentoring Grant
- 2022 University of San Diego, Center for Educational Excellence Professional Development Grant
- 2021-22 Fordham University, National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Research Fellowship
- 2020-21 Wabash Center Early Career Religion Faculty Teaching Undergraduates Workshop Fellow
- 2019-20 Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Workshop Fellowship Grant
- 2015-16 Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship
- 2014-15 The Fund for Theological Education Dissertation Fellowship
- 2014-15 John Dempster Graduate Fellowship, General Board of Higher Education & Ministry
- 2010-13 United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, Women of Color Scholar Program
- 2010-12 The Fund for Theological Education Doctoral Fellowship

### Honors and Awards

- 2023 Center for Educational Excellence, Fostering Black Academic Excellence Award, University of San Diego
- 2021 Martin Luther King, Jr. International Collegium of Scholars, Morehouse College
- 2017 Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Outstanding 45 Black Alums Honoree

## **LECTURES ♦ PANELS ♦ PROFESSIONAL PAPERS**

Panelist, "From 325 to Project 2025: Religious Nationalism, Nicaea, and the Legacy of Imperial Orthodoxy," 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network, American College at Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki Greece, 18 September 2025.

Lecturer, "Malcolm X, African Humanism, and Transatlantic Radical Traditions," Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 11 July 2025.

Panelist, "Stratagems of White Christian Nationalism," Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc. Illinois District Conference, Online, 18 June 2024.

Panelist, "Harriet: Film Screening & Panel Discussion," St. John's University, Queens NY, 22 April 2024.

- Lecturer, “Within and Beyond: From Dichotomous Logics to a Quantum Mechanics of Being in Decolonizing Authority,” Fides Quaerens Conference, Villanova University, Villanova PA, 16 March 2024.
- Lecturer, “Unmasking Racism as Legion: White Supremacy, The Sin of Unworthiness and Co-dependency in the Black Pastorate, Thirkield Jones Lecture, Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta GA, 6 December 2023.
- Presenter, “Review of Andrew Prevot’s *The Mysticism of Ordinary Life and Critiques of Normativity*,” Theology and Religious Reflection Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio TX, 18 November 2023.
- Presider, “Paul Tillich and Delores Williams in Dialogue,” Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio TX, 18 November 2023.
- Lecturer, “On Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’* and what was missed: Ecowomanism and Indigenous Spiritualities,” St. John’s University, Queens, NY, 4 April 2023.
- Lecturer, “Is There Power in the Blood? Manifestations of Aje and Ancestral Spiritual Power Among Nineteenth Century *femmes de couleur libres*: Henriette DeLille and Marie Laveau,” Xavier University, New Orleans LA, 16 March 2023.
- Panelist, “Hearing Baldwin’s Call to Higher Unity and the Role of the Interreligious,” A Roundtable on James Cone’s *Martin & Malcolm in America*,” Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. Unit, American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, 20 November 2022.
- Lecturer, “The Politics of Virtue, Love and Suffering: Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and Delores Williams in Conversation,” Aquinas Center, Catholic-Orthodox Lecture, Emory University, Atlanta GA, 4 October 2022.
- Respondent, “The Black Social Gospel Tradition and the Spiritual Left,” Black Theology Unit, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio TX, 22 November 2021.
- Lecturer, “Faith, Nature, and Healing: The Gift of Indigenous and African Cosmologies for Environmental and Social Justice,” Forum Series, St. Paul Cathedral Episcopal Church, San Diego CA, 19 September 2021.
- Research Presentation, “Led by the Spirit: Mrs. Elizabeth McDonald and a Black Churchwoman’s Proto-womanist Commitment to the Survival and Wholeness of Black Children.” Virtual Meeting of Black Pastoral Leadership Collaboration, Office of Black Church Studies, Duke Divinity School, 16 June 2021.
- Panelist, “Say Her Name: Womanist Theology, Activism and Movement Making,” Talk Just/Just Talk Series,” Katie G. Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership, Virtual Webinar, 16 March 2021.
- Lecturer, “Womanist Ways of Being and Knowing: Understanding Survival as a Theological Virtue in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*,” Virtual Meeting of the Women Together at St. Paul, St. Paul’s Cathedral Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA, 4 February 2021.
- Lecturer, “African American Biblical Hermeneutics and Womanist Interpretation” (Kimberly Russaw), Christian Theological Seminary, 1 February 2021.

Panelist, “Black Churches within the United Methodist Church,” Black Pastors’ Convocation, Virtual Meeting, 28 January 2021.

Panelist, “Won’t You Celebrate With Me?: An Exploration of the Work of Lucille Clifton,” University of San Diego, San Diego, CA, 22 October 2020.

Presider, New Cartographies of Black Theology: 400 Years after Jamestown, Black Theology Unit, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego CA, 25 November 2019.

Paper Presentation, “The Gifts and Curses of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theology: Paul Tillich as Fit/Unfit Conversation Partner for Black Existentialist Theology,” Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego CA, 23 November 2019.

Panelist, “Paul Tillich and Political Theology Book Panel,” North American Paul Tillich Society, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego CA, 22 November 2019.

Panelist, “The Nature of Hell,” Jude 3 Project, Atlanta GA, 4 August 2019.

Paper Presentation, “Differentiation as Disfigurement: A Womanist Polemic on the Co-Option of Divinity,” The Solon and Marianna Patterson Triennial Conference on Orthodox/Catholic Dialogue, Orthodox Studies Center, Fordham University, New York NY, 4 June 2019.

Paper Presentation, “Black Women and Theotic Resistance,” Womanist/PanAfrican Unit, American Academy of Religion Western Region, Phoenix AZ, 2 March 2019.

Paper Presentation, “Is God a White Rapist? Black Women, Sacrality, and Rape as the Correlative to Lynching,” Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Denver CO, 18 November 2018.

Presider, American Civil Religion and Public Theology, Black Theology Unit, American Academy of Religion, Denver CO, 20 November 2018.

Lecture, “Womanist Christology,” Images of Jesus. Iliff School of Theology, Denver CO, 11 October 2017.

Panelist, The Doctrine of Discovery. Colorado Council of Churches, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO, 9 October 2017.

Paper Presentation, “When the Curse of Eve Meets the Curse of Ham.” Patriarchy from a Religious Perspective. The Colorado Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Denver, CO, 15 March 2017

Presider, Black Girl Magic: Considering Contemporary Challenges and Black Women’s Resistance. Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX, 22 November 2016

Lecture, “Cultivating the Tree of Life in the Interim Through Individual Resistance and Communal Revolt.” Iliff School of Theology Luncheon, Rocky Mountain Annual Conference, Denver CO, 10 June 2016

Lecture, “Resistance & Revolt as Mediums of Divine Providence,” Race, Racism, and Privilege Lecture Series. First Plymouth Congregational Church, 10 April 2016

Presider, Eco-Womanism 101 Roundtable. Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society Group, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 23 November 2014

Moderator, “Hands Up! Don’t Shoot! The Scholar’s Task in a Fergusonian Era,” Womanist Approaches to Religion & Society Group, Pre-Meeting Consultation, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 21 November 2014

Lecture, “The Development of Early Theological Anthropology,” Christology-Theological Anthropology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 20 March 2014

Lecture, “Being Human in a World of Social Construction,” Christology-Theological Anthropology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 27 March 2014

Guest Conversant, “Embodiment: Pinky & The Bluest Eye,” Human Being in Black, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 16 January 2014

Paper Presentation, “Democratic Womanism and the Politics of Communal Salvation,” American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting of American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD, 25 November 2013

Lecture, “Biblical Perspectives on Eschatology.” Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 14 November 2013

Lecture, “Contemporary Theological Voices in Ecclesiology: Avery Dulles, John Zizioulas, and Jurgen Moltmann,” Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 17 October 2013

Lecture, “A Christian Ethic of Mediation and Incarnography in the Thoughts of Marcia Riggs and Eboni Marshall Turman,” Christian Moral Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 30 April 2013

Paper Presentation, “Shifts in Protestant Evangelicalism: Sexual & Racial Desacralization as a Function of American Classism & Religious Hegemony,” American Academy of Religion , Midwest Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH, 13 April 2013

Panel Presentation, “Democratic Womanism and Black Progenious Intervention,” Squaring the Womanist Circle: Emancipation's Unfinished Agenda: "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black ?, Union Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA, 12 April 2013

Lecture, “Issues Facing Christian Moral Reasoning: Sin-Talk as Cultural Production,” Christian Moral Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 26 March 2013

Paper Presentation, “Shifts in Protestant Evangelicalism: Sexual & Racial Desacralization as a Function of American Capitalism,” Intersections Student & Faculty Symposium, Chicago Theological Seminary, 22 February 2013

Lecture, “Desacralization as a Context for African-American Biblical Interpretation,” Black Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 8 November 2012

Lecture, “A Primer on Womanist Pneumatologies,” Lecturer in Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 8 October 2012

Lecture, “Historical Trajectory of Theological Anthropology & The Problem of Evil,” Introduction to Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston IL, 27 April 2012

Panel Presentation, “Womanist Methodological Conversation on Salvation with Gregory of Nyssa”,

Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group, Pre-Meeting Consultation, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, 16 November 2012

Papers Respondent, "Black Churches, Race Consciousness, and Generational Differences", Black History Month Lecture Series, Center for the Church and the Black Experience, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 3 February 2010

## **ECCLESIAL ACTIVITIES**

### **Clergy, The United Methodist Church**

Assistant Pastor, St. Mark UMC, Chicago, IL, 2009-2016

Dean, Maceo D. Pembroke Institute, Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal, 2008-2015

Youth Pastor, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago, IL, 2008-2009

Board Member, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, UM Board of Discipleship, 2007-2010

## **ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

American Academy of Religion

Black Catholic Theological Symposium

North American Paul Tillich Society

North American Patristics Society

Society for the Study of Black Religion