

OLLI at DU On Campus Syllabus – Spring 2024

The Wisdom of the Spirituals

Thursday Afternoons In-Person; Six weeks

Instructor: Arthur C. Jones

RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS: Required: Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (Revised Edition), Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023.

This course provides learners with an introduction to the history and wise teachings embedded in the sacred folksongs called spirituals, created, and first sung by African peoples enslaved in America. Following the outline of the 2023 revised edition of *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*, the course highlights some of the principal functions and teachings of the spirituals, which were created in a specific time and place (chattel slavery in North America, 18th and 19th centuries), but yet have transcended the circumstances of their origin to speak to universal issues of human dignity, freedom and justice.

- **Session #1**– African Beginnings. Required preparation: Preface (both original preface and preface to the revised edition) and Chapter 1, “Over My Head I Hear Music in the Air.”
- **Session #2**– Suffering and Transformation. Required preparation: Chapter 2, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.”
- **Session #3**– Struggle and Resistance. Required preparation: Chapter 3, “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho.”
- **Session #4**– A Working, Everyday Spirituality. Required preparation: Chapter 4, “A City Called Heaven.”
- **Session #5**– Accountability. Required preparation: Chapter 5, “Scandalize’ My Name.”
- **Session #6**– Hope and Healing. Required preparation: Chapter 6, “There is a Balm in Gilead” and “Epilogue.”

Highly recommended field trip - One of the following events:

Saturday, April 6, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

University of Denver Spirituals Project Choir - Collaboration with Arvada Chorale

Arvada United Methodist Church

6750 Carr St

Arvada, CO 80004

Saturday, May 18, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

University of Denver Spirituals Project Choir Spring Concert: “Prayer, Protest, and Praise”

Gates Concert Hall
Newman Center for the Performing Arts
2344 E Iliff Ave
Denver, CO 80208