

Professor Elizabeth McAlister, Religion and African American Studies

Internationalizing and Decolonizing the Curriculum

Rubric for units and final project on creating publishable interview transcripts
with Africana religion practitioners

For use in:

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION OR
BLACK RELIGIONS IN THE AMERICAS

As part of decolonizing Religious Studies, we are turning our final project into a form of intellectual and material praxis that is also a form of service to our class speakers, who are all members of marginalized and even demonized religious traditions.

Over the course of the semester, a series of religious practitioners, philosophers and/or spokespeople from marginalized African-based religions will visit our class (by zoom or in person). Visitors might include Vodou priests or priestesses, Regla de Ocha (Santeria) elders, Rastafari elders and healers, and the like.

Phase 1: As part of the class visit, students will form into working groups and will interview the elders about their traditions. These interviews will be recorded.

Phase 2: working groups will listen to and correct the transcripts. Students will consider how technology amplifies inequities in our culture, how or whether to note pauses, gestures, and tones of voice. Students will work out their own process in ways that are equitable. They will keep a log that articulates how they chose processes and any reflections about the process.

Phase 3: Final transcripts will be shaped and shared with the religious elders themselves. The elders may then use them for their own purposes—on blogs, as published materials, or on their own social media, etc.

Phase 4: Students will write a reflection paper on the process and on working to create primary source documents. They will link their reflections to the course objectives, to themes of decolonizing and internationalizing, and recurring questions from the course (such as the role of music, dance, healing, dreaming, herbs, etc in these religious traditions).