

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2010**
Instructor: Robert Masson
Course #: THEO 2420
Sections: 101, 901
Course Title: **Bridging the Racial Divide**

Description:

Examination of racism, ethnic tension, and theology from the perspective of “white privilege” and African-American experience in American Christianity. Reflects on the intersection of these areas to discover, on the one hand, what race, ethnic tension, and struggles for social justice can tell us about theological notions, and on the other hand, to discern how specific theological notions contribute positively or negatively to our understanding of race, ethnic tension and social justice.

Over the course of the fall and spring terms, I am writing a book entitled “Theology in Black and White.” Readings and assignments for the course will be designed so that students can contribute to the project through their research, reflection, and reactions to my work. The project for our course is inspired by novelist James Baldwin’s suggestion that Christians, particularly white Christians, need to do their first works over. He explained:

“To do your first works over means to reexamine everything. Go back to where you started, or as far back as you can, examine all of it, travel your road again and tell the truth about it. Sing or shout or testify or keep it to yourself: but *know whence you came.*”

Since I have written an introduction to theology (*The Charmed Circle: Theology for That Heart & Feet*) and since students will have recently completed an introduction to theology, we will look back on those roads in light of issues of race, ethnic tension, and struggles for social justice, to ask whether a better path might have been chosen and how we might better tell the truth about whence we came and about where we are headed.

The course has a required Service Learning component. All students will reflect on some narrative accounts of white privilege, racism, and the struggle for social justice in the American Church. Students will have the option of developing some of those stories through participating in a standard service learning assignment or through participation in a special project connected with this class that will entail collecting, transcribing and editing stories from parishioners at African American churches.

Grades will be determined by class discussion, journal entries, midterm examination and final paper.