

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2008**
Instructor: Philip J. Rossi, SJ
Course #: Theo 150
Section: 1001
Course Title: Contemporary Atheism and Theism

Description:

The philosopher Charles Taylor, winner of the 2007 Templeton Prize (see <http://www.templetonprize.org/bios.html>), has recently described contemporary secular society as a move from “a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (*A Secular Age* Harvard University Press, 2007, p.3).

This course will critically explore the key intellectual and cultural sources that lie behind the contemporary interplay between belief and unbelief in God, between theism and atheism as systems of belief as well as life-charting options. The readings and course assignments will engage a number of the historically important intellectual forms that unbelief has taken (e.g. from Hume, Nietzsche, Freud), the intellectual, moral and practical forms it takes in contemporary life, and the responses – intellectual, moral and practical – that Christian theology offers to contemporary forms of unbelief.

Course assignments: 4 short (3-4 page) reflection papers, two class period examinations, and a final examination.

Required texts:

- Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*
- H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*
- Others: TBA

Optional texts:

- George Steiner, *Real Presences*
- Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*