Rationale for the Course

Of all of America's problems, there is perhaps none older, and none more morally troubling, than the problem of racism in its many forms. Racism of white Euro-Americans towards Native Americans, then towards black Africans imported as slaves, toward darker-skinned (and Catholic) Mediterranean Europeans, towards Jews, towards immigrating Latin Americans and Asians, is all well documented. Many believe the gradual diminishing of overt, and even covert, individual prejudice and systemic discrimination in the United States has brought us to a color-blind society. Events in the past two years deny any such a conclusion. And... when personal stories from ethnic minorities are elicited, even in the Christian Church and its seminaries, underlying pain is poignantly revealed. This course attempts to address such wounds and point toward processes of reconciliation.

... Christ... has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us.” Ephesians 2:14b

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King Jr., August, 1963

This course is more than practical ministry, more than ethics; it is theology, spiritual and practical theology. It attempts to approach our work from a spiritual and counseling perspective. It begins and ends with God, praying: thy Kingdom come, thy justice be done on earth as it is in heaven, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. We pray for reconciliation that the kingdom, the power and the glory may be yours, O Lord of all. Amen.

Course Objectives

1. To be able to talk (listen and respond) to those in any opposing group, the angry and wounded, the arrogant and indifferent, about our identities, relationships and communication.
2. To be able to sensitize those willing to face this issue and to make them aware of the real pain and damage done by many forms of ethnic discrimination—personal and corporate, overt and covert. While the White/Black paradigm is an outstanding American example of ethnic discrimination, this revised course goes beyond to face many prominent ethnic, and even gender, prejudices. To be able to discuss and implement workshops in this area as evidenced through discussions and in written work.

3. To become familiar with, and able to teach, historical roots of several varieties of ethnic discrimination as measured by critical papers.

4. To learn to listen to one another’s stories as a necessary prelude to reconciliation and to facilitate future discussions as evidenced in discussions and personal journals.

5. To exegete ourselves and make progress in dealing personally with the impact of all kinds of ethnic prejudices as they affect our identity and feelings, as displayed through class probing and personal journaling.

6. To understand ethnic privilege and isolation from a Christian perspective and develop viable strategies for combating such injustice (or unrighteousness) as evidenced in discussions and written work.

7. To develop a theology of reconciliation and personal strategies of response and be able to preach and teach such theology and strategies for reconciliation as measured through written work.

**Class Procedure**

A new pedagogical method will be introduced with this evening class. Its previous large numbers have been capped at 25 students. You will be situated with a small group around a table—empty toward the other tables and groups in the room. We will break our presentations up into smaller segments and allow for more time to process challenging material in your small group before opening the discussion up for larger group discussion.

To see the class really work, we must integrate feelings and opinions as we honestly face this difficult material. We cannot get trapped in the idea of “being nice.” Avoidance of pain and anger in oneself or others will reduce the potential for growth and healing this subject requires.

We will also be studying from, and contributing to, the CYS website—to which former students have produced articles.

I will be discussing with you the possibility of showing some powerful videos/films from 5:30 to class time. These extra experiences will great increase the value of this course.
Course Texts

Basic class reading comes from Culture and Youth Studies (CYS, at: http://cultureandyouth.org). You might begin your reading with its topic, Racism: http://cultureandyouth.org/racism/. You will be drawing extensively from this website, and your final (group) project will contribute further discussable material to it.

You don’t have to read every word of the following texts—just enough to pass basic quizzes and be able to discuss them intelligently. It is important as graduate students, and for the rest of your busy life, that you are able to scan the Cover, Table of Contents, Preface and Introduction of a book for its aim and general development, and then seize its main thesis, the development of its main argument, and its conclusion. Then, dig into its content. All this prepares you for a quiz, or, if writing up a short essay, to state the essence of the book with some key illustrative quotations or illustrations.

Hopefully you will have read The Autobiography of Malcolm X before class begins (if you haven’t studied it recently—if so, you may substitute—but most find a reread valuable). The Autobiography... is rapid reading and difficult to put down. (Study Questions as a guide are available on Sakai.)

This important course requires adequate reading. You will receive additional handouts to these basic texts and our hope is that you will choose at least one further text to add to your reading—plus the work assigned on the Internet. Some of this reading will go quickly; some will have to be carefully studied. We don’t mind your skimming sections of lesser importance. These texts have been selected with former student input. Students have evaluated the readings for this course as very important. The following required texts are in suggested order of your reading.

Michael Emerson & Christian Smith (2000) Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America, Oxford Univ. Press, 212pp. Christian Smith directed the highly respected National Study of Youth and Religion. Michael Emerson is a professor at Rice Univ. and has authored many articles and books on racism. One student said: “I really didn’t like Divided by Faith the first time I read it: I saw it as a case for hopelessness in racial reconciliation. But then I started attending an African-American church (I’m Caucasian), and very much to my surprise, Emerson and Smith are quite correct in trying to get us to realize a major divide along racial lines.” These two scholars, one a social scientist, the other a theologian and ethicist, want us to get serious about racial reconciliation. Some have gotten a bit bogged down in this important book; you may skip or skim some parts, but be sure to pick up on and consider the Conclusion or Final Word of each chapter. And above all, check out “Cultural Tools” in the Index and study each section until you can clearly explain the “Evangelical Cultural Tool Kit.”

Alex Haley, ed. (1966, 1987) The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Ballantine Books; Reissue edition, 1987. This book contains a basic challenge that must be faced by all Christians who want to take the issue of race relations seriously. (Many students believe this book should be read by all Americans, especially white Christians and all seminarians.) See if
you agree. I am postponing the quiz—and maybe your reading, on this text until our sessions on the Black Experience. It can be helpful to keep your own index of important characters and issues on blank pages at the back.)

Miroslav Volf (1996) *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, 336pp. You are only being assigned as required reading: Preface, Introduction and Part One (the first 190 pp.). This is a deep and powerful exploration, from someone who struggled with his Croatian identity with temptations for enmity and revenge, and moved despite family and peer criticism, to self-surrender and reconciliation. It is a challenging theological treatise.

Elizabeth Conde-Frasier, Soochan (Steve) Kang, and Gary A. Parrett (2004) *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*, Baker Academic, 223pp. Many students of this, and similar courses, complain that too much time is spent on the problem and not enough of its solution. How would you answer them? This is at least one attempt to point us in the right direction. Another quiz will test your general gain from this text.

Optional, for some extra credit, is a 2-3pp. report on how Manuel Ortiz’s (1996) *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church*, IVPress, 158pp. This book might apply to your past, present or future church.

**Class Assignments and Evaluation of Your Work**
(Note due Dates integrated with Class Schedule)

1. **Class Participation.** This must be an interactive class. Your presence on time, your listening to every other classmate, and your measured contributions are needed. It is important, in a large class such as this, that you not dominate discussion. Hold back after you have contributed and urge others to voice their opinions or hurts. (Attendance, listening and participation count for some 10% of your final grade.)

2. **Journals (Log of Personal Reactions and Growth).** These are from your gut or heart rather than your head. It’s a chance to disclose frank emotions, opinions, and reactions. In other words, you’re doing “self-exegesis,” or interpretation of self, past and present, as well as your various responses to subject matter, readings, classmates, small groups and professors. Begin, as Ed Gaskin often suggests, with you racial biography—how race has affected your growing up and development. These Journals are private and precious—meant for yourself, your Lord, and professors’ eyes only. Submit journal in three stages, each of 2-4 pages in length. (3 chapters)

(I) Describe your reason or enrolling in this class, your reaction to its Syllabus and first meeting, and first writing assignment. How do you see and describe yourself of racially or ethnically and in terms of you socio-economic class? How has your identity, with its benefits and disadvantages shaped your feelings toward any other groups? What previous experiences have you had with racism? At this point, what
are your honest reactions and feelings about this class, and toward your classmates/instructors? (2 pp. Due 22Sep...)

(II) Reflections on how you (your opinions, feelings, and your dark side) are reacting to the course. How do you think you are growing, what obstacles are you finding to such growth? Include specific reactions to books read and videos seen. At this point, what suggestions for, criticisms of, or questions about this class do you have? (1 p. Due 20Oct)

(III) A final evaluation of the course and of your personal growth including response to your extra reading—recommended according to your ethnicity. This final segment will mention your intended commitments for racial reconciliation in the future. It will also summarize (1) what Many Colored Kingdom has given you, (2) a visit one or two churches of another ethnic group during this course, (3) movies or videos relevant to our course seen this semester, and (4) significant conversations with a couple of persons across ethnic lines. Your reflections on these experiences will be an important aspect of your journal—in either its second or final sections. (2-3pp. Due final class)

(Journals count for 30% of grade)

3. Quizzes: short answers and brief paragraph:

   Divided by Faith                       6 October
   The Autobiography of Malcolm X        20 October
   Exclusion&Embrace (through Pt.1)      17 November

(30% of grade)

4. In terms of your Final Project mentioned above, your group will decide on one topic from CYS: Infopedia. Or, you can decide on another issue not mentioned above. Understand that CYS is for Christians of all persuasions and perspectives... and for secular readership as well. It is not polemical but seeks to encourage discussion among all viewpoints—leaving various denominations to add their own Scriptures or tradition.

If your group decides on a topic like Racism, which is already rather overloaded, you will be suggesting culling out some material, adding significant research, annotating new books, briefly describing discussions of suggested movies, and making this a more useful on-line laboratory for discussion and progress in this critical area of our lives in church and society.

Transgendered children, youth and adults find themselves in a very difficult position—sometimes even from the gay community. Many don’t know where to turn for help with pastoral care for the transgendered; few churches are equipped to offer such support. The transgendered poses a particular difficulty for a strict conservative position (Should your church allow/bless a transgendered male in a hormonally and surgically modified woman’s body to marry a man... or a woman? Intersex is an even greater challenge as the biological evidence of an in between gender is biologically visible. It is another possible topic for Infopedia.) Churches can choose to avoid these matters, or take a strict dogmatic stance on them, or prayerfully study the issues seeking generous allowance for inevitably differing opinions—since Scripture does not seem to be entirely clear about transgender or intersex conditions. Your task as a group would be to provide a place and suggestions to help
parents, counselors, pastors and church leaders communicate with, and better understand, those who consider themselves to be a gender contrary to their own bodies.

Topics like Native American Youth, Korean American, Chinese Youth, Asian American Youth, need attention and creative work—as does the topic Reconciliation.

I will work with each group to produce something worthy of your study and helpful to others for years to come. All will share in the group’s evaluation, but each member’s individual work will be noted.

Due: final day of class 30% of grade

**Very Tentative Schedule**

1. **15Sep**  
   Introductory PPTs and Discussions  
   Begin Studying CYS Infopedia

2. **22Sep**  
   Theological & Social Science PPTs and Discussions  
   Journal 1 due  
   Consider Topic for CYS  
   Begin reading *Divided by Faith*

3. **29Sep**  
   The Asian American Experience  
   Prepare for Quiz on *Divided by Faith*

4. **6Oct**  
   The Hispanic American Experience  
   Quiz on *Divided by Faith*  
   Read and Study *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
   Begin Group Work on CYS Final Project

   **READING WEEK (Reading & Projects rather than Class)**

5. **20Oct**  
   The African American Experience  
   Quiz on *Malcolm X*  
   Additional reading on Blackness and Whiteness ("Invisible Knapsack")

6. **27Oct**  
   The Black Experience  
   Reading on Feminism, Womanism, and Homosexuality

7. **3Nov**  
   Women’s Experience  
   LGBTIQX Experience  
   Study Volf’s *Exclusion&Embrace* to p. 190 for Quiz  
   Make real progress on Final Project

   **READING WEEK (No Class: Study and Final Projects)**
8. 17Nov  Obstacles to Reconciliation (Discussion of Volf)
    Quiz on Volf
    Further reading and work on Final Project

9. 24Nov  Group Reports, Reconciliation (Further Discussion of Volf and Frazier)
    Further Reading

10. 1Dec  Group Reports, Strategies for Reconciliation

11. 8Dec  Group Reports and Termination

Further Texts and Reading

(Perhaps for skimming or future reading, you might select one further book according to your ethnic group, including but not limited to, those listed below. Or, you may also choose extra reading from the fuller bibliography. If you feel, as some students do, that our required reading is weak on solutions, you might turn to Lederach, Perkins & Rice, Washington & Kehrein, etc. We begin by listing some books of ethnic interest, a fuller bibliography, and then at the end of the Syllabus, and even a further General Bibliography.)

For Asian-American Students


Arar Han and John Hsu, eds. *Asian American X: An Intersection of Twenty-First Century Voices*


Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*

Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*
For Latino/Latina Students


For African American Students

L. Janelle Dance (2002) *Tough Fronts: The Impact of Street Culture on Schooling* (Critical Social Thought), Routledge, 208pp. Includes discussions of street-savvy students, scholarly depictions of Black America, the social complexity of teacher-student relationships, the facilitation of resiliency among high-risk students and suggestions for school change.

Colin Kidd, *Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*, Cambridge University Press, 318pp. A strong argument that race is cultural rather than biological. Shows that the Bible itself is color-blind while commentators have imported racial ideologies into its interpretation.


Caribbean Americans


Douglas Sullivan-González and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds. () *The South and the Caribbean*, Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi. One of the only studies linking southern U.S. culture with that of the Caribbean or West Indies.

For White Students

John Howard Griffin (1961/ 50th Anniversary Edition, 2010) *Black Like Me*, Signet, 208pp. “In 1959, Griffin headed to New Orleans, darkened his skin and immersed himself in black society, then traveled several states until his could no longer stand the racism, segregation and degrading living conditions.” Reading this, you will understand white privilege.


Tim Wise (2nd revised ed. 2011) *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, Soft Skull Press, 208pp. A leading anti-racist activist and educator writes this memoir and polemic against white privilege that is supported by social reinforcements about which we seldom think.