GENERAL 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.

COURSE DESIGN
I am working on 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 reflection, research, and reactions. 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:

In the church I come from—which is not at all the same church to which white Americans belong—we were counselled, from time to time, to do our first works over…..

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.¹

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” and our personal individual “journeys” 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.

Doing our first works over (reexamining or redoing our introduction to Christianity and to theology) requires shared engagement and shared inquiry. On the one hand, doing our first works over is not something another person can do for us. We have to do it ourselves. On the other hand, we share the same roads and influence each other’s paths in such profound ways that there is no way to discern the truth about our roads without listening to one another. I have designed the class with readings and assignments that will provide an opportunity for us to work at doing our first works over.

REQUIRED BOOKS (available from the Bookstore)
Distinguishes between an inadequate common sense understanding of racism and racism as culture. This provides the basis for a probing critique the Catholic church’s response to racial justice and suggestions a more adequate Catholic engagement.

A leading proponent of black theology argues that unless the cross and the lynching tree are seen together, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America and no healing of the racial divide.

Note that you must use the 2008 edition—978-1-933368-99-3—which has different content and pagination from the earlier editions.
Compelling examination of the ways in which racial privilege shapes the lives of white Americans.

Argues that white Roman Catholic Theology is racist and argues that it needs to engage black theology seriously.

OTHER REQUIRED & SUGGESTED TEXTS: on D2L & listed on the calendar of assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS (See the assignment calendar on D2L for due dates.)

READING: Attentive and thoughtful reading of assigned texts for the designated classes. **Students must bring a paper copy of the assigned reading to class.**

DISCUSSION/LECTURE ABSTRACTS: All students are to take notes during discussions and lectures. For each class two students will be designated to revise their notes after class and post them on D2L discussion board by noon the next day. Other students may make suggestions for revisions or additions on the discussion board. Students may revise the notes on the basis of discussion board comments. The final draft will be delivered at the beginning of the next class. Each student will do this at least once in the first half of the semester and at least once in the second half of the semester.

Announced and unannounced **POP QUIZZES** will cover the readings assigned for the day or material covered in previous classes.

GRADES

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<tr>
<td>Participation*</td>
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<td>Discussion/Lecture Abstracts &amp; Quizzes*</td>
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<td>Midterm (Take Home Exam)</td>
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<td>Final (Take Home Exam)</td>
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The grade for participation is based on quality of your preparation for class, class attendance, engagement in class discussion and D2L discussion.

Quizzes cannot be made up. The lowest quiz grade in each half of the semester will be dropped.

CONVERTING SCORES & GRADES

The following scale is used to convert numerical scores to letter grades.

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The following scale is used to convert letter grades to numerical scores.

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ATTENDANCE POLICY
Attendance is crucial to achieve the objectives of this class. The policy of the College of Arts & Sciences will be followed: [http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance](http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance)
- You are responsible for all the material covered in every class, even in the case of excused absences. If you miss the class it is your responsibility to get notes from classmates who were present.
- Absence for more than two weeks of class (regardless of cause) is considered excessive.
- Students who miss five classes will have their grade lowered by half a letter grade for that absence and for each subsequent absence.
- Students who miss six classes (regardless of cause) may be dropped from the course and earn a WA.
- Note, after the WA grade has been issued, the student may not apply for a grade of W.

COMPUTERS AND DIGITAL DEVICES
Computers and digital/electronic devices of any kind may not be used in class.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
If you have any handicap or if during the semester special needs develop because of illness, injury, family death or similar emergency, please notify me as soon as possible so special arrangements can be made to provide the assistance you need.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
All material submitted for this class should be the actual work of only the student whose name appears on the material and should not be produced through unauthorized means. The policies of the College of Arts and Sciences will be followed in cases of academic dishonesty. The policies can be found at: [http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy](http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy)

LEARNING OUTCOMES
This course is structured to promote the three general learning outcomes of the University for theology courses.
1. Describe theologically the basic content of the Catholic faith in relation to other Christian and religious traditions as well as other world views.
2. Interpret theological texts and frameworks in their historical contexts.
3. Articulate implications of Christian faith for growth in holiness and the promotion of justice in the contemporary world.

The course also has in mind the three general learning outcomes of the University for diversity courses, although it does not fulfill that requirement. By the end of the semester you should be able to do the following.
1. Identify differences and similarities in values, practices, and beliefs between your own culture and other cultures.
2. Explain how categories of human diversity (such as race, gender, ethnicity and religious conviction) influence personal identities and can either create structural and institutional inequity or promote greater social justice.
3. Critically reflect upon your personal, cultural and religious presuppositions and how these affect your values and relationships.

Those broad outcomes will be pursued within context of our specific topic: racism, ethnic tension, and theology from the perspective of “white privilege” and African-American experience in American Christianity, particularly, Roman Catholicism. So by the end of the semester you should be able to do the following.
1. Describe
   a. the conception of white privilege in the literature on race and in current theological discussions,
b. the arguments for and against holding that white privilege is a reality in American culture and American Catholic ecclesial life,

c. the effects of privilege on the understanding of race and issues of social justice in American culture and the Catholic church.

2. Identify how specific theological doctrines, scripture texts, and religious practices articulate and justify people’s understandings of humanity, and in particular, how these contribute to either a better understanding or obfuscation of the dynamics of white privilege, racism, ethnic tensions, and social injustice. Conversely, identify how the realities of white privilege, racism, ethnic tensions, and social injustice clarify what is meant by or at issue in doctrine, scripture and practices.

3. Describe how differences in social location, racial identity, and religious convictions can lead to different self-understandings, evaluations of social and political realities, and courses of action or inaction.

4. Explain and critically evaluate Christian responses, and particularly the American Catholic Church’s responses, to the reality of white privilege and racism, attentive to the strengths and shortcomings of these responses.

5. Use specific theological doctrines, stories or practices to analyze and formulate a response to the reality of racism in your context.

GRADE CRITERIA

A (SUPERIOR GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

1. **Accuracy.** Knows all the important conclusions, the arguments (reasoning) which leads up to them, and the questions which they seek to address.

2. **Depth.** Explains the conclusion, arguments and questions in depth, fully and correctly.

3. **Insight.** Finds and explains connections in the material that are not explicitly made in the readings or class discussion;

or finds and explains connections between class material and issues or material outside of the class or in suggested and supplemental readings

4. **Writing** is clear and grammatically correct.

AB (VERY GOOD GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

All of the above but with some minor deficiency in one or two of the areas.

B (GOOD GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

All of the above but with some minor deficiency in two or three of the areas or significant deficiency in one of the areas.

BC (BETTER THAN ADEQUATE GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

All of the above but with some deficiency in all four areas or major deficiency in one of the areas.

C (ADEQUATE GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

1. Knows more than 60% of the material,

2. and

- gives some detailed or accurate description of the arguments which support the conclusions,

or

- gives some detailed or accurate description of the questions which the material seeks to address,

or

- finds some connections in the material that are not explicitly made in the readings or class discussion or that are discussed in suggested or supplemental readings.

CD (BARELY ADEQUATE GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)

Knows more than 60% of the material but with major deficiencies in all four areas without any of the indicators under the criteria #2 for a C.

D (Minimum grasp of the material)

Knows a least 60% of the conclusions, or reports the line of reasoning or names the questions addressed but without adequately or accurately explaining.

F (LACKS MINIMUM GRASP OF THE MATERIAL)