

## Ground-Breaking Course Connects Worship and Mission

For Immediate Release (690 words):

“Introduction to Ethnodoxology,” a course that breaks new ground in the history of graduate education, was held in the first week of June, 2008, at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. This course brought together a diverse group of students—seminarians, musicians from three continents, missionaries, and worship leaders from churches including Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis and Louisville’s St. Stephen Baptist and Sojourn Church. Students as well as professors from Liberty University, Asbury Seminary, and Kentucky Mountain Bible College enrolled in the course. Southern Seminary students were from the Billy Graham School and the School of Church Music and Worship.

The course equipped students with practical skills to encourage culturally-appropriate Christian worship in local church contexts both at home and abroad. A collaborative team of six experienced teachers from the [International Council of Ethnodoxologists](#) (ICE) crafted this course in consultation with Dr. Esther Crookshank, Southern Seminary professor of hymnology, who remarked, “The instructional resources, passionate vision, and networking connections that this teaching team brings to our campus are phenomenal. I can think of few better investments of our energies at Southern Seminary than to equip musicians, pastors, and missionaries to facilitate mature, biblical worship that connects with God’s people at the deepest level, whatever their cultural context.”

The teaching sessions, corporate worship, and group song-writing projects were supplemented with other interactive learning events. Students worshiped at a variety of local churches, joined in a shape-note singing on campus led by Bob Meek and the Ohio Valley Shape-Note Singers, and spent an evening with Brazilian hymnwriter Hiram Rollo, worship pastor of the multi-ethnic Walnut Street Baptist Church in downtown Louisville. They participated in a moving Global Hymn Festival based on the Lord’s Prayer led by internationally-known speaker and author on world congregational song Dr. C. Michael Hawn, who is a Southern Seminary graduate.

Students engaged with the subject of the course on a deep level, as their enthusiastic responses showed. One student described global worship song as foreshadowing the heavenly scene in Revelation where believers from all languages and cultures worship before God’s throne with distinct expressions of praise. Others wrote:

- “This course will challenge you to see the world with new eyes.”
- “The course was great! Instructors phenomenal! Thank you for sensitizing me more to God’s Great Commission.”
- “The Ethnodoxology course is perfect for those interested in cross-cultural ministries: pastors, mission committee members, worship leaders and coordinators of short term mission trips. It has definitely broadened my horizons while equipping me better for ministry here in my local home church as well as cross-culturally.”
- “My excitement over the class has not waned. My new phrase is: ‘Something I learned from my class last week was . . .’ Thanks again.”

Dr. Thomas Bolton, Dean of Southern Seminary's School of Church Music and Worship, thanked the ICE team for coming to the seminary: "I have heard nothing but rave reviews from this class, and I hope and pray this was but the first of many such collaborations. I would like to see SBTS at the forefront of an ethnodoxology movement. God bless you as you continue your work."

What comes next? A Worship Renewal Grant from [Calvin Institute of Christian Worship](#) (Grand Rapids, MI) with funds provided by Lilly Endowment, Inc. will enable ICE to develop a workshop version of the course to be taught at several church venues across the U.S. during 2009. At Southern Seminary, Deans Chuck Lawless of the Billy Graham School and Tom Bolton of the School of Church Music and Worship met with the ethnodoxology faculty and other professors to discuss new curricular possibilities, including a worship option for students in the seminary's Hands On semester abroad missions program.

ICE Coordinator Robin Harris commented, "The 'Introduction to Ethnodoxology' course is on the cutting edge of 'best practice' for churches and missions; we're delighted to see the positive responses from Southern Seminary and the support of the Worship Renewal Grant program. We look forward to further partnering with them to help people connect with God's heart for worship and mission."