



EMORY | OXFORD  
COLLEGE

## **The Oxford College Community Classroom**

You are invited to a series of intellectually stimulating, fun, interactive classes brought to you by Oxford College and held in the Community Room at Oxford City Hall.  
Call 770-784-8389 for more information.

**Thursday, March 16, 6:00-7:00 pm**

***We have met the prodigal, and he is us?: Thomas Hart Benton's Prodigal Son***  
**Dr. David B. Gowler, Professor of Religion**

The parable of the prodigal son has fascinated interpreters over the centuries more than any other parable of Jesus. The intriguing characterizations of the father and his two sons in this parable, for example, challenge readers to mull over the possibilities inherent in their portrayals. In addition, parables themselves are also famously open-ended. In the prodigal son, for instance, readers/hearers do not even know whether the elder son joins the celebration of his brother's return or whether the younger son actually repents or, once again, plays his father for a fool.

In this lecture, Dr. Gowler will share a few examples from visual art to illustrate how the parable of the prodigal son has been "received." Receptions of the younger son in visual art usually focus on the need for penitence and—beginning with Albrecht Dürer's *The Prodigal Son* (c. 1496) and most famously depicted in several of Rembrandt's works—often self-identify with the prodigal and depict his dissolute life, "repentance" among the pigs, or loving reception by his father. One of the most intriguing representations of the prodigal son is Thomas Hart Benton's idiosyncratic 1939 lithograph, *Prodigal Son*, apparently where "going home to find resolution was an aspiration without hope." Most of the lecture will focus on Benton's lithograph and the contexts that help to inform our own interpretations of it.

***Join us for the next Oxford College Community Classroom  
at Oxford College to hear Professor of Psychology Dr. Catherine Bagwell's lecture!***

***April 19<sup>th</sup> 6:00 – 7:00 pm***  
***Oxford City Hall***