

DePaul University
School for New Learning
Course Syllabus: “The Divine Dialogue” (DRAFT)
Course ID: AI 388 901 30704 0088
Term: Spring 2009

Faculty	Rev. Dr. William J. Wassner 6811 Stewart Drive South Bend, Indiana 46614 Email: sbstpeters@juno.com
Location	Oak Forest Campus
Time	Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Attendance on stated Saturdays is mandatory. Note Policy Statements.
Dates	28 March – 6 June 2009
Credit Hours	4

Course Description

This course examines the similarities and differences between three primary monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The main emphasis will be to establish basic competence in the comparison of these three world religions and their systems of ethics in an effort to assist interfaith dialogue in our pluralistic world. Students will further consider how spirituality can be described through the arts and will produce their own artistic expressions of spirituality. The goal of this course is to assist students in building bridges of understanding in today’s highly charged socio-political world characterized and fueled by competing theological tenets, and to consider their roles in the development of a tolerant society.

Introduction to the Instructor

Bill Wassner is the pastor of St. Peter’s UCC in South Bend, Indiana and the Executive Director of the United Religious Community in St. Joseph County. He is also a certified addictions counselor and a volunteer chaplain with the Indiana State Police assigned to the Indiana Toll Road. He has taught at the School for New Learning since 2001 conducting the courses, *The Divine Dialogue*, *Critical Thinking*, *Research Seminar*, *Crime and Violence: Law Enforcement in America* and *Contemporary Ethics*. He holds masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Chicago Divinity School, and subsequent masters degrees from Christian Theological Seminary, and Capella University.

SPECIAL NOTE: THIS CLASS IS A HYBRID (THAT IS, WE WILL NOT MEET EVERY WEEK BUT DO WORK VIA BLACKBOARD THE INTERNET. EACH WEEK IS LABELED AS SUCH).

Competencies Offered

Competencies A2X, A3E, A4, and FX are offered in this class. Below, I have listed the general descriptions of these competence statements. Student's individual topic choices must be discussed with me. In this course, competences will deal with the contrasting positions of the three monotheistic faiths. Students will examine and seek to appreciate and understand the differences and similarities of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in general. In particular, to do so with respect to the tradition's theology regarding God, their ethical positions and artistic contributions. Students can follow the guidelines listed below:

A-2-X: Can create an original work of art, which expresses spirituality.

Students demonstrate this competence by combining both artistic ability and the expression of spiritual ideas through a visual medium, augmenting this demonstration with a discussion of the choices made, and the reasons for making those choices.

A-3-E: Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems.

Students demonstrate this competence by identifying and comparing the key assumptions and ideas of two substantially different systems of thought. These systems of thought should have distinct interpretations of the human experience in relation to the universe. Philosophical and theological ideas inform certain practices and rituals but are not completely explained by them, so therefore a comparison of religious practices alone would not fulfill this competence.

A-4: Can analyze a problem using two different ethical systems.

Students demonstrate this competence by applying two ethical systems to a particular issue or problem that permits substantial ethical examination (for example, business practices, uses of technology, reproductive rights, class structures, institutional racism, sexual behavior, etc.). Students may choose any ethical system that is associated with particular thinkers. Students may consider the choices these thinkers identify, and the standards or measures by which these choices are made to obtain desired outcomes.

F-X: Can explain how the history of spiritual and religious ideas influences behavior and policies the workplace.

Students demonstrate this competence by identifying and applying at least two religious principles and/or ideas and then relate them to policies and procedures in the workplace. Concrete illustrations and direct relevancies must be clearly delineated.

Text

Corrigan, John, et al. Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions. Prentice Hall, 1998. ISBN# 0023250925

There are numerous used copies available for a better price than new.

NOTE: Numerous articles assigned and optional - available on Blackboard

Evaluation Areas

Each student will be evaluated on active participation in the following activities:

1. Attendance
2. Discussions in class and via Blackboard
3. Completion of assigned readings and required presentation
4. A final art project involving at least one field trip and a five page paper of presentation on the art for those in A-2-X **or**
5. A final research paper reflecting on a current news/world event of not less than 15 pages for those in A-3-E, A-4, and F-X

Criteria

Attendance and participation are self-evident but to reduce confusion with regards to written assignments, all written work will be evaluated as such:

A= designates work of high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; reflects a clearly identifiable thesis and argument that demonstrates cogent and creative development and support of idea.

B= designates work of good quality; reflects clearly organized and comprehensive understanding of issues at hand; presents substantive thesis and argument with evident development and support of ideas.

C= designates work which minimally meets requirements set forward in assignment; reflects some organization and development of ideas but develops argument in superficial or simplistic manner; may only address part of the assignment or be otherwise incomplete.

D= designates work of poor quality which does not meet minimum requirements set forth in the assignment; demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that student has not done reading assignments thoroughly.

NOTE: All sources utilized must be peer-reviewed journal articles. Students are encouraged to utilize the DePaul Library system for journal searches. In addition, the DePaul Writing Center is suggested as a good resource. All papers should conform to MLA standards and reflect appropriate grammatical and competency guidelines. Assignments are due without exception on given dates. Please note Policy Statements beginning below.

Please consult with the DePaul University Writing Center for Assistance (see page 9):

[Writing Guide for SNL Students at http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html](http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html). For on-campus and online tutoring, see the [DePaul University Writing Centers at http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/](http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/).

Policy Statements: The Divine Dialogue

1. SNL Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory in SNL courses. Students and faculty are expected to arrive on time, and to participate in every scheduled class session. Specific course policies can be listed in the course syllabus, and acceptance of the syllabus indicates agreement to policies outlined in that document. Missing class makes assessment a difficult process, and all students who miss any classwork are subject to grade reduction by the faculty. Students who miss more than 10% of any given course are subject to failure.

2. SNL Incomplete Policy

In Fall Quarter 2001, the School for New Learning began enforcing a recently approved policy on the issuance of the grade of Incomplete (IN) in all undergraduate courses. Overall, the policy is intended to provide specific information to students about their responsibilities in making up Incompletes and the implications of neglecting IN grades. <http://condor.depaul.edu/~snl/service/useful2.htm>

NOTE: Three absences and/or late assignments (in any combination) will constitute an automatic failure.

3. Protection of Human Research Participants

In the event that you choose to involve research activities for your final paper/project intended solely for classroom learning outcomes. Collecting data from human beings for such activities do not require institutional review if there is no intent to generalize, publish, or otherwise disseminate the findings. However, students must still abide by federally-mandated guidelines for the protection of human beings who may be the sources of such data. These include, but are not limited to, keeping persons' identifiable characteristics confidential and taking care to minimize or entirely remove the possibility of mental, social, financial, or physical harm. If findings from your research activities may be disseminated beyond classroom discussion, your activities carry risk of harm to the participants, or the identities of the participants are ascertainable, students must obtain approval from the SNL Local Review Board and DePaul Institutional Review Board. Please consult with the course instructor and visit the website of the Office of Research Protections at DePaul University (<http://research.depaul.edu>) for additional information and guidance.

4. Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

For more information, please consult the DePaul Undergraduate Student Handbook, which can be found at:<http://sr.depaul.edu/catalog/catalogfiles/2007-2008W/Handbook%20for%20Undergraduate%20Studies/ch1.html>

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Session 1 – Saturday 28 March (Classroom)

Introductions, Syllabus Overview, and Confirmation of Assignments
Discussion – "What does it mean to believe in God today?" and
"The Challenge of Postmodernism"

Assigned Readings Before Class:

Asimov J. J. (February 2007). Fallible Gods. *The Humanist*, 39-40.
French, D. (Summer 2006). Expelling God from the University. *Academic Questions*, 75-84.
Grossman, C. (2008). Survey: Americans freely change, or drop, their religions. *USA Today*
Pew Forum Report (2008). U.S. Religious Landscape Survey.

Due for This Week:

Two-page paper on the discussion of God in higher education and notions of God's power. Your paper should address the following question: *What do you believe about the existence, nature, and actions (if any) of God in this world?*

**Please submit by April 3rd
to bstpeters@juno.com and also in Blackboard**

Students are required to respond to two other learners via the Discussion Board (found under "Communication" in Blackboard).

Read For Next Week April 4th:

Chapter 4 in Corrigan
Reno, R. (November 2007). Faith in the Flesh. *Commentary*, 50-54.
Ward, K. (July 1999). The God of the Philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy*, 157-170.

Session 2 – Saturday 4 April (Classroom)

Jewish Notions of God

Due For This Week:

Proposal for Projects or Papers

**Please submit by April 12th
to bstpeters@juno.com and also in Blackboard**

Reminder: Students are required to respond to two other learners

Read For April 18th:

Chapter 5 in Corrigan

George, T. (February 2007). Evangelicals and the Mother of God. *First Things*, 20-25.

Hutchens, S. M. (June 2006). The God Who's Still There. *Touchstone*, 3-4.

Praetorius, I. (September 2006). Speaking of God as a Woman Since the Enlightenment. *Feminist Theology*, 84-97.

Session 3 – Saturday 11 April (Blackboard)

Session 4 – Saturday 18 April (Classroom)

Christian Notions of God

Read For Next Week:

Chapter 6 in Corrigan; Readings from the Koran

Azumah, J. (July 2002). The Integrity of Interfaith Dialogue. *Islam & Christian – Muslim Relations*, 269-280.

Rey, T. (Winter 1998). Islam's Place in America. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 142-143.

Takim, L. (July 2004). From Conversion to Conversation. *Muslim World*, 343-355.

Williams, R. (April 2005). Christians and Muslims before the One God. *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations*, 187-197.

Session 5 – Saturday 25 April (Classroom)

Islamic Notions of God

Suggested Enrichment Readings (OPTIONAL):

Chapters 13-15 in Corrigan

Carroll, T. K. (Spring 2003). Architecture and Spirituality. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 35-50.

Howe, J. (September 2004). Varieties of the Religious Experience – the Architectural Dimension. *Religion & the Arts*, 344-357.

Kahera, A. I. (Fall 2002). Gardens of the Righteous. *Cross Currents*, 328-341.

Kingsbury, A. (November 2007). The Changing House of Worship. *USA Today*, 64-68.

Leigh, C. (May 2006). Sacred Spaces & Other Places. *First Things*, 33-37.

Due For This Week:

Three-page draft of Project or Topic

**Please submit by May 1st
to sbstpeters@juno.com and also in Blackboard**

Students are required to respond to two other learners.

Session 6 – Saturday 2 May (No Class – Blackboard Discussions Only)

Expressions of God in Art and Architecture

Due For Next Week:

Classroom Presentations on Project/Paper

Read for May 9th:

Chapters 16-18 in Corrigan

Frank, L. (Summer 2001). The Evolution of the Seven Deadly Sins. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 95-105.

Clarfield, et al (August 2003). Ethical Issues in End-of-Life Geriatric Care. *Journal of the American Geriatric Society*, 1149-1154.

Pollack, D. (April 2007). Sexual Orientation and Religion from the Perspective of the Code of Ethics. *Social Work*, 179-180.

Session 7 – Saturday 9 May (Classroom)

Ethical Dimensions of the Three Faiths

Paper & Project Critique (Class Presentations)

Work For Next Two Weeks:

Papers and Projects

Session 8 - Saturday 16 May (No Class – Blackboard Only)

Blackboard Correspondence Regarding Projects/Papers

Session 9 - Saturday 23 May (No Class – Blackboard Only)

Blackboard Correspondence Regarding Projects/Papers

Session 10 – Saturday 30 May (Classroom)

Final Thoughts & Course Evaluations

Due For This Week:

Final Papers or Projects

**Please submit by June 4th
to bstpeters@juno.com and also in Blackboard**



What is the Writing Center?

One of the most important resources available at DePaul is the DePaul University Center for Writing-based Learning (UCWbL). The Writing Center, which is part of the UCWbL, is open to all DePaul students who would like to discuss or review their writing. You can use this service to discuss your assignments for any class, as well as non-academic writing projects like resumes and application essays. The Center has two full-time offices, Library Outposts at the Lincoln Park and Loop campuses, and online services that include Quick Questions, Feedback-by-Email, and IM conferencing (with or without a webcam). All writing center services are *free*. Writing Center tutors are specially selected and trained graduate and undergraduate students who can help you at almost any stage of your writing. They will not do your work for you, but they can help you focus and develop your ideas, review your drafts, and polish your writing. They can answer questions about grammar, mechanics, different kinds of writing styles, and documentation formats. They also can answer questions and provide feedback online, through IM/webcam chats and email.

What kinds of help does the Writing Center offer?

You determine the direction of the sessions. Tutors will help you understand your assignment and develop your paper's topics, thesis, and ideas. They can show you how to revise your paper and can teach you basic writing skills such as grammar, mechanics, summarizing, and paraphrasing. A tutor can also help you find, narrow, and support your thesis with prewriting exercises and by talking through your ideas to get started. Although tutors will help you with grammatical difficulties, tutors will not proofread your paper for you or speculate on what grade you might receive on that paper. Obviously, the tutors can't be familiar with every class or subject, but they are able to provide valuable help from the perspective of an interested and careful reader as well as a serious and experienced student-writer.

When should I use this service, and what should I bring?

The best way to use this service is to schedule your appointment with enough time to think about and use the feedback you'll receive. Always bring your assignment sheet, your paper or working draft (if you have one), and any source materials, such as an essay or book to which you are responding. If you have copies or drafts of a paper, bring your flash drive. During the session, expect to answer questions from your tutor about your paper topic, your writing process, or other issues regarding your assignment.

How do I request help?

When possible, the Writing Center accepts walk-in requests, but the best way to line up help is to use the Center's online scheduler, which confirms appointments in real time. You may schedule standing weekly appointments or schedule appointments (30 or 50 minutes) on an as-needed basis, scheduling up to 3 hours worth of appointments per week.

Quick Links and Locations

- To schedule an appointment at the Writing Center's LPC and Loop locations: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/WCOnline.html>
- To schedule Real-time conversations with IM and/or webcam: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/im.htm>
- To request Feedback-by-Email: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/email.html>
- Loop Campus Office: 1620 Lewis Center, 312.362.6726
- Lincoln Park Office: 250 McGaw, 773.325.4272

Articles to be Posted:

- Asimov, Janet J. (2007). *Fallible Gods*. [Humanist](#). Vol. 67 (1): p39-40.
- Azumah, John (2002). *The Integrity of Interfaith Dialogue*. [Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations](#). Vol. 13 (3), 269-280.
- Bahgat, Gawdat. (2005) *The Islamic Republic and the Jewish State*. [Israel Affairs](#). Vol. 11 (3), 517-534.
- Carroll, Thomas K. (2003). *Architecture and Spirituality*. [Irish Theological Quarterly](#). Vol. 68(1): p35-50.
- Clarfield, A. Mark, Gordon, Michael, Markwell, Hazel and Alibhai, Shabbir M. H. (2003). *Ethical Issues in End-of-Life Geriatric Care: The Approach of Three Monotheistic Religions—Judaism, Catholicism, and Islam*. [Journal of the American Geriatrics Society](#). Vol. 51(8): p1149-1154.
- Frank, Lisa. (2001). *The Evolution of the Seven Deadly Sins: From God to the Simpsons*. [Journal of Popular Culture](#). Vol. 35 (1): p95-105.
- French, David. (2006) *Expelling God from the University*. [Academic Questions](#). Vol. 19(3): p75-84.
- George, Timothy. (2007) *Evangelicals and the Mother of God*. [First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life](#). 170: p20-25.
- Howe, Jeffrey. (2004). *Varieties of Religious Experiences – The Architectural Dimension*. [Religion & the Arts](#). Vol. 8 (3), 344-357.
- Hutchens, S. M.. (2006). *The God Who's Still There*. [Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity](#). Vol. 19 (5): p3-4.
- Kahera, Akel Ismail. (2002). *Garden of the Righteous: Sacred Space in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. [Cross Currents](#). Vol. 52 (3): p.328.
- Kingsbury, Alex. (2007) *The Changing House of Worship*. [U.S. News & World Report](#). Vol. 143 (19), 64-68.
- Leigh, Catesby. (2006). *Sacred Spaces & Other Places*. [First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life](#). Issue 163, 33-37.
- McGrath, James, and Truex, Jerry (2004). “Two Powers” and Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism. [Journal of Biblical Studies](#). Vol. 4 (1), 43-71
- Pollack, Daniel. (2007). *Sexual Orientation and Religion: Code of Ethics*. [Social Work](#). Vol. 52 (2), 179-180.
- Praetorius, Ina. (2006). *Speaking of God As a Woman Since the Enlightenment*. [Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology](#). Vol. 15 (1): p84-97.

Price, Nicholas. (2005). *All Nations Before God's Throne*. [Cross Currents](#). Vol. 55 (3), 404-413.

Reno, R. R. (2007). *Faith in the Flesh*. [Commentary](#). Vol. 124 (4), 50-54.

Rey, Terry. (1998). *Islam's Place in America: An Islamic/Jewish/Christian Encounter in Interreligious Dialogue*. [Journal of Ecumenical Studies](#). Vol. 35(1): p142.

Suleman, Fahmid and Mawani, Rizwan.(2004). 'Word of God; Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions' An International Colloquium. October 18-21, 2003. [Journal of Qur'anic Studies](#). Vol. 6 (1):p146-149.

Takim, Liyakatali. (2004). *From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America*. [Muslim World](#). Vol. 94 (3), p343-355.

Thomas, John. (2008). *A Pastoral Letter on Faith Engaging Science*. [The United Church of Christ found at ucc.org.](#)

Tooley, Mark (2007). *Post Conversion*. [Touchstone: Journal of Mere Christianity](#). Vol. 20 (8), 46-47.

Ward, Keith. (1999). *The God of the Philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. [Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy](#). Vol. 8 (2): p157.

Williams, Rowan. (2005). *Christians and Muslims before the One God: an address given at Al-Azhar al-Sharif, Cairo on 11 September 2004*. [Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations](#). Vol. 16 (2), p187-197.

Properly cited also in DePaul Reserves Assistant on Saturday, February 16, 2008 found at:

https://www.itd.depaul.edu/ReservesAssistant/Faculty/raf_list_items.asp?cid=3140

Books of Possible Interest (found on Amazon.com):

[The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims](#) by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Sister Joan Chittister, and Murshid Saadi Shakur Chishti (**Paperback** - Jul 15, 2007)

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 220 pages
- **Publisher:** Beacon Press; None edition (July 15, 2007)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0807077291
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0807077290

[The Faith Club: A Muslim, a Christian, a Jew -- Three Woman Search for Understanding \(Walker Large Print Books\)](#) by Ranya Idliby, Suzanne Oliver, and Priscilla Warner (**Paperback** - Nov 14, 2007) - **Large Print**

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 520 pages
- **Publisher:** Walker Large Print (November 14, 2007)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1594151997
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1594151996

[Jerusalem: A History of the Holiest City as seen Through the Struggles of Jews, Christians, and Muslims](#) by Thomas A. Idinopulos (**Paperback** - Sep 25, 1994)

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 352 pages
- **Publisher:** Ivan R. Dee, Publisher; 2nd edition (September 25, 1994)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1566630622
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1566630627

[The Voice, the Word, the Books: The Sacred Scripture of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims](#) by F. E. Peters (**Hardcover** - April 3, 2007)

Product Details

- **Hardcover:** 320 pages
- **Publisher:** Princeton University Press (April 3, 2007)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0691131120
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0691131122

[Three Faces of Jesus: How Jews, Christians and Muslims See Him](#) by Joseph Imbach
(Paperback - May 1993)

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 151 pages
- **Publisher:** Templegate Publishers; 2nd edition (May 1993)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0872431940
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0872431942

[A Day Apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Find Faith, Freedom, and Joy on the Sabbath](#) by Christopher D Ringwald (Paperback - Nov 14, 2008)

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 336 pages
- **Publisher:** Oxford University Press, USA (November 14, 2008)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0195370198
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0195370195

Websites of Possible Interest:



The Institute of Interfaith Dialog

http://www.interfaithdialog.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

ABOUT RUMI FORUM



Rumi Forum was **founded in 1999** with the mission to foster interfaith and intercultural dialogue, stimulate thinking and exchange of opinions on supporting and fostering democracy and peace all over the world and to provide a common platform for education and information exchange.

<http://www.rumiform.org/server/>



The Interfaith Dialog Center (IDC) is a non-profit, tax exempt (501(c) (3)) organization founded by Turkish-Americans of North Jersey in 2003. IDC endeavors to promote respect and mutual understanding among all faiths and cultures through partnership with other religious and interreligious organizations by organizing educational and cultural activities such as lectures, seminars, conferences, discussion panels, luncheons and trips to Turkey. By this mission IDC aims to contribute to improvement of diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism in the society.

<http://idcnj.org/>



Quotation:

● *"There will be peace on earth when there is peace among the world religions....No world peace without peace among religions; no peace among religions without dialog between religions."* Hans Küng, Roman Catholic theologian, in *Global Responsibility*.

http://www.religioustolerance.org/tol_loca.htm

Also, a list of mostly local "North American Interfaith Organizations and Activities" is maintained at: <http://www.pluralism.org/>

2/10/2009 WJW