

**THEO 283-01 — Jewish/Christian Dialogue Today or
A Search for Authenticity: Contemporary Challenges in Jewish/Christian Dialogue
Xavier University, Spring 2009**

Time: MWF 11:30 a.m.-12:20 p.m.
Professors: Rabbi Abie Ingber and
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Melcher office hours: M 1:30-3:00 p.m.
W 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Overview:

This unique course will engage in a search for authentic dialogue between Jews and Christians, facing the challenges presented by the mutual history of the two religious groups and exploring the implications for the future, both divergent and shared. Professors and students will actively engage in the practice of interfaith dialogue. The course will explore stories of conflict and controversy, such as that of Edith Stein and that of the proposed convent at Auschwitz. The course will ask how mutual respect between Christians and Jews may be maintained and conflict may be resolved. An emphasis of the course is the cultural influence of modern Anti-Semitism and how that has impacted relations between the two groups. The course will also analyze historical Anti-Semitism in church theology and scriptural interpretation as an issue to be addressed in contemporary dialogue. Some established peacemaking methods will be studied as a possible means to resolve conflict.

Ethics/Religion & Society Fourth Course Elective:

THEO 283 is one of the fourth-course electives within the Ethics/Religion and Society Focus. In particular, this course is structured to further E/RS objectives of (a) heightened awareness about ethical and religious dimensions of socially significant issues; (b) increased ability to use theological methods and principles effectively in the analysis of socially significant issues; and (c) strengthened development of a world view that is oriented to responsible action.

Course Objectives:

1. To provide the student with knowledge of current issues facing Jews and Christians in dialogue.
2. To research historical events and texts that have influenced contemporary Jewish/Christian dialogue.
3. To discover some common theological ground between Christians and Jews that could strengthen current bonds.
4. To explore how some theological conflicts between the two groups might be resolved, while maintaining respect for the distinctive perspectives of both groups.
5. To examine societal and cultural influences on dialogue, including modern Anti-Semitism.
6. To explore methods of peace-making that could reduce religious-based violence and encourage open and respectful dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Texts:

The course will use three textbooks:

- (1) Greenberg, Irving. *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.
- (2) Galambush, Julie. *The Reluctant Parting: How the New Testament's Jewish Writers Created a Christian Book*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.
- (3) Niebuhr, Gustav. *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America*. New York: Viking, 2008.

There will be some additional readings on E-Reserves.

Course Requirements

(1) Class Attendance and Participation. The structure of the course emphasizes class discussion, in seminar style, so it will be especially important for students to attend regularly, accomplish assigned readings, and contribute to discussions. You may miss 5 class sessions, but absences beyond that may affect your grade. If you find that absences beyond 5 class sessions are unavoidable, please inform the professor of that as far in advance as you are able. (See Xavier University Catalog, p. 48.) It is best to read the assignments for each class session prior to that day's class meeting, with the exception of the first session, of course. The quality of one's participation is more important than quantity. "Quality" participation involves careful preparation, insightful discussion, and pertinent questions.

(2) Each student will give two In-Class Presentations, 15-20 minutes in length. For the first presentation, the student will analyze an essay or chapter from a book that addresses a current issue or trend in Jewish/Christian dialogue (Option A) or an official document from a particular religious denomination that addresses the dialogic relationship between Jews and Christians (Option B) or an essay or chapter that explores a historical event or text that continues to impact Jewish/Christian relations (Option C). The instructors will provide a bibliography of possible choices, although another option of your own choice may be negotiated with the instructors. For the second presentation, the student will discuss one of her or his own research papers – in progress – as described below in (4).

(3) Several journal reflections will be required of each student. The due dates for these journal entries are indicated in the weekly class schedule. Guidelines for the journal can be found at the end of the syllabus.

(4) Two Papers are required of 10-12 pages. The first paper will be a research paper that examines a historical text or event that has impacted the relationship between Christians and Jews. For instance, one could explore the impact that *Nostra Aetate* has had upon dialogue or that of *Dabru Emet*. For the second paper, students are asked to identify a current trend in dialogue and to explore its theological implications for future dialogue. Alternatively, students may analyze a problem encountered in dialogue and how that might be addressed and resolved. An important aspect of any of these papers will be an incorporation of secondary literature. In this way the student can intellectually engage with others involved in dialogue. Please consult

the instructors if you would like help in choosing a paper topic. The first paper will be due by the beginning of class on Wednesday, February 11. The second paper will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, April 15.

(5) A final, take-home examination will be distributed on Monday, December 4. The examination will be essay format. Students will answer four questions from a larger selection of questions. The take-home examination will be due on May 6.

(6) If you wish to save paper, you may submit your journals, papers, or final examination to us by means of the digital drop box on the Blackboard website or by email attachment to melcher@xavier.edu. If you submit your assignments in either of these two ways, I will send an electronic acknowledgement – by email – that I have received your assignment. If you do not receive an email from me acknowledging that I have received your journal within two days, you may wish to re-send it electronically or to hand in a paper copy.

Grade Assessment

The value of the above requirements is: Class attendance and in-class presentations - 20%; journal reflections – 25 %; Papers - 20% each; Final examination - 15%. Numerical grades for these five factors will be weighted according to these percentages. The grading scale will be: A = 100-94%; A- = 93-92%; B+ = 91-90%; B = 89-87%; B- = 86-84%; C+ = 83-82%; C = 81-79%; C- = 78-76; D+ = 75-74%; D = 73-71%; D- 70-68%; F = 67-0% (See Xavier catalog, 43). Class attendance and participation may be used as subjective factors in grading, especially in borderline cases. For policy on departmental grading see http://www.xavier.edu/theology/grading_policy.cfm

“**Blackboard Class**” The professor has chosen to use the academic web-based resource “Blackboard.” Ordinarily, a student can access the Blackboard site through the “My Courses” Tab on her or his portal home page. (Login to myxu). For an alternative way to access Blackboard see login instructions on the McDonald Library website at: http://www.xavier.edu/library/help/blackboard_instructions.cfm

WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE

Week of January 12 - 16

Review of Syllabus

Introduction to Course

Introduction to Jewish/Christian Dialogue

View DVD – “A Blessing to One Another” – Exhibit about Pope John Paul II and the Jews

Historical Influences on Dialogue

The Reluctant Parting, 1-53.

E-Reserves: Dawidowicz, Lucy S. “The Annihilation Camps . . .” from *The War Against the Jews, 1933-45*. New York, 1986.

Week of January 19-23

NO CLASS JAN 19 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Historical Influences on Dialogue

The Reluctant Parting, 54-118.

E-Reserves: Ericksen, Robert P. and Susannah Heschel, “Introduction” from *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Ericksen and Heschel. Minneapolis, 1999.

Week of January 26-30

Visit to Hillel House

Religious architecture, artifacts, and accoutrements

Case Studies: Edith Stein

E-Reserves: Garber, Zev, “The Problem of Edith Stein: Jewess and Catholic Saint” from *Women and the Holocaust*, ed. Esther Fuchs. Lanham, 1999.

Rosenblatt, Eloise, “Canonizing Edith Stein and Recognizing Catholic Antisemitism” in “*Good News*” after Auschwitz?, ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth. Macon, Ga., 2001.

Pope John Paul II, “Homily at Canonization Eucharist” from *Holiness Befits Your House: Canonization of Edith Stein*, ed. John Sullivan. Washington, D.C., 2000.

*****journal reflection #1*****

Week of February 2-6

Historical Influences on Dialogue

The Reluctant Parting, 118-181.

E-Reserves: Ericksen, Robert P., “Assessing the heritage: German Protestant theologians, Nazis, and the ‘Jewish question’” from *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Ericksen and Heschel. Minneapolis, 1999.

*****journal reflection #2*****

*****in-class presentations #1 and #2**

Week of February 9-13

Contemporary Anti-Semitism and the Impact on Dialogue

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth, 3-48.

E-Reserves: Excerpts from Deborah E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*. London, 2005.

*******First paper due*******

*****in-class presentations #3 and #4**

Week of February 16-20

Contemporary Issues for Dialogue

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth, 49-102.

Beyond Tolerance, 1-35.

*****in-class presentations #5 and #6**

Week of February 23-27

Case Studies: The Auschwitz Convent Controversy

E-Reserves: Rittner, Carol and Roth, John K., "Memory Offended: the Auschwitz Convent Controversy."

Carroll, James, selection from *Constantine's Sword*.

Pawlikowski, John T., "The Auschwitz Convent Controversy: Mutual Misperceptions."

Berenbaum, Michael. "The Struggle for Civility: The Auschwitz Controversy and the Forces Behind It."

*****in-class presentations #7 and #8**

Week of March 2-6

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week of March 9-13

Cultural Influence, Anti-Semitism, and the Impact on Dialogue

Case Studies: Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*

View film and discuss

Beyond Tolerance, 36-59

E-Reserves: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching" and "Criteria for Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion."

*****journal reflection #3*****

Week of March 16-20

Cultural Influence, Anti-Semitism, and the Impact on Dialogue

Case Studies: Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, continued discussion

E-Reserves: Segal, Alan F., "The Jewish Leaders."

Webb, Robert L., "*The Passion* and the Influence of Emmerich's *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Ariel, Yaakov, "*The Passion of the Christ* and the Passion of the Jews: Mel Gibson's Film in Light of Jewish-Christian Relations."

Jacobs, Steven Leonard, "Can There Be Jewish-Christian Dialogue after *The Passion*?"

*****in-class presentations #9 and #10**

Week of March 23-27

Pragmatic Suggestions for avoiding Anti-Semitism

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth, 105-161.

E-Reserves: Melcher, Sarah J., "The Problem of Anti-Judaism in Christian Feminist Biblical

Interpretation: Some Pragmatic Suggestions.”

journal reflection #4

***in-class presentations #11 and #12

Week of March 30-April 3

Guest lecturer – Dr. Daniel Rettberg, expert on ancient and medieval rabbinical tradition

Classes at Rare Books Room, Hebrew Union College

Introduction to Jewish Biblical Interpretation

Introduction to Rabbinical Tradition

Beyond Tolerance, 60-122

Week of April 6-10

NO CLASS APRIL 10 – EASTER BREAK

Theological Explorations for Opening Dialogue

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth, 162-197.

Beyond Tolerance, 123-183

E-Reserves: Melcher, Sarah J., “‘Genuine Pluralism’ and Reformed Christology.”

journal reflection #5

***in-class presentations #13 and #14

Week of April 13-17

NO CLASS APRIL 13 – EASTER BREAK

More Theological Explorations for Opening Dialogue

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth, 198-234.

Beyond Tolerance, 184-196

*****Second paper due*****

Final take-home examinations distributed

***in-class presentations #15 and #16

Week of April 20-24

The Importance of Israel for American Jews

E-Reserves: Rosenthal, Steven T., “Long-distance Nationalism: American Jews, Zionism, and Israel.”

Dabru Emet.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews.”

journal reflection #6

***in-class presentations #17 and #18

Week of April 27 –May 1

Reaching Some Tentative Conclusions in Dialogue
Discussion and Plans for Future Action

Week of May 4-8

*******Final Take-Home Examinations due on *******
