

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile - Fall Term 2008

Course Profile: W 424

Course Title: Religions in Dialogue: Buddhism, Islam and Christianity

Meeting Time and place: Wednesday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Room #

Instructors: Dr. G.H. Aasi (American Islamic College)
Sensei Sevan Ross (Chicago Zen Center)
Dr. Carol LaHurd (LSTC and ELCA)

Statement of Goals

Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have had the capacity to cross cultural and geographical boundaries permeating the lives of millions of people around the globe. These three religious perspectives view life and ultimate reality in both similar and different ways, differences which at times have resulted in misunderstandings, tensions and even clashes. The purpose of this class is to create an environment in which representatives of these perspectives can

1. Seek to respect and understand one another's faith perspectives;
2. Share respective views on the meaning and purpose of life and the nature of ultimate reality;
3. Discuss the problems and crises encountered by all humanity and seek for common visions and tasks on behalf of life and the human family.

Outline and Content of the Course

The course will begin with several weeks to acquaint the participants with the essential views and practices of Islam and Buddhism. The course will then move on to a dialogue concerning how people of these three religious communities understand themselves, their mutual relationships, and the common challenges they meet in contemporary global society. Included in this course will be discussions of

1. The origins and purpose of life and history.
2. The human quest for meaning.
3. The problem of evil: loneliness, suffering, pain, and death.
4. Liberation, enlightenment, salvation -- from whence and for what?
5. Morality in life situations.
6. Hope of the world -- the newness we all seek.
7. The future for religion within contemporary and approaching realities.

Work to be required in the course

1. Faithful attendance, informed contributions to the class, and opportunities to lead class discussions.
2. Faithful reading of all assignments.
3. Two to five page written reflections on specific required readings and/or assigned topics in consultation with the instructors.

Required Bibliography

Buddhism:

Two introductory books about Buddhism will be available in class from Sevan Ross at a minimal cost. They are *What the Buddha Taught* by Walpola Rahula and the *Four Noble Truths* by Ajahn Sumedho. Other select readings to be made available and designated web sites to be researched.

Islam:

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992
Rahman, Fazlur. *Major Themes of the Qur'an*. Minneapolis/Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980

Christianity:

Assorted readings to be posted on library reserve and/or Jenzabar, including excerpts from *Christ Crucified: A 21st Century Missiology of the Cross* and *The Word and the Way of the Cross* by Mark Thomsen. Students may also use their theology texts.