UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2016  
Instructor: Dr. Irfan Omar  
Course #: THEO 2500  
Sections: 101, 102, 701  
Course Title: Theology, Violence, and Nonviolence

Description:

This course looks at religion as a force that has produced both violent and nonviolent modes of expression in history. We will consider both the theory and method of nonviolent action in such thinkers and activists as Mohandas Gandhi (Hindu), Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Muslim), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Christian). In addition to studying select religious figures this course will be centered around seven religious traditions and their teachings related to violence, nonviolence, and peacemaking. More specifically, our focus will be to examine the role of nonviolence as a means to resolving conflicts as well as bridge building between groups and individuals. Some of the basic questions we will ask in this course are:

- What role does religion play in people’s lives?  
- How does this role involve violence and forms of otherizing?  
- How is religion used in the service of seeking political power and how is it used for the purpose of revealing structural violence visible yet tolerated in many societies?  
- What do the religious traditions themselves have to say about violence and nonviolence?  
- How have religious thinkers responded to religion-sponsored violence in the last century?  
- What is the connection between nonviolence and social justice?  
- In what direction does the growing awareness of nonviolence and professional interest in peace lead us?