

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2010**
Instructor: Dr. John Zemler
Course #: THEO 4420/5420
Section: 101/101
Course Title: **Theology, Violence and Nonviolence**

Description:

This is a demanding third-level Theology course. We will explore the theologies of non-violence and violence. The course will survey the biblical and historical trajectories of non-violence and the theological components of peace. Those components are exemplified by understanding and growing a series of proper relationships: Relationships with God, Yourself, Your Communities, and the Creation. These relationships will be explored biblically and in the Christian tradition. They will be further explored and developed in the writings of Thomas Merton, Michael Duffey, and Kosuke Koyama.

The course will also examine the Just War Tradition, its uses and abuses. Is it possible in the Nuclear Age and the Age of Insurgency to have a Just War? Mark Allman's writings will help us uncover this.

Any credible theology of non-violence requires an awareness of how to help those who suffer from trauma. Trauma damages the human soul and alienates us from our proper relationships. If left unchecked it will induce despair. It is not enough to say "I am against war," or "I am against rape," and then do nothing to help those who have been devastated by military operations and/or sexual assault. This course will examine the spiritual dimensions of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), its causes, and how to diminish its affects. In this context we will also explore the value of finding meaning and the will to stay alive through craft and prayer. Souls wounded by PTSD need our attention. Given the prevalence of violence, poverty, abuse, and sexual assault, this remains a relevant theological topic.

Any real commitment to peace requires that one first be at peace in themselves and in their relationships. This is a journey of self-understanding, renewal, and inner-conversion: a commitment to sanctification. Before one can be an effective peacemaker, one must first be at peace themselves. This is why so many vocal, public, so-called "peace activists" routinely fail in converting people to peace and then actually drive well-meaning individuals away. They cannot make authentic peace because they are not at peace themselves. Throughout our course we will explore the dimensions of becoming an authentic peacemaker and not merely someone who likes publicity and the limelight. Thus, inner-conversion, humility, compassion, and sanctification will be part of our on-going focus.

The course contains a Catholic emphasis and will also touch on peacemaking traditions and practices from the Protestant faiths, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as applicable. While it should not be too shocking that a Jesuit Catholic University might have a theology course that tracks a Catholic emphasis, the student should be able to develop theoretical

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models, factual data, and practices of peacemaking and non-violence that are applicable to nearly any religious or secular environment.

The course is demanding. Expect to work. Attendance and attention is mandatory. Expect writing assignments. Exams typically include multiple choice, short answer, listing, and small essays. The instructor enjoys teaching theology and demonstrating how it is relevant to our modern world. He also enjoys interacting with students who are dedicated to all facets of their education.

Students are to have successfully completed two theology courses prior to this one. Everything necessary to succeed in this course is presented within the course content. Personal faith commitments are not required to succeed in this course. It is an academic theology class where everything that is required to succeed is presented in the course itself.

Required texts:

- An Operators Manual for Combat PTSD: Essays on Coping, Ashley Hart, ISBN-10: 0595137989
- Who Would Jesus Kill? Mark J. Allman, ISBN-10: 0884899845
- The Social Thought of Thomas Merton: The Way of Non-Violence and Peace for the Future, David W. Givney, ISBN-10: 159982017X
- Water Buffalo Theology: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition Revised and Expanded. Kosuke Koyama. ISBN-10: 1570752567
- No Man is an Island, Thomas Merton, ISBN-10: 1590302532
- Life and Holiness, Thomas Merton, ISBN-10: 038506277X
- Sowing Justice, Reaping Peace: Case Studies of Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Healing Around the World, Michael Duffey, ISBN-10: 1580511023
- Other readings may be made available.