

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: Dr. Irfan A. Omar
Course #: THEO 8550
Course Title: **Questions in Systematic Theology**
Course Subtitle: Christians and Muslims in Dialogue

Content:

Course Description: This graduate seminar will be devoted to examining the recent history of formal Muslim-Christian dialogues that began in March 1969. Primary attention will be given to those dialogues sponsored by the sub-unit on Dialogue with Peoples of Living Faiths of the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council of Inter-religious Dialogue (formerly the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions). Dialogues co-sponsored by Muslim organizations, like Al Albait Foundation and the World Islamic Call Society, and by cooperative interfaith efforts, such as the Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chrétiens, will also be discussed.

The course will begin with introductory lectures introducing the new efforts at inter-religious dialogue and the circumstances surrounding the new commitment to advancing Muslim-Christian dialogue at the World Council of Churches and by Catholics at Vatican II and subsequently. There will be a series of lectures introducing the *Qur'an*, and the teachings and traditions of Islam. The seminar will then proceed to examine in a historical sequence selected individual contributions of Muslim and Christian scholars at formal dialogues and the joint declarations that have been issued.

During the semester one week will be devoted to an examination of texts from noteworthy "trialogues," three-way dialogues, between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. A respected Jewish scholar from the Milwaukee area, Dr. Sherry Blumberg, Director of Education at *Am Echod Congregation*, will be participating in the seminar during this week as we reflect on the history of formal dialogues between Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

It is recommended that students read the required text by Neal Robinson, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* over the summer break.

Format:

Lecture and seminar

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- **Assignment:** Each student will be responsible for leading selected classes in discussions of individual Muslim-Christian dialogues. Sometimes students will be responsible for representing the Muslim position in these dialogues and at other times the Christian position. In addition, each student will be required to write a twenty to twenty-five page paper offering an analysis and assessment of one central topic area of

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exploration as it has been treated during the time period of Christian-Muslim dialogues under investigation: e.g., Mission and Da'wah; Muhammad and Jesus; Holiness, Mysticism; Justice or Moral Issues; Religious Conflicts, Violence, and Peace-making; Living in Relationships, the so-called Dialogue of Life.

Required Texts:

- 1. Neal Robinson, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (Georgetown University Press, 1999).
- 2. Bradford Hinze and Irfan A. Omar, eds. *Heirs of Abraham: The Future of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Relations* (Orbis, 2005).
- 3. *Meeting in Faith: Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*. Compiled by Stuart E. Brown (WCC, 1989).
- 4. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* (Paulist, 1991).
- 5. Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chrétiens, *The Challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Qur'an*.
- Other texts will be announced later