

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: Philip Rossi, SJ
Course #: THEO 2300
Sections: 101/102
Course Title: **Quests for God, Paths of Revelation**

Description:

Images of journeys, quests, and pathways have often served as images that many cultures have found apt for depicting humanity's spiritual and religious aspirations. Prior to the emergence of the cultures of modernity in the West, these aspirations were understood to be fulfilled through a proper relationship to a divine realm that transcended the human. In terms of the three traditions of Abrahamic religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, this spiritual human quest had both its source and its fulfillment in God.

In many influential realms of contemporary culture, the character of these human aspirations and the possibility of their fulfillment have come into question. They may be seen as illusions (Freud), as masks of "a will to power," (Nietzsche), or as by-products of natural processes (reductive materialism), with a corresponding skepticism or outright denial of their fulfillment in a human relationship to God. This course will thus explore key questions about these aspirations – What are they? What are their sources? What do they tell us about our humanity? -- and about the possibility of their fulfillment in terms of a human relationship to the divine – Do these aspirations place us on paths that lead to nowhere or do they set us on paths that lead to God?

Required texts:

- Shusaku Endo, *Deep River*
- Robert Baron, *The Strangest Way: Walking the Christian Path*
- Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*
- Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (excerpts)
- Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi* (excerpts)
- Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation"