

(Original version: <http://www2.bc.edu/~langerr/th474.htm>)

TH474.01 Jews and Christians: Understanding the Other

Prof. Ruth Langer
Phone: 617 552-8492
E-mail: langerr@bc.edu

Prof. Philip Cunningham
Phone: (603) 669-4298 ext 252
E-mail: pacunning@aol.com

Office hours: Monday 1-2, Wednesday 10-11, Carney 412

Interreligious dialogue requires interreligious understanding. This course will build a foundation for genuine dialogue between Jews and Christians by posing fundamental theological questions in a comparative context. Students will gain an understanding of the other tradition while also deepening their understanding of their own, discussing such matters as the human experience of God, the purpose of human existence, the nature of religious community, and the ways that the communities respond to challenges, both contemporary and ancient. This course is an exercise in interreligious learning, sponsored by the Boston College's Center for the Study of the Jewish and Christian Relationship.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance at class is expected. As a courtesy to your professors, please let us know if you have to be absent. Because there are so few class sessions, unnecessary absences will affect your class participation grade (10%).
- Participation in class bulletin board discussions. For certain units, posting will be mandatory and will cumulatively contribute 20% of your grade. (Your grade will not be posted on the bulletin board!)
- Presentation of your final project in the last session of class and submission of your written report (35%)
- Final exam (35%)

If you have a disability that requires consideration by your professors, please contact one of us during the first week of class to make appropriate arrangements.

Texts:

- Frederick E. Greenspahn, *The Human Condition in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Ktav, 1986)
- Bradshaw, Paul F. and Hoffman, Lawrence A. *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (Notre Dame, 1999)

- U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1988.) (ISBN: 1-55586-247-0)
- Bible

Course Anthology

I. 9/13

Introduction to the Course: Why is it important for Jews and Christians to know the other? Discussion of the Holocaust and Christian anti-Judaism

II. 9/20

Yom Kippur

Caricaturing/Demonizing the Other: Teachings of Contempt

- Toldot Yeshu (The History of Jesus) and other Jewish texts:
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Topics/JewishJesus>
- Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Chapters 1, 3, 4, 16-27
<http://ccel.wheaton.edu/fathers2/NPNF1-03/npnf1-03-25.htm#TopOfPage>
- Cyprian, *The Lord's Prayer*, Chapters 1-11.
<http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/fathers/cyprian/cyp-lord.txt>

Christian Students will meet during the regularly scheduled class time with Prof. Cunningham; Jewish students will meet at a time to be arranged with Prof. Langer.

Bulletin board assignment: before preparing the readings for the next unit, post (1) remarks on the theological and polemical claims being made about the other tradition; (2) your reflections on the implications of these materials for your religious tradition today and (3) include your personal response. You are encouraged, after making your initial post, to respond and dialogue with the postings of others.

III. 9/27

Contemporary Routes to New Understanding:

- Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church*. http://www.ccju.org/ccju_notes_correct.htm
- U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1988.) (ISBN: 1-55586-247-0)
- Philip A. Cunningham, "New Stories for a New Relationship," *Religious Education* 91/4 (Fall 1996): 512-518. (ISBN: 0034-4087)

- Irving Greenberg, "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model," in *Twenty Years of Jewish-Catholic Relations*, ed. Fisher, Rudin and Tanenbaum (Paulist Press, 1986), 191-211. (ISBN: 0-8091-2762-8)
- Michael Kogan, "Toward a Jewish Theology of Christianity"
<http://www.icjs.org/kogan.html>

Recommended:

David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*

IV. 10/4, 10/18

Experiences of God and Revelation:

- A Maimonides Reader: Introduction to the Mishneh Torah, 35-41; Book One: Knowledge, 42-48; Guide of the Perplexed I; 54, 59, 265-274
- David Ariel, "The Calculus of the Divine World: The Teaching of the Sefirot," in *The Mystic Quest: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism* (Schocken, 1988), 65-88 (ISBN 0-8052-1003-2)
- Louis Jacobs, "God" and Shalom Rosenberg, "Revelation," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, ed. Cohen and Mendes-Flohr (Free Press, 1987), 291-298; 815-825
- Parables from the Christian Gospels: Matthew 18: 21-35; 20:1-15; 25:1-12; 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37; 13:18-21; 15:1-32;
- Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*
<http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/fathers/others/lovegod.txt>
- Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Trinity" in Mircea Eliade, ed.-in-chief, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York/London: Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 15:53-57. (ISBN: 0-02-909880-7 [v. 15])

Recommended:

Yeshaiahu Leibowitz, *The Faith of Maimonides* (Adama Books, 1987) – 100 pp.

Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides* Ch. 9 "Maimonides' Account of Divine Causality" and Ch. 10 "Creation or Eternity: God in Relation to the World"

Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions: Treatise II: Concerning [the Belief] that the Creator of All Things, Blessed and Exalted be He, is One*, pp. 87-136

Bulletin Board Assignment

V. 10/25, 11/1

Human Nature: Sin and Atonement

- Greenspahn, Parts I and II

Jewish readings for 10/25, Christian readings for 11/1

VI. 11/8

Salvation and Eschatology: The Purpose of Human Existence

- Greenspahn, Part III.

Bulletin Board Assignment

VII. 11/15

Religious Memory: Passover and Easter (Advent and anukkah)

- Bradshaw and Hoffman, Passover and Easter (Notre Dame, 1999): Undergrads read introductory overviews, Part 1 articles by Tabory, Bradshaw, and Yuval, and skim Part 3. Grad students: read entire book.

VIII. 11/22

Sacred Texts and Their Authority: Comparative Exegesis of a Common Text: Genesis 2-3

- John Wesley, Sermon 57, On the Fall of Man
<http://ccel.org/w/wesley/sermons/sermons-html/serm-057.html>
- George Whitefield, Sermon 1, The Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent. http://ccel.org/w/whitefield/sermons/txt/WITF_001.TXT
- Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord, The Bible's First History (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), Chapter 7, "A Question of Prerogatives", pp. 42-64. (ISBN: 0-8006-0878-X)
- <http://www.jewishgates.org/taland/Torahportions/breish.stm> and the links to commentaries from this page.
- Nehama Leibowitz, Studies in Bereshit (Genesis) in the Context of ancient and Modern Jewish Bible Commentary, trans. Aryeh Newman, 4th ed., (World Zionist Organization, 1981), "Tree of Knowledge", 17-27, and "The Serpent – The Evil Impulse," 28-37.

IX. 11/29

Living the Good Life Before God: Ethics/Mitzvot

War and Peace:

- National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, Part I <http://www.osjspm.org/cst/cp.htm>

- <http://www.jlaw.com/Articles/war1.html> –Michael Broyde, "Fighting the War and the Peace: Battlefield Ethics, Peace Talks, Treaties, and Pacifism in the Jewish Tradition" – read all the sections of the article outlined on this page.

Recommended:

Reuven Kimelman, "War," 309-332, and Daniel Landes, "The Threat of Nuclear Destruction," 295-308 in *Frontiers of Jewish Thought*, ed. Steven T. Katz (B'nai Brith Books, 1992) RESERVE – can be used as alternate for Broyde article.

X. 12/6

Jewish and Christian Approaches to Contemporary Moral Issues:

Student Presentations

Precise instructions to be provided.