Today global events – political, economic, environmental, social - that we know little or nothing about, and that often seem far removed from our daily lives have a substantial role in shaping our lives in innumerable ways. Conflict of various kinds looms large on the global scene and often religions seem to be in the middle of the conflict and are frequently blamed for it. Religious moral thought, developed many centuries ago is precious to us, and may guide our actions, and yet sometimes it seems that it can’t keep up with all the challenges of our times which are often global in scope, or with the rapid pace of change all of humanity experiences.

This course will consider some of the world’s most pressing global challenges in the light of the ethical thought of our religious traditions. Religious ethics are grounded in specific religious communities. How does one apply ethical thought developed inside specific communities and in response to specific beliefs and experiences to questions and peoples beyond those communities? Are religious ethics - Muslim, Christian, Jewish - broad enough to address universal and not simply particular ethical concerns? Where do they, or might they come up short in the sense that they are too parochial, or in other ways inadequate to deal with the moral questions that face humanity. Working together across religious and cultural boundaries what might we have to contribute to moral discourse on global themes?

What are the themes in specific religions that contribute the most to the conversation?

Authors such at Tariq Ramadan insist that religious people must learn not only from their own tradition and be in conversations with and learn from other religions, but also with the secular world. What do religious people learn from secular ethics, about global moral issues?

In the light of a globalized world, how does one answer the question of who one has responsibility for, who one understands as a neighbor?

The final assignment for this course will be somewhat different than many course assignments. You will work in small groups, each group based on one global issue that at least several students identify and are interested in. Each group will research the contribution that religious communities (Jewish, Muslim, Christian) are making to moral thinking about, teaching about, acting in regards to, the specific issue that has been chosen, and how they are or are not working with other religious and non-religious communities. You will also be asked to try to assess and evaluate the impact that the work is having or has had in the larger world. There will be some time in class to work in the small groups, although each group will have to figure out how to work outside of class as well. And there will also be time in class for each group to present the findings from its research to the rest of the class. The project can be written, it can be filmed or presented in power point or it could be based
on an organized field trip. If it is not a written project a two page summary of the research and its findings will be required.

Student grades will reflect attendance, familiarity with the assigned reading, and demonstrated ability to engage the reading and other student’s ideas and to think critically about them. Grades will also be based on the quality of participation in one’s small group, and also the overall grade of the group the student has participated in.

**Book List**

The following books should be purchased:

- Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*; Augsburg Fortress, 2004

The following books will be on reserve in the library; readings will also be on SONISWEB;

- Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*; Oxford University Press, 2009

The following article will be available on SONISWEB: