Hartford Seminary

TH 663: Christian-Muslim Encounter: The Theological Dimension
Winter/Spring Term 2016

On-campus classroom instruction + asynchronous online instruction

Instructor: Dr. Lucinda Mosher

Syllabus

Instructor: Lucinda Mosher, Th.D. Faculty Associate in Interfaith Studies
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Office Hours (including Skype or phone conversations): by appointment

Meeting Day, Dates, Time:
Face-to-face instruction at Hartford Seminary, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM on five Thursdays:
1/21; 2/11; 3/3; 4/7; and 4/21.

Asynchronous online instruction between face-to-face sessions (approx. 10 hours)

Course Description:
This hybrid course (balancing traditional, in-classroom instruction with asynchronous online learning) explores the complexity of Christian and Muslim theological interpretation of each other, and of themselves in light of the other, in various times and contexts. Students will examine the themes, genres, and strategies of Christian-Muslim theological engagement from the 7th century CE to the present, with particular attention to the 21st-century dialogue of Christian and Muslim scholars known as the Building Bridges seminars. Thus, this course will facilitate what Francis Clooney means by comparative theology: an endeavor which “combines tradition-rooted theological concerns with actual study of another tradition.” And, following John Renard, it will define theological concerns broadly: including, of course, understandings of God, revelation, and the divine-human economy; but also the “panoply of texts and images and the various modes of interpreting them; ways of reasoning and analysis of human ‘religious’ experience; modes of expression, whether verbal or visual, of that experience; and the host of institutional and cultural developments that have formed the settings and contexts for all such interpretation, processing, and expression.” The course’s four major units of content are:

A. Historical dimensions of Christian-Muslim theological encounter—including sacred sources; community origins; community development and spread;
B. Creedal dimensions and the emergence of theological disciplines;
C. Institutional dimensions—including the conceptual foundations of, and shape of, authority and polity;
D. Ethical, spiritual, and mystical dimensions—including the theology of popular piety.

Required Texts:


NOTE: Because this book is extremely expensive, and because we will not be reading it in its entirety, students are encouraged to use the library copy.

Excerpts from proceedings of the Building Bridges Seminar (buildingbridges.georgetown.edu) or other books and journals will also be assigned. Usually, these items will be available through the dedicated website for this course.

NOTE: Students with no (or limited) background in Christianity or Islam should make use of the introductory items provided on the course website. They might wish also to read Hugh Goddard, A History of Christian-Muslim Relations (University of Edinburgh Press, 2000).
Learning Goals
As a result of this course, students will gain:

- Appreciation for the range of, and reasons for, Christian-Muslim theological engagement;
- Ability to identify the major themes of Christian-Muslim theological engagement;
- Ability to explain the issues at stake in engagement over several of these themes.
- Knowledge of the primary sources informing the theological engagement of Christians and Muslims with each other;
- Understanding of the genres and strategies of such engagement.

Assessment
Students are expected to be present for all face-to-face instruction sessions on campus in Hartford. Students are expected to participate in all 10 hours of online instructional activities, but may do so at their own pace. Please note that “online hours” will be spent on such activities as watching or listening to a lecture, watching a documentary, posting to a discussion board, or asking and answering questions via the discussion board or email. Time necessary to complete reading and writing assignments is in addition to the “online instruction hours”. Students are expected to complete all reading, written, and online assignments.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

A. Participation in face-to-face classes in Hartford (see attendance policy) [30%];
B. Participation in online learning activities as directed by the dedicated website for this course [15%]
C. Submission of four short reflection paper (5–10 pages)—in each case discussing learnings from a particular course-unit’s readings and activities [10% each; 40% total];
D. Submission of a final project or paper on some aspect of Christian-Muslim theological encounter, chosen in conversation with the professor (15-20 pages or the equivalent) [15%].

Attendance Policy
Because this class meets only five times face-to-face, missing even part of a class session will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade, unless an adequate manner of making up the time and covering the material is negotiated with the instructor. (This proviso is offered primarily to accommodate students who enroll in the course after the initial session. However, accommodation will be made for students who must miss a session because they are participating in the HartSem 2016 study tour to Iran.) Missing more than two such sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.

Participation in all online components is expected; failure to do so is considered an “absence” and will affect one’s final grade.

Detailed Course Outline
NOTE: Since this is a “hybrid course,” the course website is an official companion to this syllabus as a guide to this course. As the course unfolds, we may find it necessary to adjust some reading assignments. The course website will then become the most up-to-date and authoritative guide.

Preparing for this course
This is NOT an “Introduction to Christianity and Islam” course! Students whose knowledge of either religion is limited should plan on some preliminary learning. See “Background” folder on the course website (URL to be obtained from the professor) for some videos and other materials on the basics of Christianity and Islam per se.

Thursday, January 21 – Course Introduction
Topics: Introductions (to each other; to “theology” as a discipline, and comparative theology as a discipline; to “dialogue” and “close reading”; to Renard; to the Building Bridges Seminar; to course expectations); brief history of
Christian-Muslim engagement; Scripture, Exegesis, and Tradition – foundational texts; theologies of history; defining the “insider”. Expectations for preparation for Unit I.

**Preparation for Unit I (involves some online learning) – to be accomplished 1/22 – 2/10:**


In *Renard, Islamic Theological Themes*, Chapters 1 & 2.

In *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter*, read at least TWO of the following:

- Alex Mallett, “A Neglected Piece of Evidence for Early Muslim Reactions to the Frankish Crusader Presence in the Levant,” pp. 95–110;
- Claire Norton, “(In)Tolerant Ottomans…,” pp. 242–263;

In *Scriptures in Dialogue* (available on our website as a PDF), read Chapter 1 [“When, where, with whom do I read Scripture?” (read at least the first four entries)]; Chapter 2 [essays by Wright and Cornell + texts of Psalm 19 and al-Rum (30):19-30].

See website for other items related to Unit I, such as:

- a. Bible and Qur’an: a review of composition and structure (narrated PPT lecture by Professor Mosher)
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7ewh5k5-gY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7ewh5k5-gY)
- c. Max McLean recites the Gospel of Mark (Max McLean is founder and artistic director of Fellowship for Performing Arts, a New York City-based producer of live theater from a Christian worldview.)
  1) Chapters 1-3. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td3FKGN1AsM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td3FKGN1AsM)
  2) Chapter 4-6: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bbp3LqIgq8Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bbp3LqIgq8Y)
  3) Chapters 7-9: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnGKueokO0E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnGKueokO0E)
  4) Chapters 10-12: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PURAFvYr40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PURAFvYr40)
  5) Chapters 13-16: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbvW1BtD2rU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbvW1BtD2rU)

**Thursday, February 11 – Unit I: Historical dimensions of Christian-Muslim theological encounter**

Creedal dimensions of Christianity and Islam: *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* – early Christian-Muslim theological encounters; Discussion: “When, where, with whom do I read Scripture?” The sound of sacred texts; Dialogical engagement: Psalm 19 and al-Rum (30):19-30

**Essay on “Historical Dimensions”: due February 15th.**

**Preparation for Unit II (involves some online learning) – to be accomplished 2/12 – 3/3:**

In *Renard, Islam and Christianity*, finish reading Chapters 1 & 2 and related material; read Chapters 3 & 4.

See also, *Islamic Theological Themes*, Chapter 4 (through p. 125), Chapters 5 & 6.


In *Bearing the Word*, read two essays: Kadi, “What is prophecy?”; Davis, “My devoted friend”.

See website for other items related to Unit II, such as: *The Community of Believers*: Gavin D’Costa on “Church”; Abdullah Saeed on “umma” - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGajU31fHwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGajU31fHwM).

See supplementary material provided on website.
Thursday, March 3 – Unit II: Creedal dimensions and the emergence of theological disciplines

Topics: Narrative theology; narrative in scripture and postscriptural texts; pedagogical narratives; creedal formulas; systematic theologizing and the emergence of schools of theological thinking

Essay on Creedal Dimensions: Due March 7th.

Preparation for Unit III (involves some online learning) – to be accomplished 3/4 – 4/7:
In Renard, Islam and Christianity, read Chapters 5 & 6; see also, Islamic Theological Themes, Chapter 10, p. 371-384 (top) on theologies of governance.

Watch the following:

Online narrated PPT lectures: “The Christian Mosaic” and “The Muslim Mosaic” – the internal diversity of each community; Three-Stranded Ropes: Christian and Muslim moral theology; Mysticism; The Marrow of Worship and the Moral Vision – ethics lessons from spiritual exemplars.


Thursday, April 7 - Module III: Institutional dimensions—including the conceptual foundations of, and shape of, authority and polity

Topics: conceptual foundations and shape of authority within community; religious polity; canon/divinely-revealed law; theologies of power; theology and politics; Christian and Muslim intentional communities; Christian and Muslim institutions of higher learning; theology of architecture; construction of cathedrals, monasteries, mosques, and schools; theology of visible structures; spatial arts

Dialogical engagement of Lord’s Prayer and Fatiha.

Site Visits

Preparation for Unit IV (involves some online learning) – to be accomplished 4/8 – 4/20:
In Renard, Islam and Christianity, read Chapters 7, 8, 9. See also, Islamic Theological Themes, Parts Four and Five.


In Bearing the Word, read Ayoub, “‘Isa and Jesus”; Madigan, “Jesus and Muhammad”.


Documentary: Orthodox Christianity: The Rumanian Solution (from The Long Search, BBC 1977). An introduction to Orthodox Christian beliefs and practices, in the context of a political situation that no longer obtains. Still worthwhile to watch for its lessons on doctrine and liturgy. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qk54gys7H0 1 hour


Michael Plekon and Reza Shah-Kazemi on theology of prayer: http://vimeo.com/26968201

Selected chanted supplications (audio recordings), including Jawshan al-Kabir (Cevşen’ül Kebed), presented here with Turkish transliteration): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVBZ6cicJAY.

Videos of Allegories

a. Pilgrim’s Progress: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_c22M_Z9jc.
Thursday, April 21 – Unit IV: Ethical, spiritual, and mystical dimensions

Topics: Scripture and ethics; Tradition/Hadith and ethics; moral-theological literature (and the related theme of human vs. divine agency); sources and models of spirituality; Jesus and Muhammad as paradigms of the inner life; hagiography; spiritual guidance; theological themes of devotion and prayer; popular piety; mysticism; social values in theological ethics/moral theology; faith and social responsibility.

See supplementary material on course website.

Final Paper: No later than Saturday, 11:59 PM, April 25th, as directed by our website, post your final project or paper on some aspect of Christian-Muslim theological encounter (15-20 pages or the equivalent). If a paper, it should be written in proper academic form. (See hartsem.edu for guidelines.) If some other sort of project, see your professor for guidelines. In this paper or project, you should demonstrate your command of the material we have studied together. You may, of course, turn to other sources as well.

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Recommended reading:
A Common Word Between Us and You (2007), www.acommondword.com; and, at least one of the official Christian responses to A Common Word


Islamica Magazine (February 2009). Special issue on A Common Word.


See also online resources such as the proceedings of the Georgetown-Campion Hall seminars on “Christian Theological Engagement with Islam”: [http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/georgetown-campion-hall-seminars](http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/georgetown-campion-hall-seminars).