

IN THE SPIRIT OF VATICAN COUNCIL II: conversations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims

Vatican Council II, which met between October, 1962 and December, 1965, sparked a new way of thinking about the various religious traditions that inspire the various peoples of human history. Its impact was especially strong among Roman Catholics in America but it influenced other religious traditions as well. Roman Catholicism in America, which had lived for so long in a parallel universe, had just seen a Roman Catholic elected President and now saw their Church engaged with the modern world, something Popes had adamantly resisted since the time of the French Revolution. The excitement of embracing “The Other” as an equal who had something to teach “Us” even as we believed we had something valuable to offer “Them” brought neighbors together.

Fifty years on, the excitement has faded and globalization and church decline has brought re-assessment. That is not an entirely surprising development as most enthusiasms lessen with time. But the core insight of Vatican Council II: that the People of God need to find a path to peace and prosperity together is more important than ever.

This course attempts to bring together contemporary insights and issues that can unite us and help us to build one world together. It focuses on Jews, Christians and Muslims simply because these “Religions of the Book” already have so much in common. It is not so much an introductory course on what these religions are but more of a conversation between people of these traditions on how to face some of the current challenges that threaten even our existence. It is hoped that we will be able to re-ignite the conversation that proved so interesting and fruitful so many years ago.

The class will meet on seven Tuesdays beginning March 4th and ending April 12th. Sessions will be from 4:30 to 5:45PM and participants will be invited to remain for a pick-up dinner in the University Dining Hall. Bellarmine will provide the dinner but folks are encouraged to make a free will offering.

The topics for each session are as follows, but can be modified according to participant inclinations:

March 4: THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITION

March 11: GOD AND REVELATION: BEYOND FUNDAMENTALISM

March 18: THE POETRY OF MYSTICISM AND GLIMPSES OF THE DIVINE

March 25: CREATION AND THE HUMAN PERSON

April 2: THE MEANING OF DEATH AND SUFFERING

April 9: BEYOND WAR AND TRIBALISM: TOWARD A GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

April 15: HOW TO BUILD A GLOBAL TRADITION BY HARNESSING THE ENERGY OF LOVE

Finally, the course will attempt to bring the generations together. For six of the seven sessions (The first session falls during Spring break at BU), we will meet with an undergraduate theology course for Bellarmine students which is focused on the religions of the Book: their relevance yesterday and today.

HMAN 459 / 7 Tuesdays / Mar. 5 – Apr. 16 / 4:30 – 5:45 p.m. / \$29 (\$39 after Feb. 26)

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