FTH 402 CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS
Fr. Stefano Penna
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
A study of the founders of religions and the meaning of religion; Christianity in relation to other religions; an introduction to Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Amerindian religions, and new religious movements; and interfaith dialogue, especially between Christians and Jews.

METHODOLOGY
In order to engage the vital issues involved in the encounter of Christians with those of other faiths this course will develop the fundamental theological concepts of faith and reason, Truth, and Revelation as the template for the exploration of how a faithful Catholic expression of how the local, national and international Church might contribute to an inter-religious communio. The phenomenological method proposed by Joseph Ratzinger will anchor this engagement. A historical and comparative study of the major religions of contemporary peoples will be the context of practicing theologically informed dialogue.

Part 1 – An exploration of the foundations of a Christian theology of inter-religious encounter with a focus on current Roman Catholic magisterial teaching.

Part 2 - An introduction to the basic features of select world religions, including key concepts and sacred writings.


As student contributions through discussion and group work are significant, students should prepare for each class by completing the required readings and understanding the key themes introduced in the readings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Teaching-Educating Mission
To introduce the religions of the world and to examine the foundations of a Christian theology of inter-religious encounter.

Spiritual Formation
To encounter the salvific person and event of Jesus Christ in the contemporary cultural reality of both multiple religious expressions and of secularizing pressure.

Pastoral Formation
To develop the pastoral tools required for the complementary mission of evangelization and building a communio opened up by Christ manifesting a welcoming respect for religious freedom.
Formation for Social Ministry
To explore the consequences of moving beyond schemes of “tolerance” to those of love and unity as vehicles of social transformation.

Human Formation
To confront the challenge of disciplined and critical living beyond the comfortable insularities of relativism or ill-informed absolutism.

REQUIRED TEXTS (NTC Bookstore)
- The Koran: *Penguin Classic; Revised edition* (Dec 31 2002)
- The Bible (*Revised or New Revised Standard Version*)
- N.B. – For Teachers it is highly recommended that you have access to the high school textbook, *World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective* (Novalis/Nelson, 2011)

REQUIRED READINGS: There will be both handouts and internet references of required texts

REFERENCE SECTION: Key texts are on Two-Hour Reserve in the NTC Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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<td>Theological Reflection / Report on Lecture</td>
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<td>Mid-Term Examination</td>
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<td>Research Essay</td>
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<td>Take-home Final Exam / 15 minute Oral Examination</td>
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Assignments:

**Theological Reflection**
Students may do one of the following two projects

**Due date: October 26 2016 at 18:30**

### I. Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI on Religions and Culture

What is the relationship of the approach of Pope Emeritus Father Benedict and Pope Francis on the questions engaging the meeting of the Church, the world religions, and contemporary cultural expressions? Write a blog post of 1200 words for our page, “Francis meets Benedict” in one of the following discourses or texts of Pope Francis (A) is analyzed through the lens of specified writings of Joseph Ratzinger

(A). Pope Francis

Visit to Grand Mufti of Jerusalem & Visit to the Rabbinate of Jerusalem – Jerusalem – 26 May 2014
Meeting with Leaders of Other Religions – Tirana, Albania 21 September 2014
Address to the Council of Europe – Strasbourg, France – 25 November 2014
Visit to the President of the Diyanet – Ankara, Turkey – 28 November 2014
Address at Interreligious and Ecumenical Gathering – Colombo, Sri Lanka – 13 January 2015
Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting – Sarajevo – 6 June 2015
Meeting with Representatives of Civil Society – Asunción, Paraguay – 11 July 2015
Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium § 247-258
Letter to the Christians in the Middle East – December 21 2014
Or any pertinent discourse on the subject

(B) Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
“Christ, Faith, and the Challenge of Cultures” – March 2-5, 1993
Truth and Tolerance – pgs. 55-109, 210-258

Research Paper (40%)
Due on November 30, 2016 at 18:30

Prepare an original piece of work of 3000 words based on one of the following options:

- A detailed Theological exploration of one aspect of any one of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Sikhism, New Age Movements.
- A detailed Theological exploration of the main tenets of faith within a Native American religion.
- A critical analysis of the question: “Has the election of the People of Israel as the first people of God been altered through the Christ event?”
- With regard to the Christian tradition and with special reference to the normativity of the Christ event, provide a theological reflection on the Lord’s words, “No one comes to the Father but by me.” (Jn. 14:6)
- Explain what you consider the basic tenets for a contemporary missionary stance. How should a Christian exercise missionary activity in cultures filled with other faiths?
- Articulate what you consider a foundation for Catholic – Islamic Dialogue.
- Evaluate the effect of the Three Assisi Meetings on the Catholic understanding and practice of Interreligious dialogue.
- Suggestion for Teachers: Critically evaluate one of the chapters (excepting Chapter 5) of World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective in the light of the Theological Perspective presented in this course.

(another topic approved by the instructor)

Length: 3000 words

Note concerning papers:

Papers shall by typed (12 point), double spaced, and formatted in accordance with Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996). All policies in the Student Handbook – especially concerning plagiarism – apply to course work.
Papers must be handed in on time. Late papers will be docked **10% each day after the hour the paper is due to a maximum of 5 days** after which the paper will receive a grade of 0%. Papers may be emailed only with the permission of the Instructor. The instructor will not read beyond the limit of the paper’s length. Please note that extensions will be granted only in the case of incapacitating illness (with a medical affidavit), severe domestic affliction or other compelling reasons. All assignments/exams must be completed (i.e. their weight will not be shifted to the final exam) or a mark of 0 will be assigned. Please read the NTC Student Handbook.

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**Mid – Term Examination (10%)**
A 45 minute in-class examination on the basic concepts of a theology of encounter with the world religions  
November 2, 2016

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**Final Examination (40%)**  
December 14, 2016  
As per NTC policy students may choose either of the following two options for the final evaluation  

*Take-Home Final Exam* – The exam will be available on the last day of class and will cover all aspects of the course. **Due date: Monday December 14 (May be submitted electronically via email)**  

*Oral Examination* - The Oral Exam of 12 minutes will be **on December 14, 2016** beginning at 6:30. These exams will ask the student to comment theologically on key texts from a non-Christian Religion distributed on December 7 class.

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It is anticipated that at least one evening will be occupied with visiting a local house of worship.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

Part 1 - An exploration of the foundations of a Christian theology of inter-religious encounter with a focus on current Roman Catholic magisterial teaching  
September 8- 29, 2016  

- *Introduction: Contemporary Religion, Truth, The New Covenant and Other Religions*
Part 2 - An introduction to the basic features of select world religions, including key concepts and sacred writings
September 29 – December 15, 2016

Hinduism
- Becker, Chapter 23
- Easwaran (optional “Introduction”), Selections posted in Class

Buddhism
- Becker, Chapter 22

Chinese Religions
- Becker, Chapter 21

Judaism
- Becker, 23-28; Chapter 20

Islam
- Becker, Chapter 24 (selections)
- Koran (selections)

Secularism
- Documents will be provided