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## SYLLABUS

### TH5/727 – SPEAKING OF FAITH: A JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE ABOUT THE INEFFABLE Vancouver School of Theology SUMMER 2018

**PURPOSE:** This seminar will use facilitated dialogue and discussions of key readings to trace the growth of faith-based dialogue from ancient Greece to today. We will explore how religious dialogue has been – and remains – essential to the Western philosophical tradition. We will also reflect on how we design and engage in dialogue as a process that seeks to use conversation to grapple with that which is beyond words.

**EXPECTATIONS AND COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:** Each session will focus on a key reading about faith-based dialogue. The first part will examine the theory and practice of dialogue. The second part will be a dialogue that explores the key reading as informed by those concepts. Students will be expected to participate in the dialogue and demonstrate some familiarity with the reading material. However, no one will be expected to have mastered these challenging texts before each class. In daily, brief, written reflections on the in-class experience, students will identify what they have learned about the connection between theory and practice. Students will submit a compendium of the daily reflections identifying how their experience of dialogue has affected their own personal/professional practice.

**REQUIRED READINGS: *Please pre-read the required readings and texts***

Ch. 1: *Laws*, Plato, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.html>

“Judah Halevi: the dialogue of subversion,” in Hughes, A. W. (2008). *The art of dialogue in Jewish philosophy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Judah Halevi, [Browse for reference: *Kitab al Khazari* (The Kuzari), 1140, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitab\\_al\\_Khazari](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitab_al_Khazari)]

HUME, David, *Part XI, DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION*. 1779, <http://www.davidhume.org/texts/dnr.html>

Buber, M., *Part 1, I and thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). (1970). New York: Scribner. (Original work published 1923)

Bohm, D., Chapter 2 “On Dialogue,” and Chapter 7 “Participatory Thought and the Unlimited,” *On dialogue*. (2004). New York: Routledge.

Zimmermann, Jens, “Ignoramus: Gadamer’s ‘Religious Turn,’” in *GADAMER’S PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY*, 6.2 (Fall 2002)

## **CALENDAR**

16 July: Course introduction – basics of dialogue-making, creating our dialogue.

READ: *Laws*, Plato, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.html>

17 July: Building on dialogue – the art of dialogue, forming a dialogic community.

READ: “Judah Halevi: the dialogue of subversion,” in Hughes, A. W. (2008). *The art of dialogue in Jewish philosophy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

BROWSE FOR REFERENCE: Judah Halevi, [*Kitab al Khazari* (The Kuzari), 1140, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitab\\_al\\_Khazari](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitab_al_Khazari)]

18 July: Faith and Dialogue – seeking *the other* in dialogue, refining our dialogue community.

READ: Hume, David, *Part XI, DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION*. 1779, <http://www.davidhume.org/texts/dnr.html>

19 July: Identity and Dialogue – encountering *self* in dialogue, refining our dialogue community.

READ: Buber, M., *Part 1, I and thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). (1970). New York: Scribner. (Original work published 1923)

Bohm, D., Chapter 2 “On Dialogue,” and Chapter 7 “Participatory Thought and the Unlimited,” *On dialogue*. (2004). New York: Routledge.

20 July: Finding *I and Thou* in dialogue, defining our dialogue community.

READ: Zimmermann, Jens, “Ignoramus: Gadamer’s ‘Religious Turn,’” in *GADAMER’S PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY*, 6.2 (Fall 2002)

17 August: Compendiums and research papers due, please submit electronically.

**August 31 End of Term;** (last day for submission of all written work for term)

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Reading and class participation: All students including auditors are expected to do all the required readings and participate in class discussions.
2. Certificate students: Certificate students are required to hand in a summary of their five daily reflection papers on their dialogue experiences. These reflections should demonstrate some engagement with course readings.
3. Basic degree students: Basic degree students are required to submit a compendium totaling approximately 1500-1875 words/6-8 pages drawing equally from their daily reflections and the assigned reading.
4. Advanced degree students (for courses at the 700 level): Advanced degree students are required to submit a research paper totaling approximately 3750-4250 words/15-17 pages drawing equally from their daily reflections, from the assigned reading, and from an additional key source not on the reading list. The additional key source may be a scholarly

work on dialogue, a course-relevant peer-reviewed journal article, or a canonic religious or philosophical text. The additional source must be discussed with the instructor outside of class hours.

**We will schedule a 1-hour meeting outside of class hours with the group of students taking the course for degree credit to help focus paper topics and expectations.**

### **COURSE POLICIES**

1. **Attendance** For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
  - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
  - Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
  - For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.
6. **Late assignments**  
Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.
7. **Limitation on use of social media**  
Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.
8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.