

RLG384 H1F
Pluralism and Dialogue
Tuesday 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Koffler House 113

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Sol Goldberg

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Office: Jackman Humanities Building 218b (in the Centre for Jewish Studies)

Office hours: Thursday 9-11am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ours is obviously a pluralistic world which includes diverse religions, cultures, values, and nationalities. But it is far from obvious how we ought to respond to the fact of these pluralities. In this course, we will take up the difficult questions that follow from the fact that each of us belongs to a particular group which must minimally get along with others and might maximally gain by learning from them. Is it clearly better to promote dialogue among peoples of different religions, cultures, and nationalities than to permit each people live a relatively isolated and autonomous existence? If so, what form would dialogue between them take? Should its goal be peace, mutual-understanding, or truth? How does the globalization of Western values – especially those associated with liberalism – solve or complicate the challenges of inter-faith and multi-cultural dialogue? Does liberalism provide the best framework for managing differences or does it instead preclude from discussion too much of what is vital within some – but not other – religious cultures? In dealing with these questions, our texts and in-class discussion will be academic; but the goal of the course is not merely theoretical. The problems and hopes suggested by the title of our course, "Pluralism and Dialogue," belong to the real world, and this course aims to help students realize these problems and hopes in the practical reality of their own worlds.

EVALUATION

1. **Participation** (10%)

- Participation is important. It means not only offering thoughts on subject matter but also listening respectfully to the views of others. If you have a problem (e.g., shyness) that will inhibit your ability to participate in class discussion, please inform me.

2. **Assignment** (20%)

- Topic distributed September 25; papers due October 16
- Approximately 750 words

3. **Responses** (30% = 10% x 3)

- In these responses, students select topics they want to explore further. These are NOT meant to be unfettered and casual meditations; rather a response should be informed by that week's readings and in-class discussion.
- Hardcopy to be submitted NO LATER THAN one week after the topic is discussed in class
- Approximately 500 words
- At least one of the assignment should provide the basis of the final essay

4. **Meeting about final essay** (5%)

- Every student is required to meet with me at least once to propose, discuss and get approval for the topic of their final essay

5. **Final essay:** (35%)

- Due the last day of the course
- 1800-2000 words

TRANSPARENCY & ON-GOING STUDENT INPUT

Students, I believe, have the right to inquire about the pedagogical methods and objectives adopted in the course. Although students should not expect everything in the course to be exactly as they would wish it, they may expect me to have justifications for why I have decided to do things one way rather than another. Please ask at any point during the semester if you are not clear about the purpose or value of a topic, text, or assignment. It is the responsibility of a teacher to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. But this responsibility assumes that students make known their difficulties as soon as they arise.

EMAIL POLICY

I try to answer emails as quickly as possible. But bear in mind that I am not always online and that the quantity of emails which I receive is greater at some points in the semester than at others. This is to say: please don't be surprised if I don't immediately reply to all of your emails. Expect an answer within 48 hours, especially if the issue can be handled quickly over email. If you anticipate that an issue requires a discussion (e.g., questions about your essay), then it is best to make an appointment to meet with me in person.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with diverse needs are welcome in this course. Please contact the Accessibility Centre for needs assessment, referrals and arrangements. The instructors will be glad to provide whatever assistance is necessary.
<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Please switch off cell-phones before class; do not talk to your classmates; use laptops only for taking notes. Distraction of other students is unacceptable.

PLAGIARISM

From the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: "It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

To represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism. Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on 'knowing,' the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known."

COURSE MATERIAL & EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

All of the texts for the course will be available on Blackboard. The weekly readings are substantive. The reasons for the amount of material are (1) to make clear the various perspectives on every topic that will be examined, and (2) to assist students with the research for their final essays. I am aware that it might not be possible to study in advance of our discussion all the texts for a particular week's class. The expectation is that students will do their best to look at several texts and to read at least one of them closely. The last portion of every class will be reserved for students' questions, especially those related to issues raised in the readings but not covered in class discussion.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND TEXTS

1. September 11 – introduction: plurality vs. pluralism; debate vs. dialogue; our shared humanity vs. sharing our humanity
2. September 20 (Thursday; make-up class @ Innis College, room 209) – the forms, origins, consequences of pluralism
3. September 25 – dialogue: its features, preconditions, and objectives
4. October 4 (Thursday; make-up class @ Innis College, room 209) – in the forum of public reason
5. October 16 – reasonable disagreements and reasonable dialogues
6. October 23 - ethnocentrism, anti-ethnocentrism, and anti-anti-ethnocentrism
7. October 30 - strained dialogues
8. November 6 – interpreting dialogues
9. November 20 – dialogue of tolerance
10. November 27 – on recognition
11. December 4 –the rhetoric of difference: a few figures