

Tangaza College

Catholic University of Eastern Africa



Department of Mission's Studies

Christian-Muslim Encounter

Our Objectives

- To form Christians as men and women of dialogue with Muslims, people who know the Muslims and their faith as objectively as possible, who are rooted in their Christian faith, motivated by the teachings of their Church and nourished by a spirituality of dialogue.
- To prepare Christians as agents of dialogue in their communities, who are able to help their fellow Christians to understand their Muslim neighbours and are aware of the Muslim sensitivity concerning all the pastoral activities of the Church.
- To offer to the Church resource-persons for the Christian-Muslim Encounter, people who will collaborate with the Christians involved in mass-media, in catechetics, in Christian initiation, in education and Christian formation, in socio-pastoral activities and in the promotion of justice, peace and sustainable development, people who will advocate a deepening of the Christian faith as regards the specific challenge posed by the Muslim faith.

Award

Certificate in Islamic Studies

To be considered for the award of the Certificate in Islamic Studies by the Department of Mission Studies in the Theology Programme of Tangaza College, a student must satisfy minimum entry requirement for the award, must obtain the number of credits required for the award, and must have passed all the courses at the end of the programme of study.

Moreover he/she must have submitted his/her long essay of at least 6000-7000 words.

Areas of Study

The programme focuses on two points:

- ♦ an objective knowledge of Islam;
- ♦ a Christian reflection on Islam.

About the first point, the programme proposes:

- ♦ a course on knowledge of Islam in two parts:
 - Islamic theology, thoughts and practices;
 - Islamic history and civilisation.
- ♦ a course on Islam in Africa.
- ♦ a course on commented readings of Muslim texts.

About the second point, the programme proposes:

- ♦ a course on Christian Theology of other religions.
- ♦ a course on Mission Theology.

These two courses aim to help the students to deepen their motivations for dialogue and to perceive the Muslim faith according to the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

- ♦ a course on Christian Faith and Muslim Faith in two parts, which aims to emphasize the specificities of the two different faiths, to understand better how we may communicate the core of our Christian faith in a way, which could be understandable by Muslim, and how we may be challenged by some aspects of Muslim faith and requested to deepen our personal faith.

Christians and Muslims have in mind a lot of prejudices and they use polemics, sometimes very ancient, against each other. So it is good to know the origin of these prejudices and polemics. A course on the history of the Christian-Muslim relations may help to clarify this point.

The programme includes also group discussions, presentations and seminars on different topics linked to the courses.

Time is left for personal reading, or for research on a particular country or pastoral theme.

Financial requirements

The applicant should be in position to pay the tuition and self-maintenance in Nairobi.

The whole year tuition will be about 100.000 Kshs or 1.380 US\$ or 1.230 Euros. (This tuition could be revised each year.)

Each student must cater for lodging, food, travel expenses, medicine, photocopies, books, stationery and the writing of Essays.

Arrangements could be made with some religious congregations, which have the possibility of welcoming students. In some of their houses, a chaplain's service is requested from the student priests and could reduce the price of accommodations.

Admission requirements

For admission to the Certificate in Islamic Studies of one-year programme in Tangaza College, candidates must:

- ♦ have completed secondary education in the country of origin.
- ♦ have completed a course in theological studies.
- ♦ have at least two years of work among Muslims.
- ♦ Be recommended by an appropriate religious superior (in the case of religious or diocesan priests) or other sponsoring authority as determined by the Academic Board.
- ♦ Provide of English competency for tertiary level studies at Tangaza College.

IF YOU WISH FURTHER INFORMATION, please write to:

The Coordinator
ISLAMIC STUDIES
TANGAZA COLLEGE
P.O.Box 15055
00509 Langata -NAIROBI
Kenya

Tel: 89 14 07 / 89 03 40

The Background

In the past and still in many places today, relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa could often be characterised as a peaceful cohabitation, as part of same family. But at the present time, these relations have deteriorated and are still changing.

Nowadays, some Muslims who have a better knowledge of their religion, and are influenced by fundamentalist trends, seem less open to non-Muslims and are more reluctant to enter into dialogue. Confronted with this change, Christians, on their part, become more afraid and are often discouraged in their desire to exchange as well as collaborating towards unity. Dialogue therefore becomes more difficult.

Following the teaching of Vatican II and the guidance of the present Pope, His Holiness John Paul II, the Catholic Church encourages dialogue with Muslims. Prompted by this encouragement of the Church, the Missionaries of Africa, who direct the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), organised in Rome from October 1989 to June 2001 a one-year programme in Islamic and Christian Reflection on Islam, with a pastoral perspective. The course was intended for members of the Church working among Muslims who felt a need for a basic training. In 2000 however, after an evaluation of the course and lengthy reflection, it was decided to discontinue the course in Rome, and put forward a similar programme in Africa that would take into account the changes in the African Muslim community and the call facing the African Church for a commitment to dialogue with Muslims.

Tangaza College is the place where this similar programme is now offered for members of the Churches of English Speaking countries of Africa.

Voices encouraging dialogue:

"Commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and to live the demands of the Decalogue. In this regard the Message of the Synod emphasizes that the Living God, Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, He wants us to bear witness to Him through our respect for the values and religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels. Far from wishing to be one in whose name a person would kill other people, He requires believers to join together in the service of life in justice and peace. Particular care will therefore be taken so that Islamic-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that this involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to commit themselves to promoting a dialogue free from the risks of false irenicism or militant fundamentalism, and to raising their voices against unfair policies and practices, as well as against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom."

John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 66

"The dialogue itself serves to promote our awareness of so many issues, otherwise outside our conceptual gaze. It helps us surpass many of the stereotypes, preconceptions and misconceptions about the 'other', which only serve to promote fears, scepticism and exclusion. Consequently, it motivates us to reconsider ideas and concepts within our own tradition, certainly without compromising our religious constants and fundamental convictions. It is often said, and rightly so, that ignorance of the other breeds enmity and resentment. But it is also true that ignorance or misunderstanding of one's own religious resources is often responsible for misconceiving and thus mistreating the other; each feeds into the other." Walid Saif, *An assessment of Christian-Muslim dialogue*, in: *Catholic International*, Vol. 13 n. 1, February 2002, p. 19.