

Dear Participants

**Thank you for your interest in inviting your community members and congregants to an interfaith book discussion on Albert Camus' THE PLAGUE.**

Currently, the following communities/congregations are participating: Congregation Lev Shalom, Jewish Community of Sedona and the Verde Valley, Flagstaff Kehilah Jewish network, Episcopal Church of Epiphany (Flagstaff), Christ Lutheran Church in Sedona, and Flagstaff's Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

The Zoom conversation will take place on **Wednesday October 28, at 7pm** and will last about 90 minutes. There is no cost involved.

We are asking interested participants to please send an email to [Melissa.cohen@nau.edu](mailto:Melissa.cohen@nau.edu) (program coordinator of the Martin-Springer Institute at NAU); we will keep track of the list, send one or two reminders of the date, and forward ZOOM link 48 hours before the event.

It will be a moderated but informal book conversation. Professor Gioia Woods (who teaches a full on-line course on the book) will add contextual and literary information; Bjorn Krondorfer will gently guide us to issues that might be particularly important for an interfaith conversation.

At this point, we kindly ask you to make the following information available to your community members.

1. Please ask interested people to send us an email go get on our zoom list; **this is the ONLY way they will eventually get our zoom invitation**
2. Encourage people to register also at the general public link: it provides additional reading group options and offers resources (**information for general reading group** can be found on the attached **flyer** or here <https://nau.edu/cal/events-overview-and-ticketing/plague/>)
3. Encourage people to purchase and read the book soon. If residing in Flagstaff, Brightside Bookstore has ordered (slightly discounted) copies

Here are themes that might come up in our interfaith conversation:

**PARALLELISM:** Reading Camus' 1947 novel today, it feels, at times, as if he had written it with our COVID-19 pandemic in mind. Some of the parallelism is astounding, including Camus' detailed observation about human behavior (from denial to a commitment to heal a wounded humanity)

**RELIGION:** though religion is addressed by Camus only via the Catholic Christian tradition, we do not need to focus on the particulars. It is just a venue to address ethical and moral questions about the role of faith, superstition, and the grounds for our existential beliefs in times of a great and lethal crisis

EXILE: It is likely that when Camus writes toward the end of his novel that the doctor/narrator "has deliberately taken the victims' side and tried to share with his fellow citizens the only certitudes they had in common - **love, exile, and suffering**," he refers to the apostle Paul in the New Testament: "And now these three remain: **faith, hope and love**. But the greatest of these is love." Exile is, of course, a theme addressed also in Judaism (the people of Israel are exiled from their land; G-d may have gone into exile with his people; etc). Is a sense of living in exile augmented during a times of crisis? Is love the answer?

IMPLICATIONS: the town's priest (though he is Catholic, we can expand this to include religious leaders in general) at first responds with a sermon, then changes his behavior and tends to the sick. What are our responsibilities as people of faith during a severe crisis?

These are some suggestions. We will not be limited to these four points but can take the conversation in many other directions.

Kindly

Bjorn Krondorfer  
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(Department of Comparative Cultural Studies)  
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