

TS 702/GC 651 WORLD RELIGIONS

Course Syllabus

BETHEL SEMINARY SAN DIEGO

Spring Quarter: March 31 – June 13, 2008
Thursdays, 7:15 – 10:00 pm

PROFESSOR: Glen G. Scorgie (telephone 582-8188, x 220; email <g-scorgie@bethel.edu>)

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Andy Johnson <andyjohnson3@gmail.com>

COURSE WEIGHT: 1 unit of credit (4 quarter hours)

PREREQUISITES: Some 100-level TS coursework recommended, but not required.

DESCRIPTION:

This course is a study of world religions (including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hispanic Catholicism) that provide structures of belief and meaning for vast numbers of people in America and globally. The goal is to develop understandings and sensitivities that will enable us to represent Christ more attractively, and communicate his Gospel more intelligibly, to adherents of these faiths. It is also an opportunity to begin to develop a Christian theology of religions.

OBJECTIVES:

That upon completion of the course, the student will have:

1. A basic understanding of the major religious traditions of the world, and the distinct life views nurtured by each of them
2. Increased sensitivity toward, and ability to dialogue and communicate with, persons of other religious traditions
3. Enhanced skills for further self-directed research on non-Christian religions, and
4. A theologically-informed personal perspective on world religions.

BASIC TEXTS:

The Bible (TNIV recommended)

Netland, Harold. *Encountering Religious Pluralism*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2001.

Neusner, Jacob, ed. *World Religions in America*, rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.

Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*, rev. ed. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (on reserve):

Corduan, Winfried. *Neighbouring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1998.

O'Brien, Joanne, and Martin Palmer. *The Atlas of Religion*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.

Strunk, William, Jr., & E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers*, 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

As well as attending all classes, students should plan their schedules in order to be able to invest not less than ninety additional hours in reading, composition and examination preparation (i.e., on average about 9 hours per week in out-of-class study) over the course of the 10-week quarter. The course requirements are as follows:

1. Reading

There will be regular reading assignments, from the texts and other sources, in preparation for class lectures and discussions. Reading assignments, along with anticipated reading for the research paper, should total, in accordance with Bethel guidelines, about 1,000 pages. Class participants are also encouraged to make summary notes of everything they read. Though this is a time-consuming activity, it is still the best way to understand and remember what we read. Students are encouraged to supplement the assigned readings with self-directed reading from other sources (see course bibliographies for suggestions).

Note: There is a reading due for the first class (see below, under Schedule of Assignments).

2. Class Participation (30%)

Each student is expected to attend consistently and come prepared each week to participate in an informed and thoughtful manner. This expectation applies to auditors as well. Students must attend at least seven complete classes to pass. Students who are unable to attend a class are asked to notify the professor in advance. Each student taking the course for credit will also have opportunities to lead class discussions.

3. Attendance at Bethel Distinguished Lectureship (10%)

Students are expected to attend at least one of Dr. Marcia Bunge's lectures at Bethel Seminary this quarter, and to submit a 2-3 response paper on it. The options times are:

*Friday, April 18, 2008, 7-9 pm

*Saturday, April 19, 2008, 9-11:30 am

In lieu of attending one of these two sessions, students may submit a 4-page review of a book from a list to be provided at the beginning of the course. Lecture reports and book reviews are **due April 23**.

4. Theology of Religions Research Paper (30%)

Each student will write a 10-12 page research paper in which they develop a biblically-consistent theology of world religions. Informed by Netland's book and other related reading, and taking into account the ideology of pluralism prevailing today, students will address such issues as the amount of truth contained within, and the salvation potential of, the non-Christian world religions. This is also an opportunity to sketch the theological contours of an informed and gracious Christ-centered engagement with adherents of other faiths.

It is also an opportunity to develop life-long theological research skills while at the same time identifying books, journals and authors which hold promise of being helpful resources and mentors in the future. This research paper is **due June 5**. For further details, see the Guidelines for Research Papers below.

5. Personal Reflections Essay (30%)

Each student is expected to submit a personal reflections essay of approximately ten typewritten pages (double-spaced). The assignment is to highlight from the course and its readings particularly significant personal insights, conclusions and reflections about world religions and their adherents. Students may find it helpful to prepare for this essay by keeping a personal journal over the course of the quarter. Developing a few themes well is preferable to merely listing numerous eclectic observations. This essay is **due June 12**.

CALCULATION OF GRADES:

Class Participation	30%	
Report on Distinguished Lecture	10%	(due April 23)
Research Paper	30%	(due June 5)
Personal Reflections Essay	30%	(due June 12)
TOTAL	100%	

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

Bibliographies will be available at the outset of the course.

POLICY ON LATE WORK:

Students unable to complete work by the due date must arrange an extension with the professor in advance. Otherwise a penalty of 2% may be imposed for each day an assignment is late. After June 13, however, there will be no further extensions for late work, except for extenuating circumstances, family emergencies or medical reasons. In such exceptional cases an Incomplete Contract, obtained from the Registrar, must be drawn up and submitted prior to the end of the course

POLICY ON DISABILITY:

Any student who because of a disability may require some special arrangement to meet course requirements should contact the instructor or the access coordinator for the Bethel Office of Disability Services by the second week of class to discuss reasonable accommodations. Please see the *Student Handbook*, pp. 20-21.

POLICY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All written material submitted must be the original work of the student. Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of scholarship standards at Bethel and can result in denial of credit and possible dismissal from the school. Any act that involves misrepresentation regarding the student's academic work is forbidden. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on assignments or exams, plagiarism, fabrication of research, multiple submissions of work in different courses, misrepresentation of academic records, the facilitation of academic dishonesty, and depriving others of necessary academic resources. Students charged with academic dishonesty have the right to appeal any disciplinary action. Contact the Associate Dean for details on the appeal process. Please read the *Student Handbook*, pp. 19, 23.

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS:

1. Suggestions for Research Paper Composition

Research papers are to be in correct research-paper format and 9-12 pages in length (maximum length of 3500 words allowed), exclusive of endnotes and bibliography.

In the interests of efficiency begin your research by reading concise treatments of your topic in appropriate survey texts and reference works. Afterwards you will supplement these with periodical articles and more detailed monographs. Prioritize sources on the course bibliographies. Your "line of argument" should be clear to the reader from the very beginning of your paper. Clearly indicate the importance and practical significance of your conclusions—in other words, answer the "So what?" question.

Each paper should include a cover page, sub-headings within the text of the paper, and a table of contents reflecting these sub-headings. The paper should be stapled. Covers are not required. As a general guideline each paper should cite about 10 different sources, including some periodical sources (not counting references to Scripture).

2. Writing Standards

Scripture references may be made in convenient parentheses within the body of the text. Students have the option of using endnotes or footnotes. Bibliographies are essential in either case. Students should employ gender-inclusive language wherever possible and appropriate. It is a good discipline to keep within recommended page limits. Marks may be deducted for papers of excessive length.

Students are encouraged to consult a brief handout prepared by Bethel San Diego on the basics of research and writing; copies are available at the front desk and in the Library.

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 6th ed. (1996), which is available from the bookstore as well as on reserve in the Library, is the standard for paper format; alternative formats must be approved in advance by the instructor. On the more important rules of writing, students are also encouraged to consult William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White's little classic, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (2000). Sample research papers are on reserve.

3. Criteria for Grading

The criteria that will be used in grading the papers will be:

- *Quality (breadth and depth) of research
- *Strength of arguments
- *Clarity of thought
- *Balance between awareness of others' opinions and personal synthesis
- *Insightfulness of discussion
- *Clear outline and logical organization
- *Care and accuracy in documentation of sources
- *Grammar, spelling and style
- *Format and neatness

COURSE OUTLINE:

1. The Global Substructure of the Primal Religions
2. Hinduism
3. Buddhism
4. Chinese Popular Religion
5. Judaism
6. Islam
7. Hispanic Catholicism
8. Mormonism
9. A Theology of World Religions (Part 1)
10. A Theology of World Religions (Part 2)

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

All assigned readings will be available on library reserve. Students will have the option of making personal copies of these readings.

Class #1 (April 3)

Topic: The Global Substructure of the Primal Religions

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chap. 9
- *Corduan, chap. 5
- *Netland, chap. 1

Class #2 (April 10)

Topic: Hinduism

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chap. 2
- *Neusner, chap. 8
- *Netland, chap. 2

Class #3 (April 17)

Topic: Buddhism

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chap. 3
- *Neusner, chap. 9
- *Netland, chap. 3

Class #4 (April 24)

Topic: Chinese Popular Religion

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chaps. 4 & 5
- *Corduan, chap. 10
- *Netland, chap. 4

Class #5 (May 1)

Topic: Judaism

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chap. 7
- *Neusner, chap. 7
- *Netland, chap. 5

Reading Week (May 5-9)

May 8 Class Cancelled

Class #6 (May 15)

Topic: Islam

Assignment Due:

- *Smith, chap. 6
- *Neusner, chap. 11
- *Scorgie, "The Cross and the Crescent: A Christian Response to Islam," *Heart and Mind*, Winter 2001-2002, 18-25
- *Selections from the *Koran*: Suras 1, 4, 9, 12 & 19
- *Netland, chap. 6

Class #7 (May 22)

Topic: Hispanic Catholicism

Assignment Due:

- *Neusner, chap. 5
- *J. Gonzalez, *Santa Biblia*, chap. 1 on "Marginality"
- *A. Wessels, *Images of Jesus*, chap. 3 on "The [Spanish] Scourged Christ"
- *Netland, chap. 7

Class #8 (May 29)

Topic: Mormonism

Assignment Due:

- *Neusner, chap. 13
- **Book of Mormon*. 3 Nephi, chaps. 11-26
- *C. Blomberg & S. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*, pp. 9-21, 75-76, 109-110, 141-142, 186-196
- *Netland, chap. 8

Class #9 (June 5)

Topic: Toward a Theology of World Religions (Part 1)

Assignment Due:

***Research Papers**

*John Hick, in Richard Plantinga, ed. *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), chap. 21.

*A. McGrath, "The Christian Church's Response to Pluralism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, no. 4 (1992): 487-501

*Netland, chap. 9

Class #10 (June 12)

Topic: Toward a Theology of World Religions (Part 2)

Assignment Due:

***Personal Reflections Essay**

*Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), chap. 1

*Clark Pinnock, in Dennis Ockholm and Timothy Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), chap. 2.

*Netland, chap. 10

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THEOLOGY OF WORLD RELIGIONS:

Clendenin, Daniel B. *Many Gods, Many Lords: Christianity Encounters World Religions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. Compare Clendenin's summary article in *Christianity Today*, 12 January 1998, 35-40.

Crockett, William, and James Sigountos, eds. *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

Dominus Iesus: Declaration of the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. The Vatican, 2000. <http://findia.net/query.html?query=Declaration+Dominus+Iesus>

Eerdmans Handbook to World Religions, rev. ed. Oxford: Lion; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Hick, John. *God Has Many Names*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980.

Kärkkäinen, Vili-Matti. *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003.

Knitter, Paul F. *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985.

McDermott, Gerald R. *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. See esp. chap. 14.

Pinnock, Clark. *A Wideness in God's Mercy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Sanders, John, ed. *What about Those Who Have Never Heard?* Downers Grove: IVP, 1995.

Stackhouse, John G., ed. *No Other Gods before Me?* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Stott, John, ed. *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Sumner, George. *The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

Tennent, Timothy. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.

Tiessen, Terrance L. *Who Can be Saved?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Tillich, Paul. *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.

Vroom, H. M. *No Other Gods: Christian Belief in Dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Yong, Amos. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.

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