

Christian Encounters with Other Cultures: Engaging the Great World Religions
CS4363
Spring 2018
Austin Graduate School of Theology

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Conference: by appointment
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Class Time: Tuesday 7-9:40pm
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Course Description:

This course is something of a centaur. The thought and emotion of a biblical theology self-consciously melds with an interpersonal exploration of four, primary world religions.

The head and torso, on the one hand, belong to a Christian theology of culture and religion. This part provides direction through a biblical consideration of the nature and role of cultures and religions in our world. Among the questions we consider are: What, in God's providence, are people-groups? What is God's relation to their cultures and their religions? What are religions for? How, then, are we as followers of Jesus to respond to them? What is the appropriate relation between understanding others and bearing witness to them?

The massive body and legs, on the other hand, belong to an introduction to four major religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. We will begin by considering the method and theory of the academic study of religion. After surveying the historical roots, basic beliefs, and practices of a religion, we arrange either to host or be hosted by practitioners of that religion. Thus we learn how to engage in interreligious dialogue as apprentices of Jesus.

Learning Objectives:

- The student will build a basic vocabulary of key terms indigenous to the various religions of the world.
- The student will be capable of describing very basic tenants and practices of the larger world religions in a manner that informed, devout adherents of those religions could recognize as accurate.
- The student will learn how to interact with adherents of other religions in a spirit of charity *and* clarity. This involves learning to play well the role of either host or guest within an interreligious exchange.
- The student will develop an appreciation for the distinctness and core concerns of each religion.

- The student will develop the rudiments of a thoughtful, biblical theology of culture and religion.

Required Texts:

- Theodore Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the World's Religions*. Prentice Hall
- Additional primary source materials will be handed out in class or made available on reserve in the library

Course Requirements and Means of Evaluation:

- Full preparation, attendance and participation in class sessions are mandatory. More than one **absence or excessive tardiness may result in a deduction of up to 15% from your final grade.**
 - Note on Absences and Preparedness: Lecture periods offer new information as well as additional clarity to the textbook materials. Please note this well: Students are entirely responsible for instructions, notes, announcements of changes in the syllabus, etc... for the reception of which they are absent. If you are absent, you are responsible to check with other students to obtain whatever you missed.
- **Two Tests, each comprising 25% of your final grade**, will be spaced throughout the semester. Tests will cover the content of the lectures and the assigned readings. The second test, offered during finals week, will not be comprehensive, but cover only the material since the first test. **Together, the tests constitute 50% of your grade.**
- Each student will read and critically review an approved book before the beginning of class on 24 April 2018. The **book review will comprise 50% of your final grade.** The written review should not exceed 10 pages.
 - The book reviewed must deal, in sufficient academic depth and detail, with a great world religion, Christian interactions with another religion, or the Christian theology of religions.
 - A bibliography of pre-approved books is attached.
 - The instructor must approve review of any books not on the bibliography.

Course Topic Schematic:

- Introduction: Culture, Religion and the Academic Study of Religions
 - Readings: Ludwig, chapter 1
- Introduction: Definitions and Categories for the Study of Religions
- Hinduism
 - Readings: Ludwig, chapters 5-6
- Buddhism
 - Readings: Ludwig, chapters 7-9
- Judaism
 - Readings: Ludwig, chapters 20-22
- Islam
 - Readings: Ludwig, chapters 26-28

- Theology of Culture
- Theology of Religions

Pre-Approved List of Books for Review

(Netland 1991, 2001; Netland and Yandell 2009; Yandell 2002; Yandell, Werther, and Linville 2012; Johnson 2009; Tennent and I.S.P.C.K. (Organization) 2000; Tennent 2002; Hick 2005; Beyer 1974; Mitchell and Wiseman 1997; Mitchell 2008, 1991; Robinson et al. 2005; Earhart 2004, 1973; Denny et al. 2012; Cragg and Speight 1980; Cragg 1999; Esposito 2011; Neusner 2004, 1975; Anderson and Anderson 1984; Brow 1966; Heim 1995, 2001; McDermott 2000; Muck 1990; Pinnock 1992; Sanders 1992; Knitter 1985; Knitter, Swidler, and Mojzes 1997; Newbiggin, Sanneh, and Taylor 1998; Sanneh 1996, 2009, 1993; De Neui 2010; Williams 2002)

Bibliography

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- Beyer, Stephan V. 1974. *The Buddhist experience; sources and interpretations, The Religious life of man series*. Encino, Calif. : Dickenson Pub. Co.
- Brow, Robert. 1966. *Religion: origins and ideas*. 1st ed. Chicago: Inter-varsity Press.
- Cragg, Kenneth. 1999. *Muhammad and the Christian : a question of response*. Rev. ed. Oxford ; Boston, MA: Oneworld Publications.
- Cragg, Kenneth, and R. Marston Speight. 1980. *Islam from within : anthology of a religion, The Religious life of man*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co.
- De Neui, Paul H. 2010. *Family and faith in Asia : the missional impact of social networks, Seagnet*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Denny, Frederick Mathewson, Carlos M. N. Eire, Martin S. Jaffee, and John Corrigan. 2012. *Jews, Christians, Muslims : a comparative introduction to monotheistic religions*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Earhart, H. Byron. 1973. *Religion in the Japanese experience: sources and interpretations, The Religious life of man*. Encino, Calif. : Dickenson Pub. Co.
- . 2004. *Japanese religion : unity and diversity*. 4th ed, *Religious life in history*. Victoria, Australia ; Belmont, Calif: Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Esposito, John L. 2011. *Islam : the straight path*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Heim, S. Mark. 1995. *Salvations : truth and difference in religion, Faith meets faith*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- . 2001. *The depth of the riches : a Trinitarian theology of religious ends, Sacra doctrina*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.
- Hick, John. 2005. *An interpretation of religion : human responses to the transcendent*. 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. 2009. *Among the gentiles : Greco-Roman religion and Christianity, Anchor Yale Bible reference library*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Knitter, Paul F. 1985. *No other name? : a critical survey of Christian attitudes toward the world religions, American Society of Missiology series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
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- McDermott, Gerald R. 2000. *Can evangelicals learn from world religions? : Jesus, Revelation & religious traditions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
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- Muck, Terry C. 1990. *Alien gods on American turf, Christianity today series*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.
- Netland, Harold A. 1991. *Dissonant voices : religious pluralism and the question of truth*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans ; Apollos.
- . 2001. *Encountering religious pluralism : the challenge to Christian faith & mission*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
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- Neusner, Jacob. 1975. *Between time and eternity : the essentials of Judaism*. Encino, Calif.: Dickenson Pub. Co.
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- Newbiggin, Lesslie, Lamin O. Sanneh, and Jenny Taylor. 1998. *Faith and power : Christianity and Islam in "secular" Britain*. London: SPCK.
- Pinnock, Clark H. 1992. *A wideness in God's mercy : the finality of Jesus Christ in a world of religions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.
- Robinson, Richard H., Willard L. Johnson, Ṭhānissaro, and Richard H. Robinson. 2005. *Buddhist religions : a historical introduction*. 5th ed, *Religious life in history*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson.
- Sanders, John. 1992. *No other name : an investigation into the destiny of the unevangelized*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.
- Sanneh, Lamin O. 1993. *Encountering the West : Christianity and the global cultural process : the African dimension, World Christian theology series*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
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- Williams, Paul. 2002. *The unexpected way : on converting from Buddhism to Catholicism*. Edinburgh; New York: T & T Clark.
- Yandell, Keith E. 2002. *Philosophy of religion : a contemporary introduction*. London [u.a.]: Routledge.
- Yandell, Keith E., David Werther, and Mark Linville. 2012. *Philosophy and the Christian worldview : analysis, assessment and development*. New York: Continuum.