

# ENCOUNTERING WORLD RELIGIONS

PHIL & MISS 6209/6309  
in the Defend the Faith Conference  
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
January 4-9, 2015  
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## Course Description

In this course, students examine the major world religions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as other faiths such as Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, and Sikhism, from the perspective of underlying world view, history, tradition, sacred literature, doctrines, and practices. Emphasis is placed on the use of primary sources and personal contact with practitioners. Attention is given to particular barriers to the Gospel, as well as to promising avenues for sharing the gospel associated with each religion.

## Texts

Lewis, James F., and William G. Travis. *Religious Traditions of the World*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999 (see inexpensive used copies at amazon.com)

Okholm, Dennis L., and Timothy R. Phillips (with John Hick, Clark Pinnock, Alister McGrath, Doug Geivett, and Gary Phillips). *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Lemke, Steve. *A Light to the Nations: Christianity and World Religions*. New Orleans: NOBTS, 2009 (downloadable free on Blackboard).

## Student Learning Outcomes

As part of the larger Seminary goal of equipping effective leaders of healthy churches, the Seminary's core value focus of Mission Focus, and the key competency of Disciple Making in the Seminary's curriculum, the objectives of this course for the successful student are

- to have an increased sensitivity to persons from different faiths.
- to achieve a working knowledge of the worldview and major beliefs (theology, revelation, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology) of each religion studied, and how it compares with the Christian worldview and beliefs.
- to be familiar with the key leaders and movements within each religion studied.
- to be able to defend Christian exclusivism against pluralism, universalism, syncretism, and inclusivism.
- to have increased ability and desire to present a credible Christian witness to adherents of these religions.
- to be able to teach others about the belief systems of other religions.

## **Class Policies**

Absences are not permitted in Defend the Faith Conferences. Students must be physically present or listen to all sessions related to the course.

Late Work will be penalized. All late work will be assessed a proportional penalty.

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale--

A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below.

Borderline Grades will be determined by the numerical grade received, unless the student's promptness and faithfulness in class attendance, positive attitude and contribution in class discussions, and preparedness and attentiveness in class warrants special consideration. These factors only apply when the student is within a few points of the next higher grade.

Appropriate Conduct in Class is especially important in an academic workshop class, in order that all students can have a chance to hear and participate in class discussions. Personal student conversations during class time disrupt the learning experience of other class members, as does internet surfing and phone texting, and will not be tolerated.

## **Class Assignments**

**Understanding World Religions Assignment** 100 points. Preferably done or at least started before the class, but due by February 1, 2015. Read the *Religious Traditions of the World* text by James F. Lewis and William G. Travis (it is helpful but not required to reach chapters 3, 4, and 6). Answer the questions listed below (typed single spaced, double spaced between paragraphs). Your answers to each question may be brief -- a sentence or two per question is sufficient.

**Salvation and World Religions Assignment**, 100 points. Due February 15, 2015  
Read *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). Write an 8-10 page paper (single spaced, double spacing paragraphs) summarizing and evaluating the book.

(a) *Briefly summarize* (in no more than 4 pages) summarize the book and the four views presented, and explain how the positions of Hick, Rahner, and Nebigin from the Lewis and Travis text relate to these four views.

(b) Then *provide your evaluation and critique* of the positions presented in the book, affirming the position you support in the light of Scripture (in not less than 4 nor more than 6 pages).

**Personal Visit Critique**, 50 points. Due March 1, 2015

Each student should visit with a practitioner of one of the religions discussed in class (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Ba'hai, Zoroastrian, etc.) preferably at the site of their worship activities. The critique (about 6-8 pages, single spaced, with double spacing between paragraphs) should include the following:

- \* Describe the place of worship.
- \* Summarize the conversation, especially regarding issues of doctrine (theology, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology).
- \* Identify insights gained through this experience.

**Defend the Faith conference reflections**, 50 points. Due March 15.

Attend all three World Religions breakout sessions (1/5-8)

Take notes on the three World Religions breakout sessions (*for students in both 6209 and 6309*).

Session notes – In addition, take notes on any five of the Defend the Faith plenary or breakout sessions besides our class (heard either in-person or by recording). Sessions dealing with Christian orthodoxy or cults are preferred but not required. Turn in a one page single spaced summary for each plenary session. Your notes should outline or overview

(a) the content of the Apologetic issue presented, and

(b) your brief evaluation of the relevance of the issue in your ministry setting.

(*just for students in PHIL/MSSN 6309, in addition to the World Religions sessions noted above*).

**Reading Questions from the Lewis and Travis Text** -- Answer all the following questions from the text. The questions are intended to be answered briefly in a sentence or two.

Chapter 1

1. Do you agree with the statement on p. 16 that we cannot witness effectively to people of other faiths unless we understand something of their faith? Why or why not?
2. Briefly respond to Emilio Castro's statement on p. 17.

Chapter 2

10. Answer "Discussion" questions 2, 5, and 6 on p. 47 of Lewis.

Chapter 5

1. Identify the three pilgrimage feasts.
2. Describe the three kinds of materials in the Talmud.
3. How many commandments do Jews identify in the Mosaic law?
4. Outline the religious year in Judaism.
5. Answer question 6 in "Discussion," p. 139 of Lewis.

6. Define the following terms:

Shema

Jew

Hanukkah

Zealots

Mishnah

Palestinian Talmud

Babylonian Talmud

*Guide for the Perplexed*

Kabbalah

Sephardim

Ashkenazim

Ghetto

Hasidim

## Chapter 7

1. What pattern is used to organize the Suras or chapters of the Qur'an?
2. In what way or ways are Muslims offended by the title "Son of God"?
3. How is the Islamic concept of the oneness of God different from Jewish and Christian views of the oneness of God?
4. Do Muslims have assurance of salvation?
5. What is Jesus called in the Qur'an?
6. Identify the five pillars of Islam.
7. Contrast "revivalist" and "modernist" Muslims.
8. In the testimony of the former Muslim who became a Christian, what does he say led him to Christ? What is the major difference he notes between the teachings of Christianity and Islam?
9. Answer briefly the questions in "Discussion," p. 220.
10. Define the following terms:

Islam  
anno Hegira  
hajj  
jinn  
Dome of the Rock  
Qur'an

The Rightly Guided Caliphs  
Ramadan  
Sunni  
Shia  
Sufi  
imam

## Chapter 8

1. Identify the four major castes in Hinduism.
2. How do women in Jainism achieve the afterlife?
3. Contrast the three divisions of Jainism.
4. Distinguish reincarnation from transmigration of the soul.
5. Answer question 2 in "Discussion," p. 292.

6. Briefly define the following terms:

Veda	anatta
Brahma	nirvana
Brahmanas	sangha
Brahman	bodhisattva
Brahmin	bhakti
karma	Tantric
maya	Vishnu
henotheism	avatar
atman	Shiva
moksha	Krishna
samsara	Bhagavad Gita
Advaita Vedanta	Rama
Mahavira	Shakti
jiva and ajiva	Sikh
ahimsa	Nanak
Siddhattha Gotama	Granth Sahib
Buddha	Ahura Mazda
Tipitaka	Angra Mainyu
anicca	Avesta
dukkha	

### Chapter 9

1. Briefly describe the five main ethical principles in Confucianism.
2. Answer question 2 in "Discussion," p. 326 of Lewis.
3. Define the following terms:

yang	Lao-zi
yin	Tian-Tai
Dao	Pure Land
Analects	Dalai Lama
Meng-zi	

### Chapter 10

1. Answer questions 2 and 6 in "Discussion," pp. 351-352 of Lewis.
2. Briefly define the following terms:

Shinto	Zen
kami	Soka Gakkai
Jodo	mandala
Amida Buddha	Seicho No Ie

## Chapter 11

1. What does Hick mean by “Son of God”?
2. What is the “axial period” of religion as defined by Karl Jaspers?
3. What does Hick mean by the “Copernican Revolution” in religion?
4. What term does Hick prefer instead of “God”?
5. What does Hick mean by “salvation”?
6. Answer questions 2 and 4 in “Discussion,” p. 366 of Lewis.

## Chapter 12

1. What does Rahner mean by “explicit Christianity” and “anonymous Christianity”?
2. How does Rahner describe salvation?
3. What biblical texts does Rahner appeal to in support of his view?
4. Answer questions 2 and 4 in “Discussion,” p. 380 of Lewis.

## Chapter 13

1. What challenge does Newbigin raise to the claim that there is no absolute truth?
2. Answer questions 1, 4, and 5 in “Discussion,” pp. 394-395 of Lewis.

## Chapter 14

1. Answer questions 2 and 3 in “Discussion,” p. 403 of Lewis.

### Suggested Bibliography

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