

# *WORLD RELIGIONS*

*MISS 9406 / THEO9406 / PHIL9406*

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*New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Spring 2006*

## **Course Description**

This study of the world's living religions treats them individually with attention to historical development and doctrinal content. Emphasis is given to the role of cultural influences in the formation of the religion and in the process of sharing the Christian witness with them.

## **Texts**

*These books may be available from Lifeway at 1-800-656-2215 or at 1-800-570-0250 (the Baton Rouge Lifeway store). Because they are older books, you can also find some used copies at attractive prices at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. It's also fine to check them out of a library, if you can find them.*

- Lewis, James F., and William G. Travis. *Religious Traditions of the World*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999.
- Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

## **Recommended Reading**

*(These books are particularly helpful resources for our work, but are not required. See a fuller bibliography at the end of the syllabus).*

- Carmody, Denise L., and John Tully Carmody. *Ways to the Center*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1989.
- Crockett, William V., and James G. Sigountos, eds. *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.
- Hopfe, Lewis M., and Mark R. Woodard. *Religions of the World*. 7th ed. New York: Macmillan, 1998.
- Okholm, Dennis L., and Timothy R. 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, 2003.

*(My workbook will be available for free in pdf format on the class web site. A hard copy or CD can be purchased by emailing Dr. Lemke).*

### *Course Objectives*

As part of the larger Seminary purpose of equipping effective leaders of healthy churches in practicing the Great Commission and the Great Commandments, the Seminary core values of Mission Focus and Characteristic Excellence, and the key competencies of Disciple Making and Theological Heritage in the Seminary's curriculum, the objectives of this course are for the successful student:

- to have an increased sensitivity to persons from different faiths and the diversity of their beliefs.
- 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 able to describe the particular approach each world religion takes to resolve the problem of evil.
- to be able to describe different scholarly approaches to the study of world religions.
- 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.
- to describe missiological approaches that would contextualize Christian witness without doctrinal compromise.

### *Class Policies*

*Class Participation* is crucial in this TDS-format class. Students should structure the time and computer resources to be online for at least the normal time of a seminar, i.e., three hours per week. While frank and meaningful discussion is encouraged, seminar members should be sensitive to treat other seminar members with dignity and respect.

*Late Work* will be penalized, since each contribution impacts everyone else in the seminar. No assignment will be accepted that is over two weeks late, and all late work will be assessed a proportional penalty (five points per office day).

### *Contacting the Instructor*

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862 Columbia Drive  
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slemke@nobts.edu

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Telephone: (504)-282-4455  
E-mail: [slemke@nobts.edu](mailto:slemke@nobts.edu)  
Fax: 504-816-8428

## *Class Assignments*

(1) *The Class Web Site* is the primary delivery system for the class. It provides a number of resources including links for further information on world religions and other class information. It also hosts the online threaded discussions which will provide the primary interaction in the class. Sign up by following these steps:

- Open your web browser to the NOBTS home page, <http://www.nobts.edu>.
- Click on the NOBTS Blackboard link in the left column.
- If you have never enrolled in Blackboard, choose the Create Account button on the left, enter in your information, then click Submit, and confirm your registration by clicking OK.
- If you are already enrolled in Blackboard, just sign in as usual.
- Your personal NOBTS Blackboard home page should now appear. To enroll in a class, click on the Courses tab at the top of the page.
- Click the Browse Course Catalog link on the right-hand side of the page.
- Under “Search for a Course,” write in “THEO 9406,” and click “Go.”
- Click on the Enroll button beside “World Religions.”
- Enter the enrollment code: THEO9406 (Note: the enrollment code is case sensitive, so type it in exactly this way).
- Click OK when the confirmation page appears.

As soon as you’re online, you need to do at several things –

- Create your own homepage from the “Communications” link and tell us more about you – who you are, where you are now, and some about your back ground.
- As you come across useful Internet sites related to world religions, email Dr. Lemke so it can be added to the External Links section.
- Begin engaging in the threaded discussions. Plan on spending about as much time as you would have in class on campus.

(2) *All seminar participants will need to read all of both texts.* Some in the seminar will likely be unfamiliar with the terminology utilized in various religious traditions. (It is helpful but not necessary to read the chapters on Christianity). A list of questions are provided at the end of the syllabus to guide your reading of the Lewis and Travis text. You need not write out the answers to them, but we might discuss some of them on our Blackboard discussions. The Bowker readings are crucial to the discussing the problem of evil in each religion.

(3) *Book content summaries and discussion.* Seminar members will be leading the discussion of two sections of our texts through the first half of the seminar. To facilitate the discussion, summarize or outline the material, along with a brief critique, and ask questions addressed to the author and the seminar to discuss. These summaries should be posted on the discussion board the Friday before the assignment, i.e., posted January 20<sup>th</sup> for January 23<sup>rd</sup>. All seminar participants are responsible to read the texts and engage in the discussion. *Email your first, second, and third choices for TWO presentations to Dr. Lemke by Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.*

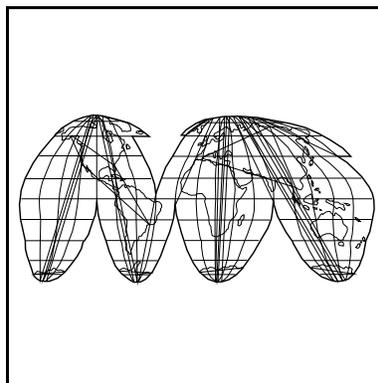
(4) Personal visit report. Each student should visit with a practitioner of a world religion or cult of a major world religion (i.e., Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Ba'hai, Sikh, Zoroastrian, etc.) preferably at the site of their worship activities. The critique (about 6-8 pages, single 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.

Your reflections on your visit should be posted on the class discussion board the same week that the religious tradition is being discussed in class. *It would be helpful to have a diversity of religious traditions visited by the seminar, so email your first, second, and third choices to Dr. Lemke by Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.*

(5) Seminar paper. Each seminar participant will present a paper to the seminar for discussion. A list of suggested papers is included in this syllabus, but students may also propose paper topics that would be of interest to the seminar. The papers should be approximately 15 pages in length in Turabian form (all class papers should be sent preferably as a WordPerfect wpd document or a pdf document, not a Word document in multiple files). The papers should be posted on the class discussion board on the Friday before they are scheduled. *Send in your list of your first, second, and third choices for a proposed paper topic by January 30<sup>th</sup>, but you're welcome to request a topic early, since it's first come, first served.*

(5) Paper response. Each seminar participant will provide a response to the paper presented by another seminar member. The critique should provide a frank assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper, and pose questions to the author and the seminar for discussion. It should also provide a list of errata identifying errors of form and style. *(These will be assigned by Dr. Lemke, based on the interests expressed in your other preferences, and the needs of the seminar).*



*Class Schedule*

<b>APPROACHES TO WORLD RELIGIONS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Discussion Topic</b>	<b>Seminar Leader</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
1/23-1/29	(a) Explanations for the Origin of Religions (Animism, Nature Worship, Original Monotheism, Progressivism, Human Projection, Divine Revelation)		RTW 13-48, LN 1-3
	(b) Scholarly Approaches to the Study of Religion (History of Religions, Personalist, Structuralist, Functionalist, Normative)		RTW, 13-48, LN 4-5
1/30-2/5	(c) Unitive Pluralism (Hick, Knitter, Smith)		RTW, ch. 11 LN 7, 13 (see *)
	(d) Universalism/Inclusivism (Rahner, Kung, Sanders)		RTW, ch. 12 LN 7, 13 (see *)
	(e) Wider Hope/Accessibilism (Fackre, Pinnock, Tiessen)		RTW 355-404 (see *)
2/6-2/12	(f) Particularism/Exclusivism/Restrictivism (Nash, Newbigin, Kraemer)		RTW, ch. 13 LN 13 (see *)
	(g) Second Chance Evangelism (Fackre, Pinnock)		(see *)
	(h) Annihilationism (Pinnock)		LN 8-12 (see *)

\* *Supplementary resources are listed below.*

<b>MIDDLE EASTERN WORLD RELIGIONS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Discussion Topic</b>	<b>Seminar Leader</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
2/13-2/19	(i) The Worldview of Judaism		RTW 103-139
	(j) The Problem of Evil in Judaism: Foundations		PSRW, 5-23
	(k) The Problem of Evil in Judaism: Development		PSRW, 24-40
2/20-2/26	(l) The Worldview of Islam		RTW 180-221
	(m) The Problem of Evil in Islam: Foundations		PSRW, 99-122
	(n) The Problem of Evil in Islam: Development		PSRW, 123-135

*For more information about the religious traditions in (j) through (x), see the books in the Bibliography with the three asterisks (\*\*\*)*.

<b>EASTERN WORLD RELIGIONS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Discussion Topic</b>	<b>Seminar Leader</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
2/27-3/5	(o) The Worldview of Hinduism		RTW 225-239, 262-280, 288-293
	(p) Evil in Hinduism: Foundations		PSRW 193-217
	(q) Evil in Hinduism: Development		PSRW 218-235
3/6-3/12	(r) The Worldview of Buddhism		RTW 243-262, 311-319
	(s) Evil in Buddhism: Foundations		PSRW 237-257
	(t) Evil in Buddhism: Development		PSRW 258-267

*For more information about the religious traditions in (j) through (x), see the books in the Bibliography with the three asterisks (\*\*\*)*.

<b>DUALISTIC AND SYNCRETISTIC WORLD RELIGIONS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Discussion Topic</b>	<b>Seminar Leader</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
3/13-3/19	(u) Dualistic World Religions: Greek religion, Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism, Jainism, and Taoism		RTW 56-57, 63-78, 239-242, 295-301, 285-288, 306-310
	(v) Evil in Dualistic Religions		PSRW 269-291
3/20-3/26	(w) Confucianism and Shinto		RTW 301-306, 328-352
	(x) Sikhs and Baha'i		RTW 280-285

*For more information about the religious traditions in (j) through (x), see the books in the Bibliography with the three asterisks (\*\*\*)*.

<b>SEMINAR RESEARCH PAPERS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Paper Topic</b>	<b>Paper Presenter</b>	<b>Respondent</b>
3/27-4/2	Paper 1		
	Paper 2		
4/3-4/10	Paper 3		
	Paper 4		
4/11-4/16	Paper 5		
	Paper 6		
4/17-4/23	Paper 7		
	Paper 8		
4/24-4/30	Paper 9		
	Paper 10		
5/1-5/7	Paper 11		
	Paper 12		

### **Other Resources for Class Presentations**

- (c) **Unitive Pluralism** – See Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*. (London: SCM Press, 1985); and John Hick’s perspective in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 27-91.
- (d) **Universalism/Inclusivism** – See John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; rep. ed. by Wipf and Stock, 2001), 81-124, 215-267; Sander’s chapter in John Sanders, Gabriel Fackre and Ronald Nash, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 21-70; and Pinnock’s perspective in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 93-147.
- (e) **Wider Hope/Accessibilism** – see John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; rep. ed. by Wipf and Stock, 2001), 131-211; and Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), and Terrance Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).
- (f) **Particularism/Exclusivism/Restrictivism** – see John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; rep. ed. by Wipf and Stock, 2001), 37-73; Nash’s chapter in John Sanders, Gabriel Fackre and Ronald Nash, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 107-15; and the sections by McGrath and Geivett in *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 149-269.
- (g) **Second Chance Evangelism** – See Fackre’s chapter in John Sanders, Gabriel Fackre and Ronald Nash, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 71-105; and John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; rep. ed. by Wipf and Stock, 2001), 131-211.
- (h) **Annihilationism** – See Clark Pinnock, “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent,” *Criwell Theological Review* (Spring 1990), 243-259; and Harold O. J. Brown, “Will the Lost Suffer Forever?” *Criwell Theological Review* (Spring 1990), 261-278, and William Crockett, ed., *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

### **Suggested/Suggestive Paper Topics**

**The Uniqueness of Christ**, 100 points. Using resources such as *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), and *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), briefly summarize the views presented, and provide your evaluation and critique of the perspectives.

**Religion and the Body** – Utilizing resources such as *Religion and the Body*, edited by Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), study the view of anthropology and/or the body in a religious tradition.

**Missiological Approaches to Contextualization** – Utilizing resources such as Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), and J. Dudley Woodberry, ed., *Christians and Muslims on the Emmaus Road: Crucial Issues among Muslims*. (Monrovia: MARC, 1989), describe how Christians can contextualize in a given culture without resorting to syncretism..

**Muslim Women** – Study the status of women in Islamic societies, and the openness Muslim women might have to presentations of the Gospel.

**An Aspect of a World Religion** – Study some particular doctrine or an aspect of a worldview in some world religion (i.e., “The Anthropology of Buddhism,” “Aesthetics in Zen Buddhism,” “Eschatology in Zoroastrianism,” “Epistemology in Hinduism,” etc.).

**Ethnographic Study** – Do an ethnographic study of a particular people group, with special attention to their theological doctrines and practices, their worldview, and their cultural presuppositions.

**Hindu Philosophies** – Identify and contrast the five major philosophical schools within Hinduism.

**Linear Cross-Sectional Study of World Religions** – Compare similar aspects of different world religions (i.e., “Mysticism in Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity,” “Nationalism in Shinto, Islam, and Christianity” etc.).

**Jesus in the Religions of the World** – Study the place of Jesus in the religions of the world.

## *Reading Questions from the Lewis and Travis Text*

### 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

- Answer "Discussion" questions 2, 5, and 6 on p. 47.

### 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.
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. How is the Quran arranged?
2. What is the significance to a Muslim of calling Jesus the "Son of God"?

3. What is the role of women in paradise?
4. Do Muslims have assurance of salvation?
5. What is Jesus called in the Quran?
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 questions 1, 4, and 5 in “Discussion,” p. 220.
10. Define the following terms:

Islam  
 Muslim  
 anno Hegira  
 hajj  
 jinn  
 Dome of the Rock  
 Quran  
 Ka’ba

The Rightly Guided Caliphs  
 Ramadan  
 Sunni  
 Shi’a  
 Sufi  
 imam  
 whirling dervish

### 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. Define the following terms:

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

### Chapter 9

1. Briefly describe the five main ethical principles in Confucianism.
2. Answer question 2 in “Discussion,” p. 326.
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.
2. 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Chapter 14

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

### Suggested Bibliography

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- Anderson, Norman. *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984.
- \*\*\* Bervard, Theos. *Hindu Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
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- \*\*\* Channakesavan, Sarasvati. *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*. Columbia: South Asia Books, 1976.
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- Dyrness, William. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1983, pp. 94-151.
- \*\*\* Feibleman, James K. *Understanding Oriental Philosophy*. New York: Horizon, 1976.
- \*\*\* Fisher, Mary Pat. *Living Religions*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1999.
- \*\*\* \_\_\_\_\_, and Ninian Smart. *Religions of the World: Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1998.
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