

# **WORLD RELIGIONS**

MISS9406 / THEO9406 / PHIL9406

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New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

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## **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**

Esposito, John L., Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd Lewis. *World Religions Today*. New York: Oxford, 2009.

Chryssides, George D., and Ron Geaves. *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*. London: Continuum, 2007.

## **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).*

- Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- 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.
- Lewis, James F., and William G. Travis. *Religious Traditions of the World*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1999.
- Okholm, Dennis L., and Timothy R. Phillips. *Four Views of Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

## **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, this course of study of the religions of the world advances the Seminary core value of Characteristic Excellence through in depth study of world religions.

Successful students will achieve the following learning objectives:

- be able to describe different scholarly approaches to the study of world religions.
- achieve a working knowledge of the major belief structures (theology, revelation, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology) of each religion studied, and how it compares with the Christian worldview and beliefs.
- describe the particular approach each world religion takes to resolve the relationship between God and creation, the problem of evil, and human salvation.
- be able to teach others about the belief systems of other religions.
- describe missiological approaches that would contextualize Christian witness without doctrinal compromise in various religious settings.
- be able to defend Christian exclusivism against pluralism, universalism, syncretism, and inclusivism.

### ***Class Policies***

*Class Participation* is crucial in this seminar. All students will come to sessions equipped to discuss the material at hand. While frank and meaningful discussion is encouraged, seminar members should be sensitive to treat other seminar members with dignity and respect.

*Late Work* will not be permitted, since each contribution impacts everyone else in the seminar.

### ***Class Assignments***

(1) *Attendance and active participation* are essential.

(2) Participation in the Greer-Heard Point Counterpoint event is expected and special events for the seminar are envisioned. The topic *Life After Death* will be explored in each of the world religion papers in this seminar. Participation in the Greer-Heard dialog will deepen and broaden the seminar participants' understanding of the entire subject within world religions.

(3) *The Encountering World Religions Web Site* within the Defend the Faith Master's program provides a number of resources including links for further information on world religions and other class information. It also hosts several online threaded discussions which will provide the additional interaction in our community or class. Sign up by following these steps on the first day of the Semester:

- Participants in the Seminar will have the opportunity to monitor one of the world religion threads in the graduate discussion board.
- Participants in the Seminar from time to time will critique discussions in the graduate discussion board.

(4) *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 20 pages in length in Turabian form (all class papers should be sent preferably as a WordPerfect wpd document or a pdf document). Papers are due at the beginning of the session preceding presentation.

(5) *1 Critical Book review*. Each seminar participant will provide critical analyses of agreed texts. The paper should summarize the work in 4-5 pages. Analyze the thesis and tools employed in achieving it in 3-5 pages. Finally, the paper should frankly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the book in 1-2 pages.

### *Class Schedule*

Jan 20 1-4:50 PM Introductions of the field, this particular study, opportunities and each other as participants. Agreement on dates of presentations and general topics.

Jan 27 Research Day

Feb 3 1-2:30 PM Book review 1

Feb 10 1-4:50 PM Discussion of Major Texts:  
Book review 2

Feb 17 1-4:50 PM Discussion of Major Texts:  
Book review 3

Feb 24 Research Day

Mar 2 1-2:50 PM Book review 4  
Book review 5

Mar 9 1-4:50 PM Discussion of Major Texts:  
Book review 6

Mar 16 Spring Break

Mar 23 Research Day

Mar 30 1-4: 50 PM Discussion of Major Texts:  
Animism and Tribal Religion  
Judaism, Historical and Contemporary

Apr 6 Good Friday

Apr 13 1-2:50 PM Hinduism

Apr 13-14 Greer Heard Forum

Apr 20 1-4:50 PM Buddhism  
New Age and Contemporary Religious Innovations

April 27 Research Day

May 4 1-2: 50 PM Islam

### ***Suggested Bibliography***

- Ahmad-Shah, E. *Buddhism and Christian Faith*. Delhi: Unity Books, 1973.
- Anderson, Norman. *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984.
- Bervard, Theos. *Hindu Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
- Bowes, Pratima. *The Hindu Religious Tradition: A Philosophical Approach*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
- Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Brown, Harold O. J. "Will the Lost Suffer Forever?" *Criswell Theological Review* (Spring 1990): 261-78.
- Carmody, Denise L., and John Carmody. *Ways to the Center*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1989.
- Carmody, Denise L., and John Tully. *Eastern Ways to the Center: An Introduction to Asian Religions*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Shamans, Prophets, and Sages*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1974.
- Chandler, Russell. *Understanding the New Age*. Dallas: Word, 1988.
- Channakesavan, Sarasvati. *Concepts of Indian Philosophy*. Columbia: South Asia Books, 1976.
- Clark, David, and Norman Geisler. *Apologetics in the New Age*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- Coakley, Sarah, ed. *Religion and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Corduan, Winfried. *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Tapestry of Faith: The Common Threads between Christianity and World Religions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Islam: A Christian Introduction*. E-book in Acrobat Adobe format.
- Crockett, William V., and Sigountos, James G., eds. *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Collier, 1961.
- Dyrness, William. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community*. Downers 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.
- Fisher, Mary Pat, and Ninian Smart. *Religions of the World: Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1998.
- Geffre, Claude, and Muriassusai Dhavamony, eds. *Buddhism and Christianity*. New York: Seabury, 1979.
- Geisler, Norman L., and William D. Watkins. *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- Goldsmith, Martin. *Islam and Christian Witness*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1982.
- Hackett, Stuart C. *Oriental Philosophy: A Westerner's Guide to Eastern Thought*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.
- Hick, John. *Death and Eternal Life*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God Has Many Names*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Hinnels, John, ed. *A New Handbook of Living Religions*. New York: PenguinUSA, 1998.
- Hopfe, Lewis M., and Mark R. Woodard. *Religions of the World*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Macmillan, 1998.
- Hume, Robert E. *The World's Living Religions*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.
- Jurji, Edward J. *The Great Religions of the Modern World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- Knitter, Paul. *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions*. London: SCM Press, 1985.
- Lewis, James F., and Travis, William G. *Religious Traditions of the World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.
- McDowell, Josh, and Don Stewart. *Handbook of Today's Religions*. San Bernadino: Here's Life, 1983.

- Moore, Charles A., ed. *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967.
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- Neusner, Jacob, ed. *Understanding Jewish Theology*. New York: Ktav, 1973.
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- Newport, John. *Christ and the New Consciousness*. Nashville: Broadman, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Life's Ultimate Questions*. Dallas: Word, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Nida, Eugene, and William A. Smalley. *Introducing Animism*. New York: Friendship Press, 1959.
- Nielsen, Niels C., ed. *Religions of the World*. New York: St. Martin's, 1988.
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- Tiessen, Terrance. *Irenaeus on the Salvation of the Unevangelized*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Vos, Johannes G. *A Christian Introduction to the Religions of the World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965.
- Woodberry, J. Dudley, ed. *Christians and Muslims on the Emmaus Road: Crucial Issues among Muslims*. Monrovia: MARC, 1989.
- Woodfin, Yandall. *With All Your Mind*. Fort Worth: Scripta, 1989.