

**North Park Theological Seminary**  
MNST 6227 Religions and Cultures Spring 2012  
Three credit hours

This course fulfills requirements for Church and World area or elective.

***Course Syllabus***

**Course Instructors:**

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Participants are encouraged to contact instructors via email anytime. Instructors will respond in a timely manner. Instructors do not check email after 9:00 pm M-F or on weekends.

**Course Description:**

This course will focus on the world's major religions, how religions are embedded in various cultures and how contemporary religious plurality is a challenge and opportunity for Christian mission. Insight from the social sciences for the mission of the church and the growth of the church in the non-western world are focused features. Participants will personally observe and reflect upon cultural worship in settings other than Christian as part of their learning.

**Participant Learning Objectives for Course:**

By the completion of this course, participants should be able to:

- Describe the nature of religion in its varied manifestations in time and place.
- Analyze and exegete diverse cultures
- Articulate the nature of religious plurality and theologize about the same in terms of Christian response to other faith expressions.
- Engage in dialog with adherents of other faiths.
- Develop a sense of what it means to have a missional identity as a person and a people of faith (church).
- Reflect critically on the interrelationships between religions and cultures, especially one's own.
- Learn how to appropriate resources and tools from the social sciences in order to better understand one's own (and others') faith and culture.
- Articulate both the challenges and opportunities that face the Christian church in the contemporary world.
- Distinguish between the *missio Dei* and missions, and articulate their necessary connections.
- Identify the countries of the world and their religious affiliations.

## **Required Texts:**

- Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou. *Understanding Folk Religion*. Baker Books, 1999. ISBN 0-8010-2219-3.
- Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Eerdmans, 1989. ISBN 0-8028-0426-8.
- Arvind Sharma, ed. *Our Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. ISBN 0-06-067700-7.
- Amos Yong. *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor*. Orbis, 2008. ISBN: 9781570757723.

## **Additional Readings:**

- Swami Dayanand Bharati. *Living Water and Indian Bowl*. Rev. ed. WCL, 2004.
- Steve Bruce. *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Blackwell, 2002.
- David Burnett. *World of the Spirits: A Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions*. Monarch Books, 2000.
- Richard Carlson. "Journeying to Zagorsk." *The Covenant Quarterly*. Feb 1994, 36-49.
- John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. Gallup Press, 2007.
- Richard W. Flory and Donald E. Miller, eds. *Gen X Religion*. Routledge, 2000.
- Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Death and Religion in a Changing World*. Sharpe, 2005. ISBN 0-7656-1222-4.
- Darrell L. Guder. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Benjamin Hoff. *The Tao of Pooh*. Dutton, 1982.
- Philip Jenkins. *The New Faces of Christianity*. Oxford, 2006.
- E. Stanley Jones. *The Christ of the Indian Road*. Abingdon Press, 1925.
- David Lim and Steve Spaulding, eds. *Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World*. WCL, 2003.
- Gerald R. McDermott. *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation and Religious Traditions*. IVP, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God's Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions?* IVP, 2007.
- Geoffrey Parrinder, ed. *World Religions: From Ancient History to Present*. FOF, 1985.
- Christopher Partridge, ed. *Introduction to World Religions*. Fortress, 2005.
- Ted Peters. *The Cosmic Self: A Penetrating Look at Today's New Age Movements*. Harper, 1991.
- Brian J. Pierce. *We Walk the Path Together: Learning from Thich Nhat Hanh and Meister Eckhart*. Orbis, 2005.
- Lamin Sanneh. *Whose Religion is Christianity?* Eerdmans, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Joel A. Carpenter. *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- David Whitten Smith and Elizabeth Burr. *Understanding World Religions: A Road Map for Justice and Peace*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.
- Huston Smith. *The World's Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- John V. Taylor. *The Primal Vision*. Fortress Press, 1963.
- Lao Tsu. *Tao Te Ching*. Vintage Books, 1997.
- Andrew Walls. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*. Orbis, 2002.
- Bryan Wilson. *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*. Routledge, 1999.
- Ralph Winter, ed. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. WCL, 1999.
- Amos Yong. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Baker, 2003.

## **Course Teaching and Learning Methods:**

This course is intentionally designed to emphasize experiential learning. In conjunction with in class discussion and learning, all participants will be expected to seek out and attend religious worship and/or cultural events in other than Christian settings following the guidelines presented in blackboard. Participants may choose to join two or more of the scheduled outings in the Chicago area or they may seek out such events in their own neighborhoods and nearby contexts following the provided guidelines.

## **Participant Responsibilities:**

1. Complete assigned weekly readings from the four required texts as well as interacting with the powerpoints, video and in class material. Attendance, discussion, participation, and accountability for reading are all part of the grade.  
**20% of total course grade.**
2. Visit and observe two non-Christian religious services of a religious community with which you are not familiar. Guidelines on blackboard describe the types of experiences required. Write a 750 word reflection on your experience following the categories of the WATERCRESS guidelines and using the rubric found on blackboard. Turn these in as soon as possible after the event. It is recommended that students turn their written observations in to the instructors in class as soon after the visits as possible. Several visits will be scheduled by the instructors during the semester and further details about these will be given in class. Participants are encouraged to visit more than two but need only report on two. If participants decide to attend and write on four distinctly different visits the two extra can take the place of two of the three quizzes.  
**10% each, total 20% of course grade.**
3. Using the rubric on blackboard, students will write one reflection paper of 750-1000 words on each of the three topics listed below and turned into class on the dates provided.
  - 3a. What does folk religion do for its adherents? What elements of folk religion can you identify in your own life and faith practices?  
**10% of course grade.**
  - 3b. Can Christians and Muslims live together in peace? On what basis?  
**10% of course grade.**
  - 3c. Would you describe yourself as a pluralist, exclusivist or inclusivist? (cf. Newbigin, chap. 14). How will this affect your ministry?  
**10% of course grade.**
4. Three quizzes on the reading, course material, and maps. Quiz dates listed in course outline. 10 % each.  
**Total of 30% of course grade.**

## **Grading:**

The weight of the assignments will be the following:

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Weekly attendance, participation in class | 20% of total grade |
| Report visits                             | 20% of total grade |
| Reflection papers                         | 30% of total grade |
| Quizzes/extra visits                      | 30% of total grade |

Course grade will be computed according to the grading policy found in the NPTS catalog.

## **Course Facilitators' Responsibilities:**

1. The course facilitators will design the course and learning modules in such a way that students have every opportunity to achieve the learning objectives.
2. The course facilitators will provide reactions to student responses and discussion as appropriate in order to clarify important ideas and concepts.
3. The course facilitators will provide opportunities for group work that will include discussion as well as experiential learning events.
4. The course facilitators will provide updated information on relevant resources for the various topics of interest.
5. The course facilitators will read and critically assess students' assignments and provide feedback in a timely manner.

## **Notes:**

1. The instructors reserve the right to modify the course to best accommodate the particular learning needs of the class.
2. Consider how you can best integrate the "Statement of Inclusive Language" from the NPTS Catalog into all your communication presentations during the course.
3. Use proper "netiquette" when writing or posting on blackboard (see *A Guide to Netiquette in Course Information folder on Blackboard*).
4. NPTS provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.
5. Please see the Course Information button in Blackboard for the Student Support document if you need assistance about electronic blackboard during your course.