

MNST 6277 Religions and Cultures Spring 2013  
North Park Theological Seminary  
This course fulfills requirements for Church and World area or elective.  
Three seminary semester credit hours  
**Course Syllabus**

**Course Instructor:**

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Participants are encouraged to contact me via email anytime. I will attempt to respond in a timely manner. Please note that I 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:

1. Interpret the interrelationship between the religious and cultural context of major world religions, including one's own.
2. Critique the historic and contemporary understandings of the nature and function of religion from both western and majority world perspectives.
3. Analyze and exegete etic perspectives of worldview values through firsthand observation of non-Christian cultural religious worship experiences.
4. Articulate the nature of religious plurality and theologize about the same in terms of a Christian response to other faith expressions.
5. Engage in practices of hospitality and dialog with adherents of other faiths.
6. Distinguish between the *missio Dei* and missions, articulate their necessary connections and apply both to a ministry and ecumenical interfaith setting.
7. Identify the countries of the world and their general 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.

Christopher Partridge, ed. *Introduction to World Religions*. Fortress, 2005. ISBN 0800637143.

**Note: Purchase a used 2005 version online, not the overpriced 2011 study version!**

Amos Yong. *Hospitality and the Other*. Orbis, 2008. ISBN 978-1-57075-772-3.

Other required readings will be posted online

**Additional Recommended Reading:** (links to other recommended materials provided online)

- Barrows, John H., ed. *The World's Parliament of Religions Vol I and II*. Parliament Publishing, 1893.
- Bharati, Swami Dayanand. *Living Water and Indian Bowl*. Rev. ed. WCL, 2004.
- Bruce, Steve. *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Blackwell, 2002.
- Burnett, David. *World of the Spirits: Christian Perspective on Folk Religions*. Monarch Books, 2000.
- Esposito, John L. and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* Gallup Press, 2007.
- Garces-Foley, Kathleen. *Death and Religion in a Changing World*. Sharp, 2006.
- Gilbert, Pierre. *Demons, Lies and Shadows*. Kindred, 2008.
- Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. Dutton, 1982.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The New Faces of Christianity*. Oxford, 2006.
- Johnson, Todd M. *Atlas of Global Christianity*. Edinburgh, 2009.
- Jones, E. Stanley. *The Christ of the Indian Road*. Abingdon Press, 1925.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christ at the Round Table*. Abingdon, 1928.
- McDermott, Gerald R. *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* IVP, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God's Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions?* IVP, 2007.
- Muck, Terry. *Alien Gods on American Turf*. Victor, 1990.
- Ott, Craig and Stephen Strauss. *Encountering Theology of Mission*. Baker, 2010.
- Pierce, Brian. *We Walk Path Together: Learning from Thich Nhat Hanh & Meister Eckhart*. Orbis, 2005.
- Sanneh, Lamin and Joel A. Carpenter. *The Changing Face of Christianity*. Oxford Press, 2005.
- Sharma, Arvind ed. *Our Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1993.
- Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- Taylor, John V. *The Primal Vision*. Fortress Press, 1963.
- Tennent, Timothy. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*. Zondervan, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*. Baker, 2002.
- Tsu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. Vintage Books, 1997.
- Walpole, Rahula. *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Press, 1973.
- Yong, Amos. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*. Baker, 2003.
- Zahniser, A.H. Mathias. *Symbol and Ceremony*. MARC, 1997.

**Course Teaching and Learning Methods:**

This course is intentionally designed to emphasize experiential learning. In conjunction with online course discussion and learning, all participants will be expected to seek out and attend non-Christian religious worship and/or cultural events in their communities and report on them following the guidelines presented online. 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 readings from required texts and other assigned learning materials. Interact with powerpoints, media and class material. 8 weekly online postings and a final report of all reading are part of the grade. **10% of total course grade**
2. Visit and observe two non-Christian services of a religious community with which you are not familiar. Guidelines online 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 online. *Turn these in as soon as possible after the event.* Several visits will be scheduled by the instructor during the semester for those in the Chicago area. Those outside of Chicago will locate similar services in their own communities. 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. First visit report is due by March 8, second due by May 3. **10% each, total 20% of course grade**
3. Using the rubric online, students will write one reflection paper of 750-1000 words on each of the three topics listed below and turned into class on the assigned due dates.
  - 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**
5. Personal Interfaith Hospitality Practice. Based on the materials and experiences this semester what practical steps will you take to practice Christian hospitality to people of other faiths? Write up in 750 words and prepare to share on last day of class **10% of course grade**

## **Grading:**

The weight of the assignments will be the following:

Weekly online participation in class	10% of total grade
Report on worship visits	20% of total grade
Reflection papers and online interaction	30% of total grade
Quizzes/extra visits	30% of total grade
Personal Interfaith Hospitality Practice	10% of total grade

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

### **Course Facilitator's Responsibilities:**

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

### **Notes:**

1. The instructor reserves 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 online (see *A Guide to Netiquette in Course Information folder in Moodle*).
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 Moodle for the Student Support document if you need assistance about electronic Moodle during your course.