

MNST 5110 Directed Study of Religions and Cultures
North Park Theological Seminary Spring 2018
Online 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. Note that I usually do not respond to emails after 9:00 pm M-F or on weekends.

Course Description:

This core course addresses online the learning outcome found in all four NPTS degree programs to, “engage diversity and exhibit growth towards intercultural competence for ministry reflective of God’s global redemptive work.” Through the lens of twelve of the world’s major religions, participants will reflect upon the inter-relationship of religions and cultures in order to understand one’s own position on pluralism. Emphasis is placed upon the practice Christian hospitality in the midst of pluralistic diversity drawing upon social sciences and missiological principles. Participants will personally observe and reflect upon non-Christian worship as part of their learning. 3 seminary credits.

Participant Learning Objectives for Course:

By the completion of this course, a participant 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 several countries of the world and their general religious affiliations.

Required Texts: Other required readings posted weekly online in the course shell)

Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tité 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.

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

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, 2000.

Garces-Foley, Kathleen. *Death and Religion in a Changing World*. Sharp, 2006.

Gilbert, Pierre. *Demons, Lies and Shadows*. Kindred, 2008.

Hofstede, Geert J., et al. *Exploring Culture*. Intercultural Press, 2002.

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.

Kubose, Guyomay M. *Everyday Suchness*. The Dharma House, 1967.

Maloney, H. Newton and Samuel Southard. *Handbook on Religious Conversion*. Religious Education Press, 1992.

McDermott, Gerald R. *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* IVP, 2000.

Ott, Craig and Stephen Strauss. *Encountering Theology of Mission*. Baker, 2010.

Palmer, Martin. *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity*. Ballantine, 2001.

Parrinder, Geoffrey. *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present*. Newnes, 1983.

Pierce, Brian. *We Walk the Path Together: Learning from T.N. Hanh & M. Eckhart*. Orbis, 2005.

Sanneh, Lamin and Joel A. Carpenter. *The Changing Face of Christianity*. Oxford Press, 2005.

Santino, Jack. *Spontaneous Shrines and Public Memorialization of Death*. Macmillian, 2006.

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.

Volf, Miraslav. *Against the Tide: Love in a Time of Petty Dreams and Persisting Enmities*. Eerdmans 2010.

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 online course emphasizes experiential learning. In conjunction with online postings and discussions, all participants will be expected to attend at least two non-Christian religious worship events and report on them following the guidelines presented online. Participants may choose to join two or more of the suggested outings if they live within the Chicagoland area. If not, participants will seek out similar experiences within their own neighborhoods and follow the guidelines provided online when arranging their visits.

Participant Responsibilities:

1. Review course shell. Become familiar with assignments and rubrics for each. Review the assigned learning materials for each week as listed in the online course shell
2. Post assignments in the appropriate online forums by midnight of Sunday each week. For assignments asking you to respond to the postings of others, post responses online by midnight central time of the following Thursday *or sooner!* Due dates posted online.
3. Attach your posts as **Word documents** in the forums provided each. *Do not post as .pdfs*

since not all students will be able to access .pdfs. ALSO, cut and paste your word document in the forum spaces provided. This will insure your postings are legible to all.

4. Following the rubrics provided, interact with the assigned learning materials in weeks 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 and post your findings in the dates given in the course schedule. In those same weeks, respond to the postings of at least two other. **10% of course grade**
5. During the semester attend **two** services of a non-Christian religious community new to you. Following the visit, write a 750 word reflection on the experience using the categories of the WATERCRESS guidelines and the rubric provided. *These are to be posted in the appropriate online forums as soon after the visit as possible.* During this semester five visits will be arranged by the instructor for those in the Chicagoland area and students may attend two or all if desired. If none of these options fit your schedule you are encouraged to find options in the areas where you live. Only two visits are required but if participants chose to, they may report on up to four different visits with the two non-required visits taking the place of your two lowest scoring quizzes. Due dates are posted in the course schedule found online. **Total 20% of grade**
6. Using the rubric provided, participants will write one reflection paper of 750-1000 words on each of the topics below, posting it online in the appropriate forums by the assigned dates and times found in the course schedule. You are *not required to respond to others' work* unless you choose to do so:
 - #1 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 grade**
 - #2 Can Christians and Muslims live together in peace? On what basis? **10% of grade**
 - #3 Would you describe yourself as pluralist, exclusivist or inclusivist? (Newbiggin, chap.14). How will this affect your ministry? **10% of grade**
7. Three quizzes (non-cumulative) on learning materials and geography maps. Dates of quizzes are listed in the online course schedule. 10% each. **Total of 30% of grade**
8. Personal Interfaith Hospitality Practice. Based on your interaction with the learning materials and experiences this semester, what steps will you take to practice Christian hospitality to people of other faiths or no faith? Post your writeup in the appropriate online forum by the deadline given in the course schedule using the rubric provided online. This assignment is to be included in your academic portfolio as one sample of meeting the academic learning outcome of your degree program. **10% of grade**

Grading:

Weight of assignments will be as follows:

Online participation	10% of total grade
Report on worship visits	20% of total grade
Reflection papers	30% of total grade
Quizzes	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.

Instructor's Responsibilities:

1. The instructor will design the course and learning modules in such a way that participants have every opportunity to achieve the learning objectives.

2. The instructor will provide responses in a timely manner to participant questions as appropriate in order to clarify important ideas and concepts.
3. The instructor will provide updated information on relevant resources for the various topics of interest.

Notes:

1. The instructor reserves the right to modify the course to best accommodate the learning needs of the class.
2. For any questions or concerns about Canvas please open a helpdesk ticket online.
3. Use proper online “netiquette” when posting online. Remember there are people on the other end of your communication. Use your best academic writing skills and avoid sarcasm, emoticons, abbreviations or writing in CAPS. Use inclusive language.
4. NPTS encourages all students to follow the Statement of Inclusive Language from the Board of Publication Policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church which states, “We are committed to being inclusive in language and imagery in an effort to eliminate prejudice, whether gender, racial, ethnic, national, religious, denominational, cultural, or physical. This way of proceeding in no manner seeks to deny personal identity; rather, it guards against any use of word or phrase that tends to exclude people.” Consider how you can best incorporate inclusive language into all of your communication (written and oral) during the course particularly in your references to God and to humanity.
5. **Harassment Policy and Title IX:** Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-6222) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5601) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students, and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student’s safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. Please refer to North Park’s Safe Community site (<http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community>) for contact information and further details.
6. **Academic Accommodation:** 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 at <https://www.northpark.edu/campus-life-and-services/student-success-and-wellness/disability-resources/>.
7. **Academic Integrity:** NPTS promotes a commitment to integrity in all areas of life. In the case of breaches of academic honesty such as plagiarism or cheating on examinations, the matter will be reported to the Dean of Faculty. Students should be advised that normally in cases of academic dishonesty or plagiarism the penalty can range from receiving a failing grade for the assignment to expulsion from the Seminary. For the full policy, please see the seminary academic catalog.