

TH550: WORLD RELIGIONS IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE (4 units).
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DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this course is twofold. First it will provide an overview of the world's major religions—Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Sikhism—focusing on their emergence and history, core beliefs and practices, religious texts and interpretations, as well as contemporary influence and expressions. Second, this course introduces various approaches on how Christianity relates to other religions and religious pluralisms, technically known as the “theology of religions.” We will critically discuss Catholic and Protestant proposals and responses and attempt an outline of Evangelical approach. Case studies will be conducted regarding Islam-, Hindu-, Buddhist-, and Sikh-Christian encounters.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By completing this course, the student will (1) gain a workable knowledge of selected world religions focusing on origins, core beliefs, and practices; (2) develop skills in learning how to empathetically understand the religious and spiritual attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, decisions, and practices of the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Sikhs in their own contexts; (3) become sensitive and discerning both concerning similarities and differences among religious beliefs and identities as well as various interreligious approaches and proposals; (4) learn some basics about how to relate to other religions and representatives of religions as well as facilitate dialogue from a Christian perspective.

COURSE FORMAT: The class will be conducted on the Internet using a 10-week lesson program aligned with Fuller's academic calendar. Each week, students and the instructor will interact with the material and each other through journaling, threaded discussions, presentations, and web-based research. Lectures for each lesson will be available online.

REQUIRED READING:

World Religions:

- Course Reader: “World Religions” (available at FTS bookstore).
- Ludwig, T. *The Sacred Paths*. 4th ed. Prentice Hall, 2005 (selected pp.).
- Original texts: Reading of your choice (50 pp. min.), from, e.g., Hindu *Vedas* or *Upanishads*, Buddhist *Dhammapada* or *Heart Sutra* (*Prajna Paramita*) or the Muslim *Quran* (all available online).

Choose one:

- Braswell, G.W., Jr. *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*. Broadman & Holman, 1996.
- Maquire, J. *Essential Buddhism. A Complete Guide to Beliefs and Practices*. Pocket Books, 2001.
- Embree, Ainslie T. *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Vol. 1. Columbia University Press, 1988

Theology of Religions and Interfaith Encounter:

- Kärkkäinen, V.-M. *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*. InterVarsity Press, 2003 (selected pp.).
- Knitter, P. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. Orbis, 2002.

Choose one (students may also suggest a title of their own choice to be approved by instructors):

- Brockington, J.L. *Hinduism and Christianity*. St. Martin's Press, 1992 (selected pp.).
- *Buddhist-Christian Studies* journal: find at least five articles of your choice.
- *Christian Witness to Hindus: Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization; Mini-Consultation on Reaching Hindus*, Pattaya, Thailand, 16–27 June 1980 (<http://www.lausanne.org>); AND Sheth, Noel. “Hindu Avatara and Christian Incarnation,” *Philosophy of East & West* 52/1 (2002): 98-125.
- Gross, R.M. & Muck, T.C. *Buddhists Talk about Jesus, Christians Talk about the Buddha*. Continuum, 2003.
- Leukel-Schmidt, P. *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue*. SCM, 2005.
- Leirvik, O. *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*. Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1999.
- Nazir Ali, Michael. *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter*. 1st rpt. Regnum Books, 1991.

RECOMMENDED READING on specific topics provided in course syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly threaded discussions (20%) and journaling (10%)
2. Required reading of 1,200 pages and critical reading responses (20%)
3. Reading from original sources (50 pp.) and a 2-page reflective paper (10%)
4. Visit to a religious site and reflective report, 2-3 pages (10%)
5. Final research paper of 8-10 pages on a topic of your choice to be approved by instructors (30%).

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Meets the World Religions (WREL) requirement in cultural literacy in MA programs; Ministry Focus Elective in MA in Global Leadership program.

FINAL EXAMINATION: None.

Updated July, 2008

This ECD is a reliable guide to the course design but is subject to modification.