

MR543: CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN THE HINDU WORLD (4 units)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course seeks to provide an overview of (1) the Hindu world, (2) Hinduism's globalization, (3) its relationship to Christianity in the Indian subcontinent, (4) Christian evangelization attempts in the past, (5) various contextual questions arising, and (6) proposals for finding a new way forward. Lectures and readings are designed to identify significant theological and social issues and challenges in planning Hindu evangelization strategies. Exposure to the Hindu missionary effort and to indigenous religious communication methodologies is encouraged with a view to finding contextual approaches for articulating the Christian message in the Hindu/South Asian context.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: At the conclusion of this course students will be:

- Familiar with common Hindu beliefs and practices
- Aware of Hinduism's global spread
- Informed regarding current tensions in the Hindu world
- Able to identify critical issues in the Christian dialogue with Hinduism
- Aware of significant missionary approaches among Hindus
- Able to discern appropriate methodologies for Christian witness among Hindus
- Gaining a love for Hindus

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 examining key themes and issues through journaling, threaded discussions, and web-based research.

REQUIRED READING:

- Alphonse, Martin. *The Gospel for the Hindus*. Chennai, India: Mission Educational Books, 2001.
- Bhaskarananda, Swami. *The Essentials of Hinduism*. Chennai, India: Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Kalapati, Joshua. *Dr. Radhakrishnan and Christianity: An Introduction to Hindu-Christian Apologetics*. Delhi, India: ISPCK, 2002.
- Kinsley, David. *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidas, 1989.
- Mathew, C. V. *The Saffron Mission*. Delhi, India: ISPCK, 1999.
- Sharma, Bal Krishna. *The Origin of Caste System in Hinduism and Its Relevance in the Present Context*. Delhi: ISPCK, 1999.
- Tathagatananda, Swami. *Journey of the Upanishads to the West*. Kolkata, India: Advaita Ashrama, 2002.

RECOMMENDED READING: A list of additional readings suitable to various students' contexts will be available from the instructor. Additional readings will be provided in an online course reader.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Weekly threaded discussions, journaling, web research.
2. In lieu of a final exam, short essays (500-700 words) will be written on each of the following topics:
 - (a) Based on your reading of Bal Krishna Sharma, *Origins of Caste*, write an essay on "Caste as a Beneficent Social Institute" vs. "Caste as a Social Evil."
 - (b) Based on your reading of C. V. Mathew, *The Saffron Mission*, write an essay evaluating the thesis that "Hinduism is the most ancient religion."
 - (c) Based on your reading of Martin Alphonse, *The Gospel for the Hindus*, write an essay evaluating the pros and cons of the "Jesus as guru" approach.
3. Write a final paper (1000-1250 words) on Swami Tathagatananda, *Journey of the Upanishads to the West*:
 - (a) Content: a Christian response to the book
 - (b) Format: a critical review toward possible publication
4. For Th.M. and Ph.D. students:
 - (a) Write a 1000-word critical review of *Dr. Radhakrishnan & Christianity*, by Joshua Kalapati
 - (b) Read two additional books and write a 500-word summary of each.

PREREQUISITES: None

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Elective

FINAL EXAM: None

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