

**ST523: THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY (4 units).**

**Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Professor of Systematic Theology.**

---

**DESCRIPTION:**

Technically known as "theology of religions," this course introduces the student to various approaches to how Christianity relates to other religions and religious pluralisms. Catholic and Protestant, including Evangelical, responses will be critically discussed. Studying theology of religions entails some knowledge of living faiths; therefore, through reading and case-studies, issues related to Islam-, Hindu-, and Buddhist - Christian encounter will also be studied.

**RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:** The course objectives are to:

- Understand that plurality of religions and an ideology of pluralism as a challenge to Christian theology and mission in the new millennium.
- Gain basic knowledge of and perspectives on the ways Christian theology in general and Evangelical theology in particular have responded to the challenge of pluralism
- Begin to study other religions from the viewpoint of Christian Theology.
- Demonstrate awareness that religious plurality is a core issue for practitioners and academicians in theological and missiological education.

**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, and web-based research. Lectures for each lesson will be available online.

**REQUIRED READING:**

- Kärkkäinen, V.-M. *An Introduction to Theology of Religions*. InterVarsity, 2003 (relevant sections).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Trinity and Religious Pluralism*. Ashgate, 2004.
- Knitter, P. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. Orbis, 2002.
- McDermott, G. R. *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* InterVarsity Press, 2001
- Netland, H. *Encountering Religious Pluralism*. InterVarsity Press, 2001 (relevant sections).
- Tennett, T. C. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*. Baker, 2002.

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

A scholarly introduction to a living faith of student's choice.

- Chapman, C. *The Cross & Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam*. InterVarsity, 2004
- Corduan, W. *Tapestry of Faiths: The Common Threads between Christianity & World Religions*. InterVarsity Press, 2002
- Imbach, J. *Three Faces of Jesus: How Jews, Christians and Muslims See Him*. Templegate, 1993.
- Kaplan, S. *Different Paths, Different Summits: A Model for Religious Pluralism*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.
- Kung, H. *Christianity and World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism*. Orbis, 1993.
- Mortensen, V., ed. *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*. Eerdmans, 2003.
- Parry, R. & C. Partridge, eds. *Universal Salvation: The Current Debate*. Eerdmans, 2004.
- Ramachandra, V. *Faiths in Conflict: Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*. IVP, 2000.
- Serretti, M., ed. *The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ: In Dialogue with the Religions*. Eerdmans, 2004.
- Summer, G. *The First and the Last: The Claims of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions*. Eerdmans, 2004.
- Tiessen, Terrance L. *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions*. InterVarsity Press, 2004.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Weekly threaded discussions (25%) and journaling. (10%)
2. 1,200 pages of required reading.
3. Reading responses: 15 pages (15%).
4. A research paper: 10 pages (40%).
5. Student presentations in the class (10%).

**PREREQUISITES:** None.

**RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM:** Meets the requirement in Globalization (GLBL) for M.A. degrees, elective in MAGL.

**FINAL EXAMINATION:** None.