

Updated January 4, 2010

BCM 314 – Introduction to World Religions
Winter/Spring Term 2010

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Instructor: Paul Borthwick

Phone (before 10:00 PM please): 781-862-9499 (h); 617-513-7406 (m)

Email: pborthwick@rcn.com or Paul.Borthwick@gordon.edu

Website: www.borthwicks.org

Facebook: yes – both personally and “Team Borthwick”

Room: Jenks 226

For additional copies of this syllabus or the Borthwick Travel Schedule, check out our web site. You can also contact me from that site.

DESCRIPTION: Global understanding requires knowledge of the beliefs and worldviews that shape the people and nations of our planet. With over 1 billion adherents under the umbrella of Islam, nearly 1 billion influenced by Hinduism and a karmic world view, and another billion influenced by a Confucian-Buddhist-Taoist world view, a student who is preparing to live responsibly in the modern inter-connected world needs a foundational understanding of what others believe. This class provides an overview of the major world religions and the accompanying worldviews of the followers of these religions.

OBJECTIVE: Practicing the values of humility, respect, inquiry, and engaged dialogue, students will compare other world religions with Christian faith in an effort to help us see our similarities and discern our differences.

The purpose of the course is to enable students to have a basic understanding of each of the primary world religious systems in our world and an in-depth understanding of at least one of these systems. Students will explore foundational religious beliefs, the historical facts that have shaped these beliefs, and the religious system’s understanding of those outside of their beliefs.

The intent of the course is to help students appreciate the beliefs of others, see how these beliefs translate into political, social, and cultural values, and comprehend the challenges of presenting the Christian Gospel to adherents of other religions.

PRIMARY TEXTS:

- Corduan, Winfried, *Neighboring Faiths* (InterVarsity Press, 1998).
- Muck, Terry & Miriam Adeney. *Christianity Encounters World Religions* (Baker 2009)

REFLECTION PAPER TEXTS:

- Fernando, Ajith, *Speaking the Truth in Love* (Barbour Publishers, 2001)
- Ridenour, Fritz, *So What's the Difference?* (Gospel Light, 2001).
- Smart, Ninian, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (Prentice Hall, 2000)

OPTIONAL (but helpful): Tennent, Timothy, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* (Baker, 2002).

REQUIREMENTS: (Students with Disabilities, please see a statement specifically related to Academic Support in the catalog)

- Final exam (objective) 15%
- Mid-term exam (objective) 10%
- Reflection Paper #1 15%
- Reflection Paper #2 15%
- Group Research Paper 20%
- Group Research Presentation 15%
- Attendance/Participation 10%

Exams: Both the Mid-term (***March 2nd***) and the Final (***April 27th***) will be objective exams incorporating multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions based on both in-class presentations and the assigned readings. Both exams will cover material covered up to that point (i.e., Final is cumulative).

Group Research Papers/Presentations: at the start of the semester, students will choose groups of 5-6 & each of these groups will work together on a research paper and an in-class presentation of ***no more than 20 minutes*** on "Addressing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to <the religious group chosen or assigned>." Because these groups often cover religious groups we cover in class/ readings, the most important aspect of the paper and presentation will be:

- Identifying the specific areas (or entry points) where the Gospel's message might be most effective.
- Ability to find the "redemptive analogies" in the religion – for example using the primary text(s) of the religion being addressed as a bridge to the Gospel
- Creativity in the way you present your material to the class.

YOUR ARE ENCOURAGED ADDRESS MORE SPECIFIC TOPICS – BUT THE TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY 2/16/10.

Group Papers are due at the start of class on April 27th at 6:00 PM

Attendance & Class Participation: ability to interact with assigned readings as well as ask questions will contribute to a students' grade.

Reflection Papers: students will do three reflection papers on various readings. Each paper should be 2-3 pages (typed, double-spaced, font of 12).

- **Paper #1:** reflection on one of these two options:
 - The articles handed out in class on the subject “Do Jews, Christians, and Moslems All Worship the Same God?” **OR**
 - *Speaking the Truth in Love* by Ajith Fernando
 - **DUE: February 16th, 2010**
- **Paper #2:** review and reflection on one of these two options:
 - Ridenour’s book, *So What’s the Difference?*
 - Ninian Smart’s book, *Worldviews*.
 - **DUE: March 30th, 2010**

CLASS SCHEDULE/ASSIGNMENTS

(Topics, assignments may change throughout the semester at the discretion of the professor.)

January 19: Introductory Class:

- Review of syllabus & texts
- Introduction of professor.
- Introductory Quiz
- Foundational Christian Attitudes towards Adherents of Other Religions
- “Seven Key Questions”
- Global Overview: Who? – Where? – How many?

Read for January 26:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*: Chapters 1 (also Ch. 10)
- Muck & Adeney, Part 1
- Research: what is “an engaged exclusivist?”

January 26: Understanding Foundations

- Do we really have a “Story to Tell to the Nations?”
- Revelation
- Common Threads in East Asia Religions
- Confucian Influence in East Asian Religions
- Hinduism: Introduction

Read for February 2 & 9:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 7
- Muck & Adeney, Part 1
- Visit the “Karma to Grace” web site (www.karma2grace.org) and read at least three of the articles there.
- “A Hindu’s Quest for the Holy” by Krister Sairsingh

February 2 & 9: Hinduism

- Make sure to ask for the differences between Avatars and the Incarnation
- Muck & Adeney, Part 1

Due for February 16: Small groups established with topics (as well as a 2nd (alternate) choice; submit topic for approval.

Due for February 16: Paper #1: reflection on one of these two options:

- The articles handed out in class on the subject “*Do Jews, Christians, and Moslems all worship the same God?*”

OR

- *Speaking the Truth in Love* by Ajith Fernando

Read for February 16 & 23 and March 16:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 8
- Muck & Adeney, Part 2 (Chapters 4-15)

February 16 and 23: Buddhism

For March 2:: Prepare for Mid-Term:

- MID-TERM REVIEW WILL BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD

March 2: Mid-Term

Read for March 16:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 8, 10, 11
- Muck & Adeney, Part 2 (Chapters 4-15)

March 9: No class. Spring Break (Borthwick teaching in Sri Lanka)

March 17: Buddhism 3 and Shintoism

The Unique Challenge of Japan

- Zen Buddhism
- Amita/Pureland Buddhism
- Shintoism
- Soka Gakkai

Read for March 23, March 30, and April 6:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 3

- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class or on Blackboard
- Review Christian-Muslim similarities.

March 24: Islam, Part 1

- Historical foundations
- Pillars of Islam

Class presentations 1

Read for March 30 and April 6:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 3
- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class or on Blackboard
- Muck & Adeney, Part 3 (chapters 16-24)

Due for March 30: Reflection paper #2: review and reflection on one of these two options:

- Ridenour’s book, *So What’s the Difference?*

OR

- Ninian Smart’s book, *Worldviews*

March 30: Islam Part 2

- Islam today
- Shiites, Sunnis, Sufis and more
- “Folk” Islam
- ***Reflection paper #2 DUE***

Class Presentations 2

Read for April 6:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 3
- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class
- Muck & Adeney, Part 3 (chapters 16-24)

April 6: Islam Part 3

- The Way Moslems view the Koran
- Missiological Issues with Hinduism and Islam

Class Presentations 3

Read for April 13:

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapters 4, 5, 6

April 13: Islam Part 4 (including Islam in America)

- Do all monotheists worship the same God?
- Missionary successes & failures with Islam
- New Islamic Forms in America
- Zoroastrianism & more

Class Presentations 4**Read for April 20:**

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapters 2 and 9

April 20: Religions of India:

- Jainism
- Sikhism

Catholics and Orthodox – our nearest religious “neighbors”

- Understanding and responding to Roman Catholicism
- Understanding and responding to Eastern Orthodoxy (and its derivatives)

- Understanding & responding to another person’s worldview

Reaching out to first-generation Americans from other World Religions

For April 28: *PAPERS DUE at the START of class*

Review for Final Exam April 28th in Class (FINAL EXAM REVIEW WILL BE ON BLACKBOARD)

April 28: Final Exam (in Class)