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BCM 314 – Survey of World Religions
Winter/Spring Term 2011

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Instructor: Paul Borthwick

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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).

REQUIRED WEB SITE RESOURCE: <<http://www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010>> The Third Lausanne Congress was held in Cape Town, South Africa October 16-25, 2010. More than 4,000 leaders (including your professor) gathered and many sessions were devoted to issues related to Truth, understanding World Religions, and Inter-Faith conflict. Use this web-site as you research your papers/projects as well as a resource for hearing Majority World leaders discuss Christian faith in a pluralistic world.

INTER-PERSONAL ENCOUNTER: over the course of this semester, we will have visitors to our class who live or serve in the context of other world religions. Visitors for this semester will potentially come from Burkina Faso, Chad, China, Nigeria, and elsewhere. *IN ADDITION*, for both the Global Engagement Paper and your group projects, students are encouraged to visit personally or in groups with people who are adherents of other religions – a Hindu or Buddhist temple, a Moslem Mosque, etc. in an effort to engage in educational dialogue.

GRADING & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Final Exam (objective): 20%
- Mid-Term Exam (objective): 10%
- Global Theologizing Paper: 15%
- Group Research Paper: 20%
- Group Research Presentation: 15%
- Global Engagement Paper 10%
- Attendance/Participation: 10%
- Extra Credit – possible (see professor)¹

Exams (30% of class grade): Both the Mid-term (**March 8th**) and the Final (**May 3rd**) 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).

¹ For students who are interested in improving their grade, extra credit (including extra reading, cross-cultural encounters, etc.) can improve your grade by as much as a half letter grade. Extra credit possibilities might include an extra reflection paper, developing a media presentation, or presenting a world religions project to students outside of class. See Professor Borthwick if you want to pursue this.

Group Research Papers/Presentations (35% of class grade): 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 an bridge to the Gospel
- Creativity in the way you present your material to the class.

Preparation for this research paper and presentation will follow this approximate calendar:

- **February 15th:** in-class instruction on how to research and write an effective paper (outlining, researching, composing, editing)
- **February 15th:** groups and group projects chosen
- **March 8th:** outlines due from each group on how the paper will be structured and from each group member on the structure of each writer’s section in the paper (to ensure that that everyone participates in the group project.
- **March 8th:** in-class instruction on how to present your project in class as a group (oral skills, use of technology, creativity, etc.)
- **March 22nd:** outlines returned with editing and structural suggestions.
- **March 29th:** in-class presentations begin.
- **May 3rd:** Group Papers due.

**YOUR ARE ENCOURAGED TO ADDRESS MORE SPECIFIC TOPICS –
BUT THE TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY 2/15/11.**

Global Theologizing Reflection Paper (15% of class grade): students will do a reflection paper integrating various readings related to world religions. This paper should be 4-5 pages (typed, double-spaced, font of 12).

- **OPTION 1:**
 - Read the articles handed out in class on the subject “Do Jews, Christians, and Moslems All Worship the Same God?” and *Speaking the Truth in Love* by Sri Lankan theologian Ajith Fernando.
 - Reflect in your paper the approaches that different authors take towards inter-religious dialogue.
 - Conclude by articulating your perspective on the question, “Is the Allah of Islam the same as the God of Christianity?”
 - **DUE: February 22nd, 2011**
- **OPTION #2:**
 - Read Fritz Ridenour’s book, *So What’s the Difference?*

- Read *Speaking the Truth in Love* by Sri Lankan theologian Ajith Fernando.
- Evaluate the attitudes communicated by each author towards other faiths.
- Conclude by articulating the approach you believe you should take when interacting with people of other faiths.
- **DUE: February 22, 2011**

Global Engagement Paper (10% of class grade): towards the end of the semester, students will submit a Global Engagement paper of 5-6 papers. This paper should

- Seek to integrate research, guest speakers, interpersonal encounters and more
- With the main ideas of the book by Ninian Smart entitled *Worldviews*
- Towards a conclusion of how you understand the way that “worldview” influences the way we view our own faith and the faith of others.

Attendance & Class Participation (10% of class grade): ability to interact with assigned readings as well as ask questions will contribute to a students’ grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE/ASSIGNMENTS

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

January 25: 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 February 1:

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

February 1: 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 8 & 15:

- 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 8 & 15: Hinduism

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

Due for February 15: Small groups established with topics (as well as a 2nd (alternate) choice; submit topic for approval.

Due for February 22: *Global Theologizing Paper* (see above)

Read for February 22, March 1 and 8:

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

February 22 and March 1: Buddhism

- International Guests
- Paul Borthwick teaching in India (possible phone link?)

For March 8: Prepare for Mid-Term
MID-TERM REVIEW WILL BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD

March 8: Mid-Term

Read for March 22:

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

March 15: No class. Spring Break

March 22: Buddhism 3 and Shintoism

The Unique Challenge of Japan

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

Read for March 29, April 5 and 12:

- 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 29: Islam, Part 1

- Historical foundations
- Pillars of Islam

Class presentations 1**Read for April 5 and 12:**

- 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 April 12: *Global Engagement Paper (see above)***April 5:** Islam Part 2

- Islam today
- Shiites, Sunnis, Sufis and more
- “Folk” Islam

Class Presentations 2**Read for April 12:**

- 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 12: Islam Part 3

- The Way Moslems view the Koran
- Missiological Issues with Hinduism and Islam
- ***Global Engagement Paper due***

Class Presentations 3**Read for April 19:**

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

April 19: 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 26:

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

April 26: 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 May 3: *PAPERS DUE at the START of class*

Review for Final Exam May 3rd in Class (FINAL EXAM REVIEW WILL BE ON BLACKBOARD)

May 3: Final Exam (in Class)