

Updated January 11, 2008

**MI 312 – Introduction to World Religions**  
**Winter/Spring Term 2008**

**Tuesdays:** 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

**Instructor:** Paul Borthwick

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**Room:** Jenks 226

For additional copies of this syllabus or the Borthwick Travel Schedule, check out our web site at [www.borthwicks.org](http://www.borthwicks.org)

**DESCRIPTION:** This class provides an overview of the major world religions and the accompanying worldviews of the followers of these religions. Comparing other world religions with Christian faith is designed to help us discern the differences and similarities of these belief systems with our own evangelical Christianity.

**OBJECTIVE:** 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 ***so that*** students can appreciate the beliefs of others, understand the differences and similarities with evangelical Christianity, and comprehend the challenges of presenting the Christian Gospel to adherents of other religions.

**PRIMARY TEXTS:** Corduan, Winfried, *Neighboring Faiths* (InterVarsity Press, 1998).

- Tennent, Timothy, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* (Baker, 2002).

**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)

**REQUIREMENTS:** (Students with Disabilities, please see a statement specifically related to Academic Support at the conclusion of this syllabus)

- 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 4<sup>th</sup>**) and the Final (**May 6<sup>th</sup>**) 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 5-7 & 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 2/19/08.***

***Group Papers are due at the start of class on April 29<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008**
- **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: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008**

## **CLASS SCHEDULE/ASSIGNMENTS**

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

### **January 29: Introductory Class:**

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

### **Read for February 5:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapters 1 and 10
- Tennent, Chapter 1

### **February 5: 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 12 and 19:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapter 7
- Tennent, Part 1
- Visit the “Karma to Grace” web site ([www.karma2grace.org](http://www.karma2grace.org)) and read at least three of the articles there.
- “A Hindu’s Quest for the Holy” by Krister Sairsingh
- For February 19: read in Tennent, the case study on Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (Chapter 9).

### **February 12 & 19: Hinduism**

**Due for February 19: Small groups established with topics;  
submit topic for approval.**

**Due for February 19: 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 26 & March 11:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapter 8
- Tennent, Part 2

**February 26:** Buddhism 1

**For March 4:** Prepare for Mid-Term

**March 4:** Mid-Term**Read for March 11:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapter 8, 10, 11
- Tennent, Part 2

**March 11:** Buddhism 2

The Unique Challenge of Japan

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

**Read for March 25, April 1, and April 8:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapter 3
- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class
- Tennent, Part 3

**March 18:** No class. Spring Break**March 25:** Islam, Part 1

- Historical foundations
- Pillars of Islam

***Class presentations 1*****Read for April 1 and 8:**

- Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, Chapter 3
- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class
- Tennent, Part 3

**Due for April 1: Reflection paper #2:** review and reflection on one of these two options:

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

**April 1:** Islam Part 2

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

- **Reflection paper #2 DUE**

**Read for April 8:**

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 3
- Articles on Islam – “Is Islam a Peaceful Religion?” “What is the Koran?” and others distributed in class
- Tennent, Part 3

**April 8:** Islam Part 3

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

***Class Presentations 2***

**Read for April 15:**

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

**April 15:** Islam Part 4 (including Islam in America)

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

***Class Presentations 3***

**Read for April 22 and 29:**

- Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, Chapter 2

**April 17:** Religions of India:

- Jainism
- Sikhism

Other World Religions to know about:

- Zoroastrianism
- Taoism (Daoism)
- Animism

***Class Presentations 4 (If needed)***

**For April 29: PAPERS DUE at the START of class**

**April 29:** ***PAPERS DUE at the START of class***

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

***Prepare for week of 5/6: Final Exam***

**May 6:** Final Exam (in Class)

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***Students with Disabilities***  
***(Consult Student Catalog for the Most Up To Date Version of This)***

Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should follow this procedure:

- 1) Contact Ann Seavey in the Academic Support Center (Jenks 412, x4746) to make sure documentation of your disability is on file in the Academic Support Center. (See Academic Catalog Appendix C, for documentation guidelines.)
- 2) Meet with an Academic Support Center (ASC) staff person to discuss the accommodations for which you are eligible and the procedures for obtaining them.
- 3) Obtain a Faculty Notification Form from the ASC and deliver it your professor within the first full week of the semester.
- 4) Set up a follow-up appointment to discuss your needs with your professor.

Your failure to register in time with your professor and the ASC may compromise our ability to provide the accommodations, so please follow the above procedure. Questions or disputes about accommodations should be immediately referred to the Academic Support Center.

Gordon College is committed to assisting students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, it is essential that you obtain appropriate documentation of the disability and that you understand the accommodations, appropriate to the specific disability, to which you are entitled.