Summer 2015

Instructor: Dr. Alan Myatt  
Contact Information: amyatt@gordonconwell.edu  
Class Schedule: June 22-26, 9:00am-4:00pm  
Office Hours: Meetings in person or via Skype by appointment

Course Description

Evangelical Theology and World Religions is a study of five of the world’s major religious traditions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese religions. Readings will also cover others such as Traditional and African Religions. However, class time will focus on the first five, as well as methods used by scholars for the study of World Religions. The question of the relation of the religions to Christianity will be addressed with an assessment of different approaches.

Gordon-Conwell Mission

The statements in italics describe how this course relates to each the learning outcomes GCTS faculty have identified in relation to the articles of the mission statement (http://www.gordonconwell.edu/about/Mission-and-Purpose.cfm):

Article 1: a) Demonstrate a strong understanding of both the content of the Bible and the overarching redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation. b) Demonstrate appropriate and effective use of the tools of biblical interpretation. The religions studied will be evaluated in light of biblical teaching.

Article 2: Demonstrate constructive and critical thinking about Christian ministry in light of biblical, theological, and historical scholarship in accordance with historic Christian orthodoxy. The interaction between Christianity and the religions studied will be considered historically, biblically, and theologically.

Article 3: Develop proficiencies in practical ministry that are biblically and theologically grounded, and contextually sensitive. Contextualization of Christian ministry in relation to the cultures of the religions discussed will be studied from a biblical perspective.

Article 4: Demonstrate growth in a life of biblical discipleship and intimacy with Christ, expressed in the life of the mind, interpersonal relationships, and interaction with broader society. Issues of devotion, spirituality, and social action in the various religions will be considered with their implications for Christian life and spirituality.
**Article 5:** Demonstrate engagement in the Church and society, using their spiritual gifts and redemptive leadership to promote renewal and reform. *The relation between the Church and a society marked by religious pluralism will be considered.*

**Article 6:** Articulate a coherent vision of God’s global activity and develop strategies for actively engaging in God’s redemptive work in the world. *Mission strategies for reaching peoples around the world of the various religions will be explored.*

**Relation to Curriculum**

TH/WM 659 fulfills the Missions requirement for the M.Div. and Christian thought elective for all other degrees.

**Course Objectives**

The course has various measurable objectives, related to the achieving the above learning outcomes. Upon completing this course students will:

1) *Acquire knowledge of the basics of the beliefs and practices of the religions studied* as evidenced by completion of reading and competent performance on written assignments.

2) *Be able to apply the methods of religious and theological studies in the critical analysis of various religious worldviews.* Students will demonstrate this competency through discussions and the completion of a term paper research project.

3) *Contextualize ministry strategies to specific religions.* Students will develop and demonstrate this through a field visit to a place of worship and interaction with a representative of one of the religions studied. The field project will include a reflective discussion of a contextualized approach to ministry in light of the discoveries from the field work.

4) *Relate the religions studied to the development of a philosophy of ministry that contributes to the Christian mission in church and society.* Through discussions and writing the student will demonstrate understanding of strategies for leading the church in its encounter with religious pluralism in contemporary society and in global missions.

**Course Requirements**

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend approximately 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.
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<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment (hrs)</th>
<th>Student’s actual time on task</th>
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<td>Class attendance</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Reading &amp; Forum Interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Research and Reflection</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Term Paper</td>
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**Required Textbooks and Materials**


**Recommended but not required**


Web-Enhanced Features

There will be mandatory forum discussions in Sakai on the readings. Every week some students will be assigned to begin a thread by posting a discussion starter question or statement in the Sakai forums. Each student will participate in the discussions every week by posting responses to each thread started by other students. The subject for the posts will be the readings for the week. The deadline for posts is midnight on Saturday at the end of the week.

Course Assignments

Please note that all assignments should be uploaded to Sakai in MS-Word Format, or using the reading report form provided. I do not accept hard copies or pdf files.

1. Complete the reading of all texts and report your reading on Sakai as per instructions found there. 10% of final grade

2. Participate in weekly forum discussions. This presupposes the completion of the reading for the week ahead of time. Each student will be assigned the task of creating a discussion topic or question for one of the weeks of class, and for helping to guide the discussion of that topic (Clearly there will be more than one student assigned to each week. A sign-up list will be provided on Sakai). The topic should be based on the readings for that week, but may also include elements from the news, issues in the church, missions, etc. Be creative, but remember, the aim is to increase our understanding and critical interaction with the reading. You should write a brief paragraph setting up the discussion question and topic that will be both interesting and challenging.

Students will be expected to respond to each topic with insights, questions, and critical analysis of the issues presented in the readings. Other materials may be brought into the discussion as well. The idea is to enhance your learning experience while allowing you to work together as a community in increasing your understanding and application of the course materials, especially in accomplishing course objectives 3 and 4 above. 10% of final grade.

3. Reflection paper on visit to a worship site and conversation with representative of one of the major religions studied. The paper should be limited to 10 pages. Due August 22. 30% of final grade.

4. Research paper treating a topic on one of the religions studied. This is an academic paper dealing with a contemporary issue, or theological/philosophical/missiological question raised by the religion under consideration. 15-20 pages. The topic should be approved by the professor. A grading rubric will be provided. Due August 22. Assignments 3 and 4 may
be on the same religion. 50% of final grade. Note that while assignments 3 & 4 are due at the same time, they should be submitted as two separate papers on Sakai.

5. Reading schedule for forum discussions:


**Week 4 - 6/22** – Class


**Week 12 – 8/17** - Tennent, 195-243.

The final due date for work in this course is August 22.
**Grading Scale**

Forum discussions will be graded based on the student’s forum topic and guidance of the discussion, as well as participation during the semester. Grades will not be assigned to individual posts. Instead, students will be assessed on the overall quality of their participation.

Assignments will be given a point value on a 100 point scale. Points are earned from a starting point of zero, not taken off from a starting point of 100. Final grades will be calculated according to the above percentages weighted for each assignment and letter grades will be applied with cutoffs as follows: A+ 100, A 94, A- 90, B+ 88, B 83, B- 80, C+ 78, C 73, C- 70, D+ 68, D 63, D- 60, F below 60.

**Late Work**

There will be a one point penalty per day of lateness, deducted from the final grade of each assignment for late work that is not excused.

**Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to be present for all class time. Excused absences will be considered in the case of serious circumstances that are not foreseen. Failure to attend class may result in serious additional work assignments and/or a reduction in one’s grade.

**Document Formatting and Citation Style Requirements**

Papers and assignments should be submitted on Sakai, in MS-Word format, according to Turabian or the APA style (for students in the counseling program), as discussed in IS 501. All papers should include a cover page, footnotes, and bibliography unless specifically stated otherwise by the professor.

**Course Schedule**

During the five days of class we will cover the following outline of material, allowing for one unit per day of class. As time allows we may also discuss some of the other religions that are included in the readings but not listed below (some attempt will be made to tailor the discussion to the needs and interests of the class members). Classes will consist of lecture and video, with discussion as appropriate.

Unit one – Introduction to the study of religion. Defining and studying religion – academic approaches for religious studies and missiology.

Unit Two – The Religions of India
- Hinduism
- Jainism
Buddhism

Unit Three – The Religions of China
Buddhism
Taoism
Confucianism

Unit Four – Religions of the Middle East and Africa
Judaism
Islam
African Traditional Religion

Unit Five – Pluralism and the global context. Strategies in mission, global evangelism, in a global, pluralist society.

Syllabus Addendum

For other seminary policies refer to the attached Syllabus Addendum

Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email
account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

**Extension Policy**
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work,” as noted on the seminary’s *Academic Calendar*, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

**Grades**
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted online within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Returned Work**
Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self addressed and postage-paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.

**Virtual Writing Center**
Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
• CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
• IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three pre-requisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status.
Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.