TH/WM 659 Evangelical Theology and World Religions
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte
Summer I 2012

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Class Schedule: May 7-11, 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 different forms of Christianity 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**

List course objectives, including action verbs, and how achievement of these objectives will be measured.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment (hrs)</th>
<th>Student's actual time on task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Forum Interaction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Research and Reflection</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Students will keep a record of time spent on each course-related task, and will submit a final report, as above, with their actual hours spent on each task listed in the last column of the table.

**Required Textbooks and Materials**


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 (so the first deadline is 5/19 and the last is 7/7).

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 turn in the provided reading report form, correctly filled out. Due 9am 7/8.

2. Participate in weekly forum discussions. This presupposes the completion of the reading for the week ahead of time. 20% 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. A grading rubric will be posted in Sakai. Due 9am 6/17. 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 9am 7/8. Assignments 3 and 4 may be on the same religion. 50% of final grade.

5. Reading schedule for forum discussions:


The final due date for work in this course is eight weeks after the final day of class. 9am July 8th.

Reading: Students will submit a report, not later than

Grading Scale

In order to receive an A in this course 100% of the reading must be completed, for a B 85%, for a C 70%. Points towards the final grade are not assigned for the reading. Completing the required reading will make it possible to receive the associated grade, but does not guarantee it. The actual grade will be determined by performance on the other assignments, though failure to do the required reading will reduce what might have otherwise been a higher grade.

Other 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+ 87, B 84, B- 80, C+ 77, C 74, C- 70, D+ 67, 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. Excused absences will be made up by doing additional assignments. Unexcused absences will result in a reduction in the final grade of 1 point per 3 hours missed.
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. Pluralism and the global context.

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 – Global Christianity and the world today
   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 on-line 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.