TH/WM 659: EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY & WORLD RELIGIONS
Fall Term 2016
Tuesdays, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Dr. John Jefferson Davis, Instructor

Course Description:

A study of the history, rituals, doctrines and sacred scriptures of five major religious traditions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese religions. This course is designed to equip the student to understand these world religions and to develop skills and insights for sharing the Christian message with those who practice these non-Christian faiths. The course will include lecture, discussion, video, and study of sacred texts.

Textbooks:

The following books are required:

Mascaro, The Bhagavad Gita (ISBN 0140441212)
Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught (ISBN 0802130313)
Dawood, tr., The Koran (ISBN 0140445587)
Hinnells, A New Handbook of Living Religions (ISBN 0140514805)

The following books are recommended but not required:

David Burnett, Unearthly Powers (ISBN 0840796129)
Nabeel Qureshi, Answering Jihad (ISBN 9780310531388)

Requirements:

Faithful class attendance and participation in class discussion is expected. Each student will prepare and present a 30-45 minute Teaching Project focusing on one of the religions studied in the course (see appendix, p. ); Due date: Tuesday, Dec. 6th.

Each student will complete a Site Visit & Interview assignment, which will involve a visit to a synagogue, mosque, temple, study center, or house of worship, and a 30 minute conversation with a practitioner of that religion (see appendix, p. ). Due date: Nov. 29th.

There will be a final exam, tentatively scheduled for Dec. 13th.

Evaluation:

For the final evaluation, the Teaching Project will count 100 points; the Final Exam, 90 points; and the Site Visit & Interview assignment, 10 points. A reading report is to be turned in on the day of the final exam, Dec. 13th. Faithful class attendance and completion of assigned readings will help the student in borderline grading situations.

Grade Scale:
A+ = 98-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D = 65-69; F = 0-64.

**Schedule of Topics:**

9/13:  Judaism: Texts, history, teachings, denominations

9/20:  Judaism: Christian anti-semitism; Zionism; Arab-Israeli conflict

9/27:  Islam: history, teachings

10/4:  Islam: the Quran

10/18: Hinduism: history, teachings

10/25: Hinduism: Bhagavad Gita

11/1:  Buddhism: history, teachings

11/22: Buddhism: Zen; Eastern religions come to America

11/29: Chinese religions and New Age religions

12/6:  Final Review and Summary; Religious Pluralism

12/13: Final Exam

(NOTE: The above schedule may vary with the dynamics of class discussion).
### Reading Assignments:

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<td>9/13:</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Hinnells, “Judaism”; handouts</td>
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<td>9/20:</td>
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<td>10/4:</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Koran, 246-435; handouts</td>
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<td>10/25:</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Gita, 43-86</td>
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<td>11/1:</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Hinnells, “Buddhism”; Rahula, 1-66</td>
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<td>11/22:</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Rahula, 67-138</td>
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### Class Attendance:

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Total # classes attended:

Name: __________________ Box#: __________ email: __________________________
Appendix 1: Teaching Project:

Your assignment is to make a 30-45 minute presentation on one of the major religions studied in the course (Judaism; Islam; Hinduism; Buddhism). You are to adapt and apply the textbook and classroom content to an audience and context of your choosing. You may present to friends or family members; a youth group or church school class; a Bible study, campus ministry, or other small group. The group to which you present must consist of at least two persons; you may also make your presentation to a remote audience via Skype, if your circumstances so indicate. You should expect to spend no less that 12-15 hours on this project, including both preparation and delivery.

The due date for the teaching project is Tuesday Dec. 6th. Your project report is to consist of three parts:

1. Describe the time, place, context, and audience of your presentation. State the learning objectives ["What"/"So What?"] that you hoped to achieve;

2. Describe the amount of time you spent in preparation; list the sources that you used; Include an outline of your presentation, including references to any visual aids, exercises, or media. Submit Powerpoint slides, if used, as part of your report.

3. Describe the feedback from your audience on your presentation. Encourage them to be frank and honest in their responses – both what they liked, and areas that needed improvement. In light of your experience, and the feedback given, what, if anything, would you have done differently?

In assigning a grade to the teaching project, the instructor will take into account: the amount of time invested; the quality and range of sources used; the quality and clarity of the outline and content; the degree of creativity and pedagogical effectiveness for the audience that was chosen.

Appendix 2: Sample Focused Topics for Teaching Project:
It is recommended that the student present an introduction or overview of one of the major religions; however, a specialized topic such as the following may be chosen:
Scripture and Tradition in Judaism
Ordination of Women in Modern Judaism
Issues in Christian-Jewish Dialogue
Christian Anti-Semitism
Christian Zionism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict
Modern State of Israel and Biblical Prophecy
Rabbinic Judaism and Christian Biblical Interpretation
Presenting the Gospel in a Jewish Context
Jesus in the Quran
Explaining the Trinity to a Muslim
Islamic Concept of Jihad
The Role of Women in Islamic Society
Concepts of God in Hinduism
Concepts of Salvation in Hinduism
The Caste System in Hindu Tradition
Role of Women in Hinduism
The Search for the Historical Buddha
Historical Development of Zen
Buddhist Concept of Nirvana
Eastern Techniques of Meditation
Eastern Religions and the "New Age" spiritualities
Presenting the Gospel in an Eastern/New Age Context

**Appendix 3: Site Visit & Interview Assignment:**

For this assignment, you are to do a site visit related to one of the religions studied in the course (e.g., a synagogue, mosque, temple, house of worship, or meditation or study center). If possible, observe the worship service, prayer or meditation time, or teaching sessions of the religion in question. You are then to have a 30 minute conversation with a person who is a practitioner of that religion. The questions you
may pose may include, but are not limited to the following: “Can you share with me some of your personal story? What are some of the important dimensions of your own understanding of (religious tradition)? What practices or beliefs are most important to you? Are there any common misunderstandings of your faith that “outsiders” may have? I am a Christian; do you have any questions about my religion?”

Some possible sites to visit within an hour of the seminary would include: Chabad Lubavitch of Northshore (Swampscott); Temple Bnai Abraham (Beverly); North Shore Islamic Center (Lynn); Cambridge Insight Meditation Center (Cambridge); Center for Mindfulness & Insight Meditation (Wenham); Sri Chinmaya Maruti Temple (Andover).

Report on your site visit and interview by supplying the following information:

Person interviewed & their background:

Place, time, and circumstance of interview:

What were some of the major points that the person interviewed emphasized in explaining their own faith and religious practices?

What insights, if any, did you gain about this religion on the basis of your visit and the interview? About how to share Christian faith with a person of this faith?

Name: _____________________________________ email:_________________

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