

CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

EM 423-3/TH 423-3, Spring Term 2008
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. – 8:50 p.m.
Schlegel Hall 122

Instructor:

Frances S. Adeney (Nelson Hall 114; ext. 370; fadeney@lpts.edu)

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

Course Description: This course provides an overview of world religions inviting Christian responses to people of other faiths. Questions about the meaning of religion in the lives of adherents, historical and sociological issues of religion in society, and contemporary realities of pluralism and resulting tensions among religions will be addressed. A focus on practices and attitudes that foster understanding between Christians and people from other traditions will be emphasized.

Purpose and Objectives:

Students will

- learn to articulate the historical roots of beliefs and practices of world religions and the differences among them
- demonstrate an ability to discuss theological/philosophical issues among religions from Christian perspectives and appreciate those issues from perspectives of other religions
- become familiar with the roles of religion in society and the conflicts of interest arising from the plurality of religions in a globalized world
- develop practices that foster mutually beneficial interactions with people of other religions

Topics:

I: Religion: Foundations and Definitions

Sociological and Historical Bases of Religion: Definitions, origins, and societal roles, Power and dangers of religion.

Philosophical and Theological Bases of Religion: Worldviews: monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, scientific positivism.

II: Religions of the World

Native American Religions, African Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Chinese Religions, Japanese Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'i

Religions in Context: Differences, blendings, historical shifts among world religions, e.g. post-colonialism, roles of women, views of Scripture

III: Christianity and World Religions

Interactions Between Christianity and World Religions: Theologies of religion,

views of Christianity from non-Christian perspectives
Globalization and religion
Practices that nurture beneficial interaction between Christians and people of other religions

Requirements and Evaluation:

1. Attendance, thorough reading and active discussion of texts and topics. Short assignments and quizzes will be given to test comprehension and critical appropriation of material. (20%)
2. Two field outings to places of worship and/or religious services of other religions, e.g. Hindu temple, Mosque, Synagogue, Buddhist Center, Native American Sweat Lodge or other. A 1500 word, typed, double-spaced report for each outing. An oral presentation of your experience highlighting practices that would foster interaction between Christians and this community of faith. (40%)
3. Two examinations testing comprehension of course content and requiring critical reflection on issues and presented in the course. (40%)

Required Texts:

Griffiths, Paul J. *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990. ISBN 0-88344-661-8

Gross, Rita M. and Terry C. Muck. *Christians Talk about Buddhist Meditation: Buddhists Talk about Christian Prayer*. NY: Continuum, 2003. ISBN 0-8264-1439-7

Hopfe, Lewis M. and Mark R. Woodward. *Religions of the World*, Seventh Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Muck, Terry. *How to Study Religion: A Beginning Guide to Method*. Wilmore, KY: Better Publications, Wood Hill Books, 2005.

O'Neill, Maura. *Mending a Torn World: Women in Interreligious Dialogue*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.