

HR-8401 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Spring 2010

Meets : Online

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SYLLABUS (FINAL – December 2010)

A religion without the element of mystery would not be a religion at all. ~Edwin Lewis

This is a little prayer dedicated to the separation of church and state. I guess if they are going to force those kids to pray in schools they might as well have a nice prayer like this: Our Father who art in heaven, and to the republic for which it stands, thy kingdom come, one nation indivisible as in heaven, give us this day as we forgive those who so proudly we hail. Crown thy good into temptation but deliver us from the twilight's last gleaming. Amen and Awomen. ~George Carlin

Introduction:

This course will examine the main global religious traditions from a thematic perspective. Acknowledging that a course that covers many religions cannot be comprehensive, we will also look at the assumptions underlying religious studies as a discipline. Students will engage in individual readings, online workshops and forums, experiential learning and theological reflection together as an online community. At the end of the course, students should be able to examine the gifts and challenges posed by religious traditions in a globalizing world, as well as undertake power analysis to deepen analysis of faith traditions and address justice issues.

Because of the online format of the course, it is imperative that students interact both with the instructor and with each other. Students are expected to spend several hours a week engaging course materials and activities in addition to the reading. Given that the participation requirement of the course is heavy, students will not be required to write a major research paper unless it will serve their degree requirements (- this can be negotiated with the instructor).

Student Learning Outcomes:

The learning outcomes for this course will include:

- Ability to engage in thoughtful, respectful and critical dialogue regarding the world's global religious traditions
- Building a basis of knowledge that will serve future ministry and/or research needs
- Honing of research and discernment skills including methodological bases for representation and interpretation of global religious traditions

Competencies for ministry and leadership will meet the following Starr King threshold areas of study:

- ❖ Life in Religious Community and Interfaith Engagement
- ❖ Thea/ology in Culture and Context
- ❖ History of Dissenting Traditions and the Thea/ological Quest
- ❖ Sacred Text and Interpretation

Course Evaluation:

As is the general methodology at Starr King School for the Ministry, narrative comments will be given as the primary form of evaluation. Students in M.A. programs will also be given letter grades. Students in other degree programs may seek special permission to receive letter grades if the reason is consistent with Starr King's educational philosophy.

The weighting of course evaluation breakdown will be as follows:

Introductory Essay	5%
Evidence of Participation	15%
Engaging the Traditions	15%
Theological Reflections	30%
Traditions Online Workshop	15%
Book Review	15%
Bibliography Contribution	5%

Introductory Essay (Max. 10 pages)

By the end of the first week of class, students are expected to submit to the instructor an 'introductory essay.' *Essays should be limited to no more than 10 pages, double space, 12pt font.* The essay will allow you to introduce yourself to me, as well as give you the opportunity to reflect on what drew you to this course, what you hope to learn, and any expectations or hesitations you might hold regarding course content or assignments. There will be no 'evaluation' of the content of this essay, although I may return it to you with comments; the completion of the exercise itself is the only requirement in terms of final course evaluation.

Essays should be submitted no later than 11:55pm, Pacific Time, the Thursday evening of the first week of classes (February 3, 2011).

Evidence of Participation

Since this is an online course, students are required to rely almost entirely on online forums and workshops for interaction with each other about the course and its contents. Weekly theological reflections and other interactive tools will be used to assess how students are engaging with the reading materials as well as experiential assignments. ***All Online Participation (Forums, Assignments, "choices" etc.) due by Thursday, 11:55 Pacific Standard Time unless otherwise noted.***

All online interaction is to be held within the course *Moodle* site. If a student is having trouble accessing any part of moodle, s/he should notify the instructor or the GTU's moodle support through the library IMMEDIATELY.

Engaging the Traditions

Students will be required to make three 'field trips' to local religious communities to either 1) meet with community leadership to learn about the faith life of the community; or 2) attend a worship/prayer service/meeting. A general forum will be created to allow students to discuss with each other their common and different experiences through exposure to living communities of faith.

Theological Reflections (500 words, max / weekly)

Each week students are required to submit a short theological reflection on the readings and activities for the week. These reflections are not to be summaries of the readings – they should primarily focus on critical theological engagement with the texts you are reading and the experiences you are having. The reflections will be shared in an online forum but students will not be able to respond to each other so as to create a safe space for personal reflection and opinion. *Due Every Thursday (with the exception of Reading Week) by Thursday, 11:55pm Pacific Standard Time*

Traditions Online Workshop

Each student will choose one global religious tradition and work with classmates in an online workshop through Moodle. Students will be expected to create online resources or activities that highlight the religious tradition they choose – creativity here is highly encouraged! Students will also be given the opportunity in this area of the course to give narrative feedback about the level of engagement of their peers in the workshop preparation.

ALL ONLINE WORKSHOPS will take place WEEK 7 of class – **March 14-18**

Book Review (1,000 words max.)

Students should choose one title from the working bibliography and do a short, scholarly review of the book they choose. Only one student may choose each title.

A review is a brief introduction to a book, which tells the reader something about the book's topic and approach. It should also discuss how useful, the book might be and to whom. A review that fulfills this purpose will involve praise, criticism, or both.

Bibliography Contribution

The majority (although not all) of students in this course will be preparing for some form of ministry in the Unitarian/Universalist tradition. In order to facilitate eventual leadership (whether at the congregational level or elsewhere) and academic research, students will be expected to add to the working bibliography as well as provide short annotations in the wikis posted to weeks 9-

15 that will help you to collaborate with your classmates and share information and sources that will shape your studies and your ministry.

Required Texts:

Gwynne, Paul. *World Religions in Practice: A Comparative Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009)
(Suggested Retail Price: \$47.95 ISBN-10 1405167033; ISBN-13 978-1405167031)

Hick, John. *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*. 2nd Edition. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004)
(Suggested Retail Price: \$32.50 ISBN-10 0300106688; ISBN-13 978-0300106688)

Markham, Ian S. and Christy Lohr, eds.. *A World Religions Reader* (3rd Edition). (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008)
(Suggested Retail Price: \$47.95 ISBN-10 1405167033; ISBN-13 978-1405167031)

Masuzawa, Tomoko. *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)
(Suggested Retail Price: \$23.00 ISBN-10 0226509893; ISBN-13 978-0226509891)

Students should investigate multiple online booksellers to find the most competitive prices for texts. Some helpful sights are:

www.amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

www.abebooks.com

www.bookfinder.com

www.alibris.com

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 “RELIGION AS A CATEGORY”

January 31 – February 4, 2011

- Read:** Masuzawa Ch’s 1 & 2
- Read Online:** Ingenthron, Elizabeth Tauba. *Framework and Construction of Courses on “Value Systems and Faith Traditions” in United States Secondary and Higher Education* (Unpublished paper – posted on Moodle with permission of the author)
- Watch:** “Map of Global Religions” and “Religions Family Tree” videos - links on Moodle
- Read online:** Lecture on “Religion as a category” – posted on Moodle on the first day of instruction – January 31, 2011
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- ASSIGNMENT DUE:** Complete introductory essay by **Thursday, January 3, 11:55pm**

WEEK 2 "WHY RELIGION MATTERS"

February 7 – 11, 2011

- Read:** Masuzawa Ch's 3, 4, 5
- Watch:** "Houston Smith" Lecture Video (1 hr. 28 mins) – link on Moodle
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on "Reflection" forum.
- Choose:** Choose a title for book to review for book review assignment (There is a list of books to choose from, or students may email/message the instructor to ask permission to review a book not on the list)
- Choose:** Choose one of the 5 "global religions" about which you'd like to collaborate with classmates on your "Online Workshop" Project. Students may coordinate and offer to cover a religious tradition not listed here. Proposals for alternatives should have at least two students coordinating and will need approval from the instructor.

WEEK 3 "TURNING TO THE TEXT"

February 14 – 18, 2011

- Read:** Masuzawa Ch's 6 & 7
- Read Online:** Joerg Rieger – Excerpt from *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Posted on Moodle)
- Read Online:** Lecture on The Turn to the Text & the Politics of Knowledge and History
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on "Reflection" forum.

WEEK 4 "INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE"

February 21 – 25, 2011

- Read:** Masuzawa Ch's 8 & 9
- Watch:** Short video "History of the Parliament of World Religions – posted on Moodle
- Watch:** Short video "Swami Vivekananda Chicago Speech, 1893 - Why we disagree"
- Watch:** 4 part series of videos "Parliament of World Religions, 1893 – Swami Vivekananda" (Parts 1-4)
- Watch:** Short video "Peace Summit with the Dalai Lama – Interreligious Dialogue"
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on "Reflection" forum.

WEEK 5 "THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION"

February 28 – March 4, 2011

- Read:** Hick Ch's 1-4
- Read online:** Lecture by guest instructor, Dr. Matthew Haar Farris
- Watch:** Short videos "HEGEL - Religion, Spirit & History" Parts 1 & 2

- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.

WEEK 6 “THEODICY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL”

March 7 – 11, 2011

- Read:** Hick Ch’s 5-7
- Read Online:** “The Problem of Evil” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Watch:** “Bill Moyers: Martha Nussbaum & The Fragility of Goodness” Parts 1-3
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.

WEEK 7 “ONLINE WORKSHOPS”

March 14 – 18, 2011

- ASSIGNMENT DUE:** *This week we will begin our engagement of the different global religious traditions through the “online workshops” that student groups have been working on for the first 6 weeks of class.*

WEEK 8 **READING WEEK – NO CLASS**

Optional Reading: Hick Chapters 8-13

WEEK 9 “BEYOND TIME & SPACE”

March 28 – April 1, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch’s 1 & 2
- Read:** Optional: Markham & Lohr Ch. 1
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 2&3
- Watch:** “Gospels of Stone” videos, Parts 1, 4, 5, 6
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 2 & 3 from Markham & Lohr
- ASSIGNMENT DUE:** BOOK REVIEWS DUE

WEEK 10 “LIFE & DEATH”

April 4 – 8, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch’s 4 & 5
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 4 & 5
- Read Online:** Lecture

- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 4 & 5 from Markham & Lohr

WEEK 11 “MARRIAGE & FOOD”

April 11 – 15, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch’s 6 & 7
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 6 & 7
- Optional Reading:** Dale Martin – excerpt from *Sex & the Single Saviour*
- Read Online:** Lecture – Religions on the themes of Marriage and Food
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 6 & 7 from Markham & Lohr

WEEK 12 “CLOTHING”

April 18 – 22, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch. 8
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 8 & 9
- Watch:** Short film “Hijab in Europe” (8 mins) – posted on Moodle
- Watch:** Short clip – Lutheran pastors discussing vestments – posted on Moodle
- Explore:** Ordained minister’s blog: *Beauty Tips for Ministers* – link posted on Moodle
Can be considered a bit of a joke but there is actually some interesting discussion here if you are preparing for ordained ministry.
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 8 & 9 from Markham & Lohr

WEEK 13 “DAY & TIME”

April 25 – 29, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch’s 9 & 10
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 10 & 11
- Explore:** Website: “A Variety of Calendars” – posted on Moodle
- View:** “The Christian Seasons Calendar” – celebration of the Christian year by University Hill Congregation (United Church of Canada) – link posted on Moodle
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 10 & 11 in Markham & Lohr

WEEK 14 “BUILDING & JOURNEY”

May 2 – 6, 2011

- Read:** Gwynne Ch’s 11 & 12
- Read:** Markham & Lohr Ch’s 12 & 13 (Chapter 14 Optional)
- Have Fun:** See if you can get the right answer to the quiz!
- Watch:** Selection of video clips on pilgrimage
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.
- Contribute:** Enter annotations into the wikis for chapters 12 & 13 in Markham & Lohr (Chapter 14 optional)

WEEK 15 “ETHICS”

May 8 – 12, 2011 – **LAST WEEK OF CLASS** –

- Read:** Hick Ch’s 17-20
- Respond:** Submit at least one answer to each of three question forums.
- Respond:** Submit 500 word theological reflection on “Reflection” forum.

Year End Evaluations – more info in class.