

**MNST 5110 RELIGIONS AND CULTURES**  
North Park Theological Seminary/ School of Restorative Arts  
Hi-flex Course Syllabus  
Spring 2022, 3 Seminary Credits

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How do we deal with religious and cultural differences? Through the lens of twelve major faith traditions, participants in collaborative cohorts will reflect upon the inter-relationship between religions and cultures in order to understand one's own faith position in today's pluralistic world. The course is taught through the lens of Evangelical Christianity however the emphasis is placed upon the practice of hospitality for all faith traditions. Drawing upon social sciences and missiological principles, participants will read, observe, and interact through a hybrid correspondence model. This course addresses the learning outcome in all NPTS programs to, "engage diversity and exhibit growth towards intercultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work."

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the completion of this course, a participant should be able to:

1. Understand key components of twelve of the world's major religions
2. Interpret the interrelationship between the religious and cultural context of major world religions, including one's own
3. Critique historic and contemporary understandings of the nature and function of religion from both western and majority world perspectives
4. Utilize skills in cultural exegesis differentiating between etic and emic etic worldview perspectives on religions and cultures
5. Articulate the nature of religious plurality and theologize about the same in terms of a faith-based approach to other faith expressions
6. Envision practices of hospitality and dialog geared toward conflict resolution with adherents of other faiths or none

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Jason Boyett. *12 Major World Religions: The Beliefs, Rituals, and Traditions of Humanity's Most Influential Faiths*. (Berkeley, CA: Zephyros Press), 2016.

Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, Tite Tiénou. *Understanding Folk Religion*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2000.

Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *Divinity & Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism*. Abingdon, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0687021949.

Amos Yong. *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 2008.

Robert E. Van Voorst. *Anthology of World Scriptures 9th Edition*. (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning), 2017. (Selections distributed to SRA students).

Additional required readings from female and male authors and non-western representatives from other world religions will be made available to students in the Canvas shell.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review course shell. Become familiar with assignments and rubrics for each. Review the assigned learning materials for each week as listed in the online course shell
2. Attend all class sessions and interact with the assigned weekly learning material and our guest speakers. Our schedule will include guest speakers that will be announced in class. Students are asked to bring questions for the guests and reflections on course learning materials. Attendance and weekly interactions will be graded. **10% of course grade**
3. During the semester attend **two** worship services of non-Christian religious communities new to you. Following the visit, write a 750-word reflection on the experience using the categories of the WATERCRESS guidelines and the rubric provided. *These are to be posted in the appropriate online forums within two weeks after the visit or sooner if possible.* During this semester several visits to religious services other than Christian will be arranged by the instructor in the Chicagoland area and students may attend two or all if desired. If none of these options fit your schedule, please contact the instructor for other options. Students outside of Chicagoland will be given the opportunity to explore the non-Christian worship opportunities in your area and follow guidelines given in class to ask permission and attend two worship experiences. Only two visits are required for the class, but if participants chose to they may report on up to four different visits with the two non-required visits taking the place of your two lowest scoring quizzes. Due dates are posted in the course schedule found online. **Total 20% of grade**
4. Using the rubric provided online, participants will write one reflection paper of 750-1000 words on each of the topics below, posting it online in the appropriate electronic forums by the assigned dates and times found in the course schedule.
  - #1 What does folk religion do for its adherents? What elements of folk religion can you identify in your own life and faith practices? **10% of grade**
  - #2 Can Christians and Muslims live together in peace? On what basis? **10% of grade**
  - #3 Would you describe yourself as pluralist, exclusivist or inclusivist? How will this affect your ministry? **10% of grade**
5. Three quizzes (non-cumulative) on learning materials and geography maps. Dates of quizzes are listed in the online course schedule. 10% each. **Total of 30% of grade**
6. Personal Interfaith Hospitality Practice. Based on your interaction with the learning materials and events this semester, what steps will you take to practice Christian hospitality to people of other faiths or no faith? Post your writeup in online forum by the deadline given in the course schedule using the rubric online. **10% of grade**

### Grading:

Weight of assignments will be as follows:

Class attendance and participation	10% of total grade
Report on worship visits	20% of total grade
Reflection papers	30% of total grade
Quizzes	30% of total grade
Personal Interfaith Hospitality Practice	10% of total grade

Course grade will be computed according to the grading policy found in the NPTS catalog.

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES**

### **Inclusive Language**

NPTS encourages all students to follow the Statement of Inclusive Language from the Board of Publication Policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church which states, “We are committed to being inclusive in language and imagery in an effort to eliminate prejudice, whether gender, racial, ethnic, national, religious, denominational, cultural, or physical. This way of proceeding in no manner seeks to deny personal identity; rather, it guards against any use of word or phrase that tends to exclude people.” Consider how you can best incorporate inclusive language into all of your communication (written and oral) during the course particularly in your references to God and to humanity.

### **Academic Honesty**

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park Theological Seminary is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

### **Incomplete Policy**

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, illness, personal and family issues, or military assignment), a student anticipates she will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student must submit the request form for a grade of incomplete to the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.”

### **Accommodations**

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class related to a disability, contact the SRA program director. If you are struggling in your coursework due to Covid-19 or other factors and need to take the course pass/fail, please let instructors know and we will modify the course requirements accordingly. In the event that we are unable to get materials in and out from our SRA students due to lockdown, please continue the course schedule as listed below.

## 2022 TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF COURSE TOPICS

Please note that topics are not related solely with the religion listed for that week  
Details of assignments, readings, and quizzes posted in Canvas

Week 1 Starts Jan 18	Introduction to Folk Religion; <i>Missio Dei</i> and Pluralism; The Nature and Function of Religion in Relation to Cultures
Jan 24-28	ECC Midwinter Conference, no class
Week 2 Jan 31`	Cultural and Religious Evolution; Views of Culture, Excluded Middle <i>Zoroastrianism</i>
Week 3 Feb 7	Symbology and Ritual: <i>Judaism</i>
Week 4 Feb 14	Bibliology, the Role of Sacred Texts; <i>Christianity</i>
Week 5 Feb 21	Mysticism, <i>Islam</i>
Week 6 Feb 28	East Meets West, Selective Easternization, <i>Santeria</i>
Week 7 Mar 7	Fundamentalism; <i>Hinduism</i>
Mar 14-18	No class due to Spring Reading Week
Week 8 Mar 21	Spiritual Realities; <i>Buddhism</i>
Week 9 Mar 28	Non-Violence; <i>Jainism</i>
Week 10 Apr 4	Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures; <i>Confucianism, Taoism</i>
Week 11 Apr 11	Conversion, <i>Shinto</i>
Week 12 Apr 18	Contextualization, <i>Sikhism</i>
Week 13 Apr 25	Pluralism as Political Process; <i>Bahá'í</i>
Week 14 May 2	Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Hospitality in a Pluralist World
Week 15 May 9	Presentation of Final Hospitality Projects; Course conclusion ceremony

Revised 11 October 2021