

MNST 5110 RELIGIONS AND CULTURES
North Park Theological Seminary
Spring 2023, 3 Seminary Credits
Hiflex Format Thursdays 6:30-9:30 pm Central time
Draft Course Syllabus

INSTRUCTORS

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Office hours with students available by appointment. Please contact instructors directly.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we interact with religious and cultural differences? Through the lens of major faith traditions, participants 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 with an emphasis on the practice of hospitality for all faith traditions. Drawing upon the social sciences and missiological principles, participants will read, observe, and discuss in a flipped classroom, hybrid model with students online and in class together. 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 several 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*. Zephyros Press, 2016.
Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, Tite Tiénou. *Understanding Folk Religion*. Baker, 2000.
Barbara Brown Taylor. *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. HarperOne, 2020.

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

Robert E. Van Voorst. *Anthology of World Scriptures 9th Edition*. Cengage Learning, 2017.

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

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Paul Knitter. *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration*. Orbis, 2005.

Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Eerdmans, 1989.

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. *Divinity & Diversity: A Christian Affirmation of Religious Pluralism*. Abingdon, 2003.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Course Interaction.** This course follows the flipped classroom model. Success of this model depends upon each student reading, viewing, and reflecting before each class and coming prepared to contribute during the live sessions. Each week learning materials are posted with guidelines for posting and responding. Attendance in all class sessions is required. A number of guest speakers representing various faith traditions will be brought to class, and students will be asked to prepare questions for the guests reflective of their understanding of course learning materials. Weekly postings, responses and attendance will be graded according to the rubric provided in Canvas. **30% of course grade**
2. **Debriefing Worship Visits.** During the semester students are asked to attend **two** worship services of non-Christian religious communities with which they are unfamiliar. Following the visit, learners will debrief their experience in a 750-word reflection using the categories of the WATERCRESS guidelines provided in class. During the semester several visits to non-Christian religious services in Chicagoland area will be arranged by the instructors with dates posted online in Canvas. If none of the scheduled dates fit the student's schedule, please contact the instructor for other options. Students outside of Chicagoland will explore non-Christian worship opportunities in their local area following guidelines given in class. Only two visits are required for the class, but if participants chose to they may report on more for extra credit. Visits are expected to be completed within the semester. Dates of scheduled visits are found online in Canvas. 10% of course grade each. **20% of course grade**
3. **Essay Exams and Case Study Responses.** Student understanding and ability to apply learning materials to real life situations will be assessed twice during the semester, once at midterm and once at semester's end. Several topics for essays will be presented along with case studies. Students will be asked to respond in essay format to a selected number of each. Grading will be based upon student's ability to integrate materials from throughout the semester into contexts provided. Essays and case study responses are timed, open note and open texts with grading based upon student's integration of topics, texts, and discussions from class. These will be posted in Canvas. Dates of the two case study responses are listed in Canvas. 15% of course grade each **30% of course grade**
4. **Interfaith Hospitality Practice.** Based on interaction with learning materials recent local events relevant to the learner's location, students will create an interfaith hospitality practice that can actually be used with people of other faiths or no faith. Follow the rubric guidelines provided online. Students will present their interfaith hospitality practice in

class during the last live session and will post a written summary online by the deadline given in Canvas. **10% of course grade**

5. **Personal Growth Assessment.** Each student will complete a personal growth assessment form provided in Canvas. This assessment is reflective of topics and texts introduced during the course. Grading is based on student's ability to self-assess, not on degrees of personal growth. This assignment to be posted online by the date provided Canvas. **10% of course grade.**

Grading:

Weight of course assignments is as follows:

Course interaction	30% of course grade
Debriefing worship visits	20% of course grade
Essay Exams and Case Study Responses	30% of course grade
Interfaith Hospitality Practice	10% of course grade
Personal Growth Assessment	10% of course grade

Final grades are computed according to the policy found on pp 21-22 of the NPTS catalog

<https://assets.northpark.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/14095125/Seminary-Academic-Catalog-2021-2022.pdf>

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.

COVID-19 Protocols and Requirements

At North Park we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of our students, faculty, staff, and the wider community. There are several protocols in place to help us stay as safe as possible while we continue to navigate the pandemic. These protocols are based on the guidance of local, state, and federal public health agencies and we adjust policies and protocols as appropriate; the pandemic environment has changed, sometimes rapidly, over the last year+ and we continue to evaluate and update our response as well. The policies and protocols listed below are our current plan, these may change as the situation changes.

For students taking a class in Illinois (at Midwinter or on-campus in Chicago): On Thursday, August 26, 2021, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker issued an executive order requiring Covid-19 vaccinations for everyone in many sectors of society -- including all employees and students at public and private institutions of higher education in our state. The order also requires universal masking indoors, and weekly testing for anyone who is unvaccinated.

Since July 1 North Park has strongly encouraged and expected all members of the campus community to get vaccinated -- and is requiring those who are not vaccinated to enroll in a weekly testing program. In addition, since August 6 North Park's safety protocols have included universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status. These key elements of the governor's executive order are already in place at North Park.

To ensure that we are complying with the governor's order, all North Parkers must submit a vaccination status form to document that they are fully vaccinated or complete the vaccination exemption request form prior to arriving in Chicago. All unvaccinated North Parkers will participate in weekly testing. For students registered for a class taking place in-person at a location in Illinois, you will be required to fill out the vaccination status form, the link to this form, along with additional details will be sent to your North Park email address prior to your class. For unvaccinated students, proof of a negative COVID-19 test with 72 hours of arrival will be required.

2023 SCHEDULE OF COURSE TOPICS

Dates for posting assignments found in Canvas

Week 1 Jan 16	Folk Religion; <i>Missio Dei</i> and Pluralism; Nature and Function of Religion, Dimensions of Culture
Jan 23-27	ECC Midwinter Conference, no class
Week 2 Jan 31`	Cultural and Religious Evolution, Excluded Middle; <i>Zoroastrianism</i>
Week 3 Feb 6	Symbology and Ritual; <i>Judaism</i>
Week 4 Feb 13	Bibliology, the Role of Sacred Texts; <i>Christianity</i>
Week 5 Feb 20	Guilt, Shame, and Fear-Oriented Cultures; <i>Santeria</i>
Week 6 Feb 27	Mysticism; <i>Islam</i>
Week 7 Mar 6	East Meets West, Selective Easternization: <i>Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism</i>
Mar 13-17	No class due to Spring Reading Week
Week 8 Mar 20	Fundamentalism; <i>Hinduism Part I</i>
Week 9 Mar 27	Conversion and Interfaith Dialogue; <i>Hinduism Part II</i>
Week 10 Apr 3	Exegeting Cultural Contexts; <i>Jainism</i>
Week 11 Apr 10	Spiritual Realities; <i>Buddhism</i>
Week 12 Apr 17	Christian Hospitality in a Pluralist World; <i>Bahá'í</i>
Week 13 Apr 24	Contextualization; <i>Sikhism</i>
Week 14 May 1	Presentation of Final Hospitality Projects; Course conclusion ceremony

Revised 11 October 2023