



MNST 5110 RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

North Park Theological Seminary – School of Restorative Arts
Fall 2023, 3 Seminary Credits
Course Syllabus

INSTRUCTORS

Rev. Dr. Paul H. de Neui, PhD, Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies
Email: pdeneui@northpark.edu

Obed Manwatkar, Visiting Professor
Email: omanwatkar@northpark.edu

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, discuss and interact with representatives of many religions in class together.

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 learning materials from female and male authors and non-western representatives from other world religions will be made available to students through handouts.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Course Interaction.** This course follows the flipped classroom model. Success of this model depends upon each student carefully reviewing and reflecting on learning materials *before* each class and coming prepared to contribute during the live sessions. Learning materials for each module will be distributed one week before class along with written guidelines for assignments to be shared in class. 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. **30% of course grade**
2. **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, open texts with grading based upon student's integration of topics, texts, and discussions from class. (15% each) **30% of course grade**
3. **Interfaith Hospitality Practice.** Based on interaction with learning materials and events relevant to the learner's location, students will create an interfaith hospitality practice that can 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 submit a written summary. **30% of course grade**
4. **Personal Growth Assessment.** Each student will complete a personal growth assessment form distributed in class. 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. **10% of course grade**

Grading:

Weight of course assignments is as follows:

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

Final course grades follow the grading policy found on pp 20 of the NPTS catalog:

Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94)
B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87)
C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C - = 78-79)
D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D - = 70-71)
F: Failure (69 and below)

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.

2023 SCHEDULE OF COURSE TOPICS

Week 1 August 31	Folk Religion; <i>Missio Dei</i> and Pluralism; Nature and Function of Religion, Dimensions of Culture
Week 2 Sept 7`	Symbology and Ritual; <i>Judaism</i>
Week 3 Sept 14	Cultural and Religious Evolution, Excluded Middle; <i>Zoroastrianism</i>
Week 4 Sept 21	Guilt, Shame, and Fear-Oriented Cultures; <i>Santeria</i>



Week 5 Sept 28	Bibliology, the Role of Sacred Texts; <i>Christianity</i>
Week 6 Oct 5	Mysticism; <i>Islam</i>
Week 7 Oct 12	East Meets West, Selective Easternization: <i>Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism</i>
Oct 19	No class due to Fall Reading Week. Work on Essay Exam #1
Week 8 Oct 26	Fundamentalism; <i>Hinduism</i>
Week 9 Nov 2	Spiritual Realities; <i>Buddhism</i>
Week 10 Nov 9	Exegeting Cultural Contexts; <i>Jainism</i>
Week 11 Nov 16	Christian Hospitality in a Pluralist World; <i>Sikhism</i>
Nov 23	No Class Due to Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 12 Nov 30	Contextualization; <i>Bahá'í</i>
Week 13 Dec 7	Conversion and Interfaith Dialogue
Week 14 Dec 14	Presentation of Final Hospitality Projects; Course conclusion ceremony Essay Exam #2

Revised 14 March 2023