

MNST 5110 RELIGIONS AND CULTURES
North Park Theological Seminary
Spring 2024, 3 Seminary Credits Hyflex Format
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, 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 essay exams/case study responses listed in Canvas. (15% 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/20211214095125/Seminary-Academic-Catalog-2021-2022.pdf>

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

Academic Accommodation: NPTS provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found at <https://www.northpark.edu/campus-life-and-services/student-success-and-wellness/disability-resources/>.

Academic Honesty: In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University 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 are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

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

- Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For a fuller discussion of academic dishonesty, see pp. 25-27 of the Seminary Academic Catalog.

Canvas: For any questions or concerns about Canvas please open an online Helpdesk ticket.

Harassment Policy and Title IX: Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-6222) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5601) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University's Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site (<http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community>) for contact information and further details.

Inclusive Language: NPTS encourages all students to follow the Statement of Inclusive Language of the ECC which explains, "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.

Incomplete Grades: If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and 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." For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).

Online/Zoom Etiquette: While online in class students are required to keep cameras on. This gives all in the class the ability to connect at least visually, if not in audibly. Please use the same etiquette you would use when in the classroom with other students. This means **avoid** traveling in your car, preparing a meal, dressing, showering, personal grooming, or engaging in other activities at the same time as when you are in the online classroom. We understand that cats,

dogs, and young children like to be in on the activity and that is not a problem as long as they do not distract from your ability to engage and learn. When not speaking, please mute microphones unless asked to do otherwise. When necessary, course participants may send chat messages to instructors during the class time. All programs such as internet use, solitaire and other games, email, and any others not related to the course should not be open during class time.

Writing Format: Use the Turabian style for references in your writing. Here is a link to writing handbook for NPTS. Refer to it for your questions regarding formatting:

<https://assets.northpark.edu/wp-content/uploads/20200717101927/Writing-Handbook-2020-2021.pdf>

Revised 25 October 2023