



TAYLOR SEMINARY

WR 523 Christian Encounter with World Religions

Fall 2011

To develop Christ-minded leaders who make a difference in the world

Instructor: Joost Pikkert Ph.D.

Office Phone: 780-431-5243

E-mail: joost.pikkert@taylor-edu.ca

Course Weight: 3 credits

Description: This course examines Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Taoism and evaluates their impact on both Canadian society and world affairs. Some practical strategies for witnessing to the adherents of these non-Christian religions are also proposed.

Objectives

1. To understand the presence, impact of non-Christian religions in the world today and how this relates to the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ
2. To be able to compare and contrast the basic teaching on non-Christian faiths with Christianity
3. To prepare oneself to live and witness in a community of diverse faiths
4. To engage in the challenges of evangelistic dialogue with those of other faiths.

Text books:

Terry Muck, Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering world Religions*, Grand Rapids, Baker, 2009

Hopfe & Woodward, *Religions of the World*, Pierson/Prentice Hall, 2005 or later

Course Requirements

1. Regular participation in class and reading of the textbook.
2. Engage in a regular on-line or face-to-face discussion with someone of another faith over the duration of the course. Hand in a 3 page reflection paper of the encounter describing the interaction, evaluating the relationship and recommending changes should you be in such a relationship again.
3. A six week curriculum for a high school or adult Sunday school class dealing on the subject of "The Christian's Response to World Religions". The curriculum should include:
 - a. PowerPoint presentations for six classes of 1 hour each in duration

- i. Class 1: Introduction to World Religions
 - ii. Class2: A Christian’s response to Islam
 - iii. Class 3: A Christian’s Response to Hinduism
 - iv. Class 4: A Christian’s Response to Sikhism
 - v. Class 5: A Christian’s Response to Buddhism
 - vi. Class 6: How to Build Effective Relationships that Lead to Inter-religious dialogue
- b. Each class should include:
- i. Basic beliefs
 - ii. Demographic maps or charts
 - iii. Key similarities and differences of the world faith with Christianity
 - iv. Suggestions for evangelism
 - v. Appropriate etiquette when visiting the place of worship
 - vi. Resources for further study
4. A one to five page report, documenting a conversation you have had with an international worker or missionary working with the adherents of a specific world religion. You may interview, write, SKYPE or e-mail the Christian worker. Have at least two or three times that you interact with this worker as you return with follow up questions. The point of this assignment is to obtain first hand experience regarding the following: building relationships; overcoming contentious religious differences; cultural knowledge useful to know so as to avoid insulting or causing awkwardness in the relationship; important life-cycle events; important religious celebrations and the role a Christian friend may take during the celebration of these events; ways a Christian may be targeted to become an adherent to this religion.

Grading and Course Load Distributions

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
Weekly participation and discussion	10	Weekly
Weekly textbook reflection papers	10	Weekly
Dialogue with Missionary	10	Oct. 18th
Sunday School Curriculum	30	Nov. 22 nd
Relationship Building with someone from another faith	20	Nov. 29th
Final	20	Dec. 6th (based on class notes and Woodward text.

Course Outline

Topic #1: The Study and Practice of Religion

Topic #2: Indigenous Traditional Religions

Topic #3: Judaism

Topic #4: Hinduism

Topic #5: Taoism and Confucianism

Topic #6: Shinto

Topic #7: Buddhism

Topic #8: Islam

Topic #9 Sikhism

Topic #10: Christianity among the World's Religions

Discussion Questions for Weekly Reflection Papers

These 2-3 page reflection papers are based on *Christianity Encountering World Religions* by Adeney and Muck.

Assignment #1 Due: Sept. 6th

1. On page 20 (Muck & Adeney) there is a discussion about negative and positive tolerance. Evaluate your community in the light of the discussion and why you think it leans more to a positive or negative tolerance.
2. Muck and Adeney, in the chapter entitled 'Context: The World of Religion Today' discuss the idea of competition, cooperation and conversion between religions as a global phenomenon. How do you react to the case they make for their thesis?

Assignment #2 Due: Sept. 13

3. A list of questions is provided on page 44 (Muck and Adeney) and unpacked in the next few pages by the authors. Interact with one of the answers provided by the authors.

Assignment #3 Due: Sept. 20th

4. Muck and Adeney, on p. 83 states, "*The fourth feature of Paul's innovation was its trialability (Rogers 1983, 231). All one had to do was receive this gift and try it on for size. See if it doesn't make a big difference in your life. Full commitment and public declaration could come later if*

you liked. For now, "try it, you'll like it" was enough." Respond either for or against this statement, citing scripture to support your position.

5. Muck and Adeney in chapter 5 propose that St. Patrick's approach of inviting people in to belong to the community, conform to the norms of the community before mandating they understood the beliefs of the community was exactly what was needed in the context in which Patrick worked. Evaluate such an approach in the light of scripture and comment on whether this approach should be considered as way to reach out across religious lines in your community.

Assignment #4 Due: Oct. 11th

6. Disputation as a way to reach out is discussed in chapter 7. Explain why or why not you think Aquinas' *Steps of Disputatio* are appropriate or inappropriate in your context with those of non-Christian beliefs?

Assignment #5 Due: Oct. 18th

7. One of the main criticisms against Ricci (Muck, chapter 9) was accommodating the Chinese concept of God in Chinese thought. Do you think the God of Islam is the God you serve? Explain to the best of your ability.
8. The Booths used all means to further their evangelistic goals by connecting to both the values of the rich and the values of the poor to create a synergy that undergird their work. As you think of a non-Christian religious community in your area, try defining their core values, needs, hopes and fears.

Assignment #6 Due: Nov. 1st

9. Sheppard faced both racism back home and horrendous crimes against humanity in Africa and strove to nurture respect. How do you balance respect for those of other religions when you are pointing them away from some of their key religious ideas and towards the uniqueness of Jesus Christ?

Assignment #7 Due: Nov. 8th

10. Mother Theresa, "would take you in and love you. She offered comfort and the last rites of whatever religion you followed, but she did not see Kali, or Muhammad or Buddha in the face of the poor. She saw the face of Christ. Religious distinctions didn't matter. Christ was present in each one; Christ sustained her in this grueling work" (p. 190). How do you react to this practice in the light of Mt. 10:34?

Assignment #8 due: Nov. 15th

11. The chapter on "Missional Ecumenicity" attempts to tread the balance between the need to continue to strive for conversions while also acknowledging that religions are often part of the reason there are conflicts in the world. Define how you view the need to evangelize with the need to be tolerant of denominations and other religions. What are your limits in these areas?

12. In the chapter on the 'Spiral of Knowledge' and "Experiencing" discusses self-knowledge as key to our understanding of how to relate to people of other faiths. How has your background affected how you view non-Christian religions?

Assignment #9 Due: Nov. 22nd

13. Respond to the idea of "Bracketing" as discussed in chapter 18 and how this may function in your context as you move into a relationship with someone of another faith commitment.
14. In encountering someone of another faith Terry and Adeney (chapter 19) discuss the possibility of dissonance (as expressed in the example of the cursing at the Hindu Temple) and how dissonance can lead to a deeper encounter with the 'other'. Relate an experience of dissonance you have had as you encountered someone with different religious beliefs from your own and how you think following the steps laid out in the text could lead to a deeper relationship with someone of a different faith.

Assignment #10 Due: Nov. 29th

15. By now you have learned something of several religions and have hopefully interacted with those of another faith, listened to them and tried to understand them. How has what you learned of another religion changed you? What parallels and dissimilarities have you found? Hypothesize how the people might change if they embraced Christ? How would they appear the same?
16. In Chapter 22 several metaphors are discussed as well as the author's metaphor of 'gift giving' as a paradigm for reaching out across religious barriers. Please choose (or create) a metaphor for reaching out across religious and cultural barriers that you think best fits what you think mission across religious barriers is all about.
17. After reviewing chapter 23 and 24, evaluate which of the practices of giftive mission fit your context the best?