**26/S2 MNST 5110-01, 02 RELIGIONS AND CULTURES**

Draft Syllabus

7:30-9:00 pm Central Time Tuesday Evenings – HyFlex Format

**INSTRUCTOR**

Rev. Dr. Paul H. de Neui, PhD, Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Religious pluralism today creates both challenges and opportunities for practicing Christian. In this course students will explore the mutual interaction between religious faith and the cultural frameworks in which they are practiced. Representatives of several major world religions will share personal insights on this interconnectivity enabling students to move from a posture of fearful uncertainty to one of holy envy. Major topics of cultural studies are addressed through the lenses of these religious traditions. Application of insights from the social sciences and global missiology addressing socio-religious plurality are focused features. Participants will personally observe and reflect upon non-Christian religious services in their own contexts as part of their learning. HyFlex format (3 seminary credits)

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify and explain key components in one's own and other major world 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. Demonstrate skills in cultural exegesis differentiating between emic and etic perspectives and levels of worldview
5. Formulate a personal posture towards socio-religious plurality as found in faith expressions other than one's own
6. Design practices of hospitality and dialog geared toward mutual enrichment 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. (302 pages)

Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, Tite Tiénou. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices 25th Anniversary Edition.* Wipf & Stock, 2024. (444 pages) (Previous edition also acceptable)

Barbara Brown Taylor. *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others.* HarperOne, 2020. (256 pages)

Amos Yong. *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor*. Orbis, 2008. (169 pages)

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**

Srvavana Borkataky-Varma and Aaron Michael Ullrey, eds. *Living Folk Religions.* Routledge, 2023.

Richard Dawson. *Religion and Culture.* Catholic University of America Press, 2013.

Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.* Baker Academic, 2002.

Carl McColman. *Unteachable Lessons: Why Wisdom Can't be Taught (And Why That's Okay).* Eerdman's 2019.

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

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

Randy S. Woodley. *Mission and the Cultural Other: A Closer Look.* Wipf & Stock, 2022.

**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. Guest speakers representing various faith traditions will speak in class, and students will be asked to prepare questions for the guests reflective of course 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 500-750 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 instructor 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. 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 student's reflections on learning materials, ministry context, personal interest and abilities, and recent local events relevant to the learner's location, students will create an interfaith hospitality practice 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. **20% of course grade**

**GRADING**

Weight of course assignments is as follows:

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| 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 | 20% of course grade |

Final grades are computed according to the policy found in the NPTS catalog.

**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 the NPU website.

**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 AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For a fuller discussion of academic dishonesty, see 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 Director of Student Living (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 website 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 in the Seminary Academic Catalog.

**Online Etiquette:** When joining the class online try to find a quiet location with good lighting where you will not be interrupted. Test your microphone before class to make sure all can hear you and that you can be heard well. When unmuting to contribute, be aware of background noise. While online in class keep cameras on and microphones off unless requested otherwise. Please use the same etiquette you would use when in the classroom with other students. This means during class ***avoid*** car travel (especially driving!), meal preparation, or engaging in other activities at the same time you are in the online classroom. When necessary, course participants may send chat messages to instructors during the class time. Other online programs and games should not be open during class time.

**Writing Format:** Use the Turabian style for references in your writing.

NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**Course Schedule**

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| Week 1 Jan 11 | Folk Religion; *Missio Dei* & Pluralism; Nature & Function of Religion |
| Week 2 Jan 18 | Cultural and Religious Evolution, Excluded Middle; ***Zoroastrianism*** |
| Jan 25-29 | ECC Midwinter Conference, no class |
| Week 3 Feb 1 | Symbology and Ritual***; Judaism*** |
| Week 4 Feb 8 | Bibliology, the Role of Sacred Texts; ***Christianity*** |
| Week 5 Feb 15 | Guilt, Shame, and Fear-Oriented Cultures; ***Santeria*** |
| Week 6 Feb 22 | Mysticism; ***Islam*** |
| Week 7 Mar 1 | East Meets West; ***Confucianism, Shinto, Taoism*** |
| Mar 8-12 | No class due to Spring Reading Week |
| Week 8 Mar 15 | Fundamentalism; ***Hinduism*** |
| Week 9 Mar 22 | Exegeting Cultural Contexts: ***Jainism*** |
| March 29 | Holy Week – no class |
| Week 10 Apr 5 | Spiritual Realities; ***Buddhism*** |
| Week 11 Apr 12 | Christian Hospitality in Our Pluralist World; ***Sikhism*** |
| Week 12 Apr 19 | Conversion and Interfaith Dialogue |
| Week 13 April 26 | Contextualization; ***Bahá'í*** |
| Week 14 May 3 | Presentation of Final Hospitality Projects |

Revised 12 October 2027