

WM 540 People's Religious Traditions - Course Guide
Fall, 2010 – Covenant Theological Seminary (St. Louis, MO, USA)

Dr. J. Nelson Jennings

Course Purpose

Become more familiar with—in a way that increases one's capacity to relate peacefully, cooperatively, and evangelistically with adherents of—people and their religious traditions

Course Objectives

By the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

- live in a posture of common humanity with affiliates of other religious traditions;
- describe the development of religious traditions within overall world history;
- articulate basic tenets of belief and practice of various people's religious traditions;
- produce an analysis of historical and socio-cultural characteristics of religious traditions;
- develop a Christian theology of people's religious traditions;
- live and minister individually in an environment of multiple religious traditions; and,
- help lead other Christians in living constructively in light of the corporate and public implications of an environment of multiple religious traditions.

Texts

- Halverson, Dean C., gen ed. *The Compact Guide to World Religions* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1996).
- Ramachandra, Vinoth. *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999).
- Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*. 2nd ed (New York: Harper Collins, 1991). [Chs.I,X (pp.1-11,384-391) – ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY]
- Tennent, Timothy C. *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002).

Academic Honesty Statement

As part of our purpose to train servants of the triune God to walk with God in all of life, we expect godly integrity in the academic work done at Covenant. At the heart of this integrity is the commitment to accurately represent our work to others. This means that members of Covenant's community will not engage in presenting the ideas of others as their own (plagiarism) or in violating the rules under which papers, projects, and examinations are to be completed (cheating). Please refer to the Student Handbook for a complete explanation of this policy. For tutorial help through the writing center, please contact the Dean's office.

The first violation of academic honesty standards will result in failure of the assignment or test in question and could, depending on the assignment, result in failure of the class. A second violation will result in dismissal from the institution.

Requirements

1. Write an approximately 2,000-word historico-theological analysis of a particular religious figure, event or movement. Two to four non-course sources (in addition to any course sources) must be consulted and cited. Grading criteria will include clarity, thoroughness, and Christian-theological insight. Student's intended topic (subject to approval) must be submitted by 12:45 pm, Sept 15; there will be an automatic 5% grade reduction from the assignment grade for each week (or portion thereof) the topic is submitted late. ***The paper is due in Dr. J's electronic Inbox by 12:45 pm, Oct 13.*** (There will be an automatic 10% grade reduction from the assignment grade for each 48-hour period (or portion thereof; excluding Sundays) the assignment is submitted late.) **30%** of total grade.
2. Read and then write an approximately 2,000-word historico-theological analysis of a religious text (cf. accompanying list). Two to four non-course sources (in addition to any course sources) must be consulted and cited. Grading criteria will include clarity, thoroughness, and Christian-theological insight. Student's intended topic (subject to approval) must be submitted by 12:45 pm, Oct 20; there will be an automatic 5% grade reduction from the assignment grade for each week (or portion thereof) the topic is submitted late. ***The paper is due in Dr. J's electronic Inbox by 12:45 pm, Dec 1.*** (There will be an automatic 10% grade reduction from the assignment grade for each 48-hour period (or portion thereof; excluding Sundays) the assignment is submitted late.) **30%** of total grade.
3. Final exam to be taken during the final exam period. **30%** of total grade.
4. Visit two religious sites as arranged. A 500-word reflection paper is due in Dr. J's electronic Inbox one week after each visit. **5%** of total grade for each reflection paper.

Schedule: Class Topic / Readings

1. **M, Aug 30 – Introduction / ---**
2. *W, Sept 1 – Overview, Approaches / Smith (on reserve), Halverson (thru p.36)*
- M, Sept 6 [No class – Labor Day]**
3. *W, Sept 8 – Primal Religions (“Animism”) / Halverson 37-53*
4. **M, Sept 13 – Hinduism / Halverson 87-102**
5. *W, Sept 15 – Hinduism (cont.), Jainism, Sikhism; Note: Requirement #1 topic due.*
6. **M, Sept 20 – Buddhism / Halverson 54-69**
7. *W, Sept 22 – Buddhism (cont.)*
8. **M, Sept 27 – Confucianism / Halverson 70-86**
9. *W, Sept 29 – Taoism / Halverson 216-234*
10. **M, Oct 4 – Shinto / Halverson 198-215**
11. *W, Oct 6 – Islam (and Baha’i) / Halverson 103-120*
12. **M, Oct 11 – Islam (cont.): mosque visit**
- W, Oct 13 [No class – Preaching Lectures] Note: Requirement #1 due.*
13. **M, Oct 18 – Judaism / Halverson 121-143**
14. *W, Oct 20 – Religion and Society / Ramachandra thru p.86; Note: Requirement #2 topic due.*
15. **M, Oct 25 – Religion and Society (cont.) / Ramachandra to end**
16. *W, Oct 27 – Interreligious Dialogue / Tennent thru p.33*
17. **M, Nov 1 – Christianity and Hinduism / Tennent 35-86**
18. *W, Nov 3 – Christianity and Buddhism / Tennent 87-137*
19. **M, Nov 8 – Christianity and Islam / Tennent 139-194**
20. *W, Nov 10 [Andrew Walls in class]*
21. **M, Nov 15 – Case Studies / Tennent 195-210**
22. *W, Nov 17 – Case Studies (cont.) / Tennent 211-229*
23. **M, Nov 22 – Case Studies (cont.) / Tennent 231-243**
24. *W, Nov 24 – Course Purpose Consolidation*
- M, Nov 29 [No Class – Thanksgiving Break]**
25. *W, Dec 1 – Student Presentations; Note: Requirement #2 due.*
26. **M, Dec 6 – Student Presentations**

Religious Text List (Partial)

Analects of Confucius: <http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/analects.htm>

Tao Te Ching: <http://www.wright-house.com/religions/taoism/tao-te-ching.html>

Avesta (Yasna 12 – “The Zoroastrian Creed”): <http://www.avesta.org/yasna/y12j.htm>

The Babylonian Creation Epic – Enuma Elish: <http://www.piney.com/Enuma.html>

De rerum natura (Lucretius’ *On the Nature of Things* – Book I only):
http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.1.i.html

Qur’an Translation: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>

Sri Guru Granth Sahib: <http://www.sikhs.org/granth.htm> + links

Indian/Hindu:

Bhagavad Gita: <http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/ctg/bhaggita.htm>

Mahabharata:

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sanskrit_in_Classics_at_Brown/Mahabharata/

Upanishads: <http://sanatan.intnet.mu/> +

<http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/upanishads.htm>

Buddhist:

The Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra or *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* (including Amida Buddha’s 18th Vow): <http://web.mit.edu/stclair/www/larger.html>

Lotus Sutra:

<http://www.buddhistdoor.com/oldweb/resources/sutras/lotus/sources/contents.htm> (cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r364h19dXio>)

Sutta Pitaka (One of the “Three Baskets” of Theravada Buddhism; read *Digha Nikaya* 15 – *Mahanidana Sutta* only):

<http://www.cambodianbuddhist.org/english/website/canon/digha/dn15.html>

Vinaya Pitaka (One of “Three Baskets” of Theravada Buddhism; read *Patimokka Rules* – *Parajika*, *Sanghadisesa*, *Aniyata* only):

<http://www.cambodianbuddhist.org/english/website/canon/vinaya/index.html>

“Ten Bulls”: <http://www.expressionsofspirit.com/10bulls/tenbulls.htm>