

Georgetown University

Spring 2008

Course Title: Christianity and World Religions
LSHV-428-01

Instructor: Professor Chester Gillis
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Class Times: Thursdays 6:00 to 8:30 PM

Course Description

This course will study the relationship between Christianity and the major world religions. It will be offered from the Christian perspective. It will address the philosophical and theological issues and conflicts that arise in a religiously pluralistic environment. This will include an historical examination of the Christian disposition towards the other religions, the problem of conflicting truth claims, the nature of salvation in the religions, the role of religious language and the process of interreligious dialogue. The course will also assess current Christian theological thinking about the other major traditions and offer possible directions for future understanding. The course will focus on the relationship with Islam and Hinduism in particular.

Disabilities Statement

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Class Format: Lectures and Discussion

Required Texts

A New Religious America by Diana Eck
(San Francisco: Harper, 2002)

No Other Name? by Paul Knitter
(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1985)

Pluralism: A New Paradigm for Theology by Chester Gillis
(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1998)

The Myth of Religious Superiority edited by Paul F. Knitter
(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2005)

The World's Religions by Huston Smith

(San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991)

Requirements

Mid-term exam and choice of a final exam or a 20 page paper (15 for BALS) due in early May. An outline of the paper must be personally approved by the professor by week seven of the semester.

Course Outline

Week One: Jan 10 Introduction to Religious Pluralism

- The situation of pluralism “On the Plain of Unity”
 - The Decline of the West
 - Religious Pluralism in America
 - Theological responses to the situation of religious pluralism: Exclusivism; Inclusivism
- Reading: Eck pages 1-79; Knitter, *No Other Name* pages 1-22

Week Two: Jan 17 Theological Theory of Pluralism

- Pluralism
 - A Brief History
 - Plurality of Revelation
 - The Copernican Revolution in Theology
 - The Doctrine of God
 - Truth Claims in Religion
 - The Kantian Shift in Epistemology
- Reading: Knitter, *No Other Name* pages 23-96; Gillis 1-38

Week Three: Jan 24 Interreligious Dialogue

- The Need for Dialogue
 - Theoretical Rules for Interreligious Dialogue
 - Practical Rules for Interreligious Dialogue
- Reading: Knitter, *No Other Name* pages 97-167; Gillis 39-67

• Christology

- Is Jesus the Christ the definitive Savior?
 - New Testament Structure
 - The Son of God in Christology
- Reading: Knitter, *No Other Name* pages 171-204; Gillis 69-99

Week Four: Jan 31 Soteriology

- The Post-Axial Shift to Soteriology
 - Salvation/liberation in the Various Traditions
 - God in Se versus God Pro Nobis
 - A Christian Soteriology
 - Criticisms of the Pluralist Move
- Reading: Gillis 101-32

Week Five: Feb 7 **Mid-Term Exam** (one hour and 15 minutes)

Islam; The tradition and its beliefs about salvation

- The Map of Islam
- Pre-History
- Muhammad - Messenger of God and Founder of Umma

Reading: Eck 222-293

Week Six: Feb 14 **Islam Continued**

- Religion of the Book
- Religion of the Law
- The Nature of God

Reading: Smith, Islam section

Week Seven: Feb 21 **Islam Continued**

- The Five Pillars
- The Caliphate
- The Qur'an
- Film: Islam: There is No God But God

Reading: Knitter, *The Myth of Religious Superiority* 211-36

Week Eight: Feb 28 **Hinduism**

- Background
- Sacred Texts
- Devotion to Three Major gods

Reading: Smith, Hinduism section; Eck 80-141

Week Nine: Mar 13 **Hinduism Continued**

- Classes of Society (Caste)
- Cosmology
- Soul, Sin and Salvation
- Slides from India

Reading: Knitter, *The Myth of Religious Superiority* 45-72

Week Ten: Mar 27 **Hinduism Continued**

- Upanishads: Brahman and Atman
- Upanishads: Karma and Rebirth
- Film: Hinduism: 330 Million gods

Reading: Knitter, *No Other Name* 205-231

Week Eleven: April 3 **Towards a Universal Theology**

- Paradigm Change in Theology
- The Birth of a New Paradigm

Reading: Gillis 165-185; Eck 335-385