

## Syllabus

### Introduction to Ecumenical Ministry in a Multi-faith World

**Professors:** Clifton Kirkpatrick and Wesley Ariarajah

**Course Description:** This course will serve as an introduction to the major theological issues and practical ministry concerns at the heart of Louisville Seminary's Doors to Dialogue (D2D) initiative. The course will introduce students to the diversity of the Christian community and the inter-religious context, the biblical and theological foundations for ecumenism and interfaith relations, the practical skills to engage in dialogue and cooperation with other Christians and people of other faith traditions, and the practices needed for ministry in an ecumenical and interfaith context.

**Learning Goals and Outcomes:** The learning goals for this course will be the three learning outcomes identified in the Doors to Dialogue (D2D) program, and now identified as core learning goals for the M.Div. program at the seminary. At the conclusion of the class students should be better able to:

- (1) describe and articulate important characteristics of the history, traditions, practices, and perspectives of at least one religious tradition other than Christianity and one Christian ecclesial tradition other than their own;
- (2) articulate, orally and in writing, their own theological perspective, including a theology of ministry, mindful of their distinctive ecclesial tradition and the global, multicultural, multireligious context of contemporary ministry; and
- (3) participate in intra-Christian and interreligious dialogue constructively, with appreciation and respect, as evidenced by a demonstrated ability to articulate the views of their dialogue partners and to identify similarities and differences with their own.

**Course Requirements:**

- (1) *Preparation and Participation:* Students are expected to be regular in class attendance, to complete all assigned readings, to actively participate in discussion both in plenary sessions and in smaller groups, and to prepare assigned "50 word sentences" in response to reflection questions related to class sessions and given below at the close of the description of each class session on the schedule below.<sup>i</sup>
- (2) *Visits, Engagement, and Reports on other traditions:* Each student will be expected to visit, engage in dialogue with, and do research on a Christian tradition and one of its local congregational expressions other than their own or with another religious tradition than Christianity and one of its local expressions. Time will be provided to make report on learnings from this process in class sessions. D.Min. students will be expected to engage in this dialogue and research with both another Christian tradition and another faith tradition.

- (3) *A Final Paper or Project*: Students will be asked to write a final paper (or with the approval of the professors an alternative project) on a critical issue related to ministry in an ecumenical and/or interfaith context.

**Themes and Calendar** for the classes, which will be conducted in plenary lectures, in discussion sessions, in small groups, and through interaction around student reports:

## **Part 1 – The Changing Religious Context**

### Week 1

Feb. 6 Introduction to the course, to one another, and to the changing religious context in America

Readings:

- Browse through the website of The Pluralism Project, <http://pluralism.org/>
- Read specifically “From Diversity to Pluralism” by Diana Eck at <http://pluralism.org/encounter/challenges> (also click in the box on the right and read the statements on pluralism and religious diversity by the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, United Methodists, and National Council of Churches)
- Read the section on religious diversity in Louisville, <http://pluralism.org/landscape/louisville>
- Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “The Religious Composition of the United States” <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-1.pdf>

### Week 2

Feb.11 “Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – A brief history and theological reflection on the four streams of the Ecumenical Movement and their relevance for today.

- Steven Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too*, pp. 1-86.
- Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*, paragraphs, 238-258 (“Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace”), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html#III.The\\_new\\_evangelization\\_for\\_the\\_transmission\\_of\\_the\\_faith](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html#III.The_new_evangelization_for_the_transmission_of_the_faith)

*Reflection Question (for 50 word sentence): Which of the “Ten things you can do for the Unity of the Church” that Harmon suggests do you think will be most helpful in enhancing the Ecumenical Movement and why?*

Feb.13 Biblical Perspectives on Christian Unity and People of Other Faiths

Each student will prepare and share a “mini-exegesis” reflecting on the implications of one of these texts for ecumenism and life together with people of other faiths:

- Genesis 1: 26-31
- Genesis 9: 8-17
- Genesis 12: 1-5
- Exodus 3: 7-8
- Psalm 133
- Micah 6: 6-8
- Jeremiah 29: 4-7
- Matthew 22: 36-40
- Matthew 28: 16-20
- Luke 4: 16-20
- I Corinthians 12: 12-14 & 26-27
- Ephesians 4: 1-6
- Colossians 1: 17-20
- Revelation 21: 1-5

*Reflection Question: Your mini-exegesis will replace your 50 word sentence for today's class session.*

### Week 3

Feb.18 Diverse Christian Families (and cousins we didn't even know!)

Readings:

- Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One*, chapter on "Christianity, pp. 65-99.
- Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Bellofatto, "The Demographic Status of World Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," in *Ecumenical Visions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (on CAMS)

*Reflection Question: Which of the demographic changes that Johnson and Bellofatto highlight do you believe has had the greatest impact on ecumenism and why?*

Feb.20 The Abrahamic Religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity)

Readings:

- Prothero, chapters on Islam and Judaism, pp. 25-63 and 243-278.

*Reflection Question: Prothero asserts that Islam is the "greatest religion" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What are two reasons he states for making this assertion?*

### Week 4

Feb. 24 Students are invited to the D2D lunch for pastoral counselors where Professor Townsend will interview Professor Ariarajah on counseling in interfaith contexts.

Feb.25 Eastern Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.)

Readings:

- Prothero, chapters on Hinduism and Buddhism, pp. 131-201.

*Reflection Question: Which of the two religions having their origin in South and Southeast Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism) has had the greater influence on American popular culture? What are two indications of this?*

Feb.27 The Challenge of Religious Diversity for the Church, for America, and for the World

Readings:

- Wesley Ariarajah, *Not without my Neighbour*, chapters one and two, pp. 1-24.
- Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, chapter 8, "How Congregations Manage Diversity," pp. 230-258.

*Reflection Question: Ariarajah states, "Dialogue is not an ambulance service; it is a public health program." Briefly (in 50 words) explain what he means by that assertion.*

## **Part 2 – Ecumenical Ministry**

### Week 5

Mar.4 Insights from twelve core global texts that produced breakthroughs for the Ecumenical Movement

Readings:

- The Nicene Creed (on CAMS)
- The Lund Principle (Faith and Order, 1952), Kinnamon, pp. 462-463.
- The Statement on the Church's Unity arising from the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC 3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly, 1961), Kinnamon, pp. 88-92.
- *The Decree on Ecumenism* from the Second Vatican Council (1964), Kinnamon, pp. 27-34.
- "Racism and South Africa" (WARC General Council, Ottawa, 1982), Kinnamon, pp. 221-223.
- *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order, Lima, 1982), Kinnamon, pp. 176-200.
- "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation" (CWME, San Antonio, 1982), Kinnamon, pp. 372-383.
- "Ten Affirmations on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" (Seoul, 1990), Kinnamon, pp. 317-324.
- "The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling" (WCC 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly, Canberra 1991), Kinnamon, pp. 124-125.
- "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" (Vatican & LWF, 1999) (on CAMS)
- "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct" (WCC, Pontifical Council, and WEA, 2011) (on CAMS)

- The “Value Statement” from “Ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (WCC, 2012) (on CAMS)

(Note: All but the Nicene Creed and the final three readings can be found in Kinnamon and Cope. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts*. Other readings will be available on CAMS.)

*Reflection Question: Pick one of these documents and identify one significant breakthrough it represented for the ecumenical movement.*

Mar.6 Major expressions of the Ecumenical Movement:

- World Council of Churches (<http://www.oikoumene.org/en>),
- National Councils of Churches (<http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/#>),
- Christian World Communions (<http://wcrc.ch/>, <http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/>, <http://www.lutheranworld.org/>, <https://www.bwanet.org/>, [http://www.vatican.va/phome\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm)),
- Global Christian Forum (<http://www.globalchristianforum.org>),
- Full Communion Agreements (<http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/formula-of-agreement-1997.pdf>),
- Faith and Order Movement, etc.

Readings:

- Peruse the websites above
- Steven Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too*, Appendix A, “Resources for Ecumenical Engagement,” pp. 87-109.

*Reflection Question: Which is your ‘Christian World Communion’ and what is one major contribution it has made to the ecumenical movement in recent years?*

## Week 6

Mar.11 Major initiatives that make ecumenism come alive in congregations – community ministries, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, World Communion Sunday, Community Ministries, Local and Regional Councils of Churches, etc.

Readings:

- Brochure for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014 (on CAMS)
- Peruse the materials online from your denomination for World Communion Sunday and be ready to share insights in class
- Peruse the website of the Association of Community Ministries in Louisville (<http://www.louisvilleministries.org/>) and particularly the website for the community ministry where you live, go to church, or are engaged in field education (You can access particular community ministries from the “members” tab on this website.)

- Peruse the website of the Kentucky Council of Churches  
(<http://www.kycouncilofchurches.org/>)

*Reflection Question: What is one significant ecumenical ministry carried out by 'your' community ministry?*

Mar.13 Panel of local pastors and ecumenical leaders on ecumenical ministry today

#### Week 7

Research and Study Week

#### Week 8

Mar.25 Student reports on visits/engagements with Catholic, Orthodox, and Evangelical Churches

- Student papers shared in advance

Mar.27 Student reports on visits/engagements with 'Mainline' Protestant, Pentecostal, and Immigrant Churches

- Student papers shared in advance

### **Part 3 – Interfaith Relations**

#### Week 9

Apr.1 Theologies of Religion and their impact on ministry

Readings:

- March, Eugene, *The Wide, Wide Circle of Divine Love*, chapters one, three, and thirteen (pp. 3-12, 23-32, and 130-139).
- Adeney, Frances and Terry Muck, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*. Baker Academic, 2009. pp. 7-11 (on CAMS)

*Reflection Question: March (and many others) identify three different approaches Christians take toward other religions – exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist. Which of these three best describes your position and give one reason why you are most comfortable with the position you have chosen?*

Apr.3 Intercultural Factors in Interfaith Relations

#### Week 10

(In addition to class sessions students are expected to participate in the Festival of Theology this week)

Apr. 7 Lecture # 1 by Wesley Ariarajah, "Beyond the Impossible: Towards a Breakthrough in Theology of Religions."

- Students may also wish to read Wesley Ariarajah's newest book, *Your God, My God, Our God* alongside the lectures.

Apr. 8 Lecture # 2 by Wesley Ariarajah, "Mission Impossible: Can it again be made Possible?"

Reading:

- Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbor*, pp. 100-129.

Apr.10 Local and global initiatives for inter-religious understanding and work for justice – World Conference on, Festival of Faiths, Interfaith Paths to Peace, Interfaith Youth Core, etc.

Explore the websites of these organizations:

- Religions for Peace (<http://www.rfp.org/>)
- The Pluralism Project (<http://pluralism.org/>)
- Interfaith Youth Core (<http://www.ifyc.org/>)
- Festival of Faiths (<http://festivaloffaiths.org/>)
- Interfaith Paths to Peace (<http://paths2peace.org/>)

*Reflection Question: Identify one ministry or program of one of these groups that particularly appeals to you.*

#### Week 11

Apr.15 Panel of scholars and pastors holding different perspectives on ministry in relation to people of other faiths

Apr.17 Easter break

### **Part 4 – Implications for Ministry**

#### Week 12

Apr.22 Student reports on visits/engagements with communities of other faiths

Apr.24 Challenging issues for ecumenical/interfaith ministry – marriage, gender justice, human sexuality, immigration, intercultural understanding, international peace and justice concerns

Reading:

- Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbor*, pp. 26-99.

*Reflection Question: Ariarajah identifies many issues that need to be navigated in the daily encounters between Christians and people of other faiths. Which of these issues make you the most nervous to pursue with those from other faith communities?*

### Week 13

May 1 Chaplaincy as a unique arena for ecumenical/interfaith ministry

Reading:

- James A. Hamel, "Ecumenism in the Chaplaincy" in *First Things* (on CAMS)
- Catherine Lack, "Multifaith Chaplaincy: Virtual Dream or Pragmatic Reality?" (on CAMS)

*Reflection Question: Do you feel it is possible to be both a Christian chaplain and a multi-faith chaplain with integrity? Briefly share one reason why or why not.*

### Week 14

May 6 Sharing and highlighting of final papers

- Papers shared in advance by email.

May 8 Summation and evaluation of the course

### **Bibliography:**

#### **A. Basic Course Texts**

- Ariarajah, Wesley, *Not Without My Neighbor – Issues in Interfaith Relations*. World Council of Churches (1999). ISBN: 2825413089
- Harmon, Steven, *Ecumenism Means You, Too*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books (2010). ISBN: 1606088653
- Kinnamon, Michael, and Cope, Brian, eds. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans (1999). ISBN: 0802842631
- March, Eugene, *The Wide, Wide Circle of Divine Love*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox (2004). ISBN: 0664227082
- Prothero, Stephen, *God is Not One*. New York, NY: HarperOne (2011). ISBN: 0061571288
- Eck, Dianna, Pluralism Project at Harvard University (online resources). <http://pluralism.org/>
- Wuthnow, Robert, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (2007). ISBN: 0691134111

#### **B. Other Significant Texts for Research and Study**

- Ariarajah, Wesley, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers. (2009) ISBN: 1606089080
- Ariarajah, Wesley, *Your God, My God, Our God*. Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications (2012). ISBN 9782825415764
- Dosick, Wayne, *Living Judaism*. New York, NY: HarperOne (1998). ISBN: 0060621796
- Esposito, John, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, (2011). ISBN: 0199794138



- Goosen, Gideon, *Bringing Churches Together*. World Council of Churches (2001). ISBN: 2825413488
- Kimball, Charles, *When Religion Turns Evil*. New York, NY: HarperOne (2003). ISBN: 0060556102
- Knitter, Paul, *Introducing Theologies of Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books (2002). ISBN: 1570754195
- Nuesner, Jacob, ed. *World Religions in America*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox (2009). ISBN: 0664233201
- Numrich, David, *The Faith Next Door: American Christians and their new Religious Neighbors*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press (2009). ISBN: 0195386213
- Thatanamail, John, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press (2006). ISBN: 0800637933
- World Council of Churches, *Reader for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute*
- “A Common Word between Us and You,” <http://www.acommonword.com/>

## **Policies of LPTS:**

### **Use of Inclusive Language**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible’s images for God. For more information, see: <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>

### **Academic Honesty**

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another’s language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center ([kmapes@lpts.edu](mailto:kmapes@lpts.edu)) during the first two weeks

of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

### **Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

---

<sup>i i</sup> Charles L. Cohen on the 50-word assignment: “A single-sentence exercise with a finite word limit counters students’ proclivity for aerating their prose with superfluities. Given at most fifty words, students must distill their arguments’ fundamentals and phrase them concisely, for, as my syllabus warns, the fifty-first word and its successors face a terrible fate. (I have been known to cut out extraneous verbiage and turn the tattered remnant into a paper airplane—a practice proved sound pedagogically if not aerodynamically.)

Fifty words might appear too many—the contests cereal companies run, after all, ask for only twenty five—but I prefer giving students sufficient rope. For one thing, the fifty-word limit allows them to cope with the assignment, which often requires complicated responses. For another, it weans them from dependency on simple declarative sentences and challenges them to experiment with multiple clauses. Some can handle compound-complex sentences, but most require—and appreciate—tutelage in them. Nor are fifty words too few; no student has ever complained about an inability to pare down the verbiage. Had Goldilocks stumbled into my section instead of the Three Bears’ den, she would have found the word limit “just right.”

Consider, for example, the assignment that I recently gave students in History/Religious Studies 451, entitled “Constructing a hypothesis”: “Using the maps in the front of the packet, compare the distribution of churches within Anglo-America east of the Mississippi River in 1750 with the distribution in 1850 and, in one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (need I say more?), hypothesize the reasons for the difference.” To complete the exercise, students must examine a series of maps, aggregate data presented graphically and convert it into written form, analyze that data and develop a hypothesis to explain patterns they may have found. They must attend carefully to

---

the material (not the least of the minor assignment's benefits is its capacity to monitor students' preparation), read the maps against each other, and offer a succinct but accurate conclusion, thereby rehearsing several critical skills simultaneously.

The quality of the responses varied, as one might expect, but the best submission hit the mark exactly, intellectually and, at fifty words, quantitatively: 'The maps show a relative decline in Anglican and Congregational Churches in relation to the growth of other churches between 1750 and 1850, which reflects the shift towards the disestablishment of state churches and the demand for a constitutional guaranty of religious freedom that occurred during the American Revolutionary Settlement.' Even more impressive, English is not the writer's native language."<sup>i</sup>