

Theologies of Religious Pluralism

Spring 2011

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M: 6:00-8:50pm

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the various Christian theological responses to religious pluralism. This subject is especially pertinent in our context of globalization. The question of this course is: What is the meaning of my neighbor's faith for my faith? In answering this question we will consider biblical, historical, and systematic perspectives and approaches.

Our first task is to understand the landscape of religious pluralism as a global phenomenon so as to situate our theological thinking within this background. This section will consider religious pluralism and theology in both historical and contemporary perspectives. Our investigation will then examine current approaches to religious pluralism. As part of the on-going exploration of the course, we will also consider how lived interreligious encounter can reshape Christian theology. The course will conclude with the consideration of theologies that emerge from the experience of interreligious conversations, including student projects of engaging theology after encounter.

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of the course is to help students develop their capacity for faithful and coherent pastoral practice in a multifaith world.

Students will:

1. gain a basic understanding of the various Christian theological responses, both historical and contemporary, to religious pluralism through critical reading, discussion, and writing assignments,
2. and begin to reflect on their own theological position on religious pluralism

Requirements:

1. Preparation for class and active participation in discussion (20%)

2. Four reflection papers (2-3 pp. each) (40%)

The Bible and Religious Pluralism

Historical Perspectives

Theologies of Religious Pluralism

Comparative Theology

3. Final paper (8-10 pp.) (40%)

The final paper will be a project in constructive theology where students will pursue independent engagement with a non-Christian religion of the student's choice. Students are expected to begin the development of this project in the first weeks of the course, with a paper proposal due the third week of class. The final paper will be due the last week of class. In the final meetings of the course, students will share their work with one another.

D.Min. students will consult with the instructor about additional requirements.

Required Books:

Richard Plantinga, ed., *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Blackwell Publishers, 1999).[CP]

Paul Knitter, ed., *Myth of Religious Superiority* (Orbis, 2005). [MRS]

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

Recommended Books:

Paul Knitter, *Without the Buddha, I Could not be a Christian* (OneWorld Publications, 2009).

Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Religion of Taoist Christianity* (Wellspring/Ballantine, 2001).

Roberto de Nobili, *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise* (Jesuit Sources, 2000).

Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rita Gross, *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Buddhist-Christian Conversation* (Continuum, 2001).

Alan Race and Paul M. Hedges, eds. *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths* (SCM Press, 2008).

CAMS:

Selected readings will be posted on CAMS.

On Library Reserve:

Richard Plantinga, ed., *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Blackwell Publishers, 1999).[CP]

Paul Knitter, ed., *Myth of Religious Superiority* (Orbis, 2005). [MRS]

Alan Race and Paul M. Hedges, eds. *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths* (SCM Press, 2008).

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

Ranya Idliby, Susan Oliver, and Priscilla Warner, *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew-- Three Women Search for Understanding* (Free Press, 2007).

Paul Knitter, *Without the Buddha, I Could not be a Christian* (OneWorld Publications, 2009).

Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Religion of Taoist Christianity* (Wellspring/Ballantine, 2001).

Roberto de Nobili, *Inquiry of the meaning of God*, in *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise* (Jesuit Sources, 2000).

Paul Griffiths, *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes* (1990).

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, ed., *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Orbis, 1988).

Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rita Gross, *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Buddhist-Christian Conversation* (Continuum, 2001).

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (Orbis, 1993).

Week 1

Religious Pluralism as the Context for Theology

(optional pre-course reading)

Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Became the World's Most Diverse Nation* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001). ISBN: 9780060621599

Introduction to the course

Explanation of writing assignments

Lecture and Discussion on religious diversity in America

Week 2

Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 1-54.

Alan Race and Paul M. Hedges, eds. *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*. [Choose one article from Part I]

John Thatamanil, "Comparative Theology After Religion," in *Planetary Loves: Gayatri Spivak, Postcoloniality and Theology* (Fordham University Press, forthcoming). (CAMS) [uncorrected proof]

Week 3

The Bible and Religious Pluralism

Richard Plantinga, "The Bible and Religious Pluralism," in CP, 11-25.

S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Reading the Bible in a Pluralistic Context," *The Ecumenical Review* 51.1 (1999): 5-10. (CAMS)

Kwok Pui-Lan, "Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World," *Semeia* 47 (1989): 25-42. (CAMS)

Daniel Boyarin and Virginia Burrus, "Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity," *Social Compass* 52.4 (2005): 431-41. (CAMS)

PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT DUE

PAPER 1 REQUIRED: The Bible and Religious Pluralism

Week 4 Historical Perspectives

Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle* 61. (CAMS)

Augustine and World Religions (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). See especially Paula Fredriksen, "Secundum Carnem"; Harkins, "Unwitting Witnesses"; Clooney, "Augustine, Apuleius, and Herme Trismegistus." (CAMS)

Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Religion of Taoist Christianity* (Wellspring/Ballantine, 2001).
On Reserve

Roberto de Nobili, *Inquiry of the Meaning of God*, in *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise* (Jesuit Sources, 2000)
On Reserve

PAPER 2: On Religious Diversity in Historical Perspective

Week 5 Theology of Religious Pluralism

Thomas Aquinas, from *Summa Theologiae*, in CP, 93-122.

Karl Barth, "The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion," *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God* I/2 (Section 17), CP, 223-42.

Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," in *Theological Investigations*, volume 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger, in CP, 288-303.

Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," in *Theological Investigations*, volume 6, trans. Karl-H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger (Seabury Press, 1974). (CAMS)

Week 6 Theology of Religious Pluralism

John Hick, "The Pluralistic Hypothesis," in *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 11-30. (CAMS)

George Lindbeck, "Many Religions and One True Faith," in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster John Knox, 1984). (CAMS)

S. Mark Heim, "Salvations: A More Pluralistic Hypothesis," in *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Orbis, 1995). (CAMS)

REQUIRED PAPER 3: Theologies of Religious Pluralism

Week 7 Comparative Theology: Living Dialogue

Rosemary Ruether, *Religious Feminism*. On reserve.

Ranya Idliby, Susan Oliver, and Priscilla Warner, *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew-- Three Women Search for Understanding* (Free Press, 2007). On Reserve.

Week 8

Comparative Theology: Scriptural Reasoning

Davis Ford and C.C. Pecknold, eds. *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). On reserve [Choose one]

Stephen Kepnes and Basit Bilal Koshul, *Scripture, Reason, and Contemporary Islam-West Encounter: Studying the "Other," Understanding Ourselves* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). On reserve [Choose one]

REQUIRED PAPER 4: On the Project of Comparative Theology

Week 9

Perspectives from the 'Others'

John Makransky, "Buddhist Perspectives on Truth in Other Religions: Past and Present," in *Theological Studies* 64. 2 (June 2003): 334-61. (CAMS)

Tim Winter, "The Last Trump Card: Islam and the Supersession of Other Faiths," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 9.2 (1999): 133-55. (CAMS)

Sallie King, "A Pluralistic View of Pluralism," in MRS, 88-101.

K.L. Seshagiri Rao, "Mohatma Gandhi: A Prophet of Pluralism," in MRS, 45-55.

Dan Cohn Sherbrook, "Judaism and Other Faiths," in MRS, 119-32.

Ashgar Ali Engineer, "Islam and Pluralism," in MRS, 211-19.

Also of interest, and on reserve as reference: Paul Griffiths, *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes* (1990)

Week 10

Theology After Encounter

Paul Knitter, *Without the Buddha, I Could not be a Christian* (OneWorld Publications, 2009). On reserve.

Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 55-127.

[Choose one reading from the two above]

Jeannine Hill-Fletcher, "As Long as We Remember: Possibilities in the Impossibilities of Interreligious Dialogue," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 531-54. (CAMS)

Week 11
Theology After Encounter

Alan Race and Paul M. Hedges, eds., *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*. [Choose one article from Part II] On reserve

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, ed., *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Orbis, 1988). On reserve [Choose one article]

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (Orbis, 1993). On reserve [Choose one article]

Mary Boys, "Patriarchal Judaism, Liberating Jesus: A Feminist Misrepresentation," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 56:3-4 (2002): 50-75. (CAMS)

Roger Haight, "Pluralist Christology as Orthodox," in MRS, 151-61. (CAMS)

Dominus Iesus (on-line)

Week 12
Theology After Encounter

Students share final papers considering the project of Theology after engaging religious pluralism.
