

## **Christianity and World Religions**

Prof. Frances S. Adeney  
Spring 2011

TH4233/EM4233  
Wed. 6:00-8:50 p.m.

**Course Description:** This course provides an overview of world religions inviting Christian responses to people of other faiths. Questions about the meaning of religion in the lives of adherents, historical and sociological issues of religion in society, and contemporary realities of pluralism and resulting tensions among religions will be addressed. A focus on practices and attitudes that foster understanding between Christians and people from other traditions will be emphasized.

### **Purpose and Objectives:**

Students will

- learn to articulate the historical roots of beliefs and practices of world religions and the differences among them
- demonstrate an ability to discuss theological/philosophical issues among religions from Christian perspectives and appreciate those issues from perspectives of other religions
- become familiar with the roles of religion in society and the conflicts of interest arising from the plurality of religions in a globalized world
- develop practices that foster mutually beneficial interactions with people of other religions

### **Topics:**

I: Religion: Foundations and Definitions

Sociological and Historical Bases of Religion: Definitions, origins, and societal roles, Power and dangers of religion.

Philosophical and Theological Bases of Religion: Worldviews: monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, scientific positivism.

II: Religions of the World

Native American Religions, African Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Chinese Religions, Japanese Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'I, U.S.A Religions  
Religions in Context: Differences, blendings, historical shifts among world religions, e.g. post-colonialism, roles of women, views of Scripture

III: Christianity and World Religions

Interactions Between Christianity and World Religions: Theologies of religion, views of Christianity from non-Christian perspectives

Globalization and religion; religions in the context of the U.S.A.

Practices that nurture beneficial interaction between Christians and people of other religions

**Requirements and Evaluation:**

1. Attendance, thorough reading and active discussion of texts and topics. Weekly assignments and in-class exercises will be given to test comprehension and critical appropriation of material. (30%)
2. Two field outings to places of worship and/or religious services of other religions, e.g. Hindu temple, Mosque, Synagogue, Buddhist Center, Native American Sweat Lodge or other. A 1500 word, typed, double-spaced report for each outing. An oral presentation based on **one of those outings** highlighting practices that would foster interaction between Christians and that community of faith. (30%)
3. **Two take-home exams** testing comprehension of course content and requiring critical reflection on issues and presented in the course. (40%)

**Required Texts:**

Gross, Rita M. and Terry C. Muck. *Christians Talk about Buddhist Meditation: Buddhists Talk about Christian Prayer*. NY: Continuum, 2003.

Muck, Terry. *How to Study Religion: A Beginning Guide to Method*. Wilmore, KY: Better Publications, Wood Hill Books, 2005. (NOTE: This text will be available from the instructor on the first day of class.)

Muck, Terry and Frances S. Adeney. *Christianity Encountering World Religions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.

Neusner, Jacob. *World Religions in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

**Supplemental Texts:** (On reserve in the library.)

Griffiths, Paul J. *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

Hopfe, Lewis M. and Mark R. Woodward. *Religions of the World*, 7th Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

O'Neill, Maura. *Mending a Torn World: Women in Interreligious Dialogue*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.

Partridge, Christopher, ed. *Introduction to World Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Young, Serenity, ed. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and About Women*. NY: Crossroad, 1995.

NOTE: All LPTS policies on plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Use of inclusive language will be expected. More than two absences will affect course grade.