

Christians and Others / Fall 2019

Gardencourt 206
Monday, 1:30-4:20 p.m

Instructor: Christopher Elwood
Gardencourt 216, x 383
celwood@lpts.edu

Course Description:

This course explores resources within Christian tradition for interpreting and addressing the challenge of religious difference and for living, working, witnessing, and engaging with religious others. Classic and contemporary contributions on the nature and value of religion, the relation between Christian faith and human religiousness, and the place of Christianity among other traditions of faith are among the themes to be examined. Students will also attend to particularly significant moments of religious encounter, exchange, and challenge in the modern period as a means toward evaluating various theological interpretations of religion and articulating their own position.

Students taking this course should have completed Introduction to Theology and Ethics or Systematic Theology.

Goals and Objectives:

The goal of the course is to help students develop their capacity for faithful and coherent theological reflection and expression in pastoral practice. In Louisville Seminary's structure of assessment, the particular work of this course is most closely related to Master of Divinity Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 3: *Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.* It also contributes to aspects of the following specified outcomes: SLO 2: *Students will learn to become skillful interpreters of the history of Christian experience.* SLO 4: *Students will demonstrate the ability to reflect critically and self-critically on relationships between Christian faith and various forms of systemic injustice.* SLO 6: *Can articulate own theological perspective, mindful of the global, multicultural, multi-religious context of contemporary ministry.*

Students will

- gain a basic understanding of Christian theologies of religion, both contemporary and historic;
- become familiar with and learn to interpret theologically key historical moments of Christian and non-Christian religious exchange, encounter, and challenge;
- sharpen their skills of theological interpretation through the close reading and discussion of primary sources;
- develop their capacity to make responsible and relevant use of historic theological writing;
- clarify their own theological and ethical positions through the production of a dialogical paper and a constructive statement of their position on the relation of Christian faith to other traditions.

Required text:

Paul F. Knitter, ed. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002. (Abbreviated "Knitter" in the list of assignments)

On Library Reserve:

N.B. All required reading not from the required text for the course should be posted on the CAMS site.

Ajzenstat, O.E. "Beyond Totality: The Shoah and the Biblical Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas." Tod Linafelt, ed.

Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust. New York, New York University Press: 2000, 106-120.

Dawe, Donald G. and John B. Carman, *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World.* Maryknoll, N.Y., 1987.

D'Costa, Gavin, ed. *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered.* Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990.

Eck, Diana L. *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation.* San Francisco: Harper, 2002.

Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras.* Boston, 1993.

- Edwards, John. *The Jews in Christian Europe*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Edwards, Jr., Mark U. *Luther's Last Battles*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1983.
- Gager, John G. *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*. New York, 1983.
- Ghazi, Abidullah al-Ansari. *Raja Rammohun Roy: An Encounter with Islam and Christianity and the Articulation of Hindu Self-Consciousness*. Xlibris, 2010.
- Heber, Reginald. "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." (Word document)
- Heim, Mark S. *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*. Maryknoll, N.Y., 1995.
- Hick, John, and Brian Hebblethwaite, ed. *Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings*. Philadelphia, 1980.
- Hick, John, and Paul F. Knitter, ed. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987.
- Hirota, Dennis. "Images of Reality in the Shin Buddhist Path." Dennis Hirota, ed. *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*. SUNY, 2000, 33-72.
- Kaufman, Gordon D. *God—Mystery—Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- Keller, Catherine, ed. *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*. Routledge, 2011.
- Knitter, Paul. *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985.
- Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
- Lyden, John C. *Film as Religion: Myths, Moral, and Rituals*. New York: NYU Press, 2003.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul, and Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford, 2010.
- Oberman, Heiko A. *The Roots of Antisemitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Ramadan, Tariq. *What I Believe*. New York: Oxford, 2010.
- Roy, Rammohun. *Vindication of the Incarnation of the Deity as the Common Basis of Hinduism and Christianity*. (Word document).
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: Harper, 1978.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Towards a World Theology*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981.
- Thatamanil, John. "Comparative Theology after 'Religion.'" Stephen Moore and Mayra Rivera, ed. *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.
- Thomas, Owen C. *Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations*. New York, 1969.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Requirements:

1. *Course engagement*: Thorough preparation for class, thoughtfully active participation in discussion, and appropriate note-taking together constitute a basic expectation and requirement of the course. Attendance is mandatory. Students will submit a one-paragraph self-assessment of their course engagement, including a grade, in the conclusion of their final project/position paper (see 4. Culminating exercise, below). The following is a rough guide to letter grade assignment: A = completed 95-100% of the reading prior to class discussion, with critical reflection, and engaged thoughtfully and with respect for others in class exchanges; B = completed 85% ...; C = completed 75% ... Grades should be lowered appropriately for unexcused absences, tardiness, leaving class early, in-class texting or other forms of non-participation. The instructor reserves the right to adjust the reported grade when necessary. (about 15%)
2. *Film review*: A review of the film, "Of Gods and Men," focusing on issues related to religious and cultural identity and difference, **first draft** (2-3 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman) **due September 9**; **revision** (3-4 pages, double spaced) **due November 18**. (about 10%)
3. *Pre-Dialogical paper*: Write an essay on a theologian who articulates *a position on religious difference that you do not share*, giving a generous and persuasive reading of this position together with an explanation of reasons why one might reasonably and ethically adopt this view (5 pages, double spaced), **due October 21**. (about 25%)

4. *Culminating exercise*: A project that represents the fruit of your theological, historical, and ethical reflection across this semester on the central topic of the course and the variety of questions raised by your reading, discussion, thinking, and practice. A traditional way to fulfil this assignment would be to write an academic **position paper** (8-10 pages) supplying a comprehensive outline of your present position on the relation of Christian faith to other faiths—discussing areas of difficulty, complexity, confidence, and struggle—while clearly and explicitly utilizing theological sources and figures studied in this course. But other projects are possible. The shape, style, content, length, and format is to be determined by you, as it is an exercise intended for your own growth and development. So use whatever freedom and creativity serves positively that intention. Keep in mind that the time, effort, reflection, and imagination expended on a non-traditional project should not be less than would be devoted to an academic position paper. The written components of this exercise are **due** to the instructor **December 10**, and your projects will be presented to the class (plan on limiting your presentation to 10 minutes) so as to fuel conversation with colleagues in the final conversation (exam) on **December 12** (see the calendar). (about 50%)

All papers should be typed, double spaced (12-pt. Times New Roman font), saved as a Word document with title Yourlastname.Assignmentname, and submitted electronically to the instructor's email inbox. Essays submitted for this course will observe conventions of academic writing. Students needing help with citation, voice, development of argument, or other aspects of writing style, should consult with the Academic Support Center within the first few days of the term.

N.B. In order to pass the course, students must complete and submit all assigned work.

Policy on Late Work:

Written assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (i.e., a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Citation Policy:

The papers will observe conventions of academic writing. Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

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. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center (ASC). For help with citation, voice, development of argument, or other aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the ASC early in the semester.

Grading:

The Seminary's grading system defines the following grades:

A = superior, B = good, C = satisfactory, D = marginal, F = failure.

Grading for this course will seek to maintain standards commensurate with a graduate level of teaching and learning. Students should understand that assignments that are completed with a level of competence expected of graduate students—in ordinary language, “good” or “very good” work—earn a grade in the range of “B.” “A” work is work that exceeds basic expectations, in which there is a quality of originality in thought and execution that goes beyond the level of basic competence.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructor 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 the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility and Accommodation:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (bherrintonhodge@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.

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>.

Policy on late work:

All written assignments are due, unless indicated otherwise, by 11:59 pm on the date given in the syllabus. Students who encounter unusual obstacles to getting an assignment in may ask for an extension of the due date. They should contact the instructor to request an extension before the work comes due. They may speak to the instructor directly, but they are required to communicate by email so as to provide a record of the request. Extensions are granted solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments submitted late, when no extension has been granted, will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Use of electronic devices in class:

Do not send or read text messages during class. Cell phones should be turned off. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask the instructor for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking and referring to the assigned primary source readings for the day. You may not access the Internet during class time unless specifically for purposes directly relevant to the course. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites will negatively affect the course grade.

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.

Contacting the instructor:

While students are always welcome to speak to the instructor at any time about questions or issues that arise, the most reliable and efficient means of setting up an opportunity to meet and talk over important matters is through email. Students are strongly encouraged to contact the professor when they feel they need clarification on topics and questions that arise in the class, or when they are confronting significant challenges in their learning.

Schedule of topics and assignments

*N.B. The film Of Gods and Men will be shown **September 5** at 7:00 PM.*

September 9

Introductions: contemporary discussions

***Film review first draft due**

- Knitter, Introduction
- Film: *Of Gods and Men* (2010; 122 minutes) – **to be shown Thurs., 9/5 GC 206, 7:00 PM**
- Testament of Dom Christian de Chergé

Recommended background:

- John C. Lyden, “The Religion Film Dialogue as Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Film as Religion*, 108-126

September 16

One way

- Knitter, ch. 1-3
- Karl Barth, “The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion,” [from *Church Dogmatics* 1/2], in Hick and Hebblethwaite, ed., *Christianity and Other Religions*, 32-51

September 23

One way that includes many

- Knitter, ch. 4-6
- Karl Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions” [from *Theological Investigations* V], in Hick and Hebblethwaite, ed., *Christianity and Other Religions*, 52-86
- *Nostra Aetate (In Our Time)*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

Recommended background:

- Justin Martyr, “Second Apology,” <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-secondapology.html>, ch. 1, 7-8, 10-13

September 30

Many ways to the one end

- Knitter, ch. 7-9
- John Hick, “The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity,” in Hick and Knitter, ed., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 16-36

October 7

Many ways, different ends

- Knitter, ch. 10-12
- John B. Cobb, Jr., "Beyond Pluralism," in D'Costa, ed., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 81-95
- S. Mark Heim, *Salvations*, 1-10, 129-131, 212-229

Recommended background:

- S. Mark Heim, *Salvations*, 144-157
- S. Mark Heim, "A Trinitarian View of Religious Pluralism," <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2666>

RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK 10.14-10.18

October 21

Repudiation

***Pre-Dialogical paper due**

- Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Antisemitism*, 101-146

Recommended background:

- John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 247-269
- John Edwards, "Renaissance, Reformation, and the Jews," in *The Jews in Christian Europe*, 41-65
- Mark U. Edwards, Jr., "Apocalyptic Expectations: The Scourge of God" and "Against the Jews," in *Luther's Last Battles*, 97-142

October 28

Religion

- Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 119-121, 125-131, 301-305
- Raimon Panikkar, "Eruption of Truth," <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2015>
- John Thatamanil, "Comparative Theology after 'Religion'," in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, 238-257, 384-388

November 4

Otherness

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1-4, 31-40, 49-50, 63-68, 73-79, 86-87, 100-110, 353-359
- O.E. Ajzenstat, "Beyond Totality: The Shoah and the Biblical Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas," in Tod Linafelt, ed., *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust*, 106-120

November 11

Reasoning(s)

- Frank E. Talmadge, "Four Phases of Jewish Reluctance," in Talmadge, ed., *Disputation and Dialogue*, 259-264
- Moses Mendelssohn, Letter to Johann Caspar Lavater, in Frank E. Talmadge, ed., *Disputation and Dialogue*, 265-272
- Martin Buber, "The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul," in Frank E. Talmadge, ed., *Disputation and Dialogue*, 273-283
- John Howard Yoder and Peter Ochs, "What Needs to Change in the Jewish Christian Dialogue and Why," in Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, 30-40

Recommended background:

- Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 47-49, 55-62

November 18

Idolatry

***Film review revision due**

- Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “Idolatry in Comparative Perspective,” in Hick and Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 53-68
- Reginald Heber, “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains”
- Rammohun Roy, *Vindication of the Incarnation of the Deity as the Common Basis of Hinduism and Christianity*
- Abidullah al-Ansari Ghazi, *Raja Rammohun Roy: An Encounter with Islam and Christianity and the Articulation of Hindu Self-Consciousness*, 130-143

Recommended background:

- Abidullah al-Ansari Ghazi, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, 93-129, 218-228, 250-288

November 25

Comparison

- Dennis Hirota, “Images of Reality in the Shin Buddhist Path,” in Hirota, ed., *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*, 33-46, 57-58, 60-61, 64-67
- John B. Cobb, Jr., “A Christian Critique of Pure Land Buddhism,” <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1486>
- Gordon D. Kaufman, “God and Emptiness: An Experimental Essay,” in *God—Mystery—Diversity*, 141-150, (151-156), 221-223
- Glossary
- Francis X. Clooney, “A Christian Pilgrim along the Buddhist Way,” <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/springsummer2019/christian-pilgrim-along-buddhist-way>

December 2

Postmodernity and difference

- Knitter, Conclusion
- Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html
- Tariq Ramadan, *What I Believe*, 80-84, 90-95, 112-118
- Tariq Ramadan, “Manifesto for a new ‘We’,” *What I Believe*, 123-133
- Sharon V. Betcher, “Take my yoga upon you: A spiritual *pli* for the global city,” in Catherine Keller, ed., *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*, 57-80

December 10

T

***Culminating Exercise—Position paper/Projects due**

December 12

Th 1:30-4:20

Conclusions: Culminating Exercise presentations/conversation (exam)