DM 9351: World Religions and Christianity: Christian Ministry, Theology and Spirituality in a Multifaith World

DMin January Term 2011

January 4-14, 2011 1:00 – 4:00PM

Course Description:

A study of issues of Christian ministry, theology and spirituality in the context of the multifaith character of our contemporary global society. The course will guide students in theological reflection on Christian attitudes toward the Religious Other, and explore pastoral and spiritual resources for Christian ministry in multifaith settings. 3 credit hours.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Survey key features of our current 21st century global society with its woundedness on different levels, and reflect on the fact of religious diversity as a context for Christian mission and ministry.

2. Study highlights of two major religious traditions (Islam and Buddhism) in their historical development and contemporary manifestations, toward an appreciation of their spiritual message and significance for our times.

3. Engage in theological reflection on viable attitudes toward Religious Others from the standpoint of Christian love of neighbor, in a spirit of hospitality, dialogue and cooperation.

4. Study ways in which Christians may learn from other religious traditions toward broadening and deepening perspectives in ministry, theological understanding, and spiritual practice.

Required Readings:

David Brockman, et. al., The Gospel Among Religions : Christian Ministry, Theology and Spirituality in a Multifaith World (Orbis 2010). (GAR)


Online sources, as well as essays and articles pertaining to class themes (to be sent to enrollees by electronic attachment).
Requirements:

A. Pre-session assignments:


2. Read Paul Knitter, One Earth, Many Religions, pp. 1-135, and write a 7-8 page review essay.
   (Due date: Dec. 17, via email file)

3. Explore online sources for descriptive and statistical accounts of global poverty, militarization, ecological deterioration, and related issues (e.g. globalissues.org, worldwatch.org, and others) and write a 3-4 page reflection essay on “Our Global Woundedness.”

4. Read Thich Nhat Hanh, Miracle of Mindfulness, and engage in mindfulness exercises as recommended, 10 minutes daily. Briefly jot down reflections on these exercises in a logbook.
   (Instructor will send further instructions to enrollees and respond to questions individually by email.)

B. Regular Class Attendance and Participation (See schedule below), including one oral presentation summarizing an assigned reading (5-10 minutes) and initiating discussion on the theme.

C. Final written assignment: Summary Essay, ca. 10 pages, on a theme or themes addressed in the course, to be determined on consultation with Instructor, due Feb. 4 (via email attachment).

Grade for the course will be based on cumulative results of class participation, including fulfillment of pre-session assignments, active attendance and oral presentation (50%), and evaluation of final written assignment (50%).

Schedule and Content of Sessions:


Read: Four Ennobling Truths of our Global Society (electronic file); online sources on global poverty, militarization, ecological deterioration. (www.globalissues.org, www.worldwatch.org)

Discuss: a) Knitter, OEMR, pp. 1-135 (pre-session assignment)

   b) Exercises in Mindfulness ( “ )
January 5. **Islam: Path of Total Submission to God**

Read: Hunt, *Muslim Faith and Values*

Question to be addressed: What can we learn from Islam in our own approach to God?

January 6. **Buddhism: Ways of Wisdom and Compassion**


Question to be addressed: What can we learn from Buddhists toward our own cultivation of wisdom and compassion?

January 7. **Visit to Maria Kannon Zen Center.**

Orientation to Zen Practice: Contemplation in Action.

Read: Attunement to the Breath (Electronic File); Re-read sections of Hanh, MM.

January 10. **Christian Attitudes toward the Religious Other**


a) Historical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the Religious Other

b) Three Classic Positions: Theological Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism (Barth, Rahner, Hick)

c) Theological reflection: Toward a viable theology of religions for grounding Christian ministry in an interfaith world.

January 11. **More Recent Christian Theologies of the Religious Other**


Learning from theological Perspectives of Reuther, Suchocki, Pieris, Amaladoss, Mveng, Heim, Chung, and others (oral presentations summarizing assigned articles---TBD).

View in class: *Spirit in Nature*: Religious Traditions and the Ecological Question

January 12. **Eastern Wisdom and Christian Understanding**
Read: Brockman, GAR, pp. 182-217; 1 or 2 other articles TBA.

Theological Horizons in Dialogue with Other Traditions: Trinity, Eucharist, Pneumatology, Issues in Practical Theology. (Oral presentations summarizing assigned articles---TBD)

January 13. **Buddhist Meditation and Christian Contemplation: Toward Personal and Global Healing**

Read: Brockman, GAR, pp. 218-231

Re-read: Hanh, *Miracle of Mindfulness*.

Discuss: Fruits of Contemplative Practice; Overcoming Ministerial Burn-out or Compassion Fatigue.

Practicum: Labyrinth; Mindfulness Exercises in Class.

January 14 **The Wider Ecumenism: Christian Ministry in Interfaith Settings**


Knitter, OEMR, pp. 136-182.

Overview and Discussion of Learning Outcomes, consultation on themes for Final written assignment.

**Syllabus Attachments**

A. **MINORITY CONCERNS AND THE PERKINS CURRICULUM**

In 1975 the Perkins Senate passed resolutions which bear on the relation of the Perkins curriculum to this school's common concern for the status of ethnic minority groups and of women both in education for ministry and in the ministry itself. The following statement summarizes these resolutions with respect to all courses except those in the area of Ministry.

1. Instructors and students alike are urged to use inclusive language, images and metaphors which will give full and positive value to both the past contributions and the future prospects of ethnic minorities and women in the church and in society at large.

2. Instructors and students alike are urged to give sensitive consideration to the role of images from a predominantly white and male culture in shaping both the language and concepts of Christian theology and the models and methods of Christian ministry that are widely current today.
3. Instructors are urged to make every effort to provide in the syllabi, assignments and formats of their courses, opportunities (1) for women students and students from ethnic minority groups to pursue their study with special reference to their own status or tradition and (2) for all students to become acquainted with the special problems and conditions that affect women and ethnic minority groups in human society.

B. SMU Disability Accommodations:

Southern Methodist University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4563) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Then you should schedule an appointment with your professor to make appropriate arrangements for the course work in this class.