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## REL. 359: Issues in Christianity Today: Religious Pluralism

### Aim of the Course

The fact of religious pluralism is a problem for Christian theology. Traditionally, Christianity has understood itself as the one, true religion, as the only religion through which human beings can be "saved." Nevertheless, after two thousand years of continuous and intensive missionary efforts, the other religions of the world have stubbornly refused to go away, and the adherents of those religions have, for the most part, been content to decline the urgent appeals of Christian missionaries to convert. The question therefore arises: How do we make "Christian theological sense" of the ongoing existence of a multiplicity of religions? The aim of the course is to delve deeply into this question.

Our approach will be primarily *theological* (as opposed to a *religious studies* approach); in other words, we will not be concerned so much with *describing* and *cataloguing* religious pluralism, but rather with *understanding* and *accounting for* religious pluralism, from the standpoint of Christian faith.

### Prerequisite

Sophomore standing is prerequisite for this course.

### Class Meeting Times

Class meetings will be held on Monday through Friday, from 12:15 to 3:00 p.m.

### Course Requirements

1. *Class Participation* (20% of final grade). Regular attendance at class meetings and regular participation in class discussions are expected. Additionally, each student will take a turn at initiating class discussion by identifying, and raising a question about, a passage in the assigned reading that they find particularly interesting. *More than one absence from class will progressively lower this portion of your grade.*
2. *Midterm Exam* (25%), which will take place on the second Wednesday of the term. The exam will contain both short answer and short essay questions.
3. A *4-5 page essay* (25%), due on the third Wednesday of the term. *Late essays will not be accepted without prior consent of the professor.*
4. A *take-home Final Exam* (30%), due by 1:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the term.

### Required Texts

- R. Plantinga, ed. *Christianity and Plurality: Classic and Contemporary Readings.*
- D. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras.*
- R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, rev. ed.

### Students with Special Needs

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml). Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the [disabilities services coordinator](#) as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

### Academic Honesty

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgment of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

### Course Calendar

*Note: The reading assignments listed in this course calendar are to be completed PRIOR to that day's meeting of the class.*

#### **WEEK 1**

**Monday:** Getting oriented

**Tuesday:** Biblical Background, Herbert of Cherbury, G. E. Lessing  
Plantinga, *Christianity and Plurality*, Introduction and chaps. 1, 10, & 11.

**Wednesday:** Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ernst Troeltsch  
Plantinga, chaps. 12 & 13.

**Thursday:** Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer  
Plantinga, chaps. 14 & 15.

**Friday:** Joachim Wach, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner  
Plantinga, chaps. 16-18.

#### **WEEK 2**

**Monday:** Vatican II, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, John Hick (begin)  
Plantinga, chaps. 19, 20, and chap. 21 to p. 334.

**Tuesday:** John Hick (finish), Lesslie Newbigin, John Paul II.  
Plantinga, chap. 21 from p. 335, chaps. 22 & 23.

**Wednesday:** MIDTERM EXAM

**Thursday:** D. Eck, *Encountering God*, Preface-chap. 2.

**Friday:** Eck, chaps. 3 & 4.

### **WEEK 3**

**Monday:** Eck, chaps. 5 & 6.

**Tuesday:** Eck, chaps. 7 & 8.

**Wednesday:** ESSAY DUE, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.  
In-class viewing of the film, *Women Serving Religion*.

**Thursday:** Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, Preface-chap. 2.

**Friday:** Panikkar, chaps. 3-6.

### **WEEK 4**

**Monday:** Panikkar, chaps. 7-10.

**Tuesday:** No class--work take-home final.

**Wednesday:** TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE BY 1:00 P.M.

[Back to Courses](#)