

X-820 MTS Colloquium: Religious Diversity  
Tuesday, 6:00-9:00 PM, Room 161  
Spring, 2013

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Religious diversity is a fact of the contemporary world, which includes persons of diverse religion affiliation and some who claim no religious affiliation at all. Indeed, there is considerable religious diversity within what are sometimes thought of as single religious traditions (including Christianity). In this course we will survey both religious diversity itself and a variety of possible responses to it. (We encourage you to notice, as the semester progresses, which tones and methods of engaging the issue seem helpful and which create problems.) As we engage this topic, you will have opportunity to pursue some aspect of particular interest to you and to develop the critical research, writing, and discussion skills needed to complete an MTS degree. This syllabus is written on paper, not stone: We may well make some adjustments to it as the semester proceeds.

Common Texts

Wayne Booth et al. *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Elizabeth Breuilly, Joanne O'Brien, et al. *Religions of the World: The Illustrated Guide to Origins, Beliefs, Traditions & Festivals*, revised edition. Checkmark Books (formerly Facts on File), 2005.

Diana Eck. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Beacon Press, 2003.

Paul J. Griffiths, ed. *Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes*, Orbis, 1990.

Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Orbis, 2003.

Baruch Levine, Bruce Chilton, Jacob Neusner, and Vincent Cornell. *Do Jews, Christians, and Muslims Worship the Same God?* Abingdon, 2012.

Miroslav Volf. *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue*. Eerdmans, 2012. (You may purchase this book or use the copy on reserve in the library. As the semester unfolds, we will substitute some chapters from this book for chapters in *Do Jews, Christians, and Muslims Worship the Same God?*)

## Assignments

1. Reading and discussion. Good class discussion requires preparation. Do the reading! Then review it, noting major points and where they appear. Many people find it help to summarize or journal about what they have read. Jot down page numbers for anything you still don't understand and topics you'd like to discuss in class. Bring a copy of the reading, as well as your notes, to class. In class, listen carefully to what others are saying (that includes *not* checking email, texting, or web surfing during class). Don't be afraid to ask questions and raise objections, but also leave room for others to speak.
  
2. Three short papers (2-3 pages, double-spaced, options available on Jan 29, Feb 19, Mar 19, Apr 16, and Apr 23; questions for the later dates will be posted on the class web site). These should be typed, double-spaced, 12-pt Times-Roman font with one-inch ragged-right margins, name on back. Criteria: Attention to question, accuracy in describing the book author's position, clarity and correctness of writing. If you do extra short papers we will base your grade on the best three.
  
3. Essay (10-12 pages plus cover sheet and bibliography) on a particular question within the general course area. It is natural for such a project to develop as you work on it: later stages need not exactly match the plans set out earlier, although we encourage you to consult with us on major changes in plan. You may submit material early for feedback.
  - a. a proposal (due Mar 5). This should list (1) the *question* you want to answer, (2) a paragraph about how you envision approaching the question, (3) a ten-item annotated bibliography with at least two books and six short sources beyond the required class reading. See Cheryl Maddox (reference librarian) if you need help.
  - b. Teaching presentation (maximum 12 minutes, individual dates to be scheduled on Feb 5). Choose an interesting article, essay, or chapter (a book is too much) from your paper research. *Instructors will need copies of your material a week in advance.* In the presentation, identify your author's question and thesis. Explain his or her method of approach and assumptions, primary evidence and arguments, and conclusion. Finish with your own brief assessment of the material. Alternatively, you may present a classic work from a tradition and comment on the ways in which it is representative (or not) of that tradition. Graded on accuracy and clarity. Consider using handouts, slides, or other visual assists.
  - c. Finished essay (due Apr 9). A complete paper, double-spaced, proof-read, with cover sheet, citations, and bibliography, stapled. (*Tip: Write with your books and notes closed. Anytime you open them for consultation, insert a citation. Inserting references and bibliographic entries while you write will save much headache later.*)
  - d. Revised essay (due May 7). This should exhibit improvements in response to feedback on your first version and your class presentation. Again, please staple.

CTS Writing Policies.

Except when quoting from other writings, writers of papers at CTS are urged to use inclusive language. For example, generic language phrased in sex-specific terms and the use of gender designations for inanimate objects should be avoided (e.g., “brother” when the meaning is human being or person; “her” as the pronoun for an inanimate object). Language for “God” should be selected with great care so that the metaphors and grammatical forms are faithful to the biblical revelation of God whose being transcends titles, names, and metaphors.”

Please note also that ideas and information taken from another person’s work (even if they are not presented in that writer’s words) should be credited to the source (a good procedure is to insert a note any time you find yourself opening a book or notes to check something during writing). If you use *even a few* of the other writer’s own words, they must be marked as quotation by quote marks or an indented block format. If you use artistic media such as music, images, film clips, or material from websites, you must obey copyright restrictions and give proper credit for the material.<sup>1</sup> In this class you may use either short-form citations with a reference list (recommended) or footnotes; for instructions, see Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, or go to [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org).<sup>2</sup> Quoted material should comprise no more than 10% of your paper.

## Grading

## Grades:

- A (94% upward) = truly superior work according to the declared purposes and criteria
- A- (90-93%) = very good work, but not quite reaching excellence on all purposes and criteria
- B+ (87-89%) = good work, beyond basic expectations
- B (84-86%) = competent work, clearly and solidly fulfilling basic purposes and criteria
- B- (80-83%) = satisfies the basic purposes and criteria in a minimal way
- C+ (77-79%) = meets many of the basic expectations but does not satisfy some significant purposes and criteria
- C (74-76%) = meets some of the purposes and criteria but leaves several unfulfilled
- C – (70-73%) meets few purposes of the assignment and satisfies few of the criteria
- D (60-69%) = student did something but does not meet the purposes and criteria of the assignment
- F (below 60%) = work does not deserve credit or was not turned in

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Harris, *The Plagiarism handbook* (Los Angeles: Pyczak Publishing, 2011), p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> revised edition, University of Chicago, 2007, with a quick guide at [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html).

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Attendance and class participation	20 %
Short papers	20 %
Class presentation	20 %
First finished essay	20 %
<u>Revised essay</u>	<u>20 %</u>
Total possible:	100 %

Your grade for attendance and participation defaults to 16 of 20 possible points (B-). You may miss two sessions without penalty. Missing three sessions, being frequently late to class, handing in work late, or being unprepared to discuss the reading will lower this part of the grade. (Missing four sessions will mean that you cannot get credit for the course, unless a special exception to the rule is made by the Academic Dean.) Your participation grade will rise if you are a high-quality participant in verbal and/or internet discussions.

#### Calendar

Week One (Jan 22) Syllabus, introductions, library skills. Read *Craft*, 273-276.

Week Two (Jan 29) *Craft*, 29-83; *Religions of the World*, Introduction and chapters on Abrahamic faiths.

**Short paper 1:** What qualities should a research paper's guiding question have, and what steps might you follow to arrive at such a question?

Week Three (Feb 5) *Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, chaps 1-2. *Craft*, 1-28, 84-102.

Week Four (Feb 12) *Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, chaps. 3-4. *Craft*, 103-138.  
Bring calendar for scheduling presentation; be prepared to share your preliminary ideas about topic.

Week Five (Feb 19) *Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, chap. 5. *Craft*, 139-169.  
**Short paper 2: Assignment to be posted on website.**

#### **READING WEEK: No class Feb 26**

Week Six (Mar 5) **Due: Essay Proposals.**  
*Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Introduction through Chapter 4.  
*Craft*, 171-201.

Week Seven (Mar 12) *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, chaps. 5-9. *Craft*, 203-211.

**Short paper: Assignment to be posted on website.**

Week Eight (Mar 19) *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, chap. 10 through Conclusion. *Craft*, 232-248.

**Short paper 3: Assignment to be posted on website.**

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

EASTER RECESS (No Class Mar 26)

Week Nine (Apr 2) *Religions of the World*, chaps. on Vedic Faiths and Bahai. *Craft*, 249-270.

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Week Ten (Apr 9) *Christianity through non-Christian Eyes*, chaps. ??  
**Essays Due (four copies, completed, proofread, with citations in place)**

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Week Eleven (Apr 16) **Read essays from group** for class discussion. *Encountering God*, chaps 1-2.

**Short paper 4: Assignment to be posted on website.**

Week Twelve (Apr 23) *Encountering God*, chaps 3-6.

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Week Thirteen (Apr 30) *Encountering God*, chaps. 7-8.

**Short paper 5: Assignment to be posted on website.**

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

FINAL SESSION (May 7): **Class will meet. Revised Essays due.**

#### Sources on Research Paper Writing

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research, Third Edition*. (thorough introduction to entire process of writing a research paper)

Joseph Gibaldi. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Sixth Edition*. (introductory)

Modern Language Association. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, 3rd ed. (aimed at graduate students and professional academics)

William Strunk and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed. (handy refresher on writing and punctuation)

Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. (aimed at graduate students and professional academics)

Vhymeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. (a relatively elementary introduction but good if you have little experience with formal papers)

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (handy intro to use of logic and evidence)

### Some Strategies for Research Papers

*Remember: your paper should seek to answer a question, not just gather information on a topic. Choose a question you are genuinely curious about rather than one to which you are sure you know the answer. Most students start with too wide a topic/question: here are some suggestions for focusing your work.*

*Terminology: A “secondary source” is one that describes, analyzes, and evaluates a “primary source.” What is “primary” and what is “secondary” will shift depending on what your topic is: when writing about Luther, Luther’s works will be primary sources; if writing about Augustine, Luther’s comments would be secondary sources.*

1. **Evaluate a thesis.** Choose an interesting secondary essay or article, read the writer’s sources (and other related articles that have since been published) and assess whether they support the writer’s thesis.
2. **Test competing theses.** Choose two contrasting statements about a topic, learn more about it, and adjudicate between the contrasting opinions.
3. **Discuss a classic work.** Choose a classic work (which might be a statement of faith or teaching text but might also be a literary, visual, liturgical, musical, or architectural work), and analyze the ways in which it is or is not representative of its tradition. This will be easier if you compare it to a very specific description of the tradition, and if you choose a work on which secondary sources are available.
4. **Compare classic works or a classic and a contemporary work.** Choose two works of similar genre from different religious traditions, or different parts of the same tradition, and compare them with regard to some focusing question (with insight sharpened by reading secondary literature, of course).
5. **Evaluate a contemporary dialogue.** Take a manageable amount of material relating to religious pluralism from contemporary sources (e.g., published editorial essays or contributions to discussion on a web site) and evaluate them in light of the theoretical resources we have studied this semester and any necessary research on the accuracy of their statements about particular traditions. Draft your own contribution or response.