

**Topics in Religion**  
**Religious Pluralism**

REL385 / 2 Credits / Northwestern College / Spring 2010

**Instructor:** Dr. Michael Andres, [andres@nwciova.edu](mailto:andres@nwciova.edu)

**Office/Hours:** VPH115; Mon, Tue, Fri 3:30-5:00pm; ext. 7079

**Class Time:** MWF 10:40-11:40; 3/16-4/30

**Class Location:** VPH202

**Course Description:**

A study of an interdisciplinary area of religion, not sufficiently covered by other courses, in response to student or faculty interests. This course will be an exploration of religious pluralism.

**Course Objectives:**

- To further develop careful research and analytical skills.
- To grasp an historic, evangelical, and Reformed doctrine of Christology, faith, and salvation, while interacting extensively with other theological and religious traditions.
- To explore various models and theories about the nature of religious pluralism, especially questions that arise concerning salvation in non-Christian religions.
- To consider how one's view of Christ and salvation ought to affect the faith and practice of the Church and draw one closer to the living God.

**Primary Texts:**

- John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, eds. *Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings* (Oneworld, 2001).
- Dennis Okholm and Timothy Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Zondervan, 1996).

**Course Requirements:**

- *Class attendance/participation:* Participation and attendance are mandatory; participation encouraged. After *two* unexcused absences, students will be graded down one half letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence.
- *Readings:* Reading should be completed *before* class time listed. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of forthcoming reading assignments given in syllabus.
- *Quizzes:* Students are required to take six quizzes over terms from reading. Lowest score dropped.
- *Written Project:* One written analyses are required.
- *Oral Presentation:* One oral presentation is required.

**Guidelines for Written Project** (2000 word max; due April 2):

Compare and contrast the views of Hick, Pinnock, McGrath, and Geivett in Okholm and Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Include discussion of their view of the person of Christ (esp. humanity and divinity), the work of Christ (including atonement theory),

the nature of salvation, the nature of faith (including its cognitive dimension), the nature of religion, and the content and salvific efficacy of other major world religions. Give rational, biblical, and theological reasons why you find one of the positions expressed most persuasive. Formatting guidelines can be found at [Writing and Submission Guidelines](#). Please note that a hard copy of written assignment should be submitted to instructor at class time and an electronic copy to *My Northwestern*.

### **Guidelines for Oral Presentation** (30 minute max. / 50 points):

Please pass out a one-page handout with an outline of your presentation on one side, and a bibliography on the other side; at top of handout include your name, REL 385, date, and title of presentation.

The objective of the oral presentation is to *teach your classmates* about your given subject. Therefore your presentation should be clear, concise, persuasive, and informative.

Demonstrate your superior grasp of the subject, and be prepared to respond to questions. You may use OHP, video, PowerPoint, marker board, or any other media available to enhance the learning process. Students may be graded on the material you present to them, so strive for accuracy.

In preparation you should *thoroughly research* your subject. Do not merely summarize the reading/article given to rest of class. You should consult dictionaries and encyclopedias of religion, theology, church history, biblical studies, etc., works treating your subject, and journal articles. Read various sources; be sure to read sources from alternate viewpoints on your subject (e.g. there are differing views on the nature, limits, and value of natural theology). You should also read relevant portions of primary sources (e.g. actually read relevant parts of Vatican II)! You may use a few key quotations but do not flood your presentation with quotes. As always, do not plagiarize! You must explain the subject in your own words.

Pick out and focus on key, crucial views and arguments about religious pluralism. Be discerning. Put emphasis on main themes (“best”) rather than less-central (“good/interesting”) issues; you do not need to say everything there is to say on your subject. Include very brief historical background only if necessary, but omit if unnecessary. Historical background and cultural context *should only be around five minutes* of oral presentation. While cultural context is crucial, this is not meant to be a mere biography of the subject. Focus on the *views and arguments* of your subject. Be fair, nuanced, and sensitive to all views on your subject. This presentation is not designed to be an assault on “false views.” Carefully present your subject, noting various differing views, then analyze and evaluate (e.g. specify the strengths and weaknesses of Newbigin on religious pluralism). Try to empathize with and understand the persuasive power of the view you are evaluating, even if you do not finally agree with it. However, do not be afraid to state any fair criticisms of the view. Evaluation should be based on Scripture, church tradition (key theologians, creeds, and confessions), reasonable arguments, findings from general revelation (other disciplines, science, etc.), and Christian experience (but take care that you do not lapse into mere feelings or opinions). If you have difficulties come see Prof. Andres ASAP. You can find the oral presentation evaluation form [here](#).

### **Course Assessment:**

- Quizzes (33%) = 50 points / 10 points each
- Written Analysis (33%) = 50 points
- Oral Presentation (33%) = 50 points

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:**

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community committed to integrity and honesty in all intellectual and academic matters. Behavior that violates academic integrity can take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, cheating on tests, quizzes, papers, and projects; plagiarism using unauthorized material; willful misrepresentation of evidence and arguments. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas, with the intent of deceiving the reader concerning the origin of the words, ideas, or images. (Excerpts from *NWC Student Handbook*, 11)

**Course Assistance:**

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern College will provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact both their instructor and the college disability service provider to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

I have an open door policy. Please come by my office, preferably at office hours, if you have any questions or are having any problems with the reading, lectures, note taking, written project, etc. Or come by for a cup of tea and chat about life. For further assistance in academic matters help is available through Tom Truesdell at Academic Support (VPH 125B).

**Course Schedule:**

Date	Topic	Reading
Mar 17	Introduction <i>Christology</i>	
Mar 19	Person of Christ	John 1; Phil 2; Nicene Creed; Chalcedonian Definition; <u>Quiz #1</u> (see MyNWC)
Mar 22	Work of Christ	<u>Quiz #2</u>
Mar 24	Day of Learning in Community – No Class <i>Soteriology</i>	
Mar 26	Salvation	<u>Quiz #3</u>
Mar 29	Nature of Faith <i>Salvation in a Pluralist World</i>	
Mar 31	World Religions	Okholm/Phillips, Intro
Apr 2	Exclusivist-Inclusivist-Pluralist Taxonomy	<u>Paper Due</u>

Easter Break – April 3-5

*Pluralism*

Apr 7 John Hick Hick, Ch 9; Okholm/Phillips, Ch 1

Apr 9 Wilfred Cantwell Smith Hick, Ch 4

Apr 12 Paul Knitter Hick, Ch 8; Quiz #4

*Inclusivism*

Apr 14 Karl Rahner and Vatican II Hick, Ch 2-3; Quiz #5

Apr 16 Clark Pinnock Okholm/Phillips, Ch 2

Apr 19 John Sanders Sanders excerpt (My NWC)

*Exclusivism / Particularism*

Apr 21 Church History Prior to 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Apr 23 Karl Barth Hick, Ch 1

Apr 26 Lesslie Newbigin Hick, Ch 6; Quiz #6

Apr 28 Harold Netland Netland excerpt (My NWC)

Apr 30 Pope John Paul II Hick, Ch 11