THEO 60819
Christianity and World Religions

University of Notre Dame
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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to the basic teachings and spiritualities of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. We will approach these religions both historically and theologically, seeking to determine where they converge and differ from Christianity on such perennial issues as death, meaning, the nature of the ultimate Mystery, the overcoming of suffering etc. That is to say, we will not only attempt to comprehend these religions according to their own self-understanding, but we will also endeavor to appraise their significance in relation to Christian faith, both in the challenge and enrichment they present.

We will also examine some traditional and contemporary Catholic and Protestant approaches to the truth claims of other religions. Our own search to know how the truth and experience of other faiths are related to Christian faith will be guided by the insights of important Christian contemplatives who have entered deeply into the spirituality of other traditions.

By course end we ought to have a greater understanding of what is essential to Christian faith and practice as well as a greater appreciation of the spiritual paths of others.

Texts

4. Electronic articles on Library Reserves.

Requirements

2 Response Papers (7-8 pp.)
Class Participation

Regular and punctual attendance is required.
Class participation is strongly encouraged, not only for your own mastery of the subject matter, but also because it will make the difference between a higher and a lower grade if your overall performance is a borderline case.

Schedule

Note: The list below of topics and assigned readings identifies the order we will follow, but does not indicate the exact length of time we will spend on each topic. That will be determined by our needs as we proceed. Some topics can be covered in a single class period or less, while others may take longer. I will keep you informed as to what you should read in preparation for the next class period.

Topics and Readings

SECTION I: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE INTER-RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER

1. Preliminary Considerations and General Introduction to the Course. Six Doctrinal Differences between Semitic and Eastern Religions.

Read:

2. Christian Attitudes to Other Religions.

Read:

3. Vatican II.

Read:
4. Bede Griffiths’ Theology of Religions.

Read:

Recommended:
  c. Bede Griffiths interview on his near-death experience (3:26):
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOAlyl7u2dw

SECTION II: HINDUISM.


Read:

Recommended:
  a. Film on Hindu Temples (4:50): www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yiupwfu_h0k
  b. Film on dalits (11:16): www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBxy1R0jitM&feature=related

2. The Revelation of the Upanishads.

Read:
  a. Griffiths, CR, 47-86.
  b. Selections from the Upanishads.

Recommended:
  a. Video footage of Sri Ramana Maharshi:
    www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-OS8LU6JW8 (6:26) and
    www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6P42Xl8GRO (7:24)


Read:

Read:
- a. Excerpts from Shankara’s Upadesasahasri and Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya.

Recommended:

5. The Theory and Practice of Yoga.

Read:
- a. B. Malkovsky, “Yoga.” (3 pp., unpublished)
- b. B. Malkovsky, “Yoga,” GOC, 125-152.

Recommended:
- b. Old film footage of B. K. S. Iyengar: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmOUZQi_6Tw (3:12) and www.youtube.com/watch?v=cd_eTupTCbl&feature=fvw (4:33)

First Response Paper Due

SECTION III: BUDDHISM.

1. The Story of the Buddha and the Foundations of Buddhist Doctrine.

Read:

2. The Buddha and the Christ.

Read:

3. **Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.**

   **Read:**

   **Recommended:**
   c. Film *Doing Time, Doing Vipassana* (1997, 52 min.):
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8tZX3dGSM8

4. **Zen.**

   **Read:**

   **Recommended:**

5. **Zen and Christian Faith.**

   **Read:**

   **Second Response Paper Due**

**SECTION IV: ISLAM.**

1. **The Origin of Islam.**
Read:
Jomier, HUI, 5-24.

Recommended
a. Malkovsky, “Return to India,” GOC, 3-12.

2. Basic Muslim Articles of Faith.

Read:

3. The Five Pillars.

Read:
Jomier, HUI, 49-72.

Recommended:

4. Muslim Social Life.

Read:
Jomier, HUI, 73-89.

Recommended:

5. The Muslim-Christian Encounter.

Read:

Recommended: