DI 612 Theology of Religious Manyness
A Hartford Seminary Online Course
Preliminary Syllabus
Spring 2017

Instructor:
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Office Hours: conversations are welcome, but by appointment only and are held by phone, Facetime, or Skype only.

Course Meeting Times
This is an asynchronous online course. It has no face-to-face component. A dedicated course website will be available on Day One of Spring Term 2017. Students are expected to log in at least once during every week of the term.

Email Policy
The instructor will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly.

Course Description:
The question of the place of one particular religion among other religions has been debated for millennia; likewise, the related question of the status (theologically) of adherents of other religions according to a particular worldview. A range of answers have been advocated, extensively (but not only) by Christian theologians and religious studies scholars. Premised on the conviction that “theology of religious manyness” is a better formulation than “theology of religions” or “theology of religious pluralism,” making use of the insights of the emerging discipline of comparative theology, and examining the theoretical and methodological issues at play, this course will explore a range of theological responses to the fact of religious manyness found under the “umbrellas” of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Goals:
Completion of this course will enable the student to:

1) Account for the vocabulary of the academic study of religion and the relationship of one religion to another.

2) Define the task of the theologian of religious manyness.

3) Explain the relation of theologies of religious manyness to the emerging fields of “comparative theology” and “theology without walls”.

4) Differentiate a range of theological responses to the fact of religious manyness from Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist vantage-points.
5) Formulate a personal theology of religious manyness that demonstrates knowledge of and critical engagement with the major options presented in the literature engaged in this course.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following Hartford Seminary Master of Arts Degree Program Learning Outcomes:

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion.
- To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

Course Structure:
The course will comprise seven modules: course introduction (one week); five religion-modules; course conclusion. For each module, the course’s Canvas website will provide instructions for reading assignments and online activities such as watching or listening to a lecture, answering a question posed by the instructor, commenting on another student’s response, or taking a short quiz. You should plan to spend approximately six hours per week on reading and 3–4 hours per week on online learning tasks.

NB: The Canvas website will provide the most accurate and up-to-date instructions for all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494. If you have questions about course content, contact your professor.

Attendance Policy
Participation in all online components is expected; failure to do so is considered an “absence” and (if habitual) will affect one’s final grade.

Assessment Expectations
Students are expected to complete every reading assignment and to participate related online activities in the time specified for a given unit. Assessment will be made of the regularity and quality of the student’s online participation.

Students are to submit five brief summary/reflection essays (one for each religion) of approximately 1000 words at the end of each of the first six modules.

Students are to write a summary essay of no more than twenty pages in which they demonstrate their attainment of course goals—most especially their ability to articulate their own theology of religious manyness, given their particular religious location.

All papers are to accord with the standards for academic papers posted on the Hartford Seminary website. All papers and projects must accord with Hartford Seminary’s stated policy regarding the citing of sources. Plagiarism is to be avoided!

Grades will be calculated as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Online participation (Module 1)</td>
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<td>Online participation (Mods 2 – 6)</td>
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Short essays (Mods 2 – 6) 50%
Online participation in Module 7 5%
Final essay 10%

Grades on discussion posts and formal essays submitted after the due-date indicated for that item on the Canvas site may be affected negatively. Please note that all assignments for this course should be submitted by the last day of Spring Term 2017. Requests for a formal extension (i.e. a grade of “Incomplete” in order to submit the remainder of one’s work during the four weeks following the end-of-term) will almost certainly be denied.

Required Reading

Much of the required reading for this course will take the form of essays, journal articles, and book chapters provided to course enrollees on the course’s Canvas website (either as PDFs for download or links to online items). In conversation with these items, the following books should be read in their entirety:


NOTE: If you have never taken a survey course in the world’s religions, then you should have at hand a good comprehensive textbook, such as Mary Pat Fisher’s Living Religions (Prentice-Hall; any edition from the 4th onward is adequate), for ready reference. If you plan to use a textbook other than Fisher’s, please clear your choice with your professor.

Recommended Reading:


Jayatilleke, K. N. **The Buddhist Attitude to Other Religions.** Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1966.


Makransky, John. **Buddhist Perspectives on Truth in Other Religions: Past and Present.** [http://www.johnmakransky.org/article_04.html](http://www.johnmakransky.org/article_04.html)

Martin, Jerry L. **Theology Without Walls: Theology from the Ground Up: Opening Remarks.** [See course website for this item]

Nikhilananda, Swami. **Interreligious Attitude.** [http://www.hinduism.co.za/inter-re.htm](http://www.hinduism.co.za/inter-re.htm)


Schmidt-Leukel, Perry, ed. **Buddhist Attitudes to Other Religions.** EOS, 2008. ISBN 978-3-8306-7351-4


