

**AP8791 Apologetics, Pluralism & Missiology**  
BWD-W203, TUE 5:30-7:30 PM  
Birmingham Theological Seminary  
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**Spring 2010**

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**Course Description:**

This course introduces the student to variety of ways Christianity relates to other religions within the context of religious pluralism. This course will examine apologetic questions as they are related to making disciples of the nations (missiology). Attention will be given to the problems associated with Western colonialism both religiously and culturally, and how those issues relate to apologetics. A variety of responses will be introduced and critically discussed. Specific attention will be given to issues related to Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

**Required Texts:**

1. Burnet, D. *The Spirit of Hinduism: A Christian Perspective on Hindu Life and Thought*, Monarch Books, 2007.
2. Chapman, C. *The Cross & Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam*. InterVarsity, 2004.
3. Newbigin, L. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Eerdmans, 1989.
4. Zacharias, R. *Jesus Talks with Buddha: There is One God and Who is His Prophet?* Multnomah, 2001.

**Recommended Text:**

*Bosch, D. Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, American Society of Missiology, 1991.*

**Objectives:**

1. Understand the plurality of religions, the ideology of pluralism and the unique challenges and opportunity presented to Christian theology and mission.
2. Gain basic knowledge of and perspectives on the ways Christian theology in general and Protestant and Evangelical theology in particular have responded to the challenge of pluralism.
3. Begin to study other religions from the viewpoint of Christian Theology.
  - A. Student will become more acquainted with operating apologetically within an increasingly minority status.
  - B. Student will become more aware of how the truth of the gospel can and should be proclaimed in an apologetic way.
  - C. Student will gain an awareness of how to make internal critiques of other faiths by using their sacred texts.

4. Demonstrate awareness that religious plurality and pluralism is a core issue for the Christian worker, academics, and pastoral practitioner.
5. Develop sensitivity to the concerns of other world religions and cultures while preserving a Biblical apologetic and theory of missions.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Class Attendance and participation in discussions.
2. Book review for each of the required texts.
3. Theological paper 8-10 pages, addressing one of the specific obstacles presented by pluralism.
4. Final examination.

All written assignments should be submitted according to the Turabian standard. Submissions that are submitted incorrectly will be reduced by one letter grade.

**Grading:**

Book reviews 40%

Paper 40%

Exam 20%

**Book Reviews:**

(Five paragraph minimum for each). For information about how to write a theological book review, please see John Frame's *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, (P & R, 1987) Appendix E. Evaluating Theological Writings, summarized here.

A list of criteria by which to evaluate theological writings:

1. Scripturality: is it either deduced from or consistent with scripture?
2. Truth: is it true even if not found in Scripture?
3. Cogency: properly argued?
4. Edification
5. Godliness
6. Importance
7. Clarity
8. Profundity: does it deal with real important questions or just superficial ones?
9. Form and style: appropriate?
10. Emphasis (6). No such thing as a single normative emphasis. Emphasis only wrong if it falls into category 1-9.
11. Comparability: Resemblances to other poorly regarded work is irrelevant.
12. Terminology: can't criticize terminology unless it commits errors in categories 1-9.

### Grading Standards:

	LOW QUALITY	AVERAGE	HIGH QUALITY
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
_____	1. Title-creativity		
_____	2. Clarity of thesis and research problem		
_____	3. Adequacy of claims (claims are not too ambitious or too weak for thesis)		
_____	4. Tone (attitudes, purpose, audience)		
_____	5. Development of ideas, thoroughness, explains assumptions		
_____	6. Biblical, and logical, interpretive philosophy is fair, not inflexible (not mere proof text)		
_____	7. Follows accepted grammatical and mechanical norms		
_____	8. Scholarship (interacts with appropriate texts, writes at grade level)		
_____	9. Conclusion (ties up loose ends without being repetitive, correlates with thesis)		
_____	10. Documentation and Form (meets requirements of paper, neat)		

### Tentative Course Schedule:

1. Religious Context of Pluralism and Ways of Knowing
2. Understanding Christian Conversion Beyond Decision, and Western Middle Class Morality
3. Contemporary Missiology and its Colonialistic Mistakes: Conservative and Liberal
4. Apologetic Exclusivism in a Pluralist Culture, **Newbiggin due**
5. Islam as a Religion
6. Islam as a Culture
7. Apologetic Encounter with Muslims, **Chapman due**
8. Hinduism, Beliefs and Sacred Texts
9. Hinduism as a Culture
10. Western Attraction to Non-Christian Religions and Apologetic Opportunities, **Burnet due**
11. Buddhism
12. Christianity, Religious Violence, Backlash, and a Pluralist Society, **Zacharias due, Paper due**
13. **Final Exam**

### Select Bibliography

Anderson, S. The World's Religions. Grand Rapids: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976.

Bavinck, J.H. The Church Between Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship Between the Christian Faith and Other Religions, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981.

Bowker, J. ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions. Oxford, New York,: Oxford University Press, 1997.

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- Coogan, M.D. *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
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- Earhart, H.B. *Religious Traditions of the World*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993.
- Geisler, N. & Saleeb, A. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*. Baker, 1993.
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- Hiebert, P.G; Shaw, R. D; Tienou, T. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Belief and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Basis, Purpose and Manner of Inter-Faith Dialogue" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30, no. 3 (1977): 253-70.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Good Shepherd: Meditations On Christian Ministry in Today's World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Word In Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Missions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Parshall, P. *The Cross and the Crescent: Reflections on Christian-Muslim Spirituality*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1989.
- Shenk, D. W. *Global Gods: Exploring the Role of religions in Modern Societies*. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1995.
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