

HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership

LTR 5141: World Religions and the Encounter with Pluralism

Spring Semester 2026

Syllabus [Draft]

Dr. Thomas G. Walsh
Email: t.walsh@hji.edu

[Note: This syllabus is a guide for the course. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus in order to enhance the overall learning experience.]

Course Description: The course considers the ways in which Christianity has understood and encountered the world's religions in terms of both theology and ministry. We will examine the various perspectives toward the world's religion that have been part of Christian teachings and theologies, i.e., theology of religion. Are other religions and/or their teachings worthy of respect and serious engagement or are they threats or errors to be avoided or challenged? Some have characterized the types of approaches adopted in considering other religions as exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism. In addition to looking at Christian, and Unificationist teachings about other religions that have been prominent throughout Christian history, we will examine some of the practices---some of the best and some of the worst---that have characterized Christian missions. The course will give special attention to:

- Christian teachings concerning other religions, i.e., theology of religion
- the historical development of Christianity's view of other religions
- primary approaches taken in the view of other religions
- the consideration of best practices in terms of engagement with other religions
- reflection on Unificationism's theology of religions and its relevance to ministries in a multi-faith world

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of Christianity's views about other religions, i.e., the Theology of Religions.
- Students will be conversant in basic teachings and core features of the world's religions, and the major typologies used in the Theology of Religions.
- Students will attain capacity to identify some of the best, and some of the worst practices as applied to evangelism, engagement with, or encounter with other religions.
- Students will learn to apply their knowledge to advance mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation among the world's religions.

Course Rubrics

Course Outcomes	Novice (1)	Progressing (2)	Mastered (3)	Exceptional (4)	Score
Demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of Christianity's teachings about other religions, i.e., the theology of religion	Can describe the primary ways in which Christianity has viewed other religions.	Can reference core documents in both scripture and scholarly writings that illustrate or convey theology of religion perspectives.	Can explain central developments in the history of Christian theology as related to teachings about and practices related to other religions.	Can demonstrate grasp of and capacity for analytical engagement with core texts from both Christian scripture and prominent scholarly research related to teachings and practices related to other religions.	
Be knowledgeable of the basic history, teachings and core features of the major world religions; and the major typologies applied in Theology of Religions.	Can describe the basic beliefs and hallmarks of major world religions, and the primary typologies applied in Theology of Religions.	Can describe the historical development of the scripture, doctrines and practices of major world religions.	Can compare similarities and differences of the history, beliefs, and practices of major world religions.	Can engage in deeper critical reflection and comparative analysis of the world religions with reference to scripture, doctrine and practices.	
Identify some of the best, and some of the worst practices as applied to evangelism, engagement with, or encounter with other religions.	Can describe several of the most prominent examples of best practices and worst practices toward other religions.	Can identify theological and cultural concepts that contributed to attitudes and practices toward other religions.	Can discuss the historical development of doctrine and practice over time that led to improvements in perspective and practice.	Can evaluate and assess the scholarly theological debates and comparative religion analysis related to the way in which Christianity, and religions in general view one another.	
Apply knowledge to advance mutual respect, dialogue	Can explain the value of dialogue,	Can explain prominent stages in the	Can explain Christianity's embrace of a	Can identify and explain core aspects of	

and cooperation among the world's religions.	mutual respect and cooperation among religions.	development of Christianity's more respectful appreciation of other religions, including advances in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.	wider ecumenism that includes not only estranged denominations, but other religions.	interreligious dialogue, and examples of interreligious cooperation, and develop a constructive perspective on engagement with other religions.	
--	---	---	--	---	--

REQUIREMENTS

1. Carefully study instructor's recorded lecture each week.
2. Carefully study assigned readings each week.
3. Complete written assignments as indicated in modules on Canvas
4. Write two short essays (750 words with footnotes and bibliography) based on the lectures and assigned readings.
5. Final Term Paper

This is an asynchronous class. Students are expected to study the instructor's recorded lecture each week; carefully read the weekly reading assignments; complete weekly written assignments and short essays as assigned. Late submissions of assignments will result in a loss of grading points. The midterm exam will be based on the material from the lectures and required readings. Grades for the course will not be changed nor incompletes granted unless there are personal circumstances which made completion of course requirements impossible. Please note the following:

- Basic communications between the instructor and the students will take place on the Canvas platform. All students are expected to log in to Canvas regularly to receive updates on reading assignments, the professor's lectures, and other assignments. Any changes in the schedule or syllabus will also be announced through canvas.
- Students must practice proper netiquette in all course-related communications.
- Students must have access to the Internet, a (real) computer, and Microsoft Word (free for students). iPads and similar devices allow you to perform many, but not all, of the required activities. Students must have the proper hardware/software (video camera, microphone, etc.) to participate in synchronous learning sessions and to record presentations.
- Late assignments will result in a lower grade.

GRADING

1. Written Assignments 30% (10 x 3%)
2. Short Essays 20% (2 x 10%)
3. Midterm Exam 20%
4. Final Term Paper 30%

Final Grades are recorded by letter, and are understood as follows:

A Excellent
B Good
C Acceptable
D Acceptable, but below expectations
F Failure

Grading Rubric:

In calculating the final letter grade for the course, numerical grades for assignments are converted into the following letter grades:

Letter Minimum Points

A	93.00
A-	90.00
B+	87.00
B	83.00
B-	80.00
C+	77.00
C	73.00
C-	70.00
D	60.00
F	50.00

This scale severely penalizes Fs. Therefore, it is better to hand in a poorly done assignment than not to hand one in at all.

In computing the cumulative grade point average (G.P.A.) the following quality point scale is used:

A 4.00	A- 3.67	B+ 3.33
B 3.00	B- 2.67	C+ 2.33
C 2.00	C- 1.67	D+ 1.33
D 1.00	D- 0.67	F 0.00

Incompletes are given only when there are compelling medical or personal reasons.

*See HJI catalog for a detailed grading policy.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student's work is expected to be a product of his or her own effort. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. Plagiarism in its most severe form occurs when a student purchases a paper from a third party or submits an entire body of work written by a third party, as the student's own. The most serious cases can be reported to the Office of the Provost for disciplinary action. Possible actions include probation, suspension, or dismissal/separation from HJI.

Cutting and pasting material from various websites without citing the source of said material also constitutes plagiarism, as is a failure to cite sources in a paper, conveying the impression, intentionally or not, that another writer's work is the student's own. In these cases of plagiarism, the instructor may give the student an "F" for the offending assignment, require that the student repeat the assignment, or if the plagiarism continues, give the student an "F" for the course. A pattern of such behavior may be reported to the Office of the Provost. It can lead to serious consequences as listed above.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT in assignments is permitted only with prior permission of the instructor. If the instructor permits students to use AI for research, students should know that it may give false results and its facts need to be checked and verified. Any passages generated by AI must be given proper citation, just as for citing other authors' works. In addition, students must append a paragraph at the end of their work explaining how and why they used ChatGPT, which includes what prompts were used and what measures were taken to verify its accuracy. Students may not use AI to produce the content for an assignment. If an AI tool is used without obtaining prior permission and/or without providing the required citation or explanation, it will be treated as plagiarism.

Faculty reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, to find instances of AI-generated writing, as well as plagiarism from other sources, in student assignments.

NETIQUETTE

When posting online or by email, you need to follow the same ethical standards and laws as you would in face-to-face communications. Your language should be respectful of faculty members and fellow students. Do not post private or confidential information about anyone, and do not provide personal information that could put yourself at risk. HJI's LMS has robust security measures to protect communication between teacher and

student. Yet please be aware that anything that you post in discussions and groups in which other students participate can be retrieved by others and copied.

Do not download and share course materials without permission of the instructor, as this may violate copyright. HJI reserves the right to delete postings on HJI maintained sites that are considered insensitive, harassing or illegal. Language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise, is a violation of the Student Code

REQUIRED TEXTS [Each can be purchased used from Amazon for under \$10.]

Ruben Habito, The Gospel Among Religions: Christian Ministry, Theology, and Spirituality in a Multi-Faith World, Orbis Books: 2010. ISBN: 1570758999

Veli-Matti Karkkainen, An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X

Paul Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religion, Orbis Books: 2002. ISBN: 1570754195

COURSE SCHEDULE, OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS [subject to adjustments]

Module 1 Week of January 26

Course Introduction and Overview: Introduction to Religion and its Core Components

Assignments:

Review the Syllabus Carefully

View Instructor's Video.

Post Your 200-300 word Self-Introduction on Canvas.

Module 2 Week of February 2

An Introduction to Theology of Religions: Biblical Perspectives

View the instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Veli-Matti Karkkainen, **An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.** IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X pp. 1-55

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400 word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Submit on canvas.

Module 3 Week of February 9

An Introduction to Theology of Religions: Historical Developments

View the instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Veli-Matti Karkkainen, **An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.** IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X Pp. 55-110.

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400 word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Submit on canvas.

Module 4 Week of February 16

An Introduction to Theology of Religions: Theologians' Perspectives

View the instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Veli-Matti Karkkainen, **An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.** IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X Pp. 165-216.

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400 word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Submit on canvas.

Module 5 Week of February 23

An Introduction to Theology of Religions: Theologians' Perspectives

View the instructor's video

Reading Assignment: Veli-Matti Karkkainen, **An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.** IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X Pp. 224-309.

Written Assignment: Prepare a Short Essay of 700 words, using footnotes.

Module 6 Week of March 2

The Gospel Among Religions

View the instructor's video

Reading Assignment: David Brockman and Ruben L. F. Habito, **The Gospel Among Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2010, p. ix to p. 69

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400 word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Submit on canvas.

Module 7 Week of March 9

The Gospel Among Religions

View the instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: David Brockman and Ruben L. F. Habito, **The Gospel Among Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2010, p. 70-141

Module 8 Week of March 16

Submit your Mid-Term Paper on Canvas.

During Class Students Give 4-5 Minute Oral Summary of their Term Papers

Module 9 Week of March 23

A Typology of Theologies of Religion

View instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Paul Knitter, **Introducing Theologies of Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2012 ISBN 9781570754197, p. xi to p. 63.

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400-word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Post on Canvas.

Week of March 30 is Spring Break

Module 10 Week of April 6

A Typology of Theologies of Religion

View instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Paul Knitter, **Introducing Theologies of Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2012 ISBN 9781570754197, p. 63-108.

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400-word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Post on Canvas.

Module 11 Week of April 13

A Typology of Theologies of Religion

View instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Paul Knitter, **Introducing Theologies of Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2012 ISBN 9781570754197, p. 109-172.

Written Assignment: Prepare a 400-word Summary of the major points of the assigned reading. Post on Canvas.

Module 12 Week of April 20

A Typology of Theologies of Religion

View instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: Paul Knitter, **Introducing Theologies of Religions**, Orbis: New York, 2012 ISBN 9781570754197, p. 173-247.

Written Assignment: Prepare a Short Essay of 500-700 words, using footnotes.

Module 13 Week of April 27

The Theology of Religion and Its Relevance to Peace: Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue Among and Within Religions: Focus on the Abrahamic Faiths

<https://pms-phil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/GO-TEACH-XII-12-Ecumenism-Dialogue.pdf>Links to an external site. Links to an external site.

Browse and study World Council of Churches website: <https://www.oikoumene.org/Links>Links to an external site. Links to an external site.

Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious

Dialogue <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2021-10/pontifical-council-interreligious-dialogue-cardinal-ayuso-inside.html>Links to an external site. Links to an external site. Focus on Religion and Peace

Reading Assignment: TBD

Written Assignment: Submit your term paper topic along with a 100 word abstract describing your topic and the approach you will take, and citing some of the primary sources you will use in your research. Submit on Canvas.

Module 14 Week of May 4

Toward a Unificationist Theology of Religions

View instructor's video.

Reading Assignment: TBD

Module 15 Week of May 11

Guidelines for Preparation for Final Term Paper

- Length: approximately 2500-3000 words
- Scholarly Style: **write in a scholarly style that is appropriate for a graduate student.** Your essay should:
 - be more than a personal reflection, but should be written to make a specific point. The essay should have three parts: a beginning/introduction, middle/body and conclusion/ending. The beginning can state your basic thesis or the point(s) you will make in your essay. The middle part should present the reasons and the evidence that supports your thesis or point(s) you are making. The middle part is the longest part and often will have sub-sections with sub-headings. The end part or final section offers a brief summary of your reasoning or the argument/thesis you have made in the main body of your essay.
 - go beyond presenting your personal opinions or views only. This is done by citing sources or authors who have greater authority. By citing other scholarly, authoritative sources, you demonstrate the strength of your own views, showing, for example, that your views are also held by or supported by others who are experts in their field.
 - use footnotes to cite all sources that you quote from, using standard footnoting style throughout the essay, that is, using a standard format such as the Chicago Manual of Style or other style guide of similar credibility
 - be written clearly and carefully, avoiding misspellings and/or poor grammar or incomplete sentences. In order to write well, an essay needs to go through several drafts. For example, a first draft should be read carefully, reviewed, corrected and improved, and the same with a second draft. This will improve your writing and will allow you to convey your content much more clearly.
- Plagiarism or reliance on AI for your content is not acceptable.
- Selection of your Topic: Please select a topic related to the assigned readings and lectures from the first half of our course **Please give serious thought to your topic and submit your proposed topic to me for approval no later than May 1. Your proposal should include your proposed title/topic and a 100 word abstract, describing your topic, and indicating a couple of resources/books/articles you will refer to in developing your topic.**

Final Term Paper Due May 21

BIBLIOGRAPHY for ADDITIONAL READING:

Karen Armstrong, **A History of God: The 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam**, Ballantine: New York, 1993. ISBN 0345384563

Claudia Baumhart-Ochse and Klaus Dieter Wolf, **Religious NGOs at the United Nations: Polarizers or Mediators**, Routledge: New York, 2019. ISBN 9780815362821

Marcus Braybrooke, **Faith and Interfaith in a Global Age**, Co-Nexus Press: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998 ISBN 0-9637897-2-4

Marcus Braybrooke, **World Faiths Encounter**, World Congress of Faiths: London, 1996. ISBN 09687718

Mary Pat Fisher, **Living Religions**, (10th edition) (Red Cover) Pearson, Prentice, 2017
ISBN- 13: 978-0-205-95640-1. Online: Amazon \$51.10; Other online companies: \$18.99:
PDF eBook \$19.99.

Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications", in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (edited by [John Hick](#) [Links to an external site.](#)).

David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, **Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology**, SUNY: New York, 1989. ISBN 0791401995

Ruben Habito, **The Gospel Among Religions: Christian Ministry, Theology, and Spirituality in a Multi-Faith World**, Orbis Books: 2010. ISBN: 1570758999

Adrian Hastings, Ed., **A World History of Christianity**, Eerdmans: Michigan, 1999. ISBN 0802824420

John Hick and Paul Knitter, Eds., **The Myth of Christian Uniqueness**, Orbis Press: New York, 1989. ISBN 0883446030

Dennis Hoover and Douglas M. Johnston, Eds., **Religion and Foreign Affairs: Essential Readings**, Baylor University Press: Waco, Texas, 2012. ISBN 978-1-60258-242-2

Samuel Huntington, **The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking World Order**, Simon and Schuster: New York, 1997. ISBN 0684844419

Elizabeth Isichei, **A History of Christianity in Africa**, Eerdmans: Michigan, 1995. ISBN 9789892808431

Veli-Matti Karkkainen, **An Introduction to the Theology of Religion: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**. IVP Academic, 2003. ISBN: 083082572X

Michael Kinnamon and Brian Cope, Eds., **The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices**, Eerdmans: Michigan, 1997. ISBN 2 825411876

Paul Knitter, **Introducing Theologies of Religion**, Orbis Books: 2002. ISBN: 1570754195

Michael Mickler, **The Unification Church Movement: An Assessment**, Cambridge University Press: 2023. ISBN 978-1-009-24145-8

Hak Ja Han Moon, **Mother of Peace: And God Shall Wipe Away All Tears from Their Eyes**, Washington, D.C., 2020, The Washington Times Global Media Group. ISBN: 978-0-9601031-1-9

Sun Myung Moon, **As a Peace-loving Global Citizen**, The Washington Times Foundation: Washington, D.C., 2010. ISBN: 978-1-930549-45-8

Terry C. Muck, **Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-First Century**, Baker Academic: 2009. ISBN: 0801026601

Michael Pocock, **The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends**, Baker Academic: 2005. ISBN: 9780801026614

Alan Race (1982). **Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions**. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Thomas Selover, Ed., **Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universal Value: A Compilation of Academic Explorations**, PWPA International, Seoul, Korea: 2021

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, **Towards a World Theology**, Westminster: Philadelphia, 1981. ISBN 0664213804

Thomas Walsh, Executive Editor, **Assembly 2000: Renewing the United Nations and Building a Culture of Peace**, IIFWP: New York ,2000. ISBN 1930549024
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ab1yPzPXPo0WpDMcdf0m31ebiW1sp6SI/view?usp=sharing>
[Links to an external site.](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ab1yPzPXPo0WpDMcdf0m31ebiW1sp6SI/view?usp=sharing) [Links to an external site.](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ab1yPzPXPo0WpDMcdf0m31ebiW1sp6SI/view?usp=sharing)

Thomas Walsh and Frank Kaufmann, **Christianity in the Americas: Ecumenical Essays**, IIFWP: New York, 1997. ISBN 1557787530