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## MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

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## Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

MB 780 January 12-23 (except for second Monday, January 19, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day), 2004 8:00-12:30 (3 hrs. credit).  
Room TBA. A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Instructor. Office Hours: By arrangement. Phone: C/o Mrs. Julee Bellar, MC303, 858-2259.  
Home (after December 20, 2003): 858-4434. Email: mathias\_zahniser@asburyseminar.edu. Please use email whenever possible.

### Catalogue Description:

Symbols, stories, rites, ceremonies, and other aspects of a variety of religious traditions provide insight and, in some cases, models for the task of Christian discipling. Students will construct their own structures for the discipling task based upon these insights and models. Three hours.

### Human Religion and the Discipling Task

The religious dimension of a culture provides its people with conceptions of reality and the means for maintaining the force and relevance of those conceptions. Features of a culture's repertoire such as story, scripture, rites of passage, pilgrimages, worship traditions, social organizations, and other symbolic activities shape the worldview of its people. The cross-cultural study of religion examines the religious dimension of culture with a view to understanding its nature and function. The course assumes that religiousness is a universal aspect of human identity. It also assumes the tools and results of religious studies offer much to Christian discipling. Based on these assumptions, the course explores the relevance of some of the non-verbal forms typical of human religion for the process of discipling. Discipling here means forming persons as individuals and members of communities of faith into the image of God's son. *The course deals almost exclusively with non-verbal forms of discipling.*

### Goals:

1. The student will be able to represent accurately in responses to readings the following concepts:
  - 1.1 the function of religion in culture according to Zahniser (1997).
  - 1.2 the meaning of Mircea Eliade's (1959) *homo religiosus* and the way in which, according to him, humans sanctify space, time, natural phenomena, and the processes and stages of living; and
  - 1.3 the meaning of the ritual process as presented by Victor Turner (1971), including the concepts "rites of passage," "liminality," and "*communitas*."
  - 1.4 dimensions of Mathias Zahniser's (1997) case for the use of non-verbal means in Christian formation and disciple making such as *traditional religious societies, modern theists, divine intimacy and ultimacy, cross-cultural discipling, split-level Christianity, the excluded middle, bonding to meaning, and syncretism*.
2. Students will be able to analyze a phenomenon of their own choosing according to one or more of these concepts.
3. Students will gain insight into the relation of discipling with symbols and rituals to syncretism and community development.
4. Students will gain confidence in their ability to apply this analysis to the task of discipling.

**Note:** The instructor hopes students will feel free to deal with the materials of the course critically. The analysis and application can be thought of in dialectical terms: the material examined in the seminar may be used to stimulate a more effective discipling process.

**Common Readings:**

The books can be purchased at the bookstore. The articles (marked \*) will be found in the packet for this course obtainable at the bookstore.

\*Courson, Jim

- 1998 "Deepening the Bonds of Christian Community: Applying Rite of Passage Structure to the Discipling Process in Taiwan." *Missiology: An International Review*. 26:301-313.

Eliade, Mircea

- 1959 *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

\*Finn, Thomas M.

- 1989 "Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus." *Journal of Ritual Studies*. 3:69-89.

\*Roach, Elizabeth M.

- 1988 "Transformation of Christian Ritual in the Pacific: Samoan White Sunday." *Missiology: An International Review*. 16:173-182.

Turner, Victor

- 1977 [1969] *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias

- 1997 *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*. Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications.

**Reading Packet**

A reading packet is available at the Cokesbury Bookstore containing Courson 1998, Finn 1989, and Roach 1988 (marked with an asterisk above).

**4-MAT Reflections**

You will prepare one 4-MAT Reflection for each assigned reading even when more than one chapter or more than one author is assigned. See the document 4mat780.doc posted with this syllabus, featuring specific guidelines for preparing these reflections. With the exception of the first day, when your 4-MAT will be due by 5:00 p.m., your 4-MAT Reflection will be due at the beginning of the class session for which the readings you are reflecting on are assigned. This syllabus indicates in the schedule of class periods when readings are assigned to be discussed.

**Class Presentation**

Each student (or team) will be responsible for presenting a thirty-minute portion of a discipling procedure or event. This event or process will be the subject of the research paper identified in the following paragraph. Ideally, presentations will involve the class in acting out an important part of the discipling procedure.

**A Research Paper**

Each student or team of students will produce a standard research paper of between 20 and 25 pages, including notes and bibliography. The paper will present a proposal for a discipling event or process making use of a model growing out of the seminar. Careful attention will be given in the evaluation to form, following the standards set in Slade, 11th. ed. (1999) or any later edition of Slade. Structure will also be important with attention given to thesis statement, use of sources, and the organization of the argument. Papers will be due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 28, 2004. The evaluation of the in-class presentation will be averaged with the evaluation of the final paper to equal half of the final grade. In the case of team presentations, all members of the team will receive the grade assigned to the paper and the presentation.

**Lectures, Powerpoint, and Notes**

If you get into the First Class Email Desktop and follow this path: <<FC Desktop / Wilmore Campus / School of Theology / Lecture Power Point / MB780>>, you will see that I have posted files relevant to this class. Some, especially those labeled “study guide” or “answers,” e.g. “Eliade study guide” and “Eliade Ch 4 answers,” go back to an earlier version of this course. I kept them in the folder, however, because I thought they might help with understanding some difficult concepts.

**Evaluation**

Grades for the course will be based on written responses to the reading assignments (50%), the oral report in class, and the research paper (50%). Late assignments will result in a grade reduction and little or no feedback from the instructor.

**Class Schedule by Days**

Classes meet daily from January 12 through 23 from 8:00-12:30, except for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 19. The assignments have been made under the assumption that students are not taking other classes, engaged in independent studies, or working full time during the time of this class. All assignments, unless otherwise indicated, are to be completed before the date on which they are listed in this syllabus. These represent the theoretical meat of the course.

**1. Introduction to Discipling with Symbols and Ceremonies**

**Monday 12:** Introduction to the course: modern theists and traditional religious people.

Theological background: The ultimacy and intimacy of God. A working definition of religion applicable to the process of Christian discipling. Read Zahniser 1997, chapters 1-5 and respond using a 4-MAT and turn in by 5:00 p.m. today to Zahniser’s mailbox in room MC303.

**2. Learning from Human Religion**

**Tuesday 13:** Mircea Eliade’s approach to understanding religion. Eliade 1959. Have a 4-MAT on this reading ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today.

**3. The Nature and Function of Symbols**

**Wednesday 14:** Symbols as models *of* and models *for* Christian formation. Turner 1995, chapters 1 and 2; Zahniser 1997, chapter 6. Have a 4-MAT on this reading ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today.

**4. The Rite of Passage Ceremony: The Bonding Potential of Liminality**

**Thursday 15:** The nature and function of a rite of passage. Discipling with the rite-of-passage structure. Turner 1995, chapters 3-5; Zahniser 1997, chapters 7 and 8; Finn 1989; Courson 1998. Have a 4-MAT on this reading ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today. I suggest you base your 4-MAT on Turner and refer to Zahniser, Finn, and Courson as examples of concepts by Turner.

**5. The Discipling Potential of Periodic Festivals and Pilgrimage**

**Friday 16:** The application of the rite of passage structure to space and time. Turner 1995, chapter 5; Roach 1988; Zahniser 1997, chapters 9 and 10. Have a 4-MAT on this reading ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today. Again base your 4-MAT on Turner and use Zahniser and Roach as examples of Turner’s concepts.

**6. Monday 19: Classes will not meet. This is to Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., martyr for the liberation of his people.** We make up for these four missed hours in various ways.

**7. A Theology of Discipling with Symbol and Ceremony**

**Tuesday 20:** The problem and potential of syncretism. A Trinitarian approach to holistic discipling. Zahniser 1997, chapters 11, 12, and Conclusion; Nichols 1985. Have a 4-MAT on this reading ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today. I suggest you base your 4-MAT, referring to a summary of Nichols as it is relevant to the discussion.

**8. Student presentations.**

**Wednesday-Friday January 21-23:** Each student, or student team, will present a cross-cultural discipling method and model to the class. Examples of religious structures relevant to cross-cultural discipling include Qur'an Recitation (Islam), The Village as Microcosm and Macrocosm (the Dogon of W. Africa), Mandala (Buddhist meditative diagram), Messianic Synagogue (Contextualized discipling), and Ashram (Hindu retreats).

**9. Bibliography:** The bibliography in Zahniser (1997:221-230) will serve as a bibliography for the course. Other bibliography will be provided in connection with lectures and presentations.