

1-1-2005

MB 770 The Indigenous Church

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Recommended Citation

Moon, W. Jay, "MB 770 The Indigenous Church" (2005). *Syllabi*. Book 2827.
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Spring, 2005

MB 770 The Indigenous Church

Instructor: W. Jay Moon
Thursdays, 1- 3:45 P.M.
3 Credit Hours

Welcome

I am glad that you are considering this course offering. I value each student that enters the class as you each provide life experiences and unique backgrounds that enrich our classroom. We all have a lot to learn from each other.

Personal Introduction

My family and I were SIM missionaries among the Builsa people of Ghana, West Africa from 1992 – 2001 (with one furlough in the middle). After learning their language, our role was to do church planting and water development alongside the SIM-related, Bible Church of Africa. This course explores some of the critical issues in mission that I observed from our experience in Africa, as well as draws from the literature. I will share from my own experiences and I look forward to hearing from you as well.

Course Description and Format

This is an **advanced** course for students with a solid foundation in missiological anthropology. The format will therefore reflect the advanced standing of the students by giving you a larger share of the responsibility for the course. There will be considerable discussion of material being read for which you must always come well prepared, some lecturing, some films, and a significant amount of time given to student presentations of research papers. The focus of the course is on the relationship between Christianity and culture. We will explore how this can engender indigenous churches, or result in syncretism or “Split-Level” Christianity in both Western and non-Western cultures around the world.

Texts Used in the Course

We will read the following books in this order:

Charles Kraft (1979) *Christianity in Culture*

Lamin Sanneh (1989) *Translating the Message*

Stephen Bevans (2002) *Models of Contextual Theology*

Lesslie Newbigin (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

Dean Gilliland, ed. (1989) *The Word Among Us* (photocopy)

Darrell Whiteman, compiler *Readings in Indigenous Church*

Collateral Reading: Robert Schreiter (1985) *Constructing Local Theologies*

Course Requirements and Important Dates

A short 5-10 page paper will be written for each of the following books. In addition, when you hand in your paper, **also hand in 2-3 questions** which you want to pursue in our discussion of the book.

1. Begin **immediately** reading Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*. Write a 5-10 page critique of the book, indicating areas where you find yourself in agreement and areas where you are having some difficulty. Record the important insights you have gained for developing an approach to indigenous Christianity. The date for turning in your paper is Monday, February 28th. We will discuss the book on March 3rd.

2. Our second book to read and critique is Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Evaluate this book, noting especially the "surprises" you discovered in Sanneh's approach to this controversial topic. Your 5-10 page paper is due on Monday, March 28th for discussion on the 31st.

3. The third book we will read is Stephen Bevan's (2002) *Models of Contextual Theology*. Critique this book noting the strengths and weaknesses of each of the five models Bevans proposes. We will discuss the book April 14th so have your paper to me by Monday, April 11th.

4. In our final area of discussion of the indigenous church we turn our focus on the West. There is no more eloquent spokesman for this concern than Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. He "knocked our socks off" with *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (1986), but now he has gone a step further with his powerful book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Read and critique this book, and include in your paper the contrast between indigenizing the church "over there" and doing it "here at home." We'll discuss this book on May 5th so have your paper turned in by May 2nd.

5. We are using two "Readers" in this course: (1) Gilliland's *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* which will give you an overview of the ideas coming out of Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission faculty, plus (2) "Whiteman's Reader" of ten classic articles, plus one of Darrell's own. Each week you will need to hand in "Interaction" papers on the articles you have read for that week. Because we will give some of our class time to discussing these, they need to be given to me on Monday. Do not be late as this will hamper our discussion together. There are a total of 24 articles to read and critique.

6. **Collateral Reading:** For those of you who want to push yourself a bit more in this course for extra credit (10%) you can read Bob Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies*. This is not an easy book to read, especially the material on semiotics, so you

may have to read it more than once to get all the gold that is there. Have your paper turned in by May 12th.

The following dates are those when our class will meet and discuss these articles; your “Interaction Papers” are **due the Monday before**.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Gilliland</u>	<u>Whiteman’s Reader</u>
2/10	Class begins	
2/17	1 - Gilliland	1. Smalley, “Cultural Implications..”
2/24	2 - Glasser	2. Tippett, “Indigenous Principles...”
3/3	3 - Gilliland	3. Von Allmen, “The Birth of...”
3/10	4 - Van Engen	4. Taber, “The Limits of...”
3/17	5 - Hiebert	5. Walls, “The Gospel as the...”
3/24	SPRING BREAK	
3/31	6 - Kraft	6. Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization”
4/7	7 - Shaw	7. Whiteman, “Contextualization...”
4/14	8 - Sogaard	8. Dye, “Toward a Cross-Cultural...”
4/21	10 - Ellison	9. Arbuckle, “Inculturation and ...”
4/28	11 - Wagner	10. Willowbank, “Report of a...”
5/5	12 - Gibbs, & 13 - Tan Che-Bin	11. Costas, “Survival, Hope, and...”
5/12	14 - Woodberry	

7. **Research Papers.** Each student is required to prepare a major research paper of approximately 20 pages, plus a solid bibliography. A number of these papers will be selected for presentation to the class. A copy of each paper will be put on reserve in the library so that it can be copied by anyone interested in the topic. The paper should be reduced two pages to one to lower the cost of photocopying. Turn in one standard 8 1/2 X 11, and make a copy for yourself. A one page abstract of your paper should be written and distributed to all members of the class. Your topic should be chosen and approved as

soon as possible, but no later than **March 10th**. An outline of your paper should be turned in **March 31st**. The paper and one page abstract to be passed out to your colleagues is due **April 28th**.

Your paper should relate to the topic of indigenous Christianity with both a theoretical issue(s) and a practical application(s). Here are some possible topics from which to choose. You may add to this list as well:

1. The Muslim Concept of Jesus as it Relates to Indigenous Christianity
2. The Problem of Cultural Relativism and Christianity
3. God Working Through Culture: Incarnation as Model for Ministry
4. The Problem of Form and Meaning as it Relates to Indigeneity
5. Indigenous Christianity vs. Syncretism: Guidelines for Making a Distinction
6. The Bible as a Casebook of Indigeneity
7. The Influence of Culture on Theologizing
8. A Wesleyan Theology of Indigeneity
9. Some Concerns in My Culture That are Not Addressed by Western Christian Theology
10. The Biblical Encounter with : Ancestors in X Culture
Spirits “
Sorcery “
Materialism “
11. Indigenous Christianity in North America: Syncretistic or Incarnational?
12. God’s Ideal vs. God’s Starting Point: The Problem of Process in Indigenous Christianity
13. Making the Gospel Relevant to Contemporary: Yuppies
Street People, etc.
14. Worldview and Indigenous Christianity: Informing and Transforming Each Other
15. The Transforming Impact of Christianity in X Culture
16. Human Commonalty, Cultural Diversity, and the Gospel
17. Indigenous Christianity with Third and Fourth Generation Christians: Turning Back the Clock or Revitalizing the Faith?
18. The Major Differences Between the Old and New Testaments Are Cultural More Than They Are Theological
19. The Health and Wealth Gospel in America: Good Indigeneity or Cultural Corruption of the Gospel?
20. The Wesleyan Revival in 18th Century England: Implications for Indigenous Christianity Today.
21. How African Oral Literature Helps the Understanding of Christianity and Facilitates the Constructing of the Indigenous Church.

Summary of Important Dates:

Each Monday turn in your “Interaction Papers” for the week. They should be put in my mail slot in the ESJ Office. **Do not send them through the SPO.**

2/28	Critique of Kraft is due
3/03	Discuss Kraft
3/10	Deadline for choosing a research topic
3/10	Film: "The Healer"
3/24	SPRING BREAK
3/28	Critique of Sanneh is due
3/31	Discuss Sanneh
3/31	Outline of Research Paper is due
4/07	Film: "The Empty Cup"
4/11	Critique of Bevans is due
4/14	Discuss Bevans
4/21	Film: "Rise Up and Walk"
4/28	Research Paper and Abstract due
5/02	Critique of Newbigin is due
5/05	Discuss Newbigin
5/05	Film: "Sister Act"
5/12	Collateral Reading of Schreier is due

Course Evaluation

There will not be a final examination in this course. Your grade will be determined in the following manner:

1. 35% Research Paper
2. 25% Weekly Interaction Papers
3. 10% Critique of Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*
4. 10% Critique of Sanneh's *Translating the Message*
5. 10% Critique of Bevans' *Models of Contextual Theology*
6. 10% Critique of Newbigin's *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

You will also be given an opportunity to nominate your final grade for the course.

Office Hours

I am available for office hours on Wednesdays from 10 AM – 12 Noon, and Tuesdays from 1 - 4 PM. If these hours are not suitable, please arrange a time with me, and I will be happy to meet with you. I can also be reached at: 858-0471, or email: waltermoon@asburyseminary.edu.

Spring 2002

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Interaction Form**

Name _____ Date _____

Chapter or Article Title _____

Author _____

Rating on a Scale of 1-10 _____ [10 = high]

Summary:

What new insights have you gained from reading this article?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How do you suggest these new insights can be applied to the problem of Indigenous Christianity?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

What are some problems that have been raised that we should discuss in class?