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MW 605 Religious Studies for Christian Mission I: Judaism and Islam

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION I: 
JUDAISM AND ISLAM


I. DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

A. Catalogue Description: An introduction to the nature and function of religion in human culture with special reference to the Judaic and Islamic traditions. Special attention is given to the relevance of the cross-cultural study of religion to Christian mission among people influenced by the three great Abrahamic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A field trip is required.

B. Method: In MW 605, religious traditions are explored historically, that is, as they occur over time, phenomenologically, that is, on their own terms and through their own forms, theologically, that is, in relation to the claims of Christian faith and revelation, and elenctically, that is, with a view toward providing opportunities for the Spirit to convince people influenced by these faith traditions of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

C. Course Goals. The goals of the course are organized around three primary areas of inquiry, learning and expression: (1) religious studies; (2) the Jewish and Islamic religious traditions; and (3) an elenctic approach to evangelization.

1. The Cross-Cultural Study of Religion

1.1 Students will know of some of the basic terms, techniques, and methods employed in the cross-cultural study of religious traditions.

1.2 Students will develop their ability to listen to others, read and/or observe what they produce with unprejudiced attention and genuine respect, regardless of their worldviews and resultant commitments.

1.3 Students will accept the ideal of epoché (methodological suspension of the subjectivity of the interpreter in order to minimize the distortion of the essence of the religious expression being observed) as a working principle of inter-cultural understanding and communication.

2. The Jewish and Islamic Religious Traditions

2.1 Students will know the minimal indispensable terminology and facts associated with these religious traditions.

2.2 Students will understand the distinctive features of the Abrahamic tradition (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) over against other religious traditions.

2.3 Students will understand salient features of the worldview and ethos of Judaism and Islam as exemplified in selected phenomena basic to their identity, and in relation to sharing the gospel with people influenced by them.

2.4 Students will become aware of the satisfaction people influenced by Judaism and Islam derive from their faith traditions.

2.5 Students will become aware of the personal integration participants realize from the performance of ritual obligations.

2.6 Students will grow in spontaneous interest in learning about Jewish and Islamic traditions,
2.7 Students will grow in a sense of common humanity with persons influenced by the Jewish and Islamic traditions.

3. **An Elenctic Approach to Evangelization**
   3.1 Students will know the indispensable terminology and facts associated with an elenctic approach to evangelization.
   3.2 Students will become aware of the possibilities associated with openness to the creative Spirit of God for cross-cultural communication.
   3.3 Students will sharpen their interest in enabling others to know God in Jesus Christ.
   3.4 Students will accept the role of elenctic witness in personal and corporate Christian life.

4. **Theological Integration**
   4.1 Students will enjoy discovering a growing congruence of inner commitment and outer behavior.
   4.2 Students will increase in faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to effect change in persons in spite of apparently insurmountable barriers.

5. **Group Learning as Pilgrims**
   5.1 Students will gain experience and develop skills in group and travel learning.
   5.2 Students will increase their appreciation for the value of a team approach and a learning community in Christian witness to persons influenced by major religious faiths such as Judaism and Islam.

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**II. REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**A. Common Readings:** The following books have been selected to give a common foundation to our knowledge:

- Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. The material to be read from Kaufmann has been included in the course packet.
- A. H. Mathias Zahniser, “Close Encounter of the Vulnerable Kind: Christian Dialogue and Proclamation Among Muslims,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 49/1 (Spring, 1994), 71-78. This article to be distributed by the instructor is required reading for all students.

**B. Recommended Readings**

C. The following instruments of learning, means of evaluation, and vehicles for ministry are designed to provide expressions of spiritual formation, cognitive discovery, affective response, and community and individual contributions related to the goals of the course.

1. **Interaction papers** cover designated readings for a particular session or chapters in texts not covered in class (see November 2). These papers are designed to give you a chance to react to class materials from the point of view of your background and ministry perspective. These papers comprise thirty-five percent of the grade for the class. They will be evaluated carefully using the criteria identified on page 21 of the Seminary's catalogue: A = exceptional work; B = good work; C = acceptable work; D = marginal work; and F = unacceptable or unfulfilled work. Interaction papers must be turned in before the end of class on the day they are due and cannot be made up if missed. The lowest grade will be dropped before the interaction paper grades are averaged.

2. **Final integrative essay.** This essay represents sixty-five percent of the grade for the class. In response to the article by your instructor, “Close Encounters of the Vulnerable Kind” and to the book on evangelical approaches to the unevangelized, you will write an integrative essay on the topic: Christian Witness to Jews or Muslims: A Personal View. Guidelines for this essay will be distributed. The essay may not exceed fifteen pages in length, assuming one inch margins, double spacing, and twelve point courier font, not including notes and bibliography. Courier font is not required. If you use a variable-spaced font such as Times, fifteen pages of Courier content will fit into twelve pages.

3. **The field trip to Toledo, Ohio** (October 8-10 or 15-17) is required. Since this trip involves a significant time commitment, you are given some compensating days off.

4. **Small group experience.** You will be assigned to a van group in preparation for Toledo ’99 and for other group learning events. Two of your interaction papers will be turned in to your van leadership for evaluation. See the schedule below for the weeks of September 28 (ritual and worship space), October 26 (ethics and morality), December 1 (politics), and December 7 (the state of the unevangelized). While your participation in the van group will not be evaluated, your interaction papers for two of the group sessions will be averaged with your other interaction papers according to the evaluation of your van group leadership team.

III. SCHEDULE FOR THE TERM

The schedule includes the assigned readings for the day on which they will be discussed. Please have the readings read by the class period for which they are assigned. The focus in the class sessions will be upon the material presented in the assigned readings, occasionally supplemented by material presented by the instructor. Assignments are made for the week beginning on the date indicated and, unless otherwise instructed, you should turn in each interaction paper on the Tuesday of the week for which it is assigned. Interaction papers will usually be handed back on Thursday.

A. Introduction to the Course

September 7: **Introduction to the course and organization for Toledo ’99**, with special attention to course methodology and requirements. **Reading:** Chapter 1 in Ellwood and McGraw.
B. Judaism and Islam: a quick preview.


September 28: Preparation for Toledo ’99. On Thursday and Friday of this week, your 705 team will make a presentation to your van group on Jewish and Islamic worship space and practice. Reading: Haneef, pages 42-46 and 131-142; Wouk, Chapter 8: “The Prayers, the Synagogue, and the Worshippers.” You might review Ellwood and McGraw pages 277-79, 286-88, 378, and 391-94 for this session. You will be given a handout indicating the structure and content of the field trip. Be prepared to share with your van group the experiences you have had with Jews and Muslims. These two sessions are designed to prepare you for Toledo ’99. You have no written assignment. Be alert and learn as much as you can from these two days.

C. The Jewish Religious Tradition.

October 5: Ritual occasions of the rabbinic year. Readings: Wouk, Chapters 5-7 and 9-12. An interaction paper must be completed for any one of the chapters from Wouk. See also pages 288-91 in Ellwood and McGraw. In-class reading of “The Conversion of the Jews,” by Philip Roth (From Good-bye Columbus). No class on Friday.

October 8 (F) - 10 (Su) *****TOLEDO ’99 ONE *****

October 12: Torah, Tenakh and Talmud: the scripturalization of Judaism. Reading: Wouk, Prologue through Chapter 4 and Chapters 13-17. An interaction paper must be completed for one of the chapters from Wouk. In class clip from the video: “Judaism: The Chosen People.”” No class on Friday.

October 15 (F) - 17 (Su) *****TOLEDO ’99 TWO *****

D. The Islamic Religious Tradition.

October 19: Islamic beliefs and ritual activities. Reading: Haneef, Sec. I. An interaction paper must be completed for pages 3-38 from this reading. You have already read Ellwood and McGraw’s material covering this topic, pages 387-94 and encountered some of it on Toledo ’99. Video clips from “The Five Pillars of Islam” and “There is no God but God” on the Islamic Pilgrimage (Hajj).

October 26: Ethics and morality in Judaism and Islam. Reading: Haneef pages 63-128 and 142-184; Ellwood and McGraw pages 291-96 and 418-29. An interaction paper must be completed for the section on family life and the relationship of the sexes in Haneef (pages 141-159). On Tuesday and Thursday of this week, you will have your second session in your van groups. Although most of your reading is on Islam for this week, your 705 team will lead a discussion on Jewish and Islamic ethics. No class on Friday: Day of Prayer.

November 2: The distinctive characteristic of Abrahamic religion. Reading: Kaufmann pages 21-121. This week we examine an analysis that suggests the basic and distinctive feature of biblical monotheism. It helps us greatly with the elenctic question: What have you done with God? An interaction paper is due today on any one of the following chapters in Ellwood and McGraw: 1, 2, 6, 8, 10, or 11.

November 9: Christian witness and major religious traditions: an elenctic approach. Reading: Bavinck Part Two. On these days we shall work on our understanding of Bavinck’s elenctic approach to Christian witness among people of other religious traditions. You will receive a handout called “Between Proclamation and Dialog: An Elenctic Approach to Cross-cultural Witness.”

November 16: The Phenomenological Method and the Christian Project. Reading: Turner pages 346-366. Today and Thursday we study one of the best examples of Christian theological use of the phenomenological method. Do an interaction paper over the chapter by Turner. This chapter shows up in your packet. There will be no class on November 19—compensation for Toledo ’99 I and II.

November 22-26 *** Reading Week***

November 30: There will be no class on November 30—compensation for Toledo ’99 I and II.

December 1 & 2: Religion and politics. Reading: Ellwood and McGraw deal with the political character of Islam in Chapter 9, especially pages 394-97, 402-08, and 412-18. Summarize in an interaction paper what this chapter has to say about Islam and politics. This topic is very important for dialogue with, and witness to, Muslims today. You will meet with your van groups on these days and discuss the topic. On Thursday, hand in your interaction paper to the members of your leadership team. They will evaluate them using the same criteria that I have used on your and their previous interaction papers.

December 7 & 9: Major religious traditions and the state of the “unevangelized”: the representative evangelical approaches. Reading: You have no assignment for these days. The recommended reading by Sanders et al. What about Those Who Have Never Heard? is relevant to this week’s topic. You will be introduced to contemporary positions among evangelical regarding the possibility of salvation for those who have never heard the gospel or who have heard it inappropriately. Some of this material may help you with your final integrated essay.

December 10: Review for the exam.

F. Final examination: to be taken by the student on his or her own time.

See the discussion of the final integrative essay earlier in the syllabus under II, C, 2. Make sure you know what this is all about. The sessions with your van group on December 7 & 9 may offer some insights useful in preparing your essay. The essay is due in the office of the instructor by 1700 on December 17.