MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

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Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

MB 780 January 10-21 (except for second Monday, January 17, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day), 2005 8:00-12:30 (3 hrs. credit). Room TBA. A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Instructor. Office Hours: By arrangement in MC319. Phone: c/o Mrs. Julee Bellar, MC303, 858-2259. Email: mathias_zahniser@asburyseminary.edu. Home (after November 25, 2004): 858-4434. Please use email whenever possible. Before November 25 you will receive a notice that I am out of town, but I will still get your email. So feel free to correspond. You may also contact Jay Moon, Assistant Instructor: Email: walter_moon@asburyseminary.edu.

Catalogue Description:
Symbols, stories, 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

Eliade, Mircea

*Finn, Thomas M.

*Roach, Elizabeth M.

Turner, Victor

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias

Reading Packet

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 documents 4mat780.doc posted with this syllabus, featuring specific guidelines for preparing these reflections, and Sample 4-MAT 1. Even if you have used this form of responses to readings before, please examine the guidelines carefully. I have some of my own particular requirements. 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 will 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 4-MAT 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 instructors.

Class Schedule by Days
Classes meet daily from January 10 through 21 from 8:00-12:30, except for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 17. 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 10: 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 or via email in rich text format (.rtf).

2. **Learning from Human Religion**
   
   **Tuesday 11**: 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 12**: Symbols as models of and models for Christian formation. Turner 1995, chapters 1 and 2; Zahniser 1997, chapter 6. Installation of the Professor. **Have a 4-MAT on these readings ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today.**

4. **The Rite of Passage Ceremony: The Bonding Potential of Liminality**
   
   **Thursday 13**: 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 these readings 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 introduced by Turner.

5. **The Discipling Potential of Periodic Festivals and Pilgrimage**
   
   **Friday 14**: 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 these readings 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 17**: **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. We suggest you attend the march in Lexington as a ceremony with symbols.

7. **A Theology of Discipling with Symbol and Ceremony**
   
   **Tuesday 18**: The problem and potential of syncretism. A Trinitarian approach to holistic discipling. Zahniser 1997, chapters 11, 12, and Conclusion. Have a 4-MAT on these readings ready to turn in at the beginning of the class session today.
8. **Student Presentations.**

**Wednesday-Friday January 19-21:** 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), Ashram (Hindu retreats), Proverbs (verbal but good in non-literate contexts), and Stories (including drama and mime).

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.