SYLLABUS
ST5415/WM535 THEOLOGY AND WORLD RELIGIONS
Dr. J. Scott Horrell

The morning double-period class of ST415/WM535 may allow time for guest speakers and visits to non-Christian religious centers as well as significant discussion together.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION
DTS Catalogue: “A study of comparisons and contrasts between selected areas of Christian theology and contemporary world religious thought, with a view toward understanding other religions and effectively communicating the gospel. May also be credited in the department of World Missions and Intercultural Studies/Theological Studies. 3 hours.” (2 credit hours are also an option through the Registrar.)

II. OBJECTIVES
A. Students will be conversant regarding the basic theological content and selected practices of the major world religions. Video presentations, guest lecturers, site visitations, assigned readings, and class discussions are designed so that students gain familiarity with and capability relating to those of non-Christian beliefs and customs.

B. Class Participants will compare and contrast Christian truth with selected beliefs and practices of other world religions. The course will compare responses by the world religions to universal questions, and evaluate these responses from a Trinitarian perspective.

C. Students will focus on a single world religion of their choice developing a theological and missiological strategy for communicating the gospel to its adherents. The student will integrate class content and personal research in a written presentation concerning a major non-Christian religion’s primary beliefs, barriers, and bridges to Christian faith and how best to make understandable the gospel.

D. Students may have opportunity develop bridges of friendship and dialogue with a person or family of a non-Christian religion by showing compassion in a demonstrable form. Doing good works—not abstractly but by personal caring toward a particular non-Christian religionist—is an integral part of Christian witness.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS: 2020
A. Required Books


**B. Recommended Books**


**C. Suggested Books**


### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. Class Readings

Mandatory readings are listed on the Class Schedule (below) on the *preferred* date for the student to have read the material. Excepting course textbooks, all readings are found on Canvas at [https://online.dts.edu](https://online.dts.edu). Readings may be completed as
late as the two dates for Required Reading Reports. The one exception is Stephen Prothero’s *God is Not One*—see B. below. Selected chapters from Winfried Corduan’s *Neighboring Faiths*, 2d ed. (InterVarsity Press, 2012) serve as the basic course textbook along with Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland’s, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions* (Oxford University Press, 2014). These works are supplemented by the professor’s notes, additional required textbooks, and selected articles. Students may read the Optional Readings (in gray in course schedule) for up to three points of extra credit. The Reading Reports are done through Canvas online links (Quizzes) due at two times in the semester (see VII. Course Schedule). Readings value 30% of the final grade.

B. Critical Review

As a primer to the course, students will read and evaluate Stephen Prothero’s *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter* (HarperOne, 2010). You will submit a 1000-word (4–5 page) critical review of the work that is near the beginning of the course (see below). Not included in the Reading Reports, Prothero’s *God Is Not One* provides a popular overview of the world religions and challenges Christian faith.

The review should be double-spaced and patterned after *Bibliotheca Sacra* reviews. The format includes the complete bibliographic information: full title and subtitle; the author’s name, editor and/or translator if appropriate; edition (if not 1st), place, publisher, and date of publication; and total number of pages. In the first paragraph, include brief background information about the author and clearly state the book’s purpose. No more than half the review should summarize what is in the work—this, in a balanced and non-pejorative manner. The concluding half should critically evaluate and interact with Prothero’s argument, noting both positive and negative aspects. What are key concerns and responses from a Christian perspective? The critical review is worth 15% of the final grade.

C. Visitation Project

Beyond classroom lectures and possible outings, students will visit a non-Christian religious entity—e.g., Jewish synagogue, Islamic mosque, Hindu, Buddhist, or Baha’i temple, New Age, Scientology, Santeria, or Spiritualist center, etc. (not semi-Christian groups such as Unitarianism and Mormonism). Most non-Christian religions in the US are accustomed to having visitors and will treat you kindly. Respectfully interview a leader as to what they believe, why they adhere to that religion, how they answer worldview questions (see class lectures). Try to befriend the person with whom you speak. Pray beforehand that God will open opportunity to speak of Jesus Christ. It is suggested that students go two-by-two.
Groups larger than four are not encouraged. Each student is to write a 500-word evaluation of her or his experience regarding what was observed and how one might better relate to such religious people in the future. The world religion center visitation values 10% of the final grade.

D. Individual Project: Monograph

Students will write a paper that (1) articulates the basic beliefs of a selected world religion, (2) evaluates these beliefs in light of Christian truth, and (3) develops at least three primary “points of entry” for relating the gospel to the religion’s adherents. The monograph should be about fifteen pages long, double-spaced, with an additional bibliography of at least twelve works including primary works of the selected religion. The monograph should follow Turabian format. The paper is due at the course deadline and values 35% of the grade.

E. Final Exam

A brief Final Exam will review the course and allow students to think through applications of the material; either in class or online. 10% of the grade.

F. Extra Credit: Up to Three Points

1. Optional Readings. As noted above, any percentage of the Optional Readings (marked in gray both in VII. Course Schedule and Reading Reports) yields extra credit of up to 3 points for 312 pages.

G. Students Seeking Only 2-Credit Hours

Students desiring to take the course for two credits must be approved by the professor and the DTS Registrar before the course begins. For two credits, all the assignments above are required with these exceptions:

2. Choice of either Prothero Review or Visit to Non-Christian Religion.
3. Monograph. Rather than a 15-page monograph students will submit a ten to twelve page monograph with at least eight works in the bibliography.
4. So the course weighting is Reading 40%, Prothero Review or World Religion Visitation 20%, Monograph 40%.

V. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

A. Students with Disabilities or Medical Incidents

Dallas Theological Seminary works to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with psychological, medical, physical, and learning disabilities. A student desiring or needing accommodations on the basis of such disabilities or of medical incidents such as hospitalization or severe injury is to contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (https://students.dts.edu/studentlife/disability-services/). If the student is aware of a condition that may impact his/her studies, the student should contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities prior to the beginning of the semester or at the onset of a crisis.

B. Plagiarism

From the Student Handbook: 1.17: “Plagiarism occurs in research whenever a writer appropriates material that falls outside the sphere of common knowledge, and is from any source not his own without indicating his or her indebtedness to that source. The theft may have to do with substance (i.e., ideas or information taken from a source without acknowledgment in the form of proper documentation), or it may have to do with verbal expression (i.e., wording or phraseology taken from a source without acknowledgment in the form of proper documentation and quotation marks around the quoted material). In either of these forms, plagiarism constitutes a serious academic and ethical impropriety. For this reason any work submitted that gives clear evidence of plagiarism, whether committed deliberately or naively, will receive a grade of zero. Each case will be reported to the Dean of Students. Depending on the circumstances, the student may be subject to additional disciplinary action.”

Included on the Canvas Home page (Unit 7) and in the 0 General Materials folder as 0.4a Vericite Plagiarism Self-Check are brief directions and a video on how to evaluate your own work for plagiarism. GTAs and graders look at this very carefully. With Bible verses and Creeds often cited, we expect some direct quotes. Beyond those citations, all work should be your own. When quoting the professor’s notes, include in the endnotes: J. S. Horrell, ST102 Class Notes, [e.g.] “Ch.4 God Made Flesh,” DTS, Mar. 2020, 29.
C. Late Homework

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, are to be turned in at the beginning of the designated class or before the deadline online. Good excuses will be honored but must be written out and communicated clearly. In regular Dallas Campus classes, without a valid excuse late homework will lose five percent per day of classes. Extension and Online courses lose ten percent per day of classes.

D. Absences

Penalties for non-attendance will be assigned according to the Student Handbook. Four single-class absences or two double-class session absences are allowed before the student’s grade will be reduced (classes are measured in blocks of 75 minutes). For each single-class absence beyond the limit, the student’s cumulative grade will be reduced by two points. Be sure to arrive on time for class. Three tardies (10 minutes) are considered one absence.

E. Electronic Device Usage in Class

“Students should refrain from using cell phones, laptop computers, or other devices in a manner that distracts others in the class. Playing games, browsing the internet, using email, instant messaging, or text messaging, etc., are considered unacceptable when class is in session. Unless permitted by the professor, students should turn off all electronic devices during tests and quizzes.” (Student Handbook)

F. Graduating Students

All work of graduating students—including the Final Exam and Reading Report—is due as marked in the course schedule below. The final exam will be given several days before the marked deadline. The student is responsible to communicate on this with the professor.

G. Extension, Hybrid, and Winter-Summer Course Students

Because of the large amount of reading, all extension and winter and summer course students are strongly advised to read ahead in the Class Notes.

VI. GRADING

A. Letter-Number Grade Scale
B. **Weighing of Course Requirements for Grading** (Three Credit Course)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings:</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Review of Prothero, <em>God Is Not One</em></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to World Religion (temple, mosque, etc) with Report</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Monograph</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Credit: 3 Points Maximum</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Reading (Gray reads and/or listed options) $\geq 3$

Optional Reading with Critical Review: up to $\geq 3$

C. **Class Participation**

Classes and visits to religious sites are intended to be dynamic with the interaction of class members. The student is responsible to participate in class and group discussions for her or his own learning and enrichment.

D. **Get an Early Start**

Along with the review of Prothero’s *God Is Not One* due early in the semester, classes assume that students will have done the assigned reading. Especially in concentrated courses, wise students will complete the reading beforehand.

VII. **COURSE LECTURES, ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE, ST5415/WM535A Fall 2020**

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**8.26 INTRODUCTION to Course**

I. **BACKGROUNDs TO COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES:**
TOWARD A BIBLICAL APPROACH

A. Contemporary Religious Studies


9.2 Contemporary Religious Studies (cont.)


B. Three Worldview Paradigms: The Idea of God

A Trinitarian Framework and Approach


9.8 Tues

Due Online (by 11:59PM): Critical Review of Prothero


9.9 II. OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION OF MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

A. Hinduism

"We Are All Hindus Now," *Newsweek* (Aug 24, 2009), 70 (1p); x.H. Hesse, *Siddhartha* (New Directions, 1951) 3pp.

9.16 Visiting Lecturer or Visit to a Hindu or Buddhist Temple

9.23 B. Buddhism


9.30 C. Jainism, Sikhism


D. Chinese & East Asian Popular Religions (Taoism, Confucianism, etc)


10.7 E. African and Other Traditional Religions


10.14 F. Western Spiritism, Afro-American and Indian Religions.


10.20 Tues  *DUE: Reading Report One (All Material to Date) ONLINE by 11:59PM

10.21  **G. Judaism**


10.28  **H. Islam**


11.4  **Guest Lecturer or Visit to a Muslim Mosque**

11.11  **I. Islam, Zoroastrianism, Baha’i**


11.16-20  **READING WEEK**
11.23–27   THANKSGIVING BREAK

12.2   III. THEOLOGY AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

A. A Christian Theology of World Religions

*Due: ALL Graduates’ Work


12.8 Tues.  *Due: Personal Visit to Another Religion Report

*Due: Reading Report Two (All Remaining Required Readings) 11:59PM

12.9   B. Universalism, Pluralism, Inclusivism, Exclusivism


C. Conclusions, Prayer

*Final Exam, online and/or in group

12.10-14  *MONOGRAPH, Thur–Mon 11:59PM

*ALL EXTRA CREDIT, Optional Reading Report
COURSE SCHEDULE ST415/WM535A Fall 2020

8.26 Wed  Course Introduction, Syllabus


9.16 Class Lecturer or Visit to a Hindu or Buddhist Temple

10.20 Tues Required Reading Report One, 11:59PM

11.4  Class Lecturer or Visit to a Muslim Mosque

11.16–20 Fall Reading Week

11.23–27 Thanksgiving Break

12.2  Due: All Graduates’ Work

12.8 Tues Report: Personal Visit to Another Religion
     Required Reading Report 2

12.9 Wed  Final Class
     Final Exam (online and/or group)

12.10-14 DUE: Monograph
     All Extra Credit, Mon 11:59PM