

## **HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY**

80156 SCRL 220 01 World Religions 3 Credit Hours

**Spring 2008**

### ***Our Mission:***

*The mission of Howard University School of Divinity, as a graduate theological and professional school, is to educate, form, and empower leaders to serve the church and the world, to celebrate the religious and cultural heritage of African Americans, the African Diaspora and Africa and to engage in the pursuit of excellence in ministry, driven by a passion for justice and freedom and a relentless search for truth.*

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. K. Kwakye-Nuako

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Office: Mays Hall, Room 188

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5 p.m. & By Appointment

For Appointment please call, 202.806-0500

Class Schedule: Wednesdays 7.10-9.30 p.m.

Classroom: Mays Hall, LL 96

### **Statement**

**Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students in need of accommodations due to a disability should contact the office of the Dean of Special Student Services for verification and determination of reasonable accommodations as soon as possible after admission to the University, or at the beginning of each semester.**

**The Dean of Special Student Services, Dr. Barbara Williams, can be reached at 202.238.2420**

### **Course Description**

This course is to introduce students to some of the major religions of the world, examining each about its ideals, ethics, rituals, and worldview in order to gain insights into some of the beliefs which have contributed to shape human institutions. Put differently, this course seeks to provide an entrée into the hearts, minds, and behavior of most people in this world. In addition, the course seeks to facilitate a sympathetic understanding of these religious traditions and their relevance for our contemporary world as students prepare for ministry. Studying the religions of the world calls for critical engagement with the tenets of these religions so that students can develop a deeper appreciation for their own faith traditions as well as those that millions of the world's population subscribe. This is to enable students create healthy relationship with peoples of other faiths as they minister in a pluralistic world by engaging in meaningful dialogue in humanity's search for meaning.

## Course Requirements:

Students are expected to:

1. Attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be 10% of the course grade.
2. **Turn off all cellular telephones during class**
3. Read the assigned texts carefully **before** class for the day the readings are listed. As you read, endeavor to identify the contradictions, inconsistencies and other issues that are problematic. **(Do not read into what the authors have presented based on your disdain for a particular faith tradition or your ignorance about God).**
4. Please use inclusive language. The use of male pronoun for God will not be accepted.
5. I will follow and enforce the university policy on academic dishonesty, particularly with regards to cheating and plagiarism.
6. Except for extenuating circumstances that will prevent a student from completing the work for the semester, I will not give anyone an “Incomplete” grade. Instead, I will give grade for work done by the student(s) who fail(s) to complete their course requirements.
7. Group presentation will be an essential component of this course. Students will be group to make weekly presentation on an assigned faith tradition. **No presentation should exceed forty-five (45) minutes to make room for class discussion.** This will carry 20% of the course grade
8. To integrate theory with praxis, students are required to visit two religious traditions, different from their own, and immerse themselves as participant observers. Following this encounter, students are to write a seven-page, double spaced paper of the visits focusing on the significance of the worship services to a student of religion. This purely experiential learning requires **no interviews or textbook reference**, and is due on February 27, 2008. No excuses or late papers will be entertained. This paper will be 20% of the grade for the course.
9. John S. Dunne’s concept of “passing over” is crucial for human survival in our postmodern society. How has this course equipped to become an agent of human transformation? Be analytical in your response and draw from the course and other relevant materials to argue your case. This paper should be provocative and insightful, and not a sermon. Alternatively, students may describe how Judaism, Christianity and Islam created a new Abraham for their unique purposes. How has the “new Abraham” contributed to the misuse of religion, and how would you redeem Abraham from sectarian interests and make him the universal figure, the seed of hope for humanity? The final paper should not be less than twelve pages, and is due on the last day of class. Again, no excuses or late submissions will be accepted. The final paper will be 30% of the grade for the course.

Grading:

A: 93-100

- B: 86-92
- C: 78-85
- D: 70-77
- F: Below 69

**Required Texts:**

- \*\*\* Berling, Judith A *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education*, Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004
- \*\*\* Davis, Kortright and Elias Farajaje-Jones, ed., *African Creative Expression of the Divine*, Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991.
- \*\*\* Dunne, John S. *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978
- Esposito, John L, Darrell J. Fasching & Todd Lewis. *Religions and Globalization: World Religions in Historical Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Eck, Diana. *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2002
- Feiler, Bruce. *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. Perennial Books, 2004
- Harrod, Howard L. *Becoming and Remaining a People: Native Americans Religions on the Northern Plains*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995.
- \*\*\* Horton, Robin. *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*. Cambridge University Press, 1997
- \*\*\* Kessler, Gary E. *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases* 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.
- \*\*\* Magesa, Laurenti. *African Religions* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996

**SYLLABUS**

Week 1 January 9	<b>Introductory Class</b> , No reading Assignment
Week 2 January 16	<b>Religion: A Definition</b> Read: Horton, p.19-49; Kessler, pp. 21-44
Week 3 January 23	<b>Studying the World's Religions Today: An Overview.</b> Read Esposito, pp. 1-35; Berling, pp. 5-17
Week 4 January 30	<b>Perspectives in the Study of World Religions</b> Read Berling, pp. 64-80; Dunne, pp. ix-xiii, 219-233
Week 5 February 6	<b>Hinduism:</b> Read Esposito, p. 287-365.
Week 6 February 13	<b>Buddhism:</b> Read Esposito, pp.367-437

Week 7 February 20	<b>East Asian Religions</b> Read, Esposito, pp. 439-421;
Week 8 February 27	<b>Judaism:</b> Read Esposito, pp. 109-185
Week 9 March 5	<b>Christianity:</b> Read Esposito, pp. 37-107
Week 10 March 12	<b>Islam:</b> Read Esposito, pp.187-285
Week 11 March 19	<b>Spring Recess</b>
Week 12 March 26	<b>Abraham:</b> Read Feiler, pp. 3-218
Week 13 April 2	<b>Native American Religious Traditions:</b> Read Harrod, pp. 3-107
Week 14 April 9	<b>African Indigenous Religion</b> Read Magesa, pp.
Week 15 April 16	<b>African Caribbean Religions:</b> Read Davis, p. 1-26, 37-52, 53-62, 63-80.
Week 16 April 23	Globalization, Read Esposito, pp. 523-553, Read Eck, <b>A New Religious America</b> , pp.

**\*\*\*denotes material is on reserve in the Divinity School Library**