WR 601 – METHODS OF INTERRELIGIOUS & INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rev. Peter Bellini Ph.D.
Ph: 937-529-2245 x4318
pbellini@united.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course prepares students to encounter diverse religious traditions in various cultural settings. Coursework introduces students to a confessionally Christian engagement of comparative theology and diverse spiritual practices. Practical engagement involves an intercultural trip.

II. TEXTBOOKS:

Required Reading:


Peterson, Brooks, Cultural Intelligence. Intercultural Press. 978-1-931930-00-0


Articles: (on reserve)


Studebaker, Steven M. “Christian Mission and the Religions as Participation in the Spirit

**RECOMMENDED READING:**


**III. GOALS:**

This is a required course that introduced students to conceptual frameworks and practical methods for **understanding and encountering the Church in its mission in both local and global contexts** (Core Competency Three). It must be completed before any intercultural-immersion experience organized through the Academic Dean’s Office and Student Services. We will explore contemporary practices of congregations encountering “others” and critically examine several theological frameworks rooted in historic Christian traditions for interreligious and intercultural encounters of open-hearted surrender to the sovereignty of God, resulting in compassionate gospel witness and authentic interreligious learning in action, word, and silence. Students will be expected to apply a chosen theological framework for cruciform service, vulnerable learning and peace-making testimony in situations of interreligious/intercultural difference. Such love-knowledge for the church and world today requires both conceptual understanding and embodied wisdom, meeting polarizing conflicts in “other-izing” with gentling spiritual disciplines of Christian presence and fruits of the Spirit.
IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

Upon conclusion of this course, in order to exhibit an understanding of the Church and its mission in both local and global contexts, students will be expected to:

• distinguish, compare and contrast at three habitual frameworks (theological, philosophical, and cultural) within which leaders in confessional faith traditions have related to religious-cultural plurality.
• Identify basic content, distinction, and practices of the major world religions
• recognize and analytically describe (at least) five dimensions with which s/he and current community(ies) of faith may newly conceive of engagement with “others.”
• explore appropriately and experiment practically with differing (spiritual) disciplines or practices in which encounter—with gentle conviction and open-hearted compassion—interreligious and intercultural difference
• formulate preliminary criteria and guidelines for a “model of encounter” to be engaged in future ministry contexts with deepened capacity to compare and contrast with colleagues’ models
• assess the value, merit, and integrity of that model/framework of choice in confirmation (and/or revision) through intercultural immersion experience(s)

V. TEACHING STRATEGIES:

This is an online course in which teaching/learning includes lectures, discussion, audio-visual presentations, reading and writing assignments, and a practice assignment which helps to contextualize textual and writing work, all in preparation for an immersion experience and cross-cultural awareness in more dimensions than belief.

VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Feb 27  INTRODUCTION
• Introduce yourself – see online course questions
• Film – on Interreligious Dialogue
• Take and Grade World Religions Quiz
• Read the Prothero text

INTRACHRISTIAN APPROACH
• Lecture on IntraChristian Relations
• Film – on Denominations
• Book Review #1 Due – Prothero text

Mar 13 YOUR LOCATION AND BIAS

Your Location & Bias
• Lecture on Location and Bias
• Films on Prejudice and Racism

WORLD RELIGIONS OVERVIEW
• Lecture on World Religions
• Film on World Religions
• Read the Cornille Text
• Location and bias Paper #1 Due

Mar 27 VIRTUE APPROACH
• Lecture on Virtue
• Films on Virtue
• Read the Knitter Text
• Book Review #2 DUE – Cornille Text

THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF ENCOUNTER
• Lecture on Knitter and Theological Method
• Films on World Religions
• Book Review #3 Due – Knitter Text

Apr 10 THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF ENCOUNTER cont.
• Lecture on Knitter
• Films

PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD OF ENCOUNTER

• Lecture on Postmodern philosophy (Derrida, Foucault, Levinas) and Balthasar
• Films on Postmodern view of Difference
• Read Peterson Text

Apr 24 CULTURAL METHOD OF ENCOUNTER

• Lecture on Worldview and culture
• Films on worldview
• Read Clooney text
• Book Review #4 due – Peterson Text

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY & VIRTUE

• Lecture on Intercultural Sensitivity
• Films
• Book Review #5 Due – Clooney Text
• Location and Bias Paper Due

May 8 ISLAM AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

• Lecture
• Film on Isla
• World Religions Quiz - DUE
• FINAL Project DUE May 17

VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS:

A. Inclusive language

United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor.

B. Academic Integrity
Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. **Online Confidentiality**

One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

**VIII. USING ONLINE RESOURCES**

For information about how to access United Online and where to find help if you need it may be found on the seminary website at [http://www.online.united.edu](http://www.online.united.edu). Help guides are also in the student computer lab and in the Student Handbook. For online help, please e-mail onlinehelp@united.edu.

**IX. EVALUATION:**

A. **Assignments**

1. **World Religions Quiz** – 5% of grade
2. **Discussion Forums** – 10% of grade
3. **Reading Reviews (5)** – Write a review for each of the 5 required texts.
   Papers should be between 4-6 pp double-spaced Times 12 pt. See **READING REPORT FORM** 30% of grade
4. **Location and Bias Paper** – 15% - 3-4 pp.
   • Identity your location including (1-2pp): Socio-cultural, ethnic, racial, denominational, and ideological backgrounds
   • Identify your experience with difference - other cultures, ethnicities, and racial groups (1-2 pp)
   • Identify your biases and prejudices (1-2 pp).
   • Use lecture material for framework of interpretation, not merely your opinions. I want to see an academic approach to these issues.

5. **FINAL PROJECT**

a. **Final Synthesis Paper (40% of grade)** - Write a 13-19pp paper double-space, Times, 12 pt, that brings all of the material of the class together.

b. Select a religion or culture that you will encounter for your project. I.e. Islam.
c. Select a method (theological, philosophical, or cultural) and a model (within one of the methods) that will serve as a framework for analysis. I.e. Theological method and the partial replacement model

d. Select one of Cornille’s virtue that will inform your approach to that cultural or religion, i.e. humility

e. Go to another context for your field research: i.e. a mosque, a Jewish Temple, a Hindu temple, a cultural festival, grocery store etc. If there are absolutely none within a one-hour radius of your home find an encounter through video online of one of the above places if possible. If none are available create a hypothetical scenario. This incorporates your practice-reflection paper/experience.

f. The paper will contain the following:

- **Introduction (1-3 para.):** Identify these three items (religion/culture, method/model, and virtue) up front in the introduction.

- **Summary of the Methods & Models (5-7pp):** Identify and describe thoroughly the three methodologies (theological, philosophical and anthropological) and models for encounter from class. Each methodology has several models as explained in class.

- After describing all of the models in each of the three methodologies pick one methodology (theological, philosophical, or anthropological) and one model (i.e. The theological fulfillment model) within that methodology. Share why you prefer to use that model. What are the pros and cons over against the other models when it comes to effective peaceful and informative encounters? What are the criteria or guidelines you used to develop which methodology and model would work best?

- **Compare and Contrast (3-5 pp) -** Compare and contrast the religion/culture with your own using method, model and virtue that you have selected. The comparison and contrast should involve:
  - Content of the religion/culture
  - Practices of the religion/culture

- **Encounter (5-7pp): Practice-Reflection** Give a narrative of your encounter describing the who, what, when, where, why and how of the experience. Demonstrate how the method, model, and virtue can be implemented as your encounter the religion/culture that you selected in 5 dimensions. Describe the encounter utilizing the method, model and virtue you selected. What are some of the challenges, blessings, pros, cons. Here are some dimensions of encounter from which to choose:
- Space in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other (Each category has 8 dimensions)
- Body in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Time in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Speech acts in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Sound in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Touch in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Sense of self in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- Sense of the other in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, music, art, food, business or other
- For Example – you may choose space, body, time, speech, and touch in interfaith dialogue.
- Practice-Reflection on the experience, the wisdom of the practice, and the unfamiliarity of the practice to Christian habits, custom, or belief(s). Choose one practice for 7 consecutive days.
  - Keeping kosher or halal eating practices for a week (guidelines provided)
  - Wearing a head-covering for a week, regardless of where you go/are
    - Men – a yarmulke/kippah) Women – a head scarf covering all but the face
  - Performing salat – Muslim prayer 5 X day both words and performative-embodied aspects (guidelines provided)

X. STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Will be available online.

XI. REFERENCES:


