

Please note that changes to this syllabus may be made up to the beginning of the course. At the first class session the working syllabus for the course will be presented. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions. ~Bill Selvidge

Nazarene Theological Seminary
MSS745 Folk Religions
Fall Semester 2009
Syllabus

Bill Selvidge, Instructor
Office: 816-268-5492
Email: bselvidge@nts.edu

Thursday, 9:00-12:00
Room 301

1. Course description

A study of traditional, or folk, religions, practices, systems, and institutions, including animism, witchcraft, shamanism, and revitalization movements, for understanding them within their own context and worldview, and as related to the Christian mission.

2. Course Narrative

Cross-cultural ministers (including missionaries) face many aspects of differing beliefs and practices. Among these are beliefs and practices arising from the traditions of a people. Many cross-cultural ministers have either been taught, trained, and/or educated in an Enlightenment/Modern context that has few or no categories for an unseen world of spiritual beings and forces. This results in particular difficulty when ministering in a culture in which these categories inform daily life.

This course helps the student understand the assumptions, beliefs, and practices of Christian believers who come from a traditional-religion culture, as well as the influence of traditional, particularly animistic, beliefs in all societies. It also assists determining one's own assumptions *vis-a-vis* traditional religious beliefs and practices. It suggests ways that the Christian community may intentionally process with the new believer the folk religious context from which the believer comes in relationship to their new allegiances to Jesus Christ.

3. Program objectives

While the full range of objectives/outcomes of the MA in InterCultural Studies degree program is always the background against which the courses of the program are carried out, this course particularly focuses on objectives 2. and 4. (Please see the *NTS Catalog* page 51 for the program objectives.)

2. Graduates will demonstrate the integration of theological convictions and cultural sensitivity in order to foster individual and social transformation.
4. Graduates will articulate, communicate, and contextualize the essential affirmations of the Christian faith in a cross-cultural setting.

4. Course outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. Articulate a foundational understanding of the theoretical bases as well as the actual practice of traditional, or folk, religions.
2. Place religious expression and practice, whether formal or folk (traditional), within an analytical framework.
3. Have become familiar with the folk or traditional practices of a specific group of people in a particular context.
4. To use the concepts studied to design ministry from a Christian perspective to minister to and among people who hold to and practice folk (traditional) religions.

5. To think theologically about the beliefs and practices of those who practice traditional (folk) religions, and consider appropriate ways for an effective witness to Jesus Christ in ways that are theologically informed and culturally appropriate.

5. Texts/reading

Required Reading

- Hiebert, Paul G., Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou. 1999. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Moon, W. Jay, "Should We Drum or Listen to the *Teng Nyono?*" *Missiology: an International Review* XXXII, no. 2 (April 2004): 203-215.
- Niles, Damayanthi, "How the Study of Popular Religions Can Help Us in Our Theological Task," *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 369 (April 2004): 210-218.
- Noble, Thomas A. "The Spirit World: a Theological Approach." In *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons, and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA: Baker Books, 1996.

Recommended reading.

- Burnett, David. 2000. *World of the Spirits: a Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.
- Henry, Rodney A. *Filipino Spirit World*. Manila: OMF Literature, 1986
- Hibbert, Richard Y. "Defilement and Cleansing: a Possible Approach to Christian Encounter with Muslims." *Missiology* XXXVI no. 3 (July 2008): 343-355. 344 – understanding Muslims from their frame of reference, especially on 347 regarding sacred times, spaces, objects.
- Keel, Tim, "Tattooed: Body Art Goes Mainstream" *The Christian Century* 124, no. 10 (May 15, 2007): 18-20.
- McCollum and Ifamut. "Liana-Seti Origin Myths Corrected and Answered by Biblical Myths." *Missiology: an International Review* XXXI, no. 3 (July 2003) 289-302.
- Psuate, Daniel, "Witch School Opens in Hoopeston, Illinois" personal email correspondence. July 1, 2006.
- Van Rheenen, Gailyn. *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1991.

Internet accessible resources:

<http://cis.nts.edu> (website for the Center for Intercultural Studies at NTS)

www.StrategicNetwork.org

www.missiology.org/folkreligion/

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (also referred to as The Lausanne Movement). Nairobi 2000. Deliver Us from Evil Consultation - Related Documents. <http://www.lausanne.org/nairobi-2000/documents.html> (Accessed 2009-07-08) Note that these online documents are available in a variety of languages.

6. Course requirements

1. Class readiness and participation (10%)

I assume that you will have read all assigned chapters in the texts by the class session indicated so that you may enter into discussion during class. Additional materials will be assigned from time to time, and are also required reading.

2. Discussion Boards (20%)

For four topics covered in this course, participate in a discussion on Blackboard.

- There will be a starter question or topic to which you are to respond.

- You are to make two additional responses within the topic. At least one of the responses must be in response to what another student has said. One of the responses may be an idea (thread) that you begin.
- The responses to the particular topics are to be completed within the time frame in the schedule.

For grading purposes, the three responses per each of the four topics are worth a possible 5%, or a total of 20% for this learning activity.

(1) Discussion Board #1. Understanding Animism

Starter question: In *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, Gailyn Van Rheenen notes that worldviews are largely *implicit*, and that missionaries must find forums and methods to make the implicit *explicit*. What is one of your worldview assumptions that has been implicit but has become explicit? How did this happen?

All three responses to this section are to be completed by October 1.

(2) Discussion Board #2. Thinking Theologically in Animistic Contexts

Starter question: You are part of the ministry leadership team of a local church in a heavily animistic context. A person comes to faith in Christ and eagerly wants to follow as a faithful disciple of Christ. What are some first issues you would suggest to the team that the church deal with in this believer's life? Why?

All three responses to this section are to be completed by October 15.

(3) Discussion Board #3: Analyzing Animistic Practices and Powers

Starter question: An elder from the a local church comes to you because of an issue that has arisen. In a prayer meeting, several Christians while praying mentioned the names of several of their great grandparents and asked them to watch over them and guide them. In talking with the elder about this he referred to Hebrews 12:1 and explained that they were only calling on the witnesses that were surrounding them. How would you talk with this elder about this situation?

All three responses to this section are to be completed by November 5.

(4) Discussion Board #4. Identify a traditional (folk) practice from within your own culture that hinders the following of Jesus. If you are able, identify the need that this practice seems to meet. Why is this a hindrance and how can you and the church you are part of address this practice for Christians?

All three responses to this section are to be completed by November 19.

3. Book review. (10%)

Choose one of the following books and write a thoughtful reflection of approximately 1200 words that relates how this book challenged your understanding of issues related to folk religions, increased your understanding of these issues, and/or helped prepare you for more effective ministry as a cross-cultural minister. Due date for the book review is October 29.

Burnett, David. 2000. *World of the Spirits: a Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions*. Oxford: Monarch Books.

Lane, Anthony N. S., ed. 1996. *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons, and the Heavenly Realm*. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA: Baker Book House.

Van Rheenen, Gailyn. 1991. *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

4. Project (30%)

Select a country, area, or culture of the world and complete a project that equips you and your cross-cultural ministry (missionary) colleagues to minister more effectively as a Christian *vis a vis* the folk (traditional) religious beliefs and practices of that area. Determine as much as you can of the folk religious beliefs and practices through research in books, journals, the Internet, interviews and other means.

Analyze this folk or traditional religion in terms of Hiebert's Framework. Seek to understand from an *emic* perspective why these practices are utilized by the people you study. How do these practices relate to faith in Jesus Christ? What issues will be faced by a new believer in Christ who has a background in these beliefs and practices?

What issues will/does the communication of the gospel present, not just individually, but also on a community level? What is the role of the church in helping the believer who comes from a background of these beliefs and practices? How will the knowledge and understanding you have gained help you to be a witness to Jesus Christ among these people? Suggest some approaches to an effective Christian witness.

This project will be presented in class as an additional resource for the class. Please tell me the folk religion you will research and one to two sentences that say how you anticipate working with the topic. Submit these to me by Oct 15 (submit through Moodle). I may be able to suggest areas to consider as well as identify resources to help in your research.

The final written project is due by December 10 but may be submitted earlier. Submit the final project through the assignment feature of Blackboard unless there are supplemental materials that are not in digital form. You are welcomed to submit a draft earlier in the semester (not later than October 31).

5. **Exams** (15% each, 30% total)

Two examinations will be given as part of the course. The mid-term is scheduled for October 15. The final exam will be on Thursday, December 16, at 9:00. The exams will cover the portion of the text covered to that point as well as supplemental reading (indicated in the course schedule), lectures, student project presentations, and any other sources used during the process of the course. Prior to the exam the instructor will indicate which materials will be used as a basis for the exam. **Please note** that taking the final exam at other than the time posted by the Seminary requires a request made to the Dean's office.

7. **Grading**

1. Grade values

1. Class readiness and participation	10%
2. Discussion Boards	20
3. Book reflection	10
4. Project	30
5. Exams	<u>30</u>
Total	100%

2. The semester grade will be figured according to the following scale:

- 100-90 – A
- 89-80 – B
- 79-70 – C
- 69-60 – D

Please note that a course grade of (A) is possible only if all assignments have been completed and submitted (no assignment may be submitted after the last day of regular classes for the semester, December 5.)

- Late submissions of assigned course work will be deducted by 10% of the possible grade value. No work will be accepted for credit following the last day of the regular semester, Friday, December 11. If you are unable to complete the course work within this time a request for an incomplete must be submitted to the Registrar. An In-Progress (IP) is not available for this course.

8. Plagiarism.

Be sure to read and understand the content and implications of the Plagiarism statement in the NTS Student Handbook. All assignments in this course are made with the expectation that the work you submit is your own work. Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in a failing grade for the course.

Give careful attention to the use of Internet sources. While the Internet provides easy access to a wealth of resources, as with all other resources, Internet resources must be carefully selected and properly cited and referenced.

9. Computer use in class.

The use of computers during class sessions is encouraged for assisting with class notes, for presentations involving PowerPoint or various media, and for connecting with the Internet for specific questions directly related to the topic at hand. Other uses of computers during class sessions are considered inappropriate and relate directly to student involvement in the course. If you have urgent business involving computer use that requires your attention please do so outside of the classroom.

Bibliography

In addition to the texts required for this course, the following brief bibliography contains additional sources for the study of folk (traditional) religions.

- Augsberger, David. 1986. *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Bediako, Kwame. 1995. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- _____. 2004. *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Bosch, David. 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Burnett, David. 1988. *Unearthly Powers: A Christian Perspective on Primal and Folk Religion*. Eastbourne, England: MARC
- Carpenter, Mary Yeo. 1996. Familism and ancestor veneration: a look at Chinese funeral rites. *Missiology* 24:503-17.
- Cheng, Lit-sen. 1999. *Asia's Religions: Christianity's Momentous Encounter with Paganism*. Vancouver: China Horizon and Horizon Ministries Canada.
- Clendenin, Daniel B. 1995. From the Verbal to the visual: Orthodox Icons and the sanctification of sight. *Christian Scholar's Review* XXV-1:30-46.
- Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the profane: The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism and Ritual within Life and Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- _____. 1976. *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Engelsviken, Tormod, and A. Scott Moreau ed. 2000. *Spiritual Conflict in Today's Mission*. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Occasional Paper No. 29. Nairobi: Association of Evangelicals of Africa.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1937. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hayes, Stephen. 1995. Christian response to witchcraft and sorcery. *Missionalia* 23:239-53.

- Hiebert, Paul G. 1999. *The Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International.
- Idowu, E. Bolaji. 1975. *African Traditional Religion*. Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books.
- Kakar, Sudhir. 1982. *Shamans, Mystics, and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiring into India and Its Healing Traditions*. New York: Knopf
- Kavanaugh, John F. 1991. *Following Christ in a Consumer Society—Still: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance*. Maryknoll: N.Y. Orbis Books.
- Keysser, Christian. Trans. Alfred Allin and John Kuder. 1980. *A People Reborn*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Kirwen, Michael. 1987. *The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Kroker, Vlademar. 1987. Spiritism in Brazil. *Missions Focus* 15:1-6
- Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (also referred to as The Lausanne Movement). Nairobi 2000. Deliver Us from Evil Consultation - Related Documents. <http://www.lausanne.org/nairobi-2000/documents.html> (Accessed 2009-07-08) Note that these online documents are available in a variety of languages.
- Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. 1978. *The Willowbank Report: Report on a Consultation on Gospel and Culture*. Wheaton: Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 2.
- Lane, Anthony N.S., ed., 1966. *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons, and the Heavenly Realm*. Grand Rapids, Michigan USA: Baker Book House. Note especially chapter 10, Thomas A. Noble, "The Spirit World: a Theological Approach." pp. 185-223
- Magesa, Laurenti. 1997. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1954. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
- Masson, Denis. 1995. What makes them tick? African versus Western thinking processes. In *The Best of Ethno-Info*. Harriet Hill and Jon Arensen, eds. Nairobi: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Mikulencak, Ruby. 1987. Science and magic collide in African magic. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 23:358-363.
- Olthuis, James. 1985. On worldviews. *Christian Scholars' Review*. 14:153-64
- Ong, W. J. 1969. World as view and world as event. *American Anthropologist* 71:634-47.
- Parrinder, G. 1958. *Witchcraft: European and African*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Peterson, Eugene. 1994. *Subversive Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- _____. 1997. *Leap Over a Wall: Earthly Spirituality for Everyday Christians*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.
- Richardson, Don. 1978. *Peace Child*. Glendale, Calif.: Regal.
- _____. 1981. *Eternity in Their Hearts*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books.
- Ro, Bong Rin, ed. 1985, *Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices*. Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association.
- Scotchmer, David. 1989. Symbols of salvation: A local Mayan Protestant theology. *Missiology*: 8:449-54.
- Shorter, Aylward. 1985 *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Slack, Jim. 1990. *Evangelism among People Who Learn Best by Oral Tradition: The Storying or Chronological Bible Communication Method*. Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention.
- Staples, Russell. 1982. Western medicine and the primal world-view. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6:70-71.
- Tambiah, S. J. 1970. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Engen, Charles. 1996. *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Van Rheenen, Gailyn. Web source - <http://www.missiology.org/folkreligion/>
- Zahniser, A. H. Mathias. 1997. *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples across Cultures*. Monrovia, Calif.: MARC.