



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
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AP 1535 Comparative Religions Syllabus

Semester: Spring, 2026

Day & Time: Thursdays, 7:30-9:20 PM

Professor: Dr. Amy Boe

Email: Amy.Boe@bts.education

Course: AP1535 Comparative Religions

Room: 201/VC

Credits: 2

Phone: upon request

Course Description

This study of the world's living religions treats them individually with attention to historical development, doctrinal content, and practices. Emphasis is given to the role of cultural influences in the formation of the religion as well as the process of sharing the Christian witness with them. Students will explore the main views and practices of major world religions.

Course Objectives

Cognitive (Content)

- To have an understanding of and a balanced respect for peoples from different faiths and the diversity of their beliefs.
- To achieve a working knowledge of the worldview and major beliefs (theology, revelation, anthropology, soteriology, eschatology, etc.) of each religion studied, and how it compares with Christian worldview and beliefs.
- To understand the cultural practices of the major world religions.
- To know how to engage with world religions missiologically.
- Know basic missional strategies that have been used effectively throughout church history

Affective/Motivational (Character)/Comprehension

- Reflect on the Biblical basis for mission work among other religious groups
- Distinguish between different models of missionary/evangelistic methods
- Reflect on proper case studies
- Understand the importance of proper cultural/cross-cultural research

Volitional/Application (Competencies)

- To be able to describe different scholarly approaches to the study of world religions
- To be familiar with the key leaders and movements within each world religion
- To be able to defend Christian exclusivism against pluralism, universalism, syncretism, and inclusivism
- To have increased ability to present a credible Christian witness to adherents of these religions
- To be able to teach others about the belief systems of other religions
- To make an effective case for his/her own Christian religion and a biblical worldview as contrasted to these religions
- To describe missiological approaches that would contextualize Christian witness without doctrinal compromise
- To become more confident in fulfilling the Great commission with people in other world religions
- To build a strategic model to reach those of other faiths in the student's chosen context.

Required Texts

A. Three Required Texts:

1. Cooper, Derek. *Christianity & World Religions*. Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, ISBN 978-1-59638-446-0
2. Halverson, Dean C. *The Compact Guide to World Religions*. Bethany House. ISBN 1-55661-704-6
3. Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Eerdmans, 1989. ISBN: 2-8254-0971-5

B. In addition, the student will need:

1. Microsoft Word to submit assignments.
2. Microsoft PowerPoint (or a similar product like Prezi) for a presentation at the end of the semester.
3. Logos Bible Software. Please contact the seminary office for information on acquiring the Logos Remote Learning Library.
4. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
5. The [BTS Form and Style Guide](#).
6. The [BTS Research and Writing Center](#).

C. For this class, the estimated number of pages of required reading is 500. The student will identify additional reading for their research, as needed.

Course Requirements and Assessments

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Completion of Assigned Reading	10%	A student assessment of the percentage of completed reading will be used for this grade.
Midterm	20%	Verbatim/Interview or Quiz
Presentations/Participation/Reflection papers	15%	
Book Critique	15%	<i>The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society</i>
Weekly Quizzes	15%	
Continuity Book	25%	

Plagiarism and use of AI for any assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.

Required reading. The student is expected to complete all assigned reading.

Weekly research and writing assignments. The student is expected to complete weekly writing assignments (as assigned), a book review and a final research paper. Logos Bible Software and the BTS Writing Center provide resources for research, bibliography, and footnotes. A detailed description of each assignment will be provided via email.

Course Requirements.

The student will keep a journal of all course reading, personal research and class lectures. This will culminate in the development of a “continuity book” project which will be the result of their research and strategic understanding throughout the semester. This is a quantitative summary paper in conjunction with the student’s personal learning objectives. It will reflect what is read/learned from the class, show how it will benefit people of other religions as well as Christians who want to engage people of other religions. The student will choose one additional religions of interest not studied in class. More information will be given in class.

The students will have weekly quizzes or reflection papers on the course lectures, special presenters, and readings.

Midterm: The student will submit a verbatim exercise or interview engaging someone of a different religion.

The student will submit one book critique on *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* by Lesslie Newbigin

The student will be asked for an honest assessment of the percentage of the reading.

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards

All papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be 12-point, Times New Roman font and double-spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Form and Style Guide for more information. The BTS Form and Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Research and Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

In addition, the BTS Research and Writing Center runs 2-3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

As noted above, plagiarism and use of AI for any assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	AGENDA / TOPIC	DUE ON THIS DAY/DATE
1	1/22	Introductions Syllabus Overview What is Truth?	Before the first class: 1. Familiarize yourself with the required textbooks and syllabus 2. Read Newbigin Ch. 1-4 In class/homework 1. The student will choose a specific religion that they would like to study this semester. A presentation of this religion will be given on the last night of class 2. Email the signed student agreement at the end of the syllabus to your professor
2	1/29	Continuity Book Explanation What is Religion? Spectrums of Religion	Before class: 1. Read Newbigin ch 5-9 2. Read Halverson and Cooper ch. TBD In class/homework: 1. Quiz on "What is Truth?"
3	2/5	Christianity	Before class:

			1. Read Newbigin ch 10-14 2. Read Halverson and Cooper In class/homework: 1. Quiz on "Religion" 2. Begin looking for scholarly sources pertaining to your chosen religion to research
4	2/12	Islam	Before class: 1. Read Newbigin ch 15-20 2. Read Halverson and Cooper on Islam 3. Misc. reading (TBD)
5	2/19	Islam	Before class: 1. Become familiar with the PCA Study Committee Reports on the Insider Movement 2. Misc. reading (TBD) In class/homework: 1. Submit Book Critique by Saturday, 11:59 pm. A template will be provided in class or via email.
6	2/26	Spring Break	1. No Homework 2. Or catch up on required reading/research
7	3/5	Islam Review Hinduism	Before class: 1. Read Halverson and Cooper sections on Hinduism 2. Misc. reading (TBD) In Class/homework: 1. Quiz on Islam 2. Midterm (take home/essay) due Saturday, 7 th , 11:59 pm
8	3/12	Hinduism/Yoga	Before class: 1. Read TBD In Class/homework: 1. Reflection Paper
9	3/19	Buddhism	Before class: 1. Read Halverson and Cooper sections on Buddhism 2. Misc reading (TBD) In class/homework 1. Quiz on Hinduism
10	3/26	Continuity Book in More Detail	Before class: 1. Read Halverson and Cooper

		Confucianism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism	sections on Confucianism 2. Misc. reading (TBD) In class/homework: 1. Quiz on Buddhism
11	4/2	Easter Break/No Class	Before class: 1. Read Halverson and Cooper 2. Misc. reading (TBD) In class/homework: 1. Quiz on Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism
12	4/9	Secular Humanism/Judaism	Before class: 1. Read Cooper and Halverson chapters on Judaism 2. Misc. reading (TBD) 3. Submit a statement of percentage of reading completed this semester
13	4/16	Presentations	In class, present your research using a PPT of at least two slides Submit: Final continuity book due by Saturday, 11:59 pm
	4/23	Final Paper Due	NLT 11:59 PM

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity. Those students who attend through videoconferencing (VC) must keep their video in the “on” position to be counted present.

Class Policies and Procedures

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed assignments may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence assignments must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.

- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.
- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Missions

Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1962.

_____. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962.

Bosch, David. 2018. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis Books.

Englesviken, T. Missio Dei: The understanding and misunderstanding of a theological concept in European churches and missiology. *International Review of Mission* Vol. 92 Issue 367, 2003.

Gravette, C. Michael. *God's Plan to Reach the World: Acts 1:8 A Strategy for Individuals, Churches and Associations of Churches*. Columbus, GA: Brentwood Christian Press, 2005.

Habermas, Gary. 1990. *Dealing with Doubt*. Chicago: Moody Press.

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Hesselgrave, David J. *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005.

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- _____. *Missional House Churches: Reaching Our Communities with the Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
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<http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/g-h/hartenstein-karl-1894-1952/>.
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World Religions

- Ahmad-Shah, E. *Buddhism and Christian Faith*. Delhi: Unity Books, 1973.
- Anderson, Norman. *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984.
- Bervard, Theos. *Hindu Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
- Bowes, Pratima. *The Hindu Religious Tradition: A Philosophical Approach*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
- Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Brown, Harold O. J. "Will the Lost Suffer Forever?" *Criswell Theological Review* (Spring 1990), 261-278.

Carmody, Denise L., and John Tully. *Eastern Ways to the Center: An Introduction to Asian Religions*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1983.

_____. *Shamans, Prophets, and Sages*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1974.

_____, and John Carmody. *Ways to the Center*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1989.

Chandler, Russell. *Understanding the New Age*. Dallas: Word, 1988.

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GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error

Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>
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BTS Outcomes

1. Scripture: Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies
7. Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rationale (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Throughout the course, in readings, lectures, and assignments, students will consider their research topics, such as the Christian faith and practice and apologetics, in light of Scripture. Students will study various biblical passages associated with effectively witnessing to those of other faiths.
Reformed Theology	4	The tradition of mission among those of various faiths (or of no faith) in Reformed churches has a long history. Students will be exposed to many historical quotes, readings, and prominent figures who are/were Reformed in their theology. Additionally, students may explore Reformed theology in their personal readings and assignments on their major research project.
Local Church	5	Students will be encouraged to apply a biblical theology of Christianity as it compares to other world religions in the life of their local church through an upcoming Bible study, Sunday school class, mission trip, or sermon preparation. The final ministry project is intended to be a useful product in the student's church, community, and world as they seek to witness to those of other faiths.
Wisdom	5	The study of "the nations" is rampant throughout Scripture. The major research project requires students to identify various points of contrast among the major world religions and to write with missional objectivity. Additionally, students

		may explore the application of biblical wisdom in the modern Christian's life in the local church and/or around the world as it pertains to evangelism/apologetics among other faith groups.
Discipleship	5	Students will study biblical theology and write a detailed ministry project which will bring Scripture to life in comparing Christianity with the student's chosen context (a false religion.) As a result, students will write a detailed missional strategy where he/she will explore the importance of discipleship both personally and corporately. Possible points of consideration may be discipleship in new church plants, discipleship on the short-term mission trip, and discipleship as a means for the continuing growth of established churches.
Communication	5	Students will develop in both their written and oral communications through readings, lectures and assignments, in which they write a variety of reflection papers and present their research papers to the class using multimedia. They will also practice listening skills and will demonstrate this by providing feedback to each other. Students will develop skills in apologetics as it relates to the main points of contrast with other world religions.
Worldview	5	Students will be required to apply a biblical worldview through their weekly reflection papers and class discussions. Additionally, their major "continuity book" project will require a biblical lens through which to look. Topics that will be included are the various doctrines of other faiths as compared to Christianity such as theology, soteriology, anthropology, missiology, cultural contextualization, spiritual disciplines, social settings, etc.
Leadership	5	Students will explore leadership in their readings, lectures, and their writing assignments. The student will be required to study various effective apologetics strategies required on the mission field in order to promote healthy relationships and empower people for ministry.