The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

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Phillips Theological Seminary

IU 750^3–44: Christian Theologies of Religions (ONLINE) Spring 2014

Instructor: Don A. Pittman, William Tabbernee Professor of the History of Religions, Emeritus, and Director of the Interreligious Understanding Program, Phillips Theological Seminary, 901 North Mingo Road, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74116. Office Phone: 918-610-8303; E-mail: don.pittman@ptstulsa.edu.

Syllabus: This syllabus provides a basic summary of the requirements and assignments for this three semester-hour advanced master’s level online course. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions in the syllabus, if necessary, to better achieve the learning goals of the course. Please read this syllabus carefully.

Course Description: An introduction to (a) contemporary options for a Christian theology of religions; (b) contrasting understandings of Christian mission past and present; and (c) critical issues in interreligious dialogue. Class size is limited.

Learning Objectives: Acknowledging that residents of the United States now live in the most religiously diverse society on earth, this course is designed to help prepare each seminarian who successfully completes it to be able to:

- analyze critically diverse theological perspectives within the church today on the reality and vitality of other faiths and to formulate clearly his/her own theological views;
- evaluate critically competing priorities for Christian global mission and articulate his or her own current understandings;
- lead church members in conversations concerning the significance in Christian ministry of cooperative, dialogical relationships with persons committed to other religious traditions.

This course is especially related to the MDiv program goal to “construct a guiding theology for ministerial practice that takes into account a liberative hermeneutic and is responsive to key themes in Christian theology, biblical exegesis, Christian history, and each student’s own denominational heritage and polity.”

Course Format: This will be an online course utilizing the MoodleRooms Learning Management System. Our course site may be accessed through a hyperlink on the PTS website: www.ptstulsa.edu (under Academics) or at http://moodle.ptstulsa.edu/. In order to participate effectively in the course, all students must have ready access to the internet and be able to use Skype, a free software program. All technology-related questions concerning the course or MoodleRooms should be addressed to Ms. Staci Copenhaver, assistant to the deans, at 918-610-8303 or staci.copenhaver@ptstulsa.edu.

Technology: Online education requires particular technological tools. Students enrolled in this course should have:

- A reliable computer, running an up-to-date operating system (e.g., Apple OS X, Windows XP, Vista or Windows 7);
- A word processing program compatible with Microsoft Word 2003 and newer;
- Power Point or Keynote;
- Broadband internet access (strongly preferred, whether it is delivered by satellite, cable, or DSL);
- External speakers are recommended for adequate sound quality; and
- A webcam and Skype software.
**Required Texts:**


2. Don A. Pittman, et. al, *Ministry and Theology in Global Perspective: Contemporary Challenges for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996; ISBN: 0-8028-0844-1, paperback. This textbook and reader is now out of print. Used copies, as well as perhaps a few new copies, may be available through Amazon.com. and other used book dealers advertising online (e.g., Sigler Press); prices vary.


7. Additional study materials required in the course may be made available in printed form or placed in the “Course Documents” folder on the MoodleRooms course site.

**Course requirements:** Each student will be expected to:

(a) read carefully and reflect on all assigned materials in advance of when those materials will be discussed;

(b) participate actively in all online threaded discussions, with an absolute minimum of four well-crafted, substantive contributions per week, aware that the failure to participate sufficiently in any week’s discussion is equivalent to being absent that “week” and that a student who, for any reason, misses 20% or more of the contact hours for a course, or in this case the equivalent in online participation, calculated at three hours per week for thirteen weeks of class, cannot pass the course;

(c) lead two online discussions of a specified set of readings by initiating a discussion thread with a creative or provocative question/observation and by actively monitoring the discussion in order to achieve a focused and well-rounded conversation;

(d) complete an oral mid-term examination by APRIL 1 on the contemporary debate among Christians regarding divergent theologies of religions;

(e) write a 13-15 page position paper on your own theology of religions and perspectives on mission and dialogue, participating in an interreligious dialogue as a part of the preparation. A copy of the graded position paper should be placed in your PTS portfolio.

Guidelines for all written assignments will be posted on the course site.

**Schedule for reading assignments:** This syllabus organizes topics and reading assignments by weeks, dated from Saturday through Friday. Similar to a typical graduate seminar that meets for three hours on-campus once per week, reading assignments are listed under the week in which the readings will be discussed online.

You should think about each week as having two parts: (a) preparation for the seminar; and (b) participation in the seminar. To be specific, you should prepare on five days, Saturday through Wednesday, and actively participate on two days, Thursday 8:00 a.m. through Friday 6:00 p.m.

Please recognize that in the first part of the course, which focuses on theologies of religions, discussions will focus each week on illustrative positions of several specific theologians listed in the syllabus, while the readings may cover a somewhat broader range of theologians to which comparative references may be made in our conversations. Therefore, please read all of the assigned material. Moreover, please know that a pattern of
posting last-minute contributions to the discussion board will not be appreciated by other participants of the seminar or satisfy the requirement to be both a teacher and learner.

**Serving as a discussion leader:** Each student will be required to serve as a discussion leader for two different weeks. The assignment of students to particular dates for serving as discussion leader will be determined by a random draw. Online threads for the two day seminar must be initiated by the appointed leader before Wednesday midnight (12:00 a.m., Central time.) The discussion boards will close on Friday evenings at 10:00 p.m. Later postings receive no credit.

Discussion leaders should plan on initiating and helping to shape an integrated, comprehensive conversation among members of the seminar on the relevant issues for the week. The discussion may feature a single thread or have multiple threads, but the conversation should proceed in an appropriate way through all major assigned topics. For example, our discussion leader in Week 2 will probably want to begin the seminar’s discussion by focusing first on Karl Barth in one thread, then Hendrik Kraemer in a second, and finally Lesslie Newbigin in a third, given the chronological order in which their interrelated theological contributions emerged.

**Time management:** Online courses require an extra measure of self-discipline. In fact, nationally, online courses have a higher drop-out rate because, without the routine of regular class sessions on campus, some students can quickly fall behind in completing course requirements. Indeed, many students who have taken online courses have concluded that they are more “labor intensive” than on-campus courses, although among the several advantages online courses offer is the opportunity to learn from thoughtful, carefully crafted written reflections from course participants and the opportunity to hear everyone’s voice on the topics under discussion, not only the voices of a few students who seemingly want to dominate in-class discussions on campus.

This course should require an overall time commitment similar to that required for a typical upper-division master’s level seminar (which usually meets on-campus three hours per week and requires 2-3 additional hours of work outside of class for each hour in class, for a total of approximately 10-12 hours per week). This course has been offered previously both on campus and online with a similar syllabus and identical learning objectives.

The success of this advanced master’s level seminar depends on the willingness of all involved to engage, challenge, and help one another. If we are responsible in our preparations and responsive to one another, we can establish an effective, collaborative learning community in cyberspace.

**Grading:**

Class participation, including “attendance” and discussion leadership (the instructor will have the responsibility for one-half of the leadership grade and the students will provide one-half): 25%

Oral mid-term exam on the theology of religions debate (deadline April 1): 35%

Position paper on one’s theology of mission and dialogue; due May 15 if not graduating 40%

Late penalty for mid-term exam or position paper: One-half letter grade per day.

**Grading criteria:** Knowledge of course materials, display of critical thinking skills, relevancy of contributions to discussions, and clarity of expression. In sum, one could say that final grades will depend on the extent to which each student benefits from and contributes to the goals of the seminar.

**Deadlines for course withdrawal and incomplete petitions:** The seminary’s deadline for a course withdrawal this Spring semester is March 21, 2014. The deadline for a request for an Incomplete is May 9, 2014. Concerning requests for Incompletes, the PTS catalog reads: “An Incomplete may be granted for extenuating circumstances, but the approval is not automatic and must be justified. Approval must be requested on required forms and granted prior to the announced deadline, normally the Friday prior to the last week of classes. Incompletes may be granted for a maximum of 45 days from the last official day of classes. Only in unusual circumstances will an extension be considered. Work not submitted to the instructor by the deadline will receive the grade of ‘F.’”
**Disability Accommodations:** Phillips Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see “Disabilities Policies and Procedures” in the PTS Student Handbook. Please contact the Director of Student Services or the Office of the Dean for consultation.

**Attendance Policy:** At PTS, class attendance and engaged participation are very important. Every member of the faculty and student community is, in fact, both teacher and learner. Therefore, a class absence means more than merely a missed delivery of educational content. It also means the irrecoverable loss of a unique dialogical ‘learning-through-teaching’ opportunity for oneself and others. In view of this understanding, PTS has an established an attendance policy that states: Any student who misses 20% or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot pass or successfully audit that course. The intention of the policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours. The 20% rule holds for online classes as well. In an online class, the instructor will set forth in the syllabus the requirements for what constitutes class attendance. The standard may change from week to week depending on the assignment. Typically, attendance is measured by the number of quality posts-per-week on the discussion board or other activities. The instructor sets the minimum number of posts-per-week required for a student to be considered present. If a student fails to make that minimum number of posts-per-week, s/he will be considered absent for the week. If a student is absent for 20% or more of the semester, s/he cannot pass the course.

**Professional Behavior and Netiquette:** All those engaged in teaching and learning in the Phillips Theological Seminary community deserve respect as they participate in critical theological reflection and ecumenical conversation on the range of issues enlivening contemporary discernment and debate within the church and the broader society. Among the critical dynamics of respect and open space is learning to keep confidences, which is hopefully understood as a primary ministerial skill. All the expectations and practices under which the seminary currently operates in its teaching/learning functions apply to both on campus and online courses.

Participants in the online discussions do not have available the same visual and auditory clues as those in traditional classrooms for interpreting the tone and substance of contributed comments. It is, therefore, especially important that the following guidelines concerning appropriate ‘netiquette’ – i.e. etiquette for written communication shared via the internet – should be consistently observed. Although individual professors may have unique standards or procedures regarding class etiquette that are specific to their course design and learning goals, members of the seminary community should attend to the following general institutional standards:

(a) In online discussion, statements of disagreement and alternate understandings are welcomed, and even encouraged among participants. Yet disparaging personal ad hominem attacks cannot be permitted, even if purported to be intended light-heartedly. Overt references or those by innuendo that violate the seminary’s anti-discrimination policy will not be tolerated.

(b) Rude, offensive, or abusive comments are entirely inappropriate. “Flaming” (typing words in capitals) or an excessive use of exclamation marks must always be avoided because they are widely understood to signal expressions of anger, hostility, or disrespect.

(c) Attempts to use humor, and especially sarcasm, to advance one’s position in online discussions are most generally confusing and ineff ectual. In addition, the seeming innocence of jokes can be lost in transmission.

(d) Participants should be attentive to maintaining a professional style of communication. Posted contributions on discussion boards should be free of misspelled words and other distracting technical errors. As with written papers, it is essential to properly cite sources.

(e) There are different modes of communication for online classes, e.g. discussion boards and chat rooms—formal and informal—where the standards may be nuanced accordingly to fit the class situation. However, when communicating online, participants should carefully review what they have written before they actually send or post it, making certain that chosen modes of expression convey what they want to say and how they want to say it.
Finally, members of the seminary community are to avoid forwarding any type of junk mail (e.g. advertisements, solicitations, or sexually explicit materials) to others. Moreover, they should not violate the privacy of others by divulging email address and comments outside of the class without express permission.”

**PTS Catalog Definition of a Semester-Hour.** In accord with regulations announced by the United States Department of Education in October 2010, the PTS faculty defines one semester-hour of academic credit as that which may be granted for successfully completing over the course of a semester a set of required learning activities representing approximately forty-five clock hours of graduate-level study. The workload/credit calculations related to the documentation of student learning are based on projections of the minimum time that a typical PTS student should anticipate spending in each course in direct instruction by the instructor(s), recommended reading and library research, synchronous and asynchronous online discussion, creative theological reflection and writing, content review and testing procedures, and other appropriate educational assignments designed by the instructor to ensure that students achieve the learning objectives of the course as published in the course syllabus.

**Schedule Outline:**

**Week 1. January 25 – 31**

**Topic:** Christian faith in a religiously plural world: An Introduction

**Discussion leader:** Peggy Catron-Ping.

First discussion forum: Thursday, January 30 – Friday, January 31

**Required reading:**

**Required activity:**
1. Engaging the Issues #1

**Week 2. February 1 – 7**

**Topic:** Christian faith in a religiously plural world: Disciples Perspectives

**Discussion leader:** Dianna Clark.

Discussion forum: Thursday, February 6 – Friday, February 7

**Required reading:**

**Required activity:**
1. Engaging the Issues #2
Week 3. February 8 – 14

Topics: (a) Karl Barth; (b) Hendrik Kraemer; (c) Lesslie Newbigin (d) James A. Borland.

Discussion leader: Robert Smith
Discussion forum: Thursday, February 13 – Friday, February 14

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

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Week 4. February 15 – 21

Topics: (a) Karl Rahner; (b) Gavin D’Costa; (c) Hans Küng.

Discussion leader: Aaron Krueger
Discussion forum: Thursday, February 20 – Friday, February 21

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

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Week 5. February 22 – 28

Topics: (a) Paul Tillich; (b) Ernst Troeltsch; (c) John Hick.

Discussion leader: Daniel Pigg
Discussion forum: Thursday, February 27 – Friday, February 28

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

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Week 6. March 1 - 7

Topics: (a) Raimon Panikkar; (b) John Cobb; (c) Marjorie Suchocki.

Discussion leader: Drew Kirtley
Discussion forum: Thursday, March 6 – Friday, March 7

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

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Week 7. March 8 – 14

Topics: (a) George Lindbeck; (b) S. Mark Heim; (c) James Fredericks.

Discussion leader: Matthew Limback
Discussion forum: Thursday, March 13 – Friday, March 14
Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:
George Lindbeck, “Many Religions and the One True Faith,” in
S. Mark Heim, “Many True Religions, And Each An Only Way” 1-19.
James L. Fredericks, “After Pluralism: Doing Theology Comparatively” in
*Faith among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions*, 162-79

**Week 8. March 15 – 21**

2014 Concentrated Course Week #1. No threaded discussion.

**Week 9. March 22 – 28**

2014 Concentrated Course Week #2. No threaded discussion.

**Week 10 March 29 – April 4**

Topics:  
(a) The New Testament as a missionary document;  
(b) Mission in Paul’s Invitation to Join the Eschatological Community

Discussion leader: Peggy Catron-Ping  
Discussion forum: Thursday, April 3 – Friday, April 4

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

**Week 11. April 5 – 11**

Topics:  
(a) Paradigm Changes in Missiology;  
(b) The Missionary Paradigm of the Eastern Church;  
(c) The Medieval Roman Catholic Missionary Paradigm;  
(d) The Missionary Paradigm of the Protestant Reformation.

Discussion leader: Dianna Clark  
Discussion forum: Thursday, April 10 – Friday, April 11

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

**Week 12 April 12 – 18**

2014 PTS Fall 2014 Holy Week Recess. No threaded discussion.
Week 13: April 19 – 25

Topics: (a) Mission in the Wake of the Enlightenment

Discussion leader: Robert Smith
Discussion forum: Thursday, April 24 – Friday, April 25

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:

Week 14. April 26 – May 2

Topic: (a) The Emergence of a Postmodern Paradigm; (b) Mission in a Time of Testing.

Discussion leader: Aaron Krueger
Discussion forum: Thursday, May 1 – Friday, May 2

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:
David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 349-67; and 511-519.

Week 15. May 3 – 9

Topic: Toward a Global Ethic: Common Ground for Interfaith Dialogue

Discussion leader: Daniel Pigg
Discussion forum: Thursday, May 8 – Friday, May 9

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:
Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions* (Selected readings).
WCC, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World”

Drafts of position papers nearing the final stage will provide questions for discussion.

Week 16. May 10 – 16

Topic: Globally Responsible Dialogue and Christian Ministry

Discussion leader: Discussion leaders: Matthew Limbeck and Drew Kirtley
Discussion forum: Thursday, May 15 – Friday, May 16

Required reading in preparation for this week’s online discussion:
Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions*, (Selected readings).
World Council of Churches, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World”
Drafts of position papers nearing the final stage will provide questions for discussion.