

ME835: Christianity Encounters South and Southeast Asian Religions

Paul G. Hiebert

Fall, 1997

DESCRIPTION:

This course seeks to analyze the fundamental presuppositions and the various schools of thought within Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam in South and Southeast from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The purpose is first to understand these religions in terms of their own assumptions and world views. Second, the course will deal with the problems of communicating Christianity, and developing a contextualized theology within these religious settings. Attention will be given to the broader question of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions.

COURSE FORMAT:

Class sessions will combine lecture, discussion and presentation of papers. Participants will be expected to share what they have found helpful in their readings. When possible, they will also present their research papers in class.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Textbooks:

Klostermaier, Klaus K. A Survey of Hinduism. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. 1989.

Humphreys, Christmas Buddhism: An Introduction and Guide. N.Y.: Viking Penguin. 1988.

Recommended Readings:

Kitaguawa, J. M. and Mark D. Cummings, eds. Buddhism and Asian History. N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1987.

Corless, Roger J. the Vision of Buddhism. N.Y.: Paragon House. 1989.

Additional readings will be placed on reserve. Participants are expected to conduct research on specific areas of Hindu or Buddhist thought.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Each participant is expected to complete a major research paper on a topic related to either Hinduism or Buddhism. This may deal with understanding some aspect or school of thought within these religions, with a broad overview of their beliefs, with their interface with popular religious forms, or with their relationship to Christianity. Some may wish to complete a survey of the literature on the topic. Here, instead of writing a paper, the participant is expected to do more readings, and to write a critical review of the materials on the literature related to the topic. In such a review, the point is not to summarize the literature, but to examine the debate being carried on by the scholars. All papers should include some missiological applications.

Participants are also expected to make presentations of their research in class.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES:

There are several good bibliographies on Asian religious materials. These include:

Bibliography of Asian Studies. This is published yearly and has the most exhaustive coverage of materials on Asia available.

Religious Index, Humanities Index, and Social Science Index are three important sources of information on journal articles. Look carefully under the topics of your interest. Books can be located through the card catalogue.

Elizabeth furer von Haimendorf has compiled an extensive bibliography on India up to 1976.

COURSE OUTLINE

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1. Introduction to the course:

2. Hinduism in South and Southeast Asia:

2.1 Historical emergence of Hinduism

2.2 Contemporary formal Hinduism

- belief systems

- rites and institutions

- worldviews

2.3 Folk Hinduism

2.4 Our Christian response

3. Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia:

3.1 Historical emergence of Buddhism in S. and S.E. Asia

3.2 Contemporary Theravada Buddhism

- belief systems

- rites and institutions

- worldview

3.3 Folk Buddhism

3.4 Our Christian response

4. Islam in South and Southeast Asia:

4.1 Historical emergence of Islam in S. and S.E. Asia

4.2 Contemporary Islam in S. And S.E. Asia

- belief systems

- rites and institutions

- worldview

4.3 Folk Islam

4.4 Our Christian response

5. Dealing with religious pluralism and modernity in S. and S.E. Asia: