

THEO 5141 Ecumenics: World Christianity and the Future of the Churches

Chung Chi Divinity School. Spring Semester 2019

Cheng Yu Tung Building 鄭裕彤樓 LT 1B Wednesdays 2:30 – 5:15

Philip L. Wickeri

Instructor

This interdisciplinary course will consider the subject of "World Christianity" and its potential impact on churches and families of churches in different contexts. As a course in ecumenics, we will integrate a wide range of disciplines, including history, theology, social science and cultural studies. A major part of the course involves teaching *interdisciplinarity as a method* in addressing ideas and issues in theology and world Christianity. This is a relatively new approach in theological studies which may be applied to other courses in other disciplines.

The course will address common issues and theological themes: mission and ecumenism; Christianity in a world of religions; Christology; secularization; the environment; economic justice, gender, always bearing in mind their implications for churches in particular places, especially Hong Kong, as well as their global dimension. The two are necessarily related.

After the first few weeks, each class will introduce a case study from a particular area or with a particular question so that our discussions can be focused. The case studies will be the subject of student presentations. The topics listed in the syllabus provide the guidelines. Each student (individually or in groups, depending on the number of students in the class) will be responsible for one presentation. The areas chosen are mainly from Asia, and it is expected that these will be closer to the students' interests. Readings are designed to introduce or illustrate our focus in each case. The course will combine lectures, music, art, photographs, video presentations and class discussions. The class is for beginning or intermediate master's level students.

Spring Semester

7 January 2019 (Mon) – 18 April 2019 (Thu)

Reading week: 1 April 2019 (Mon) – 6 April 2019 (Sat)

Course examinations: 25 April 2019 (Thu) – 11 May 2019 (Sat)

Instructor

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Penultimate Version as on 7 January 2018

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this course, students will:

- be able to define the character and content of ecumenism and world Christianity;
- be able to articulate critically what it means to engage in local and contextual theology from a “World Christianity” perspective;
- be able to employ an interdisciplinary methodology for the study of theology and religious studies
- be able to evaluate critically the reasons why World Christianity has become recognised as a helpful enterprise for understanding the Church, as well as the ideological usage of the term;
- be able to discuss critically the role World Christianity may play in the construction of civil society, especially in Hong Kong;
- be able to situate the present interest in World Christianity inside a history of how church, state and political ideology have been related;
- be able to explore the public relevance of selected Christian theological ideas and discern how an ecumenical perspective in a multi-faith society can inform talk about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit;
- be able to articulate critically what it means to be a Christian and a citizen of Hong Kong and the world in the light of one’s vocation;
- be able to evaluate critically selected issues in World Christianity from a theological perspective;

Readings

The readings for the course are mostly in English, but some books are available in Chinese translation. Students must learn how to read shorter selections carefully and skim the longer works that are assigned. **Above all, students should learn to read sources and texts critically, i.e. not taking the author’s perspective as a given.** The instructor will offer some hints on how to do this. Supplementary texts and short readings will be given from time to time. Students are encouraged to purchase books in the bibliography marked with an asterisk. *

Individual Meeting with the Instructor

Students should arrange to meet with the instructor before reading week to discuss the course and introduce the subject they wish to write on for their final paper. They should prepare for this meeting ahead of time. A short

bibliography should be submitted. The instructor is available for meetings with students after class on campus. Students may alternatively make an appointment to meet with him in his office in Central.

Student Presentations

All students must make one presentation during the semester. It may or may not be related to the topic for the final paper. The presentation, which may be done individually or with another student, is based on the reading for the week and may be the suggested case study in the syllabus or a related topic with the prior approval of the instructor. The presentation should include a very brief summary of the book or reading to be discussed; the student’s own evaluation of its arguments; and an assessment of the usefulness of the book for understanding the subject. The presentation may be in English or in Chinese (普通話). The student should hand their paper or presentation notes at the end of class.

Assessment, Evaluation and Grades

Assessment is based upon the Divinity School’s “Guidelines for Course Preparation” (November 2018). Class participation (15%). Meeting with the Instructor (10%) Presentation (25%). Final Paper (50%). In each area, assessment is based upon the fulfilment of learning outcomes for this course, as these are set out in the previous page.

Grade	Generic Descriptors for Newly Proposed THEO Courses (Approved by the Faculty Board of Arts & Published via CUSIS with effect from 2018-19)
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements

Final Papers

Final papers are due on May 11. The paper topic should be decided in consultation with the instructor, and a paper outline or abstract plus a short bibliography is due on 27 March, or before. It is recommended that students meet with the instructor before turning in their outline/abstract. The paper should be 8,000 words (English) or 10,000 words (Chinese).

Course Schedule

1. **January 9** **Introduction to the Course**

2. **January 16** **The Triumph of Christianity in the Ancient World**
Lecture: How Christianity Became a World Religion
Reading: Bart Erhman, *The Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden Religion Swept the World*, 1-160

3. **January 23** **The Missionary Movement and World Christianity**
Lecture: The Modern Missionary Movement & Christian Triumphalism
Reading: Bart Erhman, *The Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden Religion Swept the World*, 160-287; A. T. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, 13-45; 399-440.

4. **January 30** **Ecumenism, Catholicity and Local Christianities**
Lecture: The Ecumenical Movement and Local Christianity
Case Study: The Global and the Local in a Chinese Catholic Village
Reading: Henrietta Harrison, *Henrietta. The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village*. Note that the instructor himself will introduce this case study to give students an idea of what is expected for their own presentations.

- February 6** **Chinese New Year. No class.**

5. **February 13** **Christianity and Culture**
Lecture: An Introduction to the Thought of Raimon Panikkar, with a

Particular Emphasis on His Doctrine of the Trinity
Case Study: The Cosmotheandricism of Raimon Panikkar
Reading: Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*.

6. **February 20 Culture and Christology**
Lecture: The Many Faces of Jesus Christ
Case Study: The Christology of T. C. Chao
Reading: Chen Yongtao. *The Chinese Christology of T. C. Chao*

7. **February 27 Christianity in an Inter-religious World**
Lecture: World Religions or a Christian Theology of Religions?
Case Study: Is God Christian?
Reading: D. Preman Niles, *Is God Christian?*

8. **March 6 Secularization and the Religions**
Lecture: Christianity as a Religion of Secularization
Case Study: Secularization as Problem and Possibility
Reading: Taylor, *A Secular Age* (selections)

9. **March 13 Christianity and the Challenge of Neo-Liberal Economics**
Lecture: Capital in the 21st Century: Its Meaning for the Churches
Case Study: Churches in Hong Kong and the Gap Between Rich & Poor
Reading: Leo Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence*).

10. **March 20 World Christianity and Women's Theologies**
Lecture: Engendering World Christianity
Case Study: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology
Reading: Kwok Pui-lan, *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theologies*(selections)
Paper outlines of abstracts are due

11. **March 27 Christianity and Eco-theology**
Lecture: Christianity, Chinese Thought and the Environment
Case Study: Is a Christian Eco-theology Possible?
Reading: Heup-young Kim, *A Theology of Dao*.
Paper Outlines due today

April 3 **Reading Week**

12. April 10 **Beyond Theology: Theo-poetics, Art and Music**
Lecture: Dr. Ruiwen Chen, "Church Music and World Christianity"
Case Study: The Theo-poetics of Rubem Alves
Reading: Alves, *Transparencies of Eternity*.

13. April 17 **Liberation and The Future of the Ecumenical Movement**
Lecture: Theology, the Church, and the Churches
Case Study: Is Conciliar Ecumenism still important?
Reading: Kinnamon, Michael and Brian Cope, eds. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (selections); Kwon and Kuester, *Minjung Theology Today* (selections)

14. April 24 **The Christian Future and the Unexpected**
Lecture: Who is Eugen Rosenstock-huessy and why is he important?
Reading: Rosenstock-huessy, *The Christian Future, or the Modern Mind Outrun*.
Discussion and Course Summary

May 11 **Final Papers Due**

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*Niles, D. Preman. *Is God Christian? Christian Identity in Public Theology: An Asian Contribution*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.

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*Panikkar, Raimon. *The Rhythm of Being*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010.

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