

Christian Theology of Religious Diversity (xtianthe790). A course taught at Duke Divinity School during the fall semester of 2017 by Paul J. Griffiths, Warren Chair of Catholic Theology. Course meets Thursdays from 5:15-7:45 in 0041 Langford, Duke Divinity School, with the first class session on Thursday 31 August & the last on Thursday 30 November. Class does not meet on Thursday 5 October (inauguration of President Price) and Thursday 23 November (Thanksgiving). I have no regular office hours, but am happy to meet you outside class at any time, from early to late, on any Thursday, which is the only day I'm on campus. Please feel free to email me ([pgriffit@gmail.com](mailto:pgriffit@gmail.com)) for an appointment – preferably at least a few days before you'd like an appointment.

In this course I offer a Christian theology of religious diversity, which is to say a Christian-theological account of non-Christian persons, words, & works that might be said to be religious or concerned with religious topics. My principal interlocutors are other Christians who've spoken & written about these matters; but I also engage non-Christian texts & trajectories of thought. Among the questions central to the lectures are:

- Is the enterprise of constructing a Christian theology of religious diversity defensible? What are the principal objections to it & what the principal purposes of it?
- Who is a Christian, & what makes it reasonable or inevitable to call a particular view of religious diversity 'Christian'?
- Which questions having to do with religious diversity do Christians have standing to address? For which do they lack standing?
- How may & how should Christians categorize & sort those who are not Christian?
- What is the proper place for the word 'religion,' together with its cognates & affines, in Christian discourse?
- What, in particular, ought Christians say about the persons, words, & works of the people of Israel? Those of the Islamic people?
- What should Christians expect the contributions of non-Christian speech & writing to the development of Christian thought & practice to be?
- What ought be the relation, in Christian thinking about religious diversity, between a priori understandings of religious diversity, and understandings informed by knowledge of the particulars of non-Christian traditions of thought & practice?
- How ought Christian reading of non-Christian texts be done? More particularly, how may, and how should, Christians approach & treat literary works by those who (might appear to) worship a LORD other than Jesus?
- What may, and what should, Christians think about the possibility that non-Christian speech & thought can be about the LORD of Christian confession?
- How ought the evangelical-missionary mandate central to Christian self-understanding relate to the question of religion & the religions?
- What may & what ought be said by Christians about the relations non-Christians have or might have to Jesus Christ?
- What may & what ought be said by Christians about the final destiny(ies) of non-Christians?

- What effect ought configurations of the relations between ecclesial & non-ecclesial power in particular polities have on Christian thought about & attitudes toward non-Christians?
- What are the possibilities & what the constraints upon Christian coöperation with (religious) non-Christians?

By the course's end you should (*Deo volente*, your own efforts permitting & my capacities allowing) have a better idea than you had at its beginning of the ways in which Christians have spoken & written about the course's topics, & about the range of positions that may, Christianly speaking, be taken on them; you may also have begun to develop a more precise and theologically well-formed way of speaking & writing about them than you had before. You will at least, if you choose to do so, have read the works I'm asking you to read, some among which are likely to provoke in you thoughts you wouldn't otherwise have had. You'll also be given a sample of a Christian reading, responding to, & thinking about non-Christian (religious) texts, and will be encouraged to develop an understanding of, & perhaps also skills in, that complex activity

This course's principal pedagogical instrument is the lecture. Each of the course's first ten sessions (there are eleven) will open with one of these, and will be followed by a mix of Q&A & close discussion of a particular text. The eleventh (last) session will be lecture-free: an open forum to further elucidate (the many) unresolved issues, textual, exegetical, and systematic, that will have been raised during the semester.

The lectures will have as their principal textual interlocutors those listed below under 'required reading'. That is, the lectures will return to these texts often, and will engage parts of them in detail. It'll rarely be the case that any one of these required texts will be treated only or solely in one of the lectures; rather, they'll appear and re-appear at intervals across the course of the semester. You should make it your business to read these texts with close attention during the course of the semester, and preferably in the order given, taking careful notes & devoting to them the thought they deserve. The course's central pedagogical idea is that your reading and my lectures will progress together, your comprehension of the texts you're reading nurtured by the lectures you're hearing, & your comprehension of the lectures you're hearing nurtured by the texts you're reading. Point-counterpoint. The ideal student in this course will be good at listening, reading, & thinking.

In addition to coming to class, hearing the lectures, and participating in class discussion, if you're taking this course for credit you'll do some writing. This can take many forms; I'll canvass some options during the first class session, & I'll schedule an individual face-to-face meeting with each for-credit student during the third and fourth week of the semester to discuss the possibilities in each student's case. Whatever form your writing takes, you should expect to write about 5K words during the course of the semester.

### Required Reading

1. *Nostra Aetate* <Christian: Catholic magisterial text> <ca AD 1965> <Europe> <available in multiple languages at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)>
2. *Dominus Iesus* <Christian: Catholic magisterial text> <ca AD 2000> <Europe> <available in multiple languages at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)>

3. World Council of Churches, "Religious Plurality & Christian Self-Understanding" <Christian: Protestant text> <ca AD 2006> <Europe> <available at [www.oikumene.org](http://www.oikumene.org)>
4. Justin, *First Apology*, ca. AD 150 <Christian> <West Asia - Europe> <available in many translations; the one by L W Barnard is good; you can find another English version here: <http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html>>
5. Augustine, *De vera religione* (On True Religion), ca. AD 390 <Christian> <Africa> <there are several English versions of this; a reliable one is available here: [http://www.scottmacdonald.net/1st6centuries/Texts\\_files/Augustine,%20True%20Religion%20pt1.pdf](http://www.scottmacdonald.net/1st6centuries/Texts_files/Augustine,%20True%20Religion%20pt1.pdf), where it's called 'Of True Religion'>
6. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.81, De religione (on religion), ca. AD 1270 <Christian> <Europe> <you can find an English version of this question of the Summa here: <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3081.htm>>
7. Cusanus, *De pace fidei* (On the Peace of Faith), ca AD 1460 <Christian> <Europe> <you can find an English version of this work here: <http://jasper-hopkins.info/DePace12-2000.pdf>>
8. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 1, chs. X, XII, XIV, XVI-XVIII, ca AD 1550 <Christian> <Europe> <you can find an English version here: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/calvin-institutes-christianity/book1/chapter-10.html>; & here: <http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/books/institutes/>>
9. Barth, *Dogmatik*, §17, ca AD 1935 <Christian> <Europe> <available online, in 'The Digital Karl Barth Library' via Duke Divinity School's library; a better translation, by Garrett Green, is available in hardcopy: ISBN 9780567031099; and in Duke's library: BT75.B2635 2006>
10. Cicero, *De natura deorum* (On the Nature of the Gods), ca 45 BC <pagan> <Europe> <an English rendering can be found here: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/cicero-on-the-nature-of-the-gods>>
11. Santideva, *Bodhicaryavatara* (Entry Into the Way to Awakening), ca AD 700 <Buddhist> <India> <an English version may be found here: <http://www.drepunggomangusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/shantideva-bodhicaryavatara-wallace.pdf>; another, in most ways preferable, by Crosby & Skilton, is available in hardcopy: ISBN 9780199540433; and in Duke's library: BQ3142.E5 C76>
12. Wyschogrod. *Body of Faith*, AD 1983 <Jewish> <USA> <available in hardcopy: ISBN 9781568219103; and in Duke's library: BM601.W96 1983>
13. Dinoia, *Diversity of Religions*, AD 1992 <Christian> <USA> <available in hardcopy: 9780813207698; also in Duke's library: BR127.D56 1992>
14. Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, AD 1993 <Christian> <USA> <available in hardcopy: 9780791413661; and in Duke's library: B132.A3 C57 1993>

Additional readings, arranged chronologically by publication date – consult ad libitum

- D Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (1986)  
 T Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline & Reasons of Power in Christianity & Islam* (1993)  
 S Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?* (1992)  
 P J Griffiths, ed., *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes* (1990)

P J Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (1991)  
P L Quinn & K Meeker, ed. *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* (1999)  
J Z Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" (1998)  
R McKim, *Religious Ambiguity & Religious Diversity* (2001)  
S M Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (2001)  
P J Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (2001)  
T Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003)  
D Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*. (2003)  
T Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (2005)  
C. Cornille, ed., *Song Divine: Christian Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita* (2006)  
H Nicholson, "Comparative Theology after Liberalism" (2007)  
W T Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (2009)  
C. Cornille, ed., *Criteria of Discernment in Interreligious Dialogue* (2009)  
F X Clooney, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: Christian Commentary on the Three Holy Mantras of the Srivaisnava Hindus* (2008)  
F X Clooney, ed., *The New Comparative Theology* (2010)  
C Meister, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity* (2011)  
D Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (2011)  
H Nicholson, *Comparative Theology & the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (2011)  
J Keenan, *I am / No Self: A Christian Commentary on the Heart Sutra* (2011)  
R McKim, *On Religious Diversity* (2012)  
H Netland, *Christianity & Religious Diversity* (2015)  
S Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (2016)  
H Nicholson, *The Spirit of Contradiction in Christianity & Buddhism* (2016)