

Religions and Poverty

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In Collaboration with: The Poverty Initiative of Union Theological Seminary

Texts:

- Theodore M. Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World* (Prentice Hall, 2005). Three chapters on each of the religions.
- Chandra Muzaffar and Paul F. Knitter, eds. *Subverting Greed: World Religions and the Global Economy*. Orbis Books, 2000.
- Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*. Orbis Books, 1995.
- Other readings available on Blackboard.

Procedure:

- *For introductory classes on each religion (and for our Feb. 14 discussion of Knitter's book):* you are asked to write a succinct description of the one aspect of the religion's beliefs or practices (or of Knitter's book) that you find most interesting, arresting, provoking, or inspiring. As clearly and crisply as possible, state what it is and why you want to talk more about it.
 - Not more than 400 words. To be posted on the "Discussion Board" of Blackboard by Monday, 6:00 PM.
- *For the classes on each religion's views of poverty:* you are asked to write a synopsis-paper on how, in your understanding, the particular religion would help poor people answer these two questions: 1) Why am I poor? 2) What can I do about it?
 - To be based on the readings for the week, but you can also draw on the introductory reading from Ludwig's book. Give page numbers for references to the readings.
 - 3 to 4 pages, double spaced.

- To be uploaded as a Word .doc under “Assignments” on Blackboard by Monday, 6:00 PM.
- A “Personal Interview & Report”
 - You are to interview an Hindu or Buddhist or Muslim activist or leader or engaged scholar about 1) What they or their organization are doing to promote justice/human flourishing, 2) How their religious faith/beliefs motivate and guide them, 3) What are their hopes.
 - Since interviewees may be limited, if a number of you want to do a group interview of someone, that would be fine. But the reports would have to be done individually.
 - Deadline for informing Jeff Mansfield at jeff.mansfield@yahoo.com whom you will interview and when: March 17.
 - 3-4 pages, double spaced. Due a week after your interview. Due no later than May 1.
 - To be uploaded as a Word .doc on Blackboard under “Assignments.”
- For last two classes:
 - A brief statement on what impressed you, confused you, inspired you from our discussion with the visiting activists.
 - 400 Words, to be posted under “Discussion Board” of Blackboard by following Friday at noon.
- Final Personal Statement: “What I’ve Learned”
 - How your study of other religions and their views of poverty might affect your own work for social justice.
 - 2 to 4 pages.
 - Due in hard copy during the final exam period.

Knitter’s Office Hours

- Tue: 11:00-12:00
- Thurs: 2:00-3:00
- Or by appointment.

Content and Schedule:

- Jan 31 - First half of class: Introductions – to each other and to the course.
- Second half of class: “A World and Nation of Economic Inequality: An Analysis” (Presentation by Poverty Initiative instructors.)
- Feb. 7 “A World and Nation of Economic Inequality: An Analysis”
- Presentation by PI instructors.
 - Readings:
 - Vincent A. Gallagher, *The True Cost of Low Prices: The Violence of Globalization* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 1-59, 108-117.
 - Naomi Klein, “Disaster Capitalism: The New Economy of Catastrophe,” *Harper’s Magazine*, Oct, 2007, 47-58.
 - Jan Rhemann, “Poverty – What’s Neoliberalism Got to Do with It?” *Appalachia: Listening with Our Hearts* (New York: Poverty Initiative, 2007), 23-35.
- Feb. 14 Poverty: Context for a More Effective and Responsible Interreligious Dialogue
- Reading: *One Earth, Many Religions*.
 - Reading: *Subverting Greed*, “Introduction,” pp. 1-14.
- Feb. 19-21 **Participation in Interreligious Symposium on “Religions and Poverty” and Knitter’s Inauguration.**
- “The Religions and Poverty,” Public Event, Feb. 19. 7:00 PM
 - Colloquium on “The Suffering of the Oppressed: Common Ground for Interreligious Dialogue?” Feb. 20, 2:00-5:00.
 - Feb. 21: Class discussion with visiting religious leaders: Swami Agnivesh (India), Dr. Ali Ashgar Engineer (India), Venerable Dhammada (Thailand), Chief Oren Lyons (Native American), Rabbi Levi Weiman Kelman (Israel), Imam Talib Abdur Rasheed (Harlem)
 - Interreligious Ritual, Feb. 21, 12:00, James Chapel.
- Feb 28 Hinduism: History, Beliefs, Ethics.
- *Sacred Paths*, Chapters 4-6, on Hinduism

- Mar 6 Hinduism and Poverty: Contemporary Perspectives:
- *Subverting Greed*, Chapter 2
 - Other readings:
 - Nadkarni, M.V. "Does Hinduism Lack Social Concern?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 19, 2007, pp. 1844-49
 - D'Sa, F. X. (1999). "Lokasangraha: The Welfare of the Whole World - A Hindu Vision of a World Order." *Jnanadeepa* 2(1): 47-59.
 - Painadath, Sebastian. "Mukti: the Hindu Notion of Liberation." in Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. ed. *World Religions and Human Liberation*. 1992, pp. 63-77
 - Singh, Abraham. "Liberative Aspects in Bhagavad Gita in the Indian Context Today." *Bangalore Theological Forum*. 37/1 (2005) 158-71
 - Swami Agnivesh, "Dalits and Sangh Parivar: A Case for New Understanding of Dalit Problems," *Hinduism in the New Age* (New Delhi: Dharma Pratishthan, 2005), 130-137.
 - Swami Agnivesh, "Hinduism in the New Age." *Religion, Spirituality and Social Action: New Agenda for Humanity*. (New Delhi: Dharma Pratishthan, 2003), 129-133.
 - Discussion with Hindu Spokesperson and Activists
- Mar 27 Buddhism: History, Beliefs, Ethics (*Sacred Paths*)
- *Sacred Paths*, Chapters 7-9, on Buddhism
- Apr 3 Buddhism and Poverty: Contemporary Perspectives
- *Subverting Greed*, Ch. 3
 - Further Readings:
 - George D. Bond, *Buddhism at Work: Community Development, Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2004), 1-68.
 - A. T. Ariyaratne, *Buddhist Economics in Practice* (Salisbury: Sarvodaya Support Group UK, 1999), 1-71.

- King, Sallie. *Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism*. University of Hawaii Press, 2005. Chapter 7: “Justice and Reconciliation,” pp. 202-28.
 - ~~King, Sallie B. “Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Buddhist Church: Nondualism in Action.” in: *Engaged Buddhism*, C. Queen and S. King, eds. pp. 321-64.~~
 - David Loy, “The Three Poisons Institutionalized”
 - Discussion with Buddhist Spokesperson and Activists
- Apr 10 Islam: History, Beliefs, Ethics (*Sacred Paths*)
- *Sacred Paths*, Chapters 26-28, on Islam
- Apr 17 Islam and Poverty: Contemporary Perspectives
- *Subverting Greed*, Ch. 7
 - Other Readings:
 - Ziauddin Ahmad, *Islam, Poverty, and Income Distribution* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1991), 5-98.
 - Holger Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana: Muslim Positions towards Poverty and Distress* (Uppsala: Nordiska Africkainstitute, 2007), 7-36, 59-109, 129-159.
 - Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Ch. 8, pp. 174-199.
 - Discussion with Muslim Spokesperson and Activists
- Apr 21 Discussion with activist groups
- *Subverting Greed*, Chapters 1, 5, 6 & Conclusion
- May 1 Discussion with activist groups
- Readings:
- May TBA (FINAL EXAM PERIOD) Discussion of “Final Statements”