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MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

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Zahniser, A. H. Mathias, "MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling" (1999). *Syllabi*. Book 358.
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Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

MB 780 Fall, 1999 (3 hrs.). A. H. Mathias Zahniser, Instructor. Office (MC313) Hours: T & R 1500 - 1645. Please make appointments with Ms Dawn Tippey, MC303, 858-2259. My Phones: 858-2218 and Home: 858-4434. Email: mathias_zahniser@asburyseminar.edu; dawn_tippey@asburyseminary.edu

Catalogue Description:

Symbols, stories, rites, ceremonies, and other aspects of a variety of religious traditions provide insight and, in some cases, models for the task of Christian discipling. Students will construct their own structures for the discipling task based upon these insights and models. Three hours.

Human Religion and the Discipling Task

The religious dimension of a culture provides its people with conceptions of reality and the means for maintaining the force and relevance of those conceptions. Features of a culture's repertoire such as story, scripture, rites of passage, pilgrimages, worship traditions, social organizations, and other symbolic activities shape the worldview of its people. The cross-cultural study of religion examines the religious dimension of culture with a view to understanding its nature and function. The course assumes that religiousness is a universal aspect of human identity. It also assumes the tools and results of religious studies offer much to Christian discipling. Based on these assumptions, the course explores the relevance of some of the forms typical of human religion for the process of discipling. Discipling here means forming persons as individuals and members of communities of faith into the image of God's son.

Goals:

1. The student will be able to represent accurately in response to a study guide the following concepts:
 - 1.1 the meaning of religion as elucidated by Folkert (1991);
 - 1.2 the meaning of Mircea Eliade's (1959) *homo religiosus* and the way in which, according to him, humans sanctify space, time, natural phenomena, and the processes and stages of living; and
 - 1.3 the meaning of the ritual process as presented by Victor Turner (1971), including the concepts "rites of passage," "liminality," and "*communitas*."
2. Students will be able to illustrate these concepts from John Neihardt's (1988) *Black Elk Speaks*.
3. Students will be able to analyze a phenomenon of their own choosing according to one or more of these concepts.
4. Students will gain insight into the relation of discipling with symbols and rituals to syncretism and community development.
5. Students will gain confidence in their ability to apply this analysis to the task of discipling.

Note: The instructor hopes that students will feel free to deal with the materials of the course critically. The analysis and application can be thought of in dialectical terms: the material examined in the seminar may be used to stimulate a more effective discipling process.

Common Readings:

Chang, K. C.

- 1977 "Introduction." In *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. K. C. Chang, ed. Pp. 3-21. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Located in the custom course packet.

Eliade, Mircea

- 1959 *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Folkert, Kendall W., ed. by John E. Cort

- 1991 "A Thematic Course in the Study of Religion." *Tracing Common Themes: Comparative Courses in the Study of Religion. Studies in the Humanities*. John B. Carman and Steven P. Hopkins, eds. Pp. 19-36. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press. Located in the custom course packet.

Neihardt, John G.

- 1988 [1932] *Black Elk Speaks*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Turner, Victor

- 1977 [1969] *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Visser, Margaret

- 1991 "Behaving." In *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*. Idem. Pp. 1-37. Toronto: Harper Collins. Located in the custom course packet.

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias

- 1997 *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples Across Cultures*. Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications.

A Research Paper

Each student or team of students will produce a standard research paper of between 15 and 25 pages, including notes and bibliography. The paper will present a proposal for a discipling event or process making use of a model growing out of the seminar. Careful attention will be given in the evaluation to form following the standards set in Slade, 11th. ed. (1999). Structure will also be important with attention given to thesis statement, use of sources, and the organization of the argument. Papers will be due in a first draft form on the week before their respective writers are due to give their

presentations in class. The evaluation of the first draft and the evaluation of the in-class presentation will be averaged with the evaluation of the final paper to produce a final grade. In the case of team presentations, all members of the team will receive the grade assigned to the drafts of the paper and the presentation.

Evaluation

Grades for the course will be based on written responses to the reading assignments (50%), the first draft of the paper, the oral report in class, and the research paper (50%). Late assignments will result in a grade reduction and little or no feedback from the instructor.

Class Schedule by Weeks

All classes meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:15. All assignments, unless otherwise indicated, are to be read before the date on which they are listed in this syllabus. Assignments with an asterisk involve answering questions from a study guide. These represent the theoretical meat of the course.

1. Religion, Religious Studies, and Discipling the Nations

- **September 7 & 9:** Introduction to the Course: Modern Theists and Traditional Religious People. Biblical Background: The Great Commission and Religious Studies. Read Neihardt (1988) at least chapters 1-3.
- **September 14:** A Working Definition of Religion Applicable to the Process of Christian Discipling. Readings: Folkert (1991),* Neihardt (1988) chapters 4-14.

2. *Homo Religiosus*: The Essential Religiousness of Humanity and Christian Discipling. Please finish Neihardt (1988) by the end of this unit.

- **September 16:** Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred: Eliade (1959) Introduction and Chapter 1.*
- **September 21:** Sacred Time and Myths: Eliade (1959) Ch. 2.*
- **September 23:** Sacred Nature and Cosmic Religion: Eliade (1959) Ch. 3.* Video from the Sioux Museum.
- **September 28:** Human Existence and Sanctified Life: Eliade (1959) Ch. 4.* Put on Black Elk's vision from Neihardt (Chapter 14).

3. The Rite of Passage Structure: The Discipling Potential of Liminality.

- **September 30 & October 5: The Structure of a Rite of Passage and The Shin Byu.** Read: *Turner (1977) Chapters 1 and 2. Lecture and discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model and 2. A Typical Example: Shin Byu: a Burmese Buddhist rite of passage. Video: Footsteps of the Buddha. Although Zahniser 1997 will be read later, chapters 7 and 8 are relevant to this example.

- **October 7 & 12: The Rite of Passage Structure and the Pilgrimage:** Read: *Turner (1977), chapters 3 and 4. Lecture and discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model and 2. Typical example: “A Summer’s Passage” produced by Don Joy and his students in youth ministry classes at ATS with a report from Ralph Yoder. This event is dealt with in Zahniser 1997, chapter 6. Video: “A Summer's Passage.”
- **October 14: Periodic Festivals:** The Application of the Rite of Passage Structure to Time. Read: *Turner (1977) Chapter 5. Discussion: 1. The Theoretical Model, 2. The Jewish Sabbath. Video: “Judaism: The Chosen People. Zahniser 1997 has a chapter on the Jewish Sabbath that you will read later. If you have time read it now.
- **October 19 & 21: Food and Discipling:** The Application of Food, Meals, and Eating to the formation of believers. Read: Visser (1991) for October 19 and Chang (1977) for October 21. The presenter will be Robert Danielson.

4. Contributions from Class Participants.

- **October 26 through December 14: Presentations:** Each student, or student team, will present a cross-cultural discipling method and model to the class. Examples of religious structures relevant to cross-cultural discipling include **Qur’an Recitation** (Islam), **The Village as Microcosm and Macrocosm** (the Dogon of W. Africa), **Mandala** (Buddhist meditative picture), **Messianic Synagogue** (Contextualized discipling), and **Ashram** (Hindu retreats). Don’t forget to hand in your first draft a week before you are to present your paper. The first draft will be evaluated and handed back promptly so you can use it in your class presentation. Each day will feature two presentations. There will be no student presentations on November 30 and December 2, 4, 7, and 9. **Read:** *Zahniser (1997) during this period. A schedule of chapters and a study guide will be distributed. No responses to Zahniser (1997) will be required of presenters during the week of their presentations.

5. Bibliography: The bibliography in Zahniser (1997:221-230) will serve as a bibliography for the course.