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MB 770 The Indigenous Church

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Fall 1999

MB 770 The Indigenous Church

Instructor: Darrell Whiteman
M 304
Wednesdays 2:25-5:05

Course Description and Format

This is an **advanced** course for students with a solid foundation in missiological anthropology. The format will therefore reflect the advanced standing of the students by giving you a larger share of the responsibility for the course. There will be considerable discussion of material being read for which you must always come well prepared, some lecturing, some films, and a significant amount of time given to student presentations of research papers. The focus of the course is on the relationship between Christianity and culture. We will explore how this can engender indigenous churches, or the opposite, how it can lead to syncretism in non-Western and Third World cultures as well as in North America.

Texts Used in the Course

We will read the following books in this order:

Charles Kraft (1979) *Christianity in Culture*

Lamin Sanneh (1989) *Translating the Message*

Stephen Bevans (1992) *Models of Contextual Theology*

Lesslie Newbigin (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

Scherer and Bevans (1999) *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3:
Faith and Culture*

Dean Gilliland, ed. (1989) *The Word Among Us* (photocopy)

Collateral Reading: Robert Schreiter (1985) *Constructing Local Theologies*

Course Requirements and Important Dates

A short 5-10 page paper will be written for each of the following books. In addition, when you hand in your paper, **also hand in 2-3 questions** which you want to pursue in our discussion of the book.

1. Begin **immediately** reading Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*. Write a 5-10 page critique of the book, indicating areas where you find yourself in agreement and areas where you are having some difficulty. Record the important insights you have gained for developing an approach to indigenous Christianity. We will discuss the book and hopefully have a conference call with author Kraft in which you can ask him the unresolved questions in your mind. The date for turning in your paper is Monday, September 27. We will discuss the book on September 29.

2. Our second book to read and critique is Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Evaluate this book, noting especially the "surprises" you discovered in Sanneh's approach to this controversial topic. Your 5-10 page paper is due on Monday, October 18th for discussion on the 20th.

3. The third book we will read is Stephen Bevan's (1992) *Models of Contextual Theology*. Critique this book noting the strengths and weaknesses of each of the five models Bevans proposes. We will discuss the book November 10th so have your paper to me by Monday, November 8th.

4. In our final area of discussion of the indigenous church we will turn our focus on the West. There is no more eloquent spokesman for this concern than Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. He "knocked our socks off" with *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (1986), but now he has gone a step further with his powerful book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Read and critique this book, and include in your paper the contrast between indigenizing the church "over there" and doing it "here at home." We'll discuss this book on December 8th so have your paper turned in by December 6th.

5. We are using two "Readers" in this course: (1) Gilliland's *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* which will give you an overview of the ideas coming out of Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission faculty, plus (2) Scherer and Bevans (1999) *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Cultures*. Each week you will need to hand in "Interaction" papers on the articles you have read for that week. Because we will give some of our class time to discussing these, they need to be given to me on Monday. Do not be late as this will hamper our discussion together. There are a total of 25 articles to read and critique.

6. **Collateral Reading:** For those of you who want to push yourself a bit more in this course for extra credit (10%) you can read Bob Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies*. This is not an easy book to read, especially the material on semiotics, so you may have to read it more than once to get all the gold that is there. Have your paper turned in by December 8th.

The following dates are those when our class will meet and discuss these articles; your "Interaction Papers" are **due the Monday before**.

Date

Gilliland

Scherer and Bevans

9/08	Class begins	
9/15	1 - Gilliland	1. Walls
9/22	2 - Glasser	2. Aram I
9/29	3 - Gilliland	3. Whiteman
10/06	4 - Van Engen	4. Shorter
10/13	5 - Hiebert	5. Schreiter
10/20	6 - Kraft	6. Kwok Pui-lan
10/27	7 - Shaw	7. Asian Bishop's Conference
11/03	8 - Sogaard	8. Bellah
11/10	10 - Ellislson	9. de Mesa
11/17	11 - Wagner	10. Kanyoro
11/24	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
12/01	12 - Gibbs, & 13 - Tan Che-Bin	11. Bediako
12/08	14 - Woodberry	12. Suess

7. Research Papers. Each student is required to prepare a major research paper of approximately 20 pages, plus a solid bibliography. A number of these papers will be selected for presentation to the class. A copy of each paper will be put on reserve in the library so that it can be copied by anyone interested in the topic. The paper should be reduced two pages to one to lower the cost of photocopying. Turn in one standard 8 1/2 X 11, and make a copy for yourself. A one page abstract of your paper should be written and distributed to all members of the class. Your topic should be chosen and approved as soon as possible, but no later than **October 6th**. An outline of your paper should be turned in by **October 20th**. The paper and one page abstract to be passed out to your colleagues is due **November 17th**.

Your paper should relate to the topic of indigenous Christianity with both a theoretical issue(s) and a practical application(s). Here are some possible topics from which to choose. You may want to add to this list as well:

1. The Muslim Concept of Jesus as it Relates to Indigenous Christianity.
2. The Problem of Cultural Relativism and Christianity
3. God Working Through Culture: Incarnation as Model for Ministry
4. The Problem of Form and Meaning as it Relates to Indigeneity
5. Indigenous Christianity vs. Syncretism: Guidelines for Making a Distinction
6. The Bible as a Casebook of Indigeneity
7. The Influence of Culture on Theologizing
8. A Wesleyan Theology of Indigeneity
9. Some Concerns in My Culture That are Not Addressed by Western Christian Theology
10. The Biblical Encounter with : Ancestors in X Culture
Spirits “
Sorcery “
Materialism “
11. Indigenous Christianity in North America: Syncretistic or Incarnational?
12. God’s Ideal vs. God’s Starting Point: The Problem of Process in Indigenous Christianity
13. Making the Gospel Relevant to Contemporary: Yuppies
Street People, etc.
14. Worldview and Indigenous Christianity: Informing and Transforming Each Other
15. The Transforming Impact of Christianity in X Culture
16. Human Commonalty, Cultural Diversity and the Gospel
17. Indigenizing Christianity with Third and Fourth Generation Christians:
Turning Back the Clock or Revitalizing the Faith?
18. The Major Differences Between the Old and New Testaments Are Cultural More Than They Are Theological
19. The Health and Wealth Gospel in America: Good Indigeneity or Cultural Corruption of the Gospel?
20. The Wesleyan Revival in 18th Century England: Implications for Indigenous Christianity Today.

Summary of Important Dates:

Each Monday turn in your “Interaction Papers” for the week. They should be put in my mail slot in the ESJ Office. **Do not send them through the SPO.**

9/27	Critique of Kraft is due
9/29	Discuss Kraft
10/06	Deadline for choosing a research topic
10/06	Film: “The Healer”
10/18	Critique of Sanneh is due
10/20	Discuss Sanneh
10/20	Outline of Research Paper is due
10/27	Film: “The Empty Cup”
11/08	Critique of Bevans is due
11/10	Discuss Bevans

11/17	Film: "Rise Up and Walk"
11/24	Thanksgiving Break
12/06	Critique of Newbigin is due
12/08	Discuss Newbigin
12/08	Film: "Sister Act"
12/08	Collateral Reading of Schreiter is due

Course Evaluation

There will not be a final examination in this course. Your grade will be determined in the following manner:

1. 25% Research Paper
2. 25% Weekly Interaction Papers
3. 10% Critique of Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*
4. 10% Critique of Sanneh's *Translating the Message*
5. 10% Critique of Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies*
6. 10% Critique of Bevans' *Models of Contextual Theology*
7. 10% Critique of Newbigin's *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

You will also be given an opportunity to nominate your final grade for the course.

Office Hours

I am available for office hours Thursday 2:00-4:30. I will appreciate it if you will observe these hours for your appointments. Call me to set a time: 858-2215, or email: darrell_whiteman@asburyseminary.edu.

Fall 1999

MB 770 The Indigenous Church Interaction Form

Name _____ Date _____

Chapter or Article Title _____

Author _____

Rating on a Scale of 1-10 _____ [10 = high]

Summary:

What new insights have you gained from reading this article?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How do you suggest these new insights can be applied to the problem of Indigenous Christianity?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are some problems that have been raised that we should discuss in class?