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MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

A. H. Mathias Zahniser

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Zahniser, A. H. Mathias, "MB 780 Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling" (2003). *Syllabi*. Book 1927.
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Cross-Cultural Christian Discipling

MB 780 January 13-24 (except for second Monday), 2003 8:00-12:30 (3 hrs.). Room M306. A.H. Mathias Zahniser, Instructor. Office Hours: By arrangement. Phone: C/o Mrs. Julee Bellar, MC303, 858-2259. Home: 858-4434. E-mail: mathias_zahniser@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 non-verbal 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. The course deals almost exclusively with non-verbal forms of discipling.

Goals

1. The student will be able to represent accurately in responses to readings the following concepts:
 - 1.1 the function of religion in culture according to Zahniser (1997).
 - 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 other 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*."
 - 1.4 Dimensions of Mathias Zahniser's (1997) case for the use of non-verbal means in Christian formation and disciple making such as *traditional religious societies, modern theists, divine intimacy and ultimacy, cross-cultural discipling, split-level Christianity, the excluded middle, bonding to meaning, and syncretism*.

2. Students will be able to analyze a phenomenon of their own choosing according to one or more of these concepts.
3. Students will gain insight into the relation of discipling with syncretism and community development. January 10, 2003
4. Students will gain confidence in their ability to apply this analysis to the task of discipling.

Note: The instructor hopes 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:

The books can be purchased at the bookstore and the articles will be found in the packet for this course also at the bookstore.

Courson, Jim

- 1998 "Deepening the Bonds of Christian Community: Applying Rite of Passage Structure to the Discipling Process in Taiwan." *Missiology: An International Review*. 26:301-313.

Eliade, Mircea

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

Finn, Thomas M.

- 1989 "Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus." *Journal of Ritual Studies*. 3:69-89.

Roach, Elizabeth M.

- 1988 "Transformation of the Christian Ritual in the Pacific: Samoan White Sunday." *Missiology: An International Review*. 16:173-182.

Turner, Victor

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

Zahniser, A.H. Mathias

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

Reading Packet

A Reading packet is available containing Courson 1998, Finn 1989, and Roach 1988.

4-MAT Reflections

You will prepare on 4-MAT Reflection for each assigned reading even when more than one chapter or more than one author is assigned. See the document 4mat780.doc posted with this syllabus for specific guidelines for preparing these reflections. With the exception of the first day when it will be due by 5:00 p.m. on that day, your 4-MAT Reflection will be due at the beginning of the class session for which the readings you are reflecting on are assigned. This syllabus indicates in the schedule of class periods when readings are assigned to be discussed.

Class Presentation

Each student will be responsible for a thirty-minute presentation of a discipling procedure or event. This event or process will be the subject of the research paper identified in the following paragraph. Ideally, the student will involve the class in acting out an important part of the discipling procedure.

A Research Paper

Each student or team of students will produce a standard research paper of between 20 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) or any later edition of Slade. Structure will also be important with attention given to thesis statement, use of sources, and the organization of the argument. Papers will be due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 30, 2002. The evaluation of the in-class presentation will be averaged with the evaluation of the final paper to equal half of the final grade. In the case of team presentations, all members of the team will receive the grade assigned to the paper and the presentation.

Evaluation

Grades for the course will be based on written responses to the reading assignments (50%), the oral report in class, and the research paper (50%). Late assignments will result in a grade reduction and little or not feedback from the instructor.

Class Schedule by Days

Classes meet daily from January 14 through 25 from 8:00-12:00. It is assumed that students are not taking other classes or independent studies during the time of this class. All assignments, unless otherwise indicated, are to be read before the date on which they are listed in this syllabus. These represent the theoretical meat of the course.

1. Introduction to Discipling with Symbols and Ceremonies

Monday 13: Introduction to the course: modern theists and traditional religious people.

Theological background: The ultimacy and intimacy of God. A working definition of religion applicable to the process of Christian discipling. Zahniser 1997, chapters 1-5.

2. Learning from Human Religion

Tuesday 14: Mircea Eliade's approach to understanding religion.

Eliade 1959. Presentation by Osias Segura-Guzman.

3. The Nature and Function of Symbols

Wednesday 15: Symbols as models of and models for Christian formation. Turner 1995, chapters 1 and 2; Zahniser 1997, chapter 6.

4. The Rite of Passage Ceremony: The Bonding Potential of Liminality

Thursday 16: The nature and function of a rite of passage. Discipling with the rite-of-passage structure. Turner 1995, chapters 3-5; Zahniser 1997, chapters 7 and 8; Finn 1989; Courson 1998.

5. The Discipling Potential of Periodic Festivals and Pilgrimage

Friday 17: The application of the rite of passage structure to space and time. Turner 1995, chapter 5; Roach 1988; Zahniser 1997, chapters 9 and 10.

6. Monday 20: Classes will not meet. This is to Honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., martyr for the liberation of his people. We will find a way to make up for these four missed hours.

7. **A Theology of discipling with Symbol and Ceremony**

Tuesday 21: The problem and potential of syncretism. A Trinitarian approach to holistic discipling. Zahniser 1997, chapters 11,12, and Conclusion; Nichols 1985.

8. **Student presentations.**

Wednesday-Friday January 22-24: 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 diagram), Messianic Synagogue (Contextualized discipling), and Ashram (Hindu retreats).

9. **Bibliography:** The bibliography in Zahniser (1997:221-230) will serve as a bibliography for the course. Other bibliography will be provided in connection with lectures and presentations.