

Syllabus for Cults and World Religions (BST 703)
Front Range Bible Institute



Professor Ben Beswick
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I. Course Description

Cults and World Religions is an apologetics class to help acquaint Christians with several of the major religious groups that one will likely encounter from time to time. This course will embrace two major kinds of topics: (1) cults, and (2) major world religions. The former consists primarily of religious groups that claim some type of significant identification with Jesus, but deviate substantially from biblical Christianity. These groups will generally have their authority based on the teachings of one particular individual. These groups will generally claim belief in the Bible but look in practice to some alternative book(s) of authority as the real source(s) of spiritual authority. Classic examples include Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses.

World religions (as intended in this usage) would be those religions that do not claim such a high level of commitment to Jesus as do some of the cultic groups. These groups may (and often do) make statements that suggest a favorable view of Jesus. However, these groups have faith systems that are generally very different than Christianity. Some illustrations might include religions like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The course will include classroom lectures that are primarily based upon the professor's notes, although the format will not be in a pure lecture form. Students are encouraged to participate by asking and answering questions and taking notes. Detailed notes will be provided, but the student is encouraged to make additions in the margins based upon classroom discussions that will expand and elaborate. Classroom studies will be supplemented by relevant textbooks.

II. Course Objectives

The primary objective for this course is to adequately prepare the students to engage with the views of the groups covered in class for the purpose of evangelization. Knowing what another person believes and why that person holds those beliefs can be very helpful when seeking to lead another person to Jesus Christ. While this additional knowledge is by no means a prerequisite for evangelism, it is clearly a helpful tool for evangelism. To accomplish this first objective, the professor will expose the students to the major issues on each group: origin, founder, major viewpoints, and major theological deviations.

A second objective that is tied to the primary objective is to build upon the biblical knowledge of the student and to provide a systematic understanding of key biblical principles regarding the Gospel message. This course is built on the assumption that a thorough knowledge of the Bible and its theological truths is the best way for helping those who are in false religions.

III. Course Requirements

- A. **Attend all classes** (if a student must miss a class, he/she must obtain a DVD copy and watch the lecture)
- B. **All students** read Walter Martin's *Kingdom of the Cults* (revised edition as edited by Ravi Zacharias)
- C. **Master's level also reads** Thabiti Anyabwile's *The Gospel for Muslims* and James White's *Is the Mormon my Brother?* (obtain it from the bookstore, Amazon, or other source).
- D. **All students must memorize assigned memory verses** (and put into writing) and **turn them in on assigned dates**
- E. **All students must reply to the professor to the email questions** he will send out. **He/she must also reply to one of the other students** on a weekly basis
- F. **Complete the course project** as described below

IV. Course Grading Criteria

- A. 20% Class Attendance
- B. 20% Completion of all course reading
- C. 20% Scripture memorization
- D. 20% Weekly question replies
- E. 20% Course Project

V. Required Course Materials

- A. All students: Professor's notes on Cults and World Religions
- B. All students: Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Revised edition, Ravi Zacharias, ed.
- C. **Master's Students (suggested supplemental reading for every student, but required for all Master's students):** James White's *Is the Mormon my Brother?* and Thabiti Anyabwile's *The Gospel for Muslims*
- D. Your own computer or at least access to a computer
 - i. Class work should be on Microsoft Word (or any comparable word processing program), although the hard copies of your project do not necessarily have to be done on this program. Using the same program may be helpful when it comes to questions about style and formatting.
 - ii. One may employ Power Point in putting together resources.
 - iii. You do not need to have a laptop in class, but you may use one for note-taking if you prefer

VI. Class Assignments

- A. **All students** must memorize certain significant Bible verses related to the topic material on a weekly basis.
- i. Students must choose their translation from the following list: NASB NIV, NKJV, or ESV.
 - ii. Students must memorize the verse exactly as in the translation and where it is located.
 - iii. When memorized, the students turn in a written (computer preferred) sheet that they did from memory to demonstrate their successful memorization of those verses (this can be emailed).
 - iv. The verses to be memorized and the due date for each written sheet are listed below on the schedule.
- B. Answer weekly email questions:
- i. The professor will send out the questions.
 - ii. Each student must respond to the professor with a cc to each of the other students by the stated date.
 - iii. Each answer to the professor must be a minimum of 200 words.
 - iv. Each student must reply to at least one of the other students each week. Reply to the other student, but send a cc to all the other students and the professor. This answer will be an affirmation for what is helpful but it may also contain further information on the topic or even corrective statements in the case of errors.
 - v. Ask me if you have questions about this requirement.
- C. Master Students: *The Gospel for Muslims* Response Paper (2-5 pages)
- In 2-5 pages, students must summarize their impression of this book
- D. Project: You may choose one of the following assignments to fulfill the “project” requirement:
- i. Take the Scripture that you are memorizing, and organize it into an outline of Biblical Theology as a ministry tool.
 1. Organize according to theological concepts:
 - a. A category for Bibliology
 - b. A category for God
 - c. A category for Christ
 - d. A category for the Holy Spirit
 - e. A category for Salvation

f. Others if you wish to be more thorough

- i. Under each category (which you will have in some kind of outline format) you will place the appropriate verses and a concise statement about what that verse teaches on that respective doctrine.
- ii. You can add more verses from anywhere if you want to expand.
- iii. The idea is to have you create a very useful ministry tool for sharing the gospel with others.
- iv. Ask me if you have questions about the objective of the project or its format.

- ii. (or) Written Assignment: For this assignment, you must present a paper (10-15 pages) that presents the following
 - a. A Biblical argument for the nature & role of Christ
 - b. A contrast of the nature & role of Christ as see in Christianity and 1-2 opposing views

E. Have all projects **completed, taught, and turned in by the date listed below** (Nov. 17).

VII. Course Schedule (subject to change as necessary)

Class	Date	Class Subject	Personal Study/Reading
1	Sep. 8	Introduction, Mormonism	Martin: Ch. 1 Start memorizing following verses on God (to be turned in on Sep. 22): Deut. 6:4-6; Matt. 22:37-40; Is. 43:10-13; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:7-8, 17-18; 22:12-13; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5
2	Sep 15	Mormonism cont.	Martin: Ch. 2-3
3	Sep 22	Jehovah Witness	First group of verses due; Start memorizing following verses on

			Christ (To be turned in on Oct 20): Mic. 5:2; Zech. 12:10; 14:4; John 1:1-5, 14, 18; 3:16; 5:18-27; 6:51; 8:12, 24, 58; 10:9-18; 11:25-26; 15:1-5; Acts 10:43; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:13-20; , Heb 1:1-4; 13:8, 1 John 1:1-5; 5:18-21
4	Sep 29	Jehovah Witness cont., Roman Catholicism	Martin: Ch. 4-5
5	Oct 6	Roman Catholicism	Martin: Ch. 6-8
6	Oct 13	Islam	Masters Students; "The Gospel for Muslims" due w/ 2-5 page response paper
7	Oct 20	Eastern Religions; Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism	Martin: Ch. 9-10 Second group of verses due; start memorizing final verses on the Holy Spirit and the Gospel (To be turned in on Nov 10): Matthew 11:27-30; John 3:16; 6:37-39, 44, 63; 10:27-30; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-11, 13-14; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:26-27, 28-30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 3:17-18; Eph. 1:13-14; Titus 2:11-13; 3:3-7; Heb. 7:27; 1 Pet. 1:1-2, 5:6-11
8	Oct 27	Eastern Religions	Martin: Ch. 11-13

9	Nov 3	“American” Cults	Martin: Ch. 14-16
10	Nov 10	“American” Cults	Martin: Ch. 17-18 Final Set of verses due Finish reading Martin
11	Nov 17	Conclusion	Martin: Ch. 19 All reading due Project due

VIII. Weekly questions (find answers in your textbook, other personal resources, or internet). Answer your question to the professor by Friday following the stated date. Your reply to the other students must be by Sunday of that same week (the day before the next question comes up). You can answer the questions on the very day they are do. You can work ahead and answer them before they are do, too.

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(excellent resource for witnessing to Muslims)
- Bowman, Robert M., Jr. *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989. (An excellent resource for a focused study on the theological errors of the Watchtower)
- Hanegraaff, Hank. *Christianity in Crisis*. Eugene: Harvest House, 1993. (An expose on the Word-Faith movement, the Prosperity Gospel movement, and those who espouse these doctrines)
- Johnson, David. *A Reasoned Look at Asian Religions*. Minneapolis, MN: 1985.
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- _____. *The Maze of Mormonism*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1978. (A very good work that focuses on the history and teachings of Mormonism)

_____. *The New Cults*. Ventura, CA: Regal. 1980. (A focus on the teachings of various cults, especially those movements that are smaller and out of the mainstream, in particular those that have an Eastern origin and influence)

McDowell, Josh and Don Stewart. *Handbook of Today's Religions*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1992.

Rhodes, Ron. *The Culting of America: The Shocking Implications for Every Concerned Christian*. Eugene: Harvest House, 1994. (A broad look at the explosive growth of cults in American culture with an examination of the trends and social factors that characterize these shifts)

Ware, Bruce. *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationship, Roles, & Relevance*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005. (A clear & concise look at the biblical doctrine of the Trinity)

White, James. *Is the Mormon my Brother?* Pelham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008.

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