

Christian Theology & World Religions

Course BT 696

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Lincoln Christian University
Lincoln, Illinois 62656

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

An overview of the major world religions as they relate to Christianity. Although many faiths will be studied, we will utilize Islam as a lens by which to focus on key issues entailed in the planet's competing worldviews. 3 credit hours.

COURSE RATIONALE

Our generation is marked by a curious blend of "seeking" and relativism. Never before has (absolute) truth been the target of such skepticism and doubt. Tolerance has been radically redefined by the "politically correct" to the point that spiritual conviction is misinterpreted as unsophisticated or even vengeful. The Scriptures have much to teach us as we navigate these sometimes treacherous waters. Further, even a cursory look at the various world religions easily explodes the shallow platitudes one hears in modern discourse about faith.

UNIVERSITY MISSION AND HARGROVE SCHOOL GOAL

Lincoln Christian University is a Christian higher education community whose mission is to *nurture and equip Christians with a Biblical worldview to serve and lead in the church and the world*. The principal means we use to accomplish this mission are teaching, learning, leading, and serving through undergraduate and graduate programs offered in three schools, each of which has a distinct educational goal. The Hargrove School of Adult & Graduate Studies offers both undergraduate and graduate programs for adult learners. Our goal in the Hargrove School is to *enable servant leaders to be more effective in their chosen professions through programs delivered through non-traditional means and taught from a Christian worldview*. The school has adopted a set of student learning outcomes to further clarify these goals.

HARGROVE SCHOOL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Hargrove School has developed five student learning outcomes that are customized for each of its degree programs. The following section on Course Objectives clarifies which of these five program objectives are most applicable to this course.

This course is a requirement or elective for the Hargrove School's *Master of Arts in Bible and Theology*, which enables Christians to understand the Scriptures holistically and think theologically in order to inform their personal and professional lives, regardless of vocation. This program enables servant leaders to:

1. *Live faithfully* by reflecting key biblical values in their personal and professional lives.
2. *Think Biblically* by developing proficiencies in Bible study and in basic theology, particularly from the perspective of a Biblical worldview.
3. *Grow intellectually* by thinking critically, learning collaboratively, and communicating effectively, especially in areas related to Biblical and theological studies.
4. *Improve professionally* by demonstrating competencies in biblical understanding and theological thinking that are applicable to their professional settings.
5. *Learn continually* by acquiring graduate-level information literacy skills appropriate for lifelong learning in the field of Bible and theology.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of this course, students should be trained in the following areas:

1. Biblical thinking about worldviews. This includes the analytic ability to weigh *truth* claims, distinguish between genuine and false *tolerance*, and understand the *tension* between biblical faithfulness and worldly values, as illustrated by ancient Israel's struggle not to conform to the religions norms of the Ancient Near East.
2. Familiarity with the spectrum of world religions, with a view to appreciating what is distinctive, and thus being in a stronger position to win their adherents to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
3. Equipping believers for direct and respectful engagement with practitioners of other faiths (1 Peter 3:15-16).

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Four books, plus portions of other works, will be read during the course of BT 696.

1. Farhadian, Charles, *Introducing World Religions: A Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015).
2. Jacoby, Douglas A., *Jesus and Islam* (Spring, Texas: Illumination Publishers, 2009).
3. Qureshi, Nabeel, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); OR *No God but One: Allah or Jesus?: A Former Muslim Investigates the Evidence for Islam and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); *Answering Jihad: A Better Way Forward* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).
4. One of the following: Masood, Steven, *Into the Light*; Al Ghazoli, Mohammed, *Christ, Muhammad and I*; Taylor, Aaron D., *Alone With a Jihadist: A Biblical Response to Holy War*; Yousef, Mosan Hassan, *Son of Hamas*; OR Geisler, Norman and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*.
5. Portions of the scriptures of several world religions, and selected readings and podcasts on Canvas.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Given the importance of online classroom participation in the adult learner model **and given new federal regulations**, the Hargrove School has adopted the following policy on attendance for any non-audit students. Please note that attendance for *online* class sessions is equivalent to completing all required work on time for a given weekly session.

1. Students who miss *one week (module)*—measurable by days logged in/not logged in—may have their final course grade lowered by one letter grade increment (e.g. A to A-), provided they complete any required compensatory work. If they do not complete any compensatory work, their final course grade may be lowered by up to one complete letter grade (e.g. A to B).
2. Students who miss *two weeks (modules)* may have their final course grade lowered by two letter grade increments (e.g. B+ to B-), provided they complete any required compensatory work. If they do not, their final course grade may be lowered by up to two letter grades (e.g. A to C).
3. Students who miss *three or more modules* are assumed to have withdrawn from the course and will immediately be given a grade of WF (Withdraw Failing). ***The instructor is required to report a student to the Director of Academic Counseling as soon as the third absence (missed module) occurs.*** The Director of Academic Counseling will then inform the Registrar's Office (who will issue a grade of WF) and also inform the Financial Aid Office (because students with a WF may be subject to losing their financial aid for the entire course).
4. Students who anticipate not being able to follow this attendance policy should contact the [Director of Academic Counseling](#) during the first week of class to request an official, voluntary withdrawal (W, not WF) to avoid any academic penalty and to be eligible for a 50% refund (100% refund before the first week).
5. Students who are doing well in a course but begin to lag behind for legitimate reasons may request one of these three options: 1) permission to continue the course as an Independent Study, which requires an additional class fee of \$300 and which must be completed by the end of that course session; or 2)

permission to receive an Incomplete, which is granted only for extenuating circumstances, carries a \$25 fee, and provides an additional 30 days beyond the end of that class to complete assignments; or 3) permission to withdraw with a grade of W (not WF), which carries no academic penalty but is granted only for extenuating circumstances after the first week of class (see #4 above). To make any of these requests, please contact the course instructor and the [Director of Academic Counseling](#), both of whom must grant permission. Permission should be sought as soon as possible, but no later than one week before the course ends.

LATE WORK/RETURN POLICY

All work is due when listed in the course modules, unless otherwise stipulated by the instructor. No work may be accepted later than one week after the course concludes (the last day of BT 696 is 11 August), since *final grades for all classes are due two weeks after the last class session*. The only exception to this policy is for students who request and are granted an official course extension, which carries a \$25 fee. All such extensions are granted only for extreme circumstances (extended illness, death in family, etc.), and the extension may not exceed 30 days from the last day of class. Only the [Director of Academic Counseling](#) in the Hargrove School may grant such requests, which must be made in writing before the last day of class. Otherwise, the grade earned at that point is the one granted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

As noted in the Catalog, “as a Christian university that places a high priority on honesty, integrity, and a Biblical commitment to truth, Lincoln Christian University will treat incidents of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. Penalties may include failure of the assignment involved, requirement of additional work, failure of the course, academic probation, suspension from school, or dismissal from school... Examples include submitting someone else’s work as one’s own, failing to document appropriately quoted material or others’ unique ideas, using sources not permitted, lying, or other types of unethical behavior in fulfilling academic requirements.”

INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT COVENANT

As instructor of this course, I covenant with each student that I will model Christ-like behavior, value and respect each student as a fellow disciple/learner, be prepared for each class module, create appropriate assignments, grade all assignments fairly, return all grades promptly, and be available for online consultation. In return, I expect each student to model Christ-like behavior, value and respect fellow students and me as the instructor, be prepared for each class module, and complete assignments in ways that demonstrate your integrity.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE

Most of the online or hybrid courses in the Hargrove School require students to interact with each other and with the instructor on a regular basis. Most of that interaction is done through online comments posted in the Angel Discussion Forums. Due to the constraints and unique nature of online communication, students should be aware of the tone of any comments they post. Comments can often be misinterpreted when non-verbal cues such as facial expression and voice intonation are not present. Excessive punctuation, such as repeated exclamation points, could be construed as overly emotional or angry. Students need to consider how remarks might be interpreted by someone who does not know them personally and can only take their words at face value. Students should compose their comments per instructions under the syllabus assignments, paying careful attention to proper grammar and spelling.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Hargrove School provides “reasonable accommodation” for any student with special needs, provided the student self-discloses that information to the instructor sufficiently in advance and supplies official documentation of his/her need (obvious special needs, such as blindness, do not require documentation).

“Reasonable accommodation” ranges from giving extended deadlines to allowing for special tutors. The Hargrove School itself does not offer any tutorial services, but can provide recommendations of entities that do. For further information, contact either the instructor or the [Director of Academic Counseling](#) in the Hargrove School. Please also note that the Angel Learning program used to access all Hargrove School courses has a “508” button on the lower left corner of the main screen that allows students with disabilities to access that information technology more easily (see www.section508.gov).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: ACCELERATED APPROACH

All Hargrove graduate courses are offered in an accelerated format over 7 weeks, not the traditional 15 weeks. This format is the most common approach for adult learners because they bring considerable life experience and have a more motivated and disciplined approach to learning. Our accelerated courses are offered onsite and online, with some offered in both formats (hybrid). Our onsite courses typically have 25 hours of “seat time” in the classroom, less than the traditional 36 hours of 15-week courses (counting an “hour” in class as actually only 50 minutes, excluding breaks). Our online courses have no “seat time,” since all online courses are offered asynchronously, with faculty and students logging on at different times each week (though some courses may have synchronous sessions).

A key principle in adult education is that accelerated learning does not mean less learning. So, all of our accelerated courses, whether offered onsite or online or both, still have the same the learning expectations and workload expectations as traditional 15-week courses. In fact, new federal regulations about credit hour expectations effectively mandate that every 3-hour course require at least 125 hours of some combination of faculty instruction, class interaction, and student involvement.

It is assumed that the average graduate student will

- **Read 20 pages per hour.**
- **Write 1 page per 1.5 hours.**

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments for BT 696 include textbook reading, several additional readings (7-10), book reports (3), podcasts (10-12), quizzes (3), interactive posts (7), a scriptural project, time with a religious leader in another faith tradition, and an evangelistic study. Here follow, in descending order of total point value, the broad types of assignments. For the estimated time commitments of each assignment, refer to the following section.

1. Final exam (40 points). Meets objectives 1 and 2.
2. Weekly online posts/discussion forums (35 points). Meets objectives 1 and 2.
3. Three quizzes (30 points), on Farhadian’s *Introducing World Religions*. Meets objective 2.
4. Three short book reports (30 points). Meets objectives 1 and 2.
5. Meeting with imam, guru, priest, or rabbi etc. (25 points). Meets objectives 1, 2, and 3.
6. Evangelistic study project (20 points). Meets objectives 1-3.
7. Scriptural project (20 points). Meets objective 1.
8. Reading (included in the above; assessed by means of quizzes, online forums, and other means). Meets objectives 1, 2, and 3. NOTE: Students are responsible to read the *endnotes* in the assigned books, as some of them contain valuable information.

ASSIGNMENTS WITH ESTIMATED TIMES FOR COMPLETION

BT 696 contains 7 modules. Complete details may be found in each module.

Some small changes will be made after this original syllabus is posted. If you notice any inconsistencies, please notify your professor and the change(s) will be made. Thank you.

Note: Use the lesson modules as your primary guide through the course, not the overview box below.

MODULE 1 – THE WOLF – 19:30

Various podcasts and articles on world religions. [2:30]
Chapter 1 of Farhadian. [3:00]
Half of book by Qureshi. [7:30]
Listen to & post on "The Wolf Will Lie Down with the Lamb" and take part in the Forum [3:00]
Listen to Islam podcasts A and B. [1:30]
Readings from the Qur'an. [2:00]
Arrange: meet with imam, rabbi, guru, priest / attend mosque, synagogue, temple, shrine by week 5

MODULE 2 – THE JIHADI – 20:00

Listen to & post on Taylor, "Interview with a Jihadist" [3:00]
Read chapters 2-3 of Farhadian [6:00]
Quiz on Farhadian chapters 2-3 [2:00]
Finish Qureshi and submit book report [9:00]

MODULE 3 – IDOLS OF CANAAN – 17:30

Read about half of *Jesus & Islam* [6:00]
Readings from Hadith of Bukhari [2:00]
Listen to Hadith podcast 1, podcast 2, and podcast 3. Read the notes, too. [2:30]
Post on Hadith and take part in the Forum. [2:00]
Clashing Worldviews (Scriptural study project) [5:00]

MODULE 4 – AL-QUR'AN – 19:30

Watch debate on Violence, The Bible & the Qur'an [2:00]
Post on debate & participate in Forum [2:30]
Read chapters 4-6 of Farhadian [6:00]
Finish reading *Jesus & Islam* and submit book report [7:30]
Quiz on Farhadian chapters 4-6 [1:30]

MODULE 5 – UP-CLOSE & PERSONAL – 17:00

Read chapters 7-8 of Farhadian [5:00]
Meet with iman / guru / priest / rabbi... or tour mosque / temple / synagogue [3:30]
Post: Learning from books vs. learning from a religious leader + participate in Forum [3:00]
Quiz on Farhadian chapters 7-8 [1:30]
Begin reading the book of your choice on Islam [4:00]

MODULE 6 – GOING EAST – 19:10

Spend time in the Eastern scriptures and share what you learned in Forum [4:00]
Finish reading the book of your choice on Islam and submit a book report [6:00]
Read chapters 9-10 of Farhadian [5:00]
Listen to the podcast on Mormonism, following the accompanying notes. [1:10]
Begin reviewing for the Final Exam [3:00]

MODULE 7 – DEFENDING THE FAITH – 13:50

Various New Age-related podcasts etc: Reincarnation 1, Reincarnation 2 [video], The Secret, Avatar, A New Earth [article], The Life of Pi. Be sure to read any/all notes -- and take your own notes. [4:00]
Post on New Age Movement and take part in the Forum [3:00]
Listen to podcast on Judaism and Counter-Culture [0:20]
Final Exam [2:00]
Evangelistic project [4:00]
Course feedback [0:30]

Total hours ~ 126:00

COURSE SCHEDULE AND GRADING

BT 696 is based around 7 weekly modules, with a total of 200 points. Your final (letter) grade will be determined by where your point total falls:

<i>Course points</i>	<i>Letter grade</i>
188-200	A
180-187	A-
174-179	B+
168-173	B
160-167	B-
154-159	C+
146-153	C
140-145	C-
134-139	D+
126-133	D
120-125	D -
<120	F