

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
Cult Theology  
THEO6306  
Professor: Dr. Robert B. Stewart  
Special Event Course  
Evangelical Ministries to New Religions  
April 27-28, 2018

### **Seminary Mission Statement**

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

### **Course Description**

This course primarily involves the study of major cults in the United States. Attention will be given to the theological and operational characteristics of new religions and cults. The course will focus on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), and New Age movements. Attention will be given to the theological and operational characteristics of new religions and cults.

The student will demonstrate: (1) an understanding of the history, leadership, doctrines, ethics, and organization of the cults studied through academic study and field observation; (2) an awareness of the significance of these cults for their own members, for Christians, and for the history of religion; (3) an ability to enable and equip class members to relate more effectively to members of the cults, for discussion and evangelistic witness; and (4) to recognize the new cults which will surely come into expression in the future.

### **Course Description**

The course will address the core value of Doctrinal Integrity and Mission Focus directly and Spiritual Vitality indirectly. Reflection on the apologetic issues is intimately related to reflection on the nature of God, Scripture, Christian faith, evangelism, and the doctrine of Creation. Christian apologetics is ultimately a matter of sanctifying Christ as Lord (1 Peter 3:15). Studying Cult Theology is a particularly effective way of learning orthodox theology as it provides a backdrop against which orthodox Christianity can be seen much more clearly and its development and biblical basis understood more deeply.

## Textbooks

### Required Texts

Walker, James K., Editor. *Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook*. Watchman Fellowship, Inc. Arlington, TX. Because the Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook is constantly growing as new profiles are written, students are encouraged to purchase the Profile Notebook in either hard copy or digital form from Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook at <http://www.watchman.org/store/resources-catalog/books12626/watchman-fellowships-profile-notebook/>.

### Optional Texts

Beckwith, Francis, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds. *The New Mormon Challenge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Bjornstad, James. *The Moon Is Not the Son: A Close Look at the Teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Dimension Books, 1976.

Bowman, Robert M. Jr. *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.

———. *The Word-Faith Controversy: Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

———. *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Brown, Harold O. J. *The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984.

Countess, Robert H. *The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, 2nd. Ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982.

Groothuis, Douglas. *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist a Growing Religious Movement*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988.

———. *Revealing the New Age Jesus: Challenges to Orthodox Views of Christ*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.

———. *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1998.

Larson, Charles M. *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*. Grand Rapids: Institute for Religious Research, 1992.

McKeever, Bill and Eric Johnson. *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Reed, David. *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009.

———. *The Ten Most Important Things You Can Say to a Jehovah's Witness*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001.

Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: Twenty Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980.

Southerton, Simon G. *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*. Salt Lake City: Signature, 2004.

### **Recommended Texts**

House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Tanner, Gerald and Sandra. *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982.

Tucker, Ruth A. *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Conference Attendance. Students are required to attend all sessions of the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions conference, April 27-28, 2018 on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

2. Book Reviews. Each student is required to review two books related to the study of cults. It must be a book listed by the instructor for reading reviews. The review should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. The reviews should follow Turabian form. Book reviews should be 5-7 double-spaced pages in length. The reviews are due May 25, 2018.

3. Field Project: Each student is required to submit **ONE** (only one, not both) of the following projects:

A. Cult Evangelism Report. Students will report on a *witnessing encounter* with a cult member. An interview is frequently the easiest way to have an evangelistic encounter with a member of a counterfeit Christian group. (A witnessing encounter is defined as a dialogue that leads to the student sharing the Gospel with the cultist, not simply a dialogue on theological differences or a debate as to which position is correct.) *The student is required to prepare and submit a written report and analysis of the witnessing encounter.* The report-analysis

should be both a narrative of what occurred during the encounter and an analysis of how differences in theology and worldview impacted the encounter. **The Cult Evangelism Report is due June 29, 2018.**

- B. **Cult Worship Report.** Students will report on attending a worship service or official event of a cult or counterfeit Christian group. The report should include a summary of the service/event and an analysis of the beliefs and practices in comparison with one's readings and the class lectures on that cult. The report-analysis need not be a verbatim record but should identify and interpret all the substantive questions and answers set forth during the interview in comparison with one's readings and the class lectures on that cult. The report should also address issues related to evangelizing members of cults or new religions (e.g., terminological issues, group behavioral characteristics, or theological differences are observable during the visit). **The Cult Worship Report is due June 29, 2018.**

4. *Doctrinal Overview and Response.* Students will prepare a doctrinal overview of the beliefs of a counterfeit Christian group or cult, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), or the New Age Movement. Students will then critique those beliefs logically and biblically, with a mind to rebutting the cult position, and formulate an approach to witnessing to adherents of the group. The Doctrinal Overview and Response should be not less than 18 nor more than 25 double-spaced pages. **The Doctrinal Overview and Response is due July 13, 2018.**

5. *Reading Inventory:* Each member is expected to keep an accurate record of all reading, both required and optional, done for this course. Failure to read all of the assigned readings will impact your final grade negatively. Additional reading may impact your final grade positively. **The Reading Inventory is due July 13, 2018.**

6. *Grades* will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.

The final grade will be determined accordingly:

Book Reviews	30%
Doctrinal Overview and Response	30%
Cult Worship Report or Witness Report	25%
Conference Attendance	15%
Final Grade	100%

### **Bibliography**

Abanes, Richard. *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.

- Beckwith, Francis, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds. *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Bjornstad, James. *The Moon Is Not the Son: A Close Look at the Teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Dimension Books, 1976.
- Bowman, Robert M. Jr. *Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- . *The Word-Faith Controversy: Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- . *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- . *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity: An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990.
- Brown, Harold O. J. *The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984.
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- Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1998.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Hutchinson, Janis. *Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding and Encouraging Ex-Cultists*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994.
- . *The Mormon Missionaries: An Inside Look at Their Real Message and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995.
- Magnani, Duane. *The Watchtower Files: Dialogue with a Jehovah's Witness*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985.
- Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985.
- Martin, Walter (edited by Ravi Zacharias). *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 2003.

- McConnell, D. R. *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement*. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1988.
- McKeever, Bill and Eric Johnson. *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- Newport, John P. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Noll, Richard. *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Reed, David. *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
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- and Marian Bodine. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*. Eugene: Harvest House, 1995.
- . *The Ten Most Important Things You Can Say to a Jehovah's Witness*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001.
- Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: Twenty Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980.
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- Yamamoto, J. Isamu. *The Puppet Master: An Inquiry into Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977.