

WSBM exists to equip God's people – head, heart, and hands – through the Word of God, helping them know Jesus Christ personally and carry on His ministry.

COURSE: WSBM 551 The Global Church and Willingdon

INSTRUCTOR: Pastor John (MDiv) and Christy Best (MA)

DATE: Tuesdays | January 21 – March 18, 2025 | 7-9pm

FORMAT: Hybrid: in person (at Willingdon Church) or online

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will place our unique local church, Willingdon Church, within the context of the global church. About 1/3 of the world's population identify as Christians. In some parts of the world, the church is growing quickly. In others, it seems to be in a free-fall. There are unique theological and practical things to learn from the church in each region.

What does all this have to do with our unique, very diverse church family? We will introduce you to people from within the Willingdon Church family from each region of the world and hear powerful personal testimonies. In addition, we will explore history, theology and current faith realities within each region. Why would we do this? See below!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop more informed "Global Christians" in the Willingdon Church family
- To celebrate and explore what God is doing in different parts of the world
- To consider what the church in each region has to offer the rest of the global church, and Willingdon Church specifically
- To get to know the Willingdon church family better, building relationships and enhancing understanding across cultures as we hear how God has been at work in the lives of our church family

REQUIRED READING

Students will be required to read an assortment of articles and chapters compiled into the Course Reading Packet, available on Moodle (approximately 200 pages).

RECOMMENDED READING

See bibliography for further relevant reading suggestions.

COURSE PROGRAM

Date	Topic	Reading Assignments (from reader)
Jan 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Intro • North America • Europe • Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reading due by the first class
Jan 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Africa • Middle East 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Christianity by Continent</i>, Zurlo • <i>The State of the World</i>, Borthwick • <i>How and Why</i>, Garrison • <i>Dreams and Visions</i>, Doyle • <i>The Awakening of the Persian Church</i>, Hovsepian
Feb 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia • Former Soviet Union • Central Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Closer Look at Orthodox Christians</i>, Masci • <i>Distant Thunder</i>, Hogan • <i>How the World is Changing Christianity</i>, Granberg-Michaelson
Feb 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prosperity Theology in Africa</i>, Boaheng • <i>Witchcraft, and Wealth & Poverty</i>, Africa Bible Commentary
Feb 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latin America 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Spirit and the World in the Twenty-First Century</i>, Granberg-Michaelson • <i>The Flaw of the Excluded Middle</i>, Hiebert • <i>Pentecostalism in Latin America</i>, Eagleton
Feb 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Asia • South East Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Future of Christianity in East and Southeast Asia</i>, Ho
Mar 4	No class	
Mar 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Asia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Critical Contextualization</i>, Hiebert • <i>A Movement of Christ Worshipers in India</i>, Hubbard • <i>Vegetables, Fish and Messianic Mosques</i>, Ali
Mar 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So what? Applying what we have learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Twenty-First Century as God's Century</i>, Toft • <i>Theology and Practice in an Intercultural Church</i>, Best • <i>The Emergence of a Global Theological Discourse</i>, Tennent • <i>Beyond Loving The World</i>, Bryant

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

1. Required Reading (35%) (5%/week)

Read the articles and chapters provided in the Course Reading Packet, available on Moodle. Reading is approximately 200 pages. For each of the seven weeks of reading, submit a 5-10 sentence reflection on what you have read.

Due: weekly reading completion and reflections due by the time class begins each week

2. Reflection Assignment (15%)

In approximately 500 words, explain one big idea that you have gleaned from a different part of the world as a result of taking this class and articulate some questions you think would be helpful to explore in order to understand this idea more fully. How should those of us in a Canadian church context react or respond as we are exposed to this reality?

Ideas for topics include (but are not limited to):

- Prosperity Theology
- Witchcraft, shamanism and the demonic
- Jesus showing up in dreams and visions
- Remaining faithful in the midst of suffering
- Being a Christian in a multi-religious context
- Syncretism
- Rise of Pentecostalism
- The shifting “center of gravity” of the global church
- Contextualization

Due: Tuesday, March 18, 2025

3. Final Assignment (50%)

Pick a region of the world and explore answers to some of the questions below. Choosing around four (4) of the questions below will be sufficient for this essay length. Present your findings in an essay of 1500-2000 words.

Questions to choose from:

- What are some challenges Christians face in the region?
- What are some encouraging things God is doing in the region?
- In what ways is the church flourishing in the region?
- In what ways is the church not flourishing in the region?
- What can Christians from outside of the region learn from the Christians in the region?
- What would be some appropriate evangelistic strategies in the region?
- What are some basic statistics and demographics that give a helpful picture of life in the region?
- What can you learn by looking at the history of Christianity in this region?
- What has surprised you as you have learned about Christianity in this region?

Due: Tuesday, March 18, 2025

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Boaheng, Isaac. *Poverty, The Bible, and Africa*. HippoBooks, 2020.

Borthwick, Paul. *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?* IVP Books. 2012.

Jenkins, Philip. *Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Johnson, Todd M. and Cindy M. Wu. *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World*. Baker Academic, 2015.

Johnstone, Patrick. *The Future of the Global Church*. Biblica, 2011.

Mandryk, Jason. *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*. InterVarsity Press, 2010.

Noll, Mark. *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Historian's Discovery of the Global Christian Story*. Baker Academic, 2014.

Noll, Mark. *The New Shape of World Christianity*. InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Stiller, Brian, et al., eds. *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*. Thomas Nelson, 2015.

Walls, Andrew. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. Orbis, 2002.

Winter, Ralph and Steven Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader (Fourth Edition)*. William Carey Library, 2009.

Zurlo, Gina. *Global Christianity: A Guide to the World's Largest Religion from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe*. Zondervan, 2022.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Center for the Study of Global Christianity: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/>

Center for the Study of World Christianity: <https://www.cswc.div.ed.ac.uk/resources/journal/>

Operation World: <https://operationworld.org/>

Prayercast: <https://prayercast.com/>