DVPR 46700: 
Pluralism and Philosophy of Religions 

Spring term, 2012 
T/Th 10:30-11:50, in the Martin Marty Center Library 

Instructor: Dan Arnold (d-arnold@uchicago.edu)  
Office hours: Swift 401A, Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 (or by arrangement); sign up on the sheet kept by Susie McGee in the Martin Marty Center 

Objectives of the Course: 

This course will introduce and characterize some of the philosophical challenges posed by the manifest diversity (or “pluralism”) of religious perspectives and claims. As befits a course on religious diversity (and in order to show that the problems are not new), the course will include significant attention to some non-Western discussions and examples; the first four weeks thus involve relevant readings from pre-modern and contemporary India, which has its own very interesting history of religious diversity. 

Course Requirements: 

In addition to regular attendance and spirited participation in discussion, this class requires a 10-15-page paper (on a topic to be discussed with instructor), which will be due Friday, June 8. N.b.: Late papers will not be accepted without prior notice. 

Required Readings: 

Some of our readings are short selections available electronically through Chalk; one book (Matilal’s Central Philosophy of Jainism) is available only on reserve, and one (John Hick’s An Interpretation of Religion) is out of print; please arrange ahead of time to secure a copy from (e.g.) Abebooks.com or Amazon. The following are not only on reserve at Regenstein, but also available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore: 

– Amartya Sen, The Argumentative Indian  
– Csaba Dezso, trans., Much ado About Religion  
– Richard Vernon, ed., Locke on Toleration  
– Schubert Ogden, Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?  
– Jeffrey Stout, Democracy and Tradition 

Schedule of Topics and Readings: 

Week 1 (Tue., March 27; Thur., March 29) 

Course introduction: General reflections on “pluralism” as a philosophical problem – and a beginning with the early Indian case of King Aśoka. Reading (for Thur.): Nathan King, “Religious Diversity and its Challenges to Religious Belief” (Chalk); selections from The Edicts of Aśoka (Chalk); Romila Thapar, “Aśoka and Buddhism as Reflected in the Aśokan Edicts” (Chalk); recommended: John Strong, The Legend of King Aśoka, pp.3-26 (“The Legend and Its Background”; Chalk) 

Week 2 (Tue., April 3; Thur., April 5) 

The epistemological and ontological pluralism of the Jains. Reading: B. K. Matilal, The Central Philosophy of Jainism (on reserve); Jonardon Ganeri, “Rationality,
Harmony and Perspective” (Chalk); Himal Trikha, “Competing World Views: Perspectivism and Polemics in the Satya-Śāsana-Parīkṣā and Other Jaina Works” (Chalk)

**Week 3** (Tue., April 10; Thur., April 12)

Classical Indian philosophy and royal politics: Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s Āgamadambara; the cosmopolitanism of Mughal India. **Reading:** Csaba Dezso, trans., *Much ado About Religion*; Rajeev Kinra, “Infantilizing Bābā Dārā” (Chalk; for Thursday)

**Week 4** (Tue., April 17; Thur., April 19)

Reflections on the history of classical Indian “heterodoxy” and the modern Indian state. **Reading:** Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, Preface, pp.3-87, 139-160, 273-316, 334-356

**Week 5** (Tue., April 24; Thur., April 26):

A founding document for modern Western discourse on pluralism: The “Letter on Toleration,” by a contemporary of Dārā Shekuh’s named John Locke. **Reading:** Richard Vernon (ed.), *Locke on Toleration*

**Week 6** (Tue., May 1; Thur., May 3)

The much-discussed “pluralist” alternative. **Reading:** John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, at least pp.233-96. (N.b. that this book is out of print, but readily and cheaply available through, e.g., Abebooks.com.)

**Week 7** (Tue., May 8; Thur., May 10)

A specifically theological consideration of the issues (but one with lots of philosophical dimensions). **Reading:** Schubert Ogden, *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?*

**Week 8** (Tue., May 15; Thur., May 17)

The positions of some “reformed epistemologists.” **Reading:** William Alston, “Religious Diversity and Perceptual Knowledge of God” (Chalk); Alvin Plantinga, “Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism” (Chalk); Jason Springs, “On Giving Religious Intolerance Its Due: Prospects for Transforming Conflict in a Post-secular Society” (Chalk);

**Week 9** (Tue., May 22; Thur., May 24)

The American pragmatist tradition has the last word. **Reading:** Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*

**Week 10** (Tue., May 29; Thur., May 31): NO CLASS (I will be away at an NEH Institute)

**Final papers due Friday, June 8!**