

# Panel: Faiths share some similarities

Students discussed what's behind their beliefs and whether common ground can be found.

BY TOBY MANTHEY

Mikhaila Schneider compared God's relationship with man to a painter's relationship with his work.

"A painter can understand his painting, but a painting can't understand its creator," said Schneider, a sophomore French and international relations major.

Schneider and seven other University of Nebraska-Lincoln students presented the views of eight faiths Tuesday night in the Nebraska Union Auditorium.

The students discussed their faiths' rituals, views of life after death and the relationship of God to humans.

Many panelists acknowledged the similarity between all religions' conceptions of God.

"A rose can be called differ-

ent things in different places, but it still smells the same," said Ajay Yagnamurthy, a graduate mechanical engineering student who represented the Hindu religion.

Other religions discussed were Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the Baha'i religion, atheism and traditional American-Indian religion, which was explained by Misty Thomas.

Thomas, a senior family and consumer science major, said her religion was difficult to explain because it had become intertwined with Christianity.

"Since there was so much assimilation, we've just recently been getting back to our traditional ways," she said.

Yagnamurthy read parts of a Hindu scripture, or Veda, in its original language.

"It may not mean anything to you, but it means a whole lot to me," he said.

Muna Al-mugotir, a junior pre-dentistry and biology

major, spoke about Islam.

Al-mugotir said there were similarities between Christian and Islamic views of the after-life.

Islam followers, she said, believe in ideas of heaven and hell. Man's final end is handed down in the form of God's judgment, she said.

Shannon Culek, a sophomore international studies and philosophy major, talked about atheism.

Unlike the other panelists, Culek said man has no intrinsic purpose. She compared this to the life of a plant.

"A plant exists just because it exists," Culek said.

Because of this, she said, people must design their own purposes in life.

Some of the panelists admitted the difficulty humans have in knowing God.

"All human thought," Yagnamurthy said, "is just a droplet in the whole ocean of the universe."

# Omaha-language class offered

OMAHA from page 1

Nebraska, he said, but the Omaha-language class was chosen because Mark Awakuni-Swetland, the lecturer who teaches the class, was more knowledgeable about the Omaha nation.

"Because of Mark's expertise and experience, he was in a position to do a new language," Hitchcock said.

There has been a worldwide effort to teach more native languages, he said.

And Awakuni-Swetland said offering the class would strengthen relations with the native community.

Before starting the Omaha-language sequence, which will run for three semesters after this one, the anthropology department asked tribal members, representatives from the Indian Center and members of the American Indian student group UNITE what they thought about offering the language.

All said it would be a good

idea, Hitchcock said.

But there has been some dissent among Omaha nation members in Macy, where the tribe is located, Awakuni-Swetland said.

Some wonder why a white man is teaching their language and culture to students who are not all American Indians, he said.

And others asked if the anthropology department was offering the course only to make up for the American-Indian remains found at the university.

"My response to that is I don't know," Awakuni-Swetland said. "But regardless of why the native language is being developed at the university, we need to consider if it will benefit the native community."

Most native Omaha people do think it will benefit the community, he said.

"They've had a rough go with the university, and they're still willing to let this program develop," Awakuni-Swetland said.

All 11 students enrolled in Awakuni-Swetland's Omaha-lan-

guage class have said they wish to continue the sequence by taking the next three classes, he said.

Though the class is taught in the anthropology department, Awakuni-Swetland said students can receive language credit for it in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The drawback is that the introductory course will be taught only this semester, so it will be difficult for new students to start the sequence.

But after the four semesters of the class are up, Awakuni-Swetland said he hoped the department would renew his contract and offer the class again.

"The hope is if the university follows through on its commitment to diversity, then there's no reason to think it's not possible to get other native instructors," he said.

"The desire is to make this a new addition to the university. It strengthens relations with the native community, who have been poorly dealt with in the past."

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