



DI 610 Faith in the Neighborhood
Understanding and Engaging the World's Religions in America
A Hartford Seminary Asynchronous Online Course
Spring Term 2021

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Dr Mosher teaches from her office in northeast Florida. She may be “visited” via Zoom or phone on Mondays 8:00–10:00 AM (Eastern) or Wednesdays 8:00 – 9:30 PM (Eastern) Other times by appointment (Email or text to decide on a time.).

Course Format: asynchronous online; with an expectation of some experiential learning by each student in that student’s own geographic location.

Course Description:

The scope of 21st-century America’s religious diversity is breathtaking! It is reasonable to say that all of the world’s religions—in fact, multiple versions of most—have made themselves at home in the US. Further complicating the multifaith landscape are the many ways individuals and groups orient around “religion.” It can be confusing—even intimidating. To the rescue: an asynchronous online course helps enrollees make sense of this complexity as it fosters interfaith neighborliness, hospitality, and mutual understanding. Students are introduced to concepts, vocabulary, and practices of various religions to a degree sufficient for participation in intelligent interfaith conversation—plus techniques and resources for fruitful interfaith collaboration. Traditional lectures and reading assignments are complemented by experiential, case-study, and dialogical methodologies—all facilitated by a Canvas website. Because fieldwork is an important component of this course, students receive preparation for being an informed visitor to other people’s religious spaces. They choose their own interfaith adventures (and because of COVID-19, probably must stick to virtual adventures this term)—but get plenty of help in doing so. Past enrollees have described *Faith in the Neighborhood* as “a pilgrimage”—a journey they’re glad they’ve taken!

Required Books

- Bidwell, Duane R. *When One Religion Isn't Enough: The Lives of Spiritually Fluid People*. Beacon Press, 2018. ISBN 9780807091241
- Ibrahim, Celene. *One Nation, Indivisible: Seeking Liberty and Justice from the Pulpit to the Streets*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019. ISBN 9781532645709
- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A., *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014. ISBN: 1625644582
- Mosher, Lucinda. *Belonging*. New York: Seabury Books, 2005. ISBN: 1596270101.
- _____. *Praying: Rituals of Faith* New York: Seabury Books, 2006. ISBN: 1596270160.
- Mosher, Lucinda, Axel Takacs, Or Rose, Mary Elizabeth Moore, eds. *Deep Understanding for Divisive Times*. Newton Centre, MA: Interreligious Studies Press, 2020. ISBN 9780578785080.
- Patel, Eboo. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780807033623.
- Peace, Jennifer Howe, et al. editors. *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017. ISBN: 9781570759581.

Additional required or useful essays and other items will be made available as needed via the Canvas website.

Course Learning Outcomes

- 1) Familiarity with resources for exploring the beliefs and practices of at least six multi-faceted religious traditions that are prominent in the US.
- 2) Improvement in command of the vocabulary of religious diversity.
- 3) Awareness of (and improved skill in using) several methods for exploring various dimensions of the interaction of people who orient around religion differently.
- 4) Ability to use anthropology-of-religion methodology to arrange, conduct, and report on field work.
- 5) Familiarity with the skills, strategies, rationales, and resources useful for leadership, cooperation, and collaboration in multifaith contexts.

The material in the course relates to portions of two Master of Arts Learning Outcomes:

1. To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one's own religion by:
 - b. Relating one's tradition to public issues which intersect with faith
 - c. Engaging one's own religion analytically and contextually
 - d. Developing appreciative knowledge of the continuum of expressions and interpretations of one's own religious tradition.
 - e. Recognizing the different streams of thought and practice within one's own tradition.
2. To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and worldviews by: (b) Being able to compare the social contexts of another faith tradition with one's own; (c) Displaying empathy in critical examination of other religions.

Course Plan: This is not a “world religions” course in the traditional sense. We will not work our way down a list of religions, one at a time. Rather, we will learn about a number of religions (and diverse expressions of each) by studying interreligious engagements by means of decision-based cases, documentaries, and anecdotal/interview-driven reading assignments. The course comprises twelve modules. Here is the tentative overview of themes for each:

1. The very notion of “faith in the neighborhood”; Membership; Interreligious Learning
2. Complexifying our view of/engagement with the multi-religious neighborhood.
3. Daily Obligations in the multifaith neighborhood; Case Study 1-A₁
4. Communal worship; Holidays; Sacred Spaces in the multifaith neighborhood; Case Study 1-A₂
5. Taking Stock; Digging Deeper; Sharing Sacred Spaces; Case Study 1-B; Case Study 2-A₁
6. Experiential learning; Case Study 2-A₂
7. Interfaith leadership skills, strategies, examples, resources; Case Study 2-B
8. Multifaith cooperation and collaboration; compassionate action; Fremont USA
9. Dealing with the ugly side of faith in the neighborhood: mitigating the bigotry industries
10. Food, Clothing, Spiritual Discipline in the multifaith neighborhood; Case Study 3-A₁
11. Navigating the multifaith neighborhood: re-examination of its complexity (including the phenomena of “spiritual fluidity” or “multiple belonging”). Case Study 3-A₂
12. Assessment of the expansion of our literacy and skills. Case Study 3-B

Recurring elements connect the modules to each other: the opportunity to read/hear scripture from many religions; weekly portions of the book *My Neighbor's Faith*; interreligious case studies; opportunities for interaction with classmates and the professor. For this course, every module begins on a Wednesday. Major assignments are due on Friday and Tuesday. Your instructor reserves the right to adjust the schedule, topics, and assignments in order to accommodate the needs and interests of the students enrolled in this course

Assessment

Reflection and Discussion: *50% of final grade*

Most modules conclude with a discussion forum—a tool that provides an opportunity to demonstrate deep thinking about a module’s readings, videos, and activities—both in your own post and in your responses to classmate posts.

Lecture-Watching: *20% of final grade*

Almost all lectures are delivered through VoiceThread—a tool that enables you to receive credit for taking in the lecture and commenting on it.

Experiential learning: *10% of final grade*

The exact nature of field work requirements depends on the progress of the pandemic.

Case-Study Engagement: 15% of final grade

At intervals, students will have multiple opportunities to analyze and discuss at least three “cases” (formally presented situations).

Miscellaneous graded items: 5% of the final grade

Quizzes, simple research assignments, and other freestanding activities.

Hartford Seminary Grading Scale

- A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.
- B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

Doctor of Ministry Grading Scale

- 90-100 High Pass
- 83-94 Pass
- 70-82 Low Pass
- below 70 Fail

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one’s own previous work used in another course. See “Plagiarism” at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Inclusive Language

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and prevents discrimination on the basis of a disability. It is Hartford Seminary policy to provide reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis, which may mean working with outside social and governmental agencies to provide the necessary range of services for student success. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students with disabilities are eligible for disability support services when they are enrolled in courses and they have disclosed their disability and requested related accommodations during enrollment and/or before the start of each semester. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the [Request for Disability Accommodations](#) form.

Official Handbooks

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Communication and Technology

Students will be expected to use their Hartford Seminary email for communication regarding the course. In addition, all students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access readings, videos, mini-lectures and other course materials. Students must also create a free account with VoiceThread and have access via the VoiceThread app, in Canvas, or in a separate browser window. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information "for the good of the order."

About CANVAS:

This course's Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course.

- Be sure to explore the site thoroughly before you begin.
- If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the "Help" button (indicated by a question-mark). The "live chat" feature works very well; you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.
- If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom

conversation. (Making an appointment ensures that your professor is ready to talk with you seated at her desk rather than standing in the supermarket!)

- On the Canvas website, course material is organized into “modules”. Within each module you will find a variety of items such as detailed instructions for reading assignments; downloadable files; audio-visual lectures by your professor (usually making use of VoiceThread technology); other audio-visual or audio-only items; case studies; or discussion-board prompts requiring responses.

Attendance

Lack of engagement with the Canvas website for seven days in a row constitutes “absence” from the course and can lead to failure. Students who believe they have a legitimate reason for such disengagement must discuss this with the professor—preferably in advance. Failure to submit an assignment or perform a required activity on time is tantamount to absence from class. If you fall behind, skip ahead to the next module so that you can stay current with your classmates in discussions. Later on, you can return to an earlier module to fill in what you missed. Late submissions are permitted, but for fewer points.

Recommended Reading

Albanese, Catherine L. *America: Religions & Religion*, 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007.

Ashley, Sr., Willard W. C. *Learning to Lead: Lessons in Leadership for People of Faith*. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2012.

Berthrong, John. *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.

Chittister, Joan. *Welcome to the Wisdom of the World and Its Meaning for You: Universal Spiritual Insights Distilled From Five Religious Traditions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Eck, Diana L. *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001.

Ernst, Carl W., ed. *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Fisher, Mary Pat. *Living Religions*, ninth edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2013.

Ibrahim, Celene. *One Nation, Indivisible: Seeking Liberty and Justice from the Pulpit to the Streets*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019.

Mabry, John R., ed. *Spiritual Guidance Across Religions: A Sourcebook for Spiritual Directors and Other Professionals Providing Counsel to People of Differing Faith Traditions*. SkyLight Paths, 2014.

McCarthy, Kate. *Interfaith Encounters in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Niebuhr, Gustav. *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America*. New York: Viking, 2008.

- Patel, Eboo. *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.
- Sacks, Jonathan. *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society*. New York: Continuum, 2007.
- Schaaf, Kathe, Kay Lindahl, Kathleen Hurty, and Guo Cheen, eds. *Women, Spirituality and Transformative Leadership: Where Grace Meets Power*. SkyLight Paths, 2014.
- Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, third edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000.
- Steinkerchner, Scott. *Beyond Agreement: Interreligious Dialogue amid Persistent Differences*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).
- Valkenberg, Pim. *World Religions in Dialogue: A Comparative Theological Approach*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2013.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*. Princeton University Press; 2005, 2007.
- See also: *Common Knowledge*: interfaith literacy podcasts. <http://www.ifyc.org/podcast>
Well worth your time to listen to some of the items posted here.