

Decolonizing Interfaith Interaction

F2018 – Online

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Course Description:

This course will take a look at current models of interfaith interaction in the United States with an aim toward disrupting and dismantling their problematic foundations and structures. Utilizing postcolonial theorists and real-life examples, we will question what is generally considered a pluralistic and diverse institution (interfaith interaction), and discuss the implications for participants and leaders if it is not.

Course Requirements:

1. Readings: Please do the assigned readings each week and in the order recommended.
2. Weekly Posts: Each week, by MIDNIGHT on WEDNESDAY, you must submit one substantive post on the readings.
3. Weekly Responses: Each week, by MIDNIGHT on SATURDAY, you must submit at least one substantive response to another student's post.
4. Final Paper Outline: Students will submit a brief outline of their final paper, including a thesis, evidence, and bibliography.
5. Final Paper: Students will submit a final paper/essay answering several questions from the term.

Evaluation Policies

Grading: The course is 2 credit hours and will result in a letter grade. Students may petition to take the course Pass/Fail, but this must be done within the first week of the term and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students will earn their final course grade according to their performance as follows:

60% - Weekly thread posts and responses. This includes nine weeks of posts and responses (20 points each, for 180 points)

10% - Academic Decorum

30% - Final paper (50 points)

Grade Distribution:

93-100... A Exceptional

90 – 92... A- Excellent – Far Exceeds Expectations

87 – 89... B+ Superior – Exceeds Expectations

83 – 86... B Great Work – Meets Expectations

80 – 82... B- Good Work – Nearly Meets Expectations

77 – 79... C+ Above Satisfactory

73 – 76... C Satisfactory

70 – 72... C- Below Satisfactory

67 – 69... D+ Above the Minimum for Passing

63 – 66... D Minimum for Passing
60 – 62... D- Bare Minimum for Passing
<60 ... F Failing

Please note: Simply turning in your assignments does not guarantee an “A” grade. A-level work is exceptional and requires well-reasoned and well-argued engagement with and analysis of course materials.

Participation

Participation is imperative in an online course. Students must participate in the weekly posts and responses, because this is the basis for discussion and engagement with the course content. Posts need to be submitted on time that other students may interact with and respond to them over the course of the week. Late posts will be penalized 2 points for every day they are late.

You are also expected to proceed with Academic Decorum: post and respond with respect and consideration.

A: The student is respectful of others. While disagreeing or challenging, the student never dishonors or disrespects.

B: Every so often the student attacks another student rather than challenging or disagreeing with whatever point of view is being offered.

C: The student is disrespectful and is not willing to entertain different views.

D: The student disrupts the learning experience of others by the way they conduct themselves in on the forum discussions.

F: The student creates a hostile experience.

Weekly Posts: (10 points)

Your weekly post (DUE EACH WEDNESDAY AT MIDNIGHT) is a substantive engagement of the assigned readings, considering guiding questions or prompts, if given. Posts should not be simple summaries of the material, but should show and attempt to put the various readings in conversation with each other. This might be through thematic discussions, compare/contrast, or critical analysis of parts of the readings. Perhaps one argument resonated with you, you question the author’s evidence, or you see connections with your life or other coursework. Please *cite* the various authors referenced within the post. Your posts should be a maximum of 350 words and a minimum of 250 words.

It is nearly impossible to be substantively engaged in less than 250 words, so please take the word count seriously!

Weekly Responses: (10 points)

Your weekly response (DUE EACH SATURDAY AT MIDNIGHT) should be to one of your classmates whose post has not yet been engaged. (Once you have done this, you may, of course, respond to any other posts that catch your eye!) Try to respond to different people each week so that you can experience the variety and perspective of each of your unique classmates.

The responses should also be substantive, engaging both your own analysis of the readings as well as the poster's. They should not be mere acknowledgments of a post: "Yeah , that makes sense," or "I agree!" do not count as substantive. *Why* does their post make sense? *Why* do you agree? Use evidence to support your positions. Please *cite* the author appropriately when quoting. Responses should be a maximum of 350 words and a minimum of 250 words.

****Please note that while there are two "assignments" for each week (one post and one response), only one will receive the grade (out of 20 points.)** The "response" category on the syllabus and Canvas Assignments page is merely a reminder of the due date. You will actually create your responses on the Discussion thread for that week so that you are able to see and engage your classmates' posts.

Final Paper Outline: (10 points)

Students will present a brief outline of their final paper, providing a thesis, evidence, and bibliography. The outline may be a formal sentence outline, a bulleted list, or even a lovely paragraph. The outline assignment is a way for me to see students are engaging their final paper critically and analytically.

Final Paper: (50 points)

The final paper for the course will be 5-7 pages reflecting on the course material. I will ask you a question that will incorporate all the work we have been doing throughout the term. You will cite course materials where appropriate. Outside materials are not required, but encouraged.

Papers will be submitted via Canvas.

Grading is fairly straightforward, but if you are ever worried, please feel free to email me (tcrist@iliff.edu).

Schedule:

Week 1 [9-10]: Intros – short videos/audios/writings. Tell me what you want from this course.

READING: MNF Jennifer Howe Peace “No God Greater” (CANVAS)

Week 2 [9-17]: Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue as Practice

READING:

(1) MNF Zeenat Rahman “The Hijabi Monologues” (CANVAS)

(2) Dialogue Decalogue – Leonard Swidler Chapters 4, 6, and 7 (CANVAS)

(3) IFYC Resource: Speedfaithing (PDF on CANVAS); Speedfaithing video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omUiO-KKirl>

(4) America’s Interfaith Infrastructure: A Summary Report

<http://pluralism.org/interfaith/report/>

Week 3 [9-24]: Interfaith Dialogue from a Christian POV

READING:

(1) Nostra Aetate

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

(2) MNF Paul F. Knitter “Theological Goosebumps: A Turning Point in My Interfaith Journey” (CANVAS)

(3) Catherine Cornille *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (NY: Crossroads, 2008) (pp. 1-94)

OR

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*, (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014) (pp. 1-75)

Week 4 [10-1]: Looking back at Dialogue Practices from a Christian Origin Story: Analogy?

READING:

(1) MNF Judith Berling “How a Daoist Fire-walking Ceremony Made Me an Episcopalian” (CANVAS)

(2) Catherine Cornille *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (NY: Crossroads, 2008) (pp. 95-216)

OR

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*, (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014) (pp. 76-157)

Week 5 [10-8]: The Challenge of “Religion” in Interfaith

READING:

(1) MNF Richard Twiss “All My Relations” (CANVAS)

(2) David Chidester *Savage Systems* (Ch. 1) “Frontiers of Comparison” (CANVAS)

Week 6 [10-15]: The World Religions Paradigm

READING:

- (1) MNF Burton L. Visotzky "It Begins with a Text" (CANVAS)
- (2) Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, Chapters 1 and 9 (CANVAS)

Week 7 [10-22]: The SBNR Challenge to Religion Paradigms

READING:

- (1) MNF Kecia Ali "Belief-O-Matic and Me" (CANVAS)
- (2) Elizabeth Drescher *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* "Good Samaritan Nones" (Ch. 7) (CANVAS)
- (3) 2015 Pew Report – Skim report (available on CANVAS)

Week 8 [10-29]: Decolonization

READING:

- (1) MNF Wendy Peterson "The Prayer That God Could Not Answer" (CANVAS)
- (2) Tuhiwai-Smith, Ch. 3 "Colonizing Knowledges" (CANVAS)
- (3) bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* "Decolonization" (CANVAS)

Week 9 [11-5]: Race and Interfaith

READING:

- (1) MNF Mary C. Boys "It's Complicated" (CANVAS)
- (2) Frances B. Henderson and Bertin M. Louis Jr. "Black Rural Lives Matters: Ethnographic Research About an Anti-Racist Interfaith Organization in the U.S. South" (CANVAS)
- (3) Susan Ingram "Interfaith Conversation Tackles Race" (CANVAS)
- (4) "Hundreds of Jews, Christians and Muslims unite against racism, anti-Semitism" in New York Amsterdam News (CANVAS)

Week 10 [11-12]: On Decolonizing Interfaith Dialogue

READING:

- (1) MNF Anantanand Rambachan "The Ambiguities of Liberation and Oppression: Assuming Responsibility for One's Tradition" (CANVAS)

Final Papers Due: **Wednesday, November 21 by 5:00pm**