



Hartford International
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE



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DI 550 Introduction to Interreligious Studies Preliminary Syllabus: Fall 2024

**Synchronous Online Mode
Mondays, 7:00 – 9:00 pm (Eastern)
plus asynchronous activities**

Instructor:

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Office Hours:

Dr Mosher teaches from her office in northeast Florida. She may be “visited” there via Zoom or phone and is available at some point in almost every day of the semester. Please use email to request a conversation. Typically, such requests are fulfilled within 24 hours.

Course Description:

DI 550 is the gateway to the MA in Interreligious Studies program and a requirement of the MA in International Peacebuilding curriculum. Conducted in synchronous online mode, it integrates theory and practice in exploring how diverse individuals and groups understand *religion* and how those with differing understandings relate to one another. As students learn about this field’s history, its core principles, and its signature methodologies, they consider such themes as the meaning of *religion*, the discourse of *othering*, theologies of religious difference, comparative theology, interreligious hermeneutics, urban social history methodologies, interreligious dialogue, and faith-based collaboration—all the while improving their religious and interreligious literacy and developing skills necessary for interreligious engagement.

Outcomes:

By completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between interreligious studies and other approaches to the academic study of religion.
2. Demonstrate command of the core principles and methodologies of the field.
3. Demonstrate development or improvement of religious and interreligious literacy.
4. Present orally and in writing personal plan for future growth in this field. .

Required Textbooks [students are expected to purchase these four items]

Hedges, Paul. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies* (University of California Press, 2021). ISBN 9780520298910

Mosher, Lucinda. *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies* (Georgetown University Press, 2022). ISBN 9781647121631

Pierce, Elinor. *Pluralism in Practice: Case Studies of Leadership in Religiously Diverse America* (Orbis, 2023). ISBN 978-1-62698-548-3

Fourth textbook to be determined.

NOTE: Additional course materials are provided on this course's Canvas website.

Course format and structure:

What "synchronous online" means: The standard for a semester-long, three-credit course is participation in a weekly two-hour Zoom meeting, complemented by a third hour of asynchronous online (or some other sort of experiential) learning each week. As an enrollee in this course, you are to be in a secure location that has adequate microphone, camera, and sound capabilities each Monday at 7:00 PM (Eastern). You can expect to spend approximately six hours in preparation (through reading and writing) for each Zoom session. You will use Canvas to access the syllabus, reading materials, instructions, assignment descriptions and portals, grades, and discussions. The Canvas website provides the most accurate and up-to-date instructions for all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494. If you have questions about course content, contact your professor.

What to expect: This course is a vehicle for learning what "interreligious studies" is. However, because of what interreligious studies is, we shall always be doing several things at once:

- Gaining insight into interreligious studies as an academic field
- Developing (or improving) our multireligious literacy
- Learning experientially

How we will proceed: The course is divided into modules, each of which examines a particular aspect of interreligious studies and addresses religious literacy in some way. Traditional lectures

and discussions are supplemented by use of experiential methodologies—such as the “case method,” site-visiting, and dialogue with a study-partner. Generally, Monday night Zoom sessions will provide an opportunity to process what you have been studying for the previous six days. Here follows the tentative list of themes:

- Definitions and Procedures
- Identity, Othering, Objects, Intersectionality
- Comparative/Contrastive and Historical Methodologies
- Lived Religion
- Material Religion
- Religion, Violence, and the Margins
- Dialogue: Theory and Practice
- Ritual and Meaning-Making
- Experiential Learning
- Arts and Aesthetics in Interreligious Studies
- Interreligious Leadership, Friendship, Collaboration
- Critiquing, Synthesizing, Looking Ahead

Assignment/Assessment Categories

Reading: Weekly assignments in the required texts.

Asynchronous lecture-watching: AV-lectures to be watched independently in preparation for a Monday Zoom class are made available online, often via VoiceThread—a tool that invites responding to the video. Points are earned for watching and commenting. *15% of final grade*

Discussion prep: By 6:00 AM (Eastern) each Monday, students are to post in a designated Canvas discussion forum, responding to a prompt concerning the material encountered in that module. They are also to comment on two classmates’ posts in a brief yet substantive manner. This exercise will inform our actual discussions during our Monday night Zoom sessions. *30% of final grade*

Experiential Learning: Interactive assignments, such as case studies, conversations with an assigned partner, or field research (usually, site-visiting and reporting). *20% of final grade*

Brief summary reflections: An opportunity to consolidate and interrelate learnings from several modules, these short pieces (2–3 pages; 500–750 words) are due after the third and seventh class meetings. Specific instructions are provided on Canvas. *20% of final grade*

Formal summary essay: For the final class session, students are to submit a well-crafted essay entitled “Interreligious Studies: Critiquing, Synthesizing, Looking Ahead.” *10% of final grade*

Miscellaneous graded activities: Attendance/Zoom discussion participation, quizzes, and other activities that fall outside the above categories. *5% of the final grade*

HIU 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 and ability to articulate it well; makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds course expectations.
- 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. Barely meets expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections—or is egregiously late in submitting homework. Barely expectations of the course. {minimal connection}
- F (below 70) Is unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

MAIRS Program Outcomes Met by This Course

1. Articulate your own worldview or religious belief system while empathically and respectfully engaging people whose worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differ from your own.
2. Demonstrate fluency in the foundational concepts, insights and methods of Interreligious Studies and the application of those methods within contemporary multifaith settings.
3. At the level needed for participation in substantive dialogue, demonstrate knowledge of the roles of the scriptures and sacred texts of several religions and various historical and contemporary methods of interpretation.
4. At the level needed for participating in substantive study, demonstrate knowledge of the theological and legal traditions within several religions—with awareness of their internal diversity.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the current state of religious pluralism of the United States—thus how religion may play a part in intersectional identities, alongside other dimensions such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity.
6. Express your ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication—writing a sustained, coherent arguments or explanations in clear academic English, with well-formed sentences and paragraphs; or creating or delivering clear, engaging, and succinct presentations that may utilize visual, written, and spoken elements.
7. Conduct research on the Masters' level in the field of Interreligious Studies.

Recommended Reading

Bidwell, Duane R. *When One Religion Isn't Enough: The Lives of Spiritually Fluid People*. Beacon Press, 2018.

Goshen-Gottstein, Alon, ed. *Friendship across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship* (Wipf & Stock, 2018).

_____. *Sharing Wisdom: Benefits and Boundaries of Interreligious Learning*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017.

_____. *The Religious Other: Hostility, Hospitality, and the Hope of Human Flourishing*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014.

Gustafson, Hans, ed., *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field*. Baylor University Press, 2020.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology*. Wm B. Eerdmans, 2020.

Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A., *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014.

Leirvik, Oddbjørn. *Interreligious Studies: A Relationship Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Morgan, David. *The Thing About Religion: An Introduction to the Material Study of Religions*. University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

Morreall, John and Tamara Sonn. *The Religion Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Religious Studies*. Wiley Blackwell,

Mosher, Lucinda. *Belonging*. New York: Seabury Books, 2005.

_____. *Praying: Rituals of Faith*. Seabury Books, 2006. ISBN: 1596270160.

Patel, Eboo, et al. *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*. Beacon Press, 2018.

Segal, Robert A. and Nickolas P. Roubekas, eds. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, second edition. Wiley Blackwell, 2021.

Thatamanil, John J. *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity*. Fordham University Press, 2020.

Voss Roberts, Michelle, ed. *Comparing Faithfully: Insights for Systematic Theological Reflection*. Fordham, 2016.

HIU Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning

In our courses, we expect that instructors and students alike will strive to:

- Show mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engage in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Pay attention to the whole personhood of another—history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank

- Demonstrate how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embody mutuality—learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

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.

Inclusive Language

Hartford International University for Religion and Peace 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 understandings 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 HIU 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.

Communication and Technology

Students are expected to use their Hartford International email for communication regarding the course. Students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access other course materials. Students may also be asked to create a free account with VoiceThread. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information "for the good of the order."

About CANVAS:

The DI-550 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 call.

- On Canvas, course material is organized into “modules”. Click on “Modules” to see the course laid out in its entirety.

Official Handbooks

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook and university policies at hartfordinternational.edu. Academic policies are listed on the HIU website.

Attendance

Active attendance in Zoom class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. In the case of an absence, the professor may ask the student for a brief essay (250–750 words) on the required reading for that session. Active use of the Canvas site is also required. Failure to log on for seven consecutive days is tantamount to absence from class and may incur a penalty.

Email Policy

The instructor will use the official HIU student email addresses for all course communications. Please check your *hartfordinternational.edu* email account regularly.