



## **TH 513: The Faiths as Formal Realities: A Multireligious Investigation of Spiritual Disciplines Syllabus: Spring 2024**

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

### **Instructors:**

Lucinda Mosher, Th.D., Faculty Associate in Interreligious Studies, Director of the MA in Interreligious Studies program, Senior Scholar for Continuing and Professional Education, and Senior Editor of the Journal of Interreligious Studies

[lmosher@hartfordinternational.edu](mailto:lmosher@hartfordinternational.edu) | Cell: (646) 335-2951

Benjamin Watts, DMin., Executive Minister of the Howard Thurman Center for Justice and Transformational Ministry, Director of the Black Ministries Program, and Faculty Associate in Religion and Community Life

[bwatts@hartfordinternational.edu](mailto:bwatts@hartfordinternational.edu) | Office: (860) 509-9514

Both instructors are HIU alumni: Dr Mosher: MA 1992; Dr Watts: D.Min 1995

### **Office Hours:**

Dr Mosher's office is in northeast Florida. She may be "visited" via Zoom or phone. Dr Watts's office is on campus: 76 Sherman Street. He may be visited in person or by phone. Office hours will be formalized and posted by mid-January.

### **Course Description:**

One of three core courses in the MA in Interreligious Studies curriculum, *The Faiths as Formal Realities* explores how faith communities move from the text to practices with the use of structured beliefs and traditions. This term, the specific focus of this exploration will be spiritual disciplines: practices that involve the body and have the capacity to transform the heart, mind, and soul. It will employ a framework that, while provided by experiential Christianity, enables consideration of Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Confucian transformative practices as well.

This synchronous online course is taught collaboratively by two members of the HIU faculty. They differ in their faith commitments, religious practices, and particularity of their knowledge of other religions. Yet both are committed to promoting deep understanding of how diverse individuals and groups understand *religion* and how those with differing understandings relate to one another. Students in this course can expect to improve their religious and interreligious literacy while developing skills necessary for interreligious engagement.

### **Outcomes:**

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. Appreciate the complexity and nuance of diverse theological positions between and within several religious traditions.
2. Articulate their own theological heritage.
3. Understand the basic historical foundations, including theological and legal traditions, of several religions—to the extent that it helps them understand the notion of “spiritual disciplines.”
4. Define “spiritual disciplines” and describe several of their inward, outward, and corporate modes as provided by at least two religions.

### **Required Textbooks**

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth: Special Anniversary Edition* (HarperOne, 2018). ISBN 9780062803887.

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

NOTE: Additional course materials are provided on this course’s Canvas website or are available through the Digital Theological Library.

### **Recommended Reading**

Barush, Kathryn R. *Imaging Pilgrimage: Art as Embodied Experience*. Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021. ISBN 9798765103289

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

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

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

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

Marshall, David and Lucinda Mosher, eds. *Prayer: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*. Georgetown University Press, 2013.

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

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

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

**Course format and structure:**

**What “synchronous online” means:** The requirement 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. On Monday at 7:00 PM (Eastern), students are to be in a secure location that has adequate microphone, camera, and sound capabilities. Students can expect to spend approximately six hours in preparation (through reading and writing) for each Zoom meeting. Students are to use Canvas to access to syllabi, reading materials, instructions, assignments, grades, and some 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 either of your professors.

**What to expect:** Because this is a core course in the MA in Interreligious Studies curriculum, it is a vehicle for doing several things at once: gaining insight into interreligious studies as an academic field; learning about the faiths as formal realities specifically; developing (or improving) our multireligious fluency.

**How we will proceed:** The course has twelve content modules. Each module examines a particular aspect of spiritual discipline and addresses multireligious fluency in some way. Monday night Zoom sessions will provide an opportunity to process what you have been studying for the previous six days. Here the themes:

- Preliminary Matters: Getting started
- Module 1: The Disciplines of Study & Writing
- Module 2: The Discipline of Prayer
- Module 3: The Discipline of Meditation
- Module 4: The Discipline of Fasting
- Module 5: The Discipline of Pilgrimage

Module 6:	The Discipline of Solitude
Module 7:	The Discipline of Service
Module 8:	The Discipline of Worship
Module 9:	The Discipline of Guidance
Module 10:	The Arts as Spiritual Disciplines
Module 11:	The Discipline of Celebration
Module 12:	Recapitulation: The Discipline of Review

### **Assignment Categories**

**Reading:** Weekly assignments in the required texts, plus related items available on Canvas.

**Reflection:** Prior to most Monday night class meetings, students are to post (in a Canvas discussion forum) three observations about the material assigned for that module. Students are to comment (briefly yet substantively) on the posts of two classmates.

**Journaling:** Students are to keep a record of meaningful moments as they work with this course's materials. Excerpts are to be shared with the instructors at intervals during the term.

**Asynchronous lecture-watching:** Most modules include prerecorded lectures that are to be watched independently. These are provided on Canvas via VoiceThread—a tool that invites (and awards points for) a response to the video.

**Short Essays:** These assignments encourage synthesis of learnings from three or more modules. The first is a composition in “popular press” style (500–750 words) drawing together ideas from the first four modules of the course. The second, which is to be written in academic journal style, yet still brief (500–750 words), draws together ideas from the fifth through ninth modules.

**Culminating Project:** Create something (an essay, a visual artwork, a PowerPoint lesson, a musical composition, a poem, a puppet show, a liturgy, an inspirational talk, a video, something else) that summarizes and expresses the individual's learning about spiritual disciplines.

**Miscellany:** Graded activities that fall outside the categories described above.

### **Assessment**

Reflection: 40% of final grade

Journaling: 10%

Lecture-watching: 20% of final grade

Short essays: 15% of final grade

Culminating assignment: 10% of final grade

Miscellany: 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, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds 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 or religious practices and 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.

### **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.

### **Official Handbooks**

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

### **Communication and Technology**

Students will be expected to use their Hartford International 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. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information “for the good of the order.”

### **About CANVAS:**

The TH 513 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 email or text-message one of your instructors right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom conversation.
- On Canvas, course material is organized into “modules”. Click on “Modules” to see the course laid out in its entirety. Each module: contains preparatory materials (detailed instructions for reading assignments; audio-visual lectures by your professor; discussion forums, and so on), and the agenda for the next Zoom session.

### **Attendance**

Active attendance (that is, “camera on”) in Zoom class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session, please inform your professors in advance. They may give you an alternate assignment. 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.