TH 612 Theology of Religious Manyness
A Hartford Seminary Online Course
Fall 2015

Instructor:
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Office Hours: by appointment (in Hartford or by phone or Skype)

Course Meeting Times:
This is an asynchronous online course. It has no face-to-face component. A dedicated course website will be available on Day One of Fall Term 2015. Students are expected to log in at least once during every week of the term.

Email Policy
If you have matriculated in a Hartford Seminary program, your instructor will use your official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check that account regularly.

Course Description:
The question of the place of one particular religion among other religions has been debated, for millennia; likewise, the related question of the status (theologically) of adherents of other religions according to a particular worldview. A range of answers have been advocated, extensively (but not only) by Christian theologians and religious studies scholars. Premised on the conviction that “theology of religious manyness” is a better formulation than “theology of religions” or “theology of religious pluralism,” making use of the insights of the emerging discipline of comparative theology, and examining the theoretical and methodological issues at play, this course will explore a range of theological responses to the fact of religious manyness from the vantage-points of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—as well as Christianity.

Given that this is an asynchronous online course, students shall work their way through a series of online “learning objects”, doing so at whatever time of day they wish, and moving from one object to the next at their own pace. Given that this is a three-credit, graduate-level course, these tasks should require a total of 45 hours—although some people may wish to spend more time with them.

Reading, writing, and research-project expectations are over and above expectations regarding time committed to “online learning objects”—just as would be the case that students in a traditional course would be expected to complete reading, writing, and research-project assignments outside classroom time. Students should expect to spend some 90 hours on reading and essay-writing for this course.
Goals:
Completion of this course will enable the student to:

1) Account for the vocabulary of the academic study of religion and the relationship of one religion to another.

2) Define the task of the theologian of religious manyness.

3) Explain the relation of theologies of religious manyness to the emerging fields of “comparative theology” and “theology without walls”.

4) Differentiate a range of theological responses to the fact of religious manyness from Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist vantage-points.

5) Formulate a personal theology of religious manyness that demonstrates knowledge of and critical engagement with the major options presented in the literature engaged in this course.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following Hartford Seminary Master of Arts Degree Program Learning Outcomes:

#1. To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion.

#2. To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views.

#4. To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

Course Structure:
The course will comprise seven modules: course introduction; five religion-modules; course conclusion—each with reading assignments and online activities, which may include watching or listening to a lecture, answering a question posed by the instructor, commenting on another student’s work, or even taking an ungraded quiz to check one’s understanding of course material. The instructor reserves the right to revise the course outline if the need emerges during the term.

Attendance Policy
Participation in all online components is expected; failure to do so is considered an “absence” and (if habitual) will affect one’s final grade.

Assessment Expectations
Students are expected to complete every reading assignment and to participate related online activities in the time specified for a given unit. In an online course, the “discussion board” on the course website becomes the locus for weekly discussion of readings. These rubrics are meant to clarify how such “discussion” will be assessed. Students will receive a score for each online “module”. Each post will be evaluated for quality of contribution, using Rubric A. Each student’s discussion-board activity during a given module will be evaluated for quality, impact, and frequency of participation, using Rubric B. The result will be translated to a percentage and a letter grade for each module—and subsequently, for the course.
Rubric A: Assessment of quality of contribution to class conversation via discussion-board posts initiating a thread or responding to an instructor’s prompt:

9-10 points: The post comprises 150–300 words; it relates very well to topic; it demonstrates sophisticated and nuanced engagement with assigned readings and advanced use of course vocabulary; it features well structured, clear writing informed by excellent, creative, analytical reflection; it includes several new ideas or questions; it is well-edited; properly formatted; it is submitted on time; it encourages further engagement.

8-8.75 points: The post comprises 150–300 words; demonstrates proficient engagement with assigned readings and use course vocabulary it features well structured, clear writing informed by excellent, creative, analytical reflection; includes new some ideas or questions; is well-edited; is submitted on time; encourages further engagement—but does not relate well to the topic at hand (or, is LATE). –OR– The post relates well to the topic at hand, but has a few deficiencies in structure, clarity, creativity, analysis, or editing.

7-7.75 points: The post comprises at least 150 words, but exhibits many deficiencies in structure, clarity, creativity, analysis, or editing; however, it is indeed related to the topic. ); may be overly reliant on opinion over analysis; implies that readings have not been carefully completed. –OR– The post comprises at least 150 words and exhibits only a few deficiencies in structure, clarity, creativity, analysis, or editing—but, it is not related to the topic at hand; overly reliant on opinion over analysis; implies that readings have not been carefully completed.

6 – 6.75 points: While it may expresses new ideas or questions, the post exhibits some combination of the following deficiencies: it is less than 150 words; it relates only loosely to the topic at hand; with regard to structure, clarity, creativity, analysis, or editing, it has serious problems; content of comment indicates lack of completion or understanding of reading assignment.

5 points or fewer: The post is not related to the topic; or, it relates only loosely to the topic at hand and with regard to length, structure, clarity, creativity, analysis, or editing, it has many serious problems and develops no new ideas or questions; content of comment indicates lack of completion or understanding of reading assignment.

Rubric B: Assessment of quality of quality, impact, and frequency of participation in class conversation during a given module, via discussion-board posts initiating a thread or responding to an instructor’s prompt. Highest score possible = 12 points per module.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of participation</th>
<th>0 points</th>
<th>1 point</th>
<th>2 points</th>
<th>3 points</th>
<th>4 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient: Rarely participates and is disengaged</td>
<td>Beginning: Little self-initiated participation in discussions; instructor needs to solicit participation.</td>
<td>Developing: Initiates some level of participation but occasionally disengaged.</td>
<td>Proficient: Initiates participation in discussions.</td>
<td>Advanced: Initiates and participates actively, helping the dynamism of the conversation.</td>
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| Impact on seminar dynamics | Insufficient: Contributions (or lack thereof) harmed seminar dynamics. | Beginning: Seminar and group dynamics not significantly informed by presence of student | Developing: Contributions sometimes advanced seminar dynamics, but not always. | Proficient: Contributions regularly advance seminar dynamics in positive ways. | Advanced: Contributions have consistently positive impact on seminar dynamics. |

| Frequency during Mod | Insufficient: No posts or responses | Beginning: Only one original post or response to someone else’s post | Developing: At least two posts or responses | Proficient: At least two original posts and two responses | Advanced: Four or more original posts; at least three responses |
In addition to online participation, students are to submit five brief summary/reflection essays (one for each religion) of no more than 1000 words at the end of each of the first six modules.

As the course nears its conclusion, students are to write a summary essay of ten to twenty pages in which they demonstrate (at a level commensurate with the degree program in which they are matriculated) their attainment of course goals—most especially their ability to articulate their own theology of religious manyness, given their particular religious location.

All papers are to accord with the standards for academic papers posted on the Hartford Seminary website. All papers and projects must accord with Hartford Seminary’s stated policy regarding the citing of sources. **Plagiarism is to be avoided!** For guidelines, see: [http://www.hartsem.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guidelines-for-Writing-A-Research-Paper.pdf](http://www.hartsem.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guidelines-for-Writing-A-Research-Paper.pdf).

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online participation (Module 1)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Online participation (Mods 2 – 6)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short essays (Mods 2 – 6)</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online participation in Module 7 + Final essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Required Reading**

Much of the required reading for this course will take the form of essays, journal articles, and book chapters from a range of sources and provided to course enrollees on the course’s dedicated website (either as PDFs for download or links to online items). In conversation with these items, the following books should be read as directed in the course schedule:


**NOTE**: If you have never taken a survey course in the world’s religions, then you are also required to read (and have at hand for reference) a good comprehensive textbook, such as Mary Pat Fisher’s *Living Religions* (Prentice-Hall; any edition from the 4th onward is adequate). If you plan to use a textbook other than Fisher’s, please clear your choice with your professor.

**NOTE**: The course’s extended bibliography follows the course schedule below.
Course Outline

Module I: Course Introduction, September 8 - 20

Topic: The vocabulary of the academic study of religion

a. Religion as worldview
b. “Theology of religions” versus “theology of religious pluralism” versus “theology of religious manyness”
c. Comparative religion versus comparative theology
   i. What is comparative theology?
   ii. What are its sources, norms, methods, and goals?
   iii. What is the relationship between comparative theology and the work of constructive theology?
   iv. What is the comparative theologian’s relationship to the traditions under study?
   v. Can theologians within a specific religion do without comparative theology?
   vi. What is the relationship between comparative theology and theology of religious pluralism?
   vii. What are the risks and dangers of comparative theology? The benefits?

Topic: Typologies: the vocabulary and paradigms of relationships between religions

Reading:


Lucinda Mosher, Introduction to Toward Our Mutual Flourishing: The Episcopal Church, Interreligious Relations, and Theologies of Religious Manyness, 1-5.


Rita M. Gross, “…the Author’s Standpoint”; “…Four Models…Regarding How People Think about Belonging to a Religion”; and Chapter 4, in Religious Diversity—What’s the Problem?, 3-13; 21-32.


Martin, Jerry L. Theology Without Walls: Theology from the Ground Up: Opening Remarks. [See course website for this item]
Online Learning Objects: 7 hours, approximately

a. Introduction to the course; introduction to this module: 1 hour

b. Self-introductions. 1 hour

c. Diana Eck on Religious Views of Religious Pluralism: Part I
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR_tlcoNVF4. “Religious pluralism… is the
challenge of people of every tradition struggling to make sense of religious
difference… from the perspective of their religious faith, in the language of their religious
faith.”
Synopsis: “Today, as people encounter neighbors of other faiths, face to face, and as
communications enable people of every faith to know those of other faiths, what new
theological questions do we and others pose about our own faith? How is the ‘truth’ of
each tradition challenged in the face of other faiths and truth claims? Judaism,
Christianity, and Islam are increasingly referred to as the "Abrahamic" faiths, indicating a
common prophetic ancestor in the figure of Abraham. Abrahamic dialogue is on the rise.
What assessment do we have of these dialogues?” 1 hour and 8 minutes

d. Diana Eck on Religious Views of Religious Pluralism: Part II
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPpzrK5aVoY. An exploration of views of some of
today’s thinkers from religious traditions of the Indic world—Buddhist, Jain, Hindu,
Sikh, and Muslim communities—on religions, the diversity of religions, engagements
between religions, and dilemmas of religious truth. 1 hour and 19 minutes

e. Paul Knitter, Theology of Religions: A Zero Sum Game? Draws on thinking of Krister
Stendahl in responding to assertions by journalist Robert Wright.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur10Xjx0zqi. Main talk: 45 minutes; total: 1 hour
and 19 minutes

f. Discussion Board activities. 2 hours

Module II: Christian Theologies of Religious Manyness, September 21 – October 4

Topics:

a. Christianity: a brief introduction/review
b. Various Christian positions vis-à-vis religious manyness

Reading:

Daniel Strange, “Exclusivisms: ‘Indeed Their Rock is Not like Our Rock’” in Race &
Hedges, 36-62.

David Cheetham, “Inclusivisms: Honouring Faithfulness and Openness,” in Race & Hedges,
63-84.

Perry Schmidt-Leukel, “Pluralisms: How to Appreciate Religious Diversity Theologically,”
in Race & Hedges, 85-110.

Paul Hedges, “Particularities: Tradition-Specific Post-modern Perspectives,” in Race &
Hedges, 111-135.

Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “Feminisms: Syncretism, Symbiosis, Synergetic Dance,” in Race and
Hedges, 136-154.

Interfaith Relations and the Churches: A Policy Statement of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

World Council of Churches, *Who Do We Say That We Are? Christian Identity in a Multireligious World.*

Fernandez, Eleazar S. “Does Christianity Have Monopoly on Salvation?” (online)


Online Learning Objects: 7 hours

a. Lucinda Mosher on Christian theologies of religious manyness. 30 minutes

b. Exploration of *On Common Ground: Christianity* (useful for those with little background in Christianity) – [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity);

   Jesus: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/jesus](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/jesus);

   The Church: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/church](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/church);

   Protestant Movement: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/protestant](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/christianity/introduction/protestant);


   30 minutes

c. *Orthodox Christianity: The Rumanian Solution* (from *The Long Search*, BBC 1977). An introduction to Orthodox Christian beliefs and practices, in the context of a political situation that no longer obtains. Still worthwhile to watch for its lessons on doctrine and liturgy. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qk54gys7H0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qk54gys7H0). 1 hour


e. *Religious Pluralism: Seeing Religions Again with Marcus Borg.* A presentation on the fact of religious pluralism; a way of seeing religions; similarities and differences between religions; being Christian in an age of pluralism. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHIv-c-Rpzw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHIv-c-Rpzw). 1 hour

f. Amos Yong presents an Evangelical and Trinitarian theology of religions from a Pentecostal perspective, critiquing a recent book by McDermott and Netland (which in fact had critiqued Yong’s approach). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4etJgZ3spM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4etJgZ3spM). 1 hour and 12 minutes

g. OPTIONAL: Gavin D’Costa, a Catholic, on his personal development in Theology of Religions, the theological methods upon which he drew, and his critique of the “Exclusivist, Inclusivist, Pluralism” typology. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa7HdJ7Fl78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa7HdJ7Fl78). 10 minutes

h. Discussion Board Activities. 2 hours

First 1000-word essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), 10/4/2015.
Module III: Jewish Theologies of Religious Manyness, October 5 – October 18

Topics:

a. Judaism: a brief introduction/review
b. Various Jewish positions vis-à-vis religious manyness
c. Christian responses

Reading:

Alan Brill, Preface (xii-xiii), Chapters 3 through 7, in Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding.


Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Judaism and Other Faiths (London: Macmillan, 1994), 157-59; 177.


Online Learning Objects: 7 hours

a. Introductory Lecture – Lucinda Mosher. 30 minutes


d. Deborah Weissman, Ph.D., Towards a Jewish Theology of Other Religions, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= oIqhRKOFro. “Can contemporary Jews develop a theology of other religions that is both faithful to the Jewish tradition and respectful towards the beliefs and practices of others? What resources exist that could inform such an approach?” 45 minutes

e. Rabbi Alan Brill, Ph.D., Recent Christian Theologies of Judaism: A Jewish Response. An exploration of the question of how the two religions think differently about theology. He seeks to steer the discussion beyond attempting to create sameness or difference and outlines the changes on both sides from perceiving differences between the faiths to perceiving commonality. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyioyVuLFZ0. 45 minutes

f. Dialogue on religious truth, with Judith Plaskow and Jeanine Hill-Fletcher. Two feminist theoreticians—one Jewish and one Christian—explore whether religious truth is really an
issue in their respective theologies; and, if so, how their own feminism informs it. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSf8ReRfVCU]. 1 hour

g. Discussion Board Activities. 2 hours

Second 1000-word essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), 10/18/2015

**Module IV: Islamic Theologies of Religious Manyness, October 19 – November 1**

Topics:
- a. Islam: a brief introduction/review
- b. Various Islamic positions vis-à-vis religious manyness

**Reading:**

Shah-Kazemi, Reza. *The Other in Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur’an and Interfaith Dialogue.*


*A Common Word Between Us and You.* [PDF].


Muhammad Legenhausen, “Islam and Religious Pluralism,” [PDF].


**Online Learning Objects: 7 hours**

- a. Introductory Lecture – Lucinda Mosher. 1 hour
  The Qur’an: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/introduction/quran](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/introduction/quran);
  One Ummah with Many Views: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/introduction/ummah](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/introduction/ummah);
  Unity and Diversity: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/issues](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/issues);
  The New Islamic Landscape: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/americ/infrastructure](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/americ/infrastructure);
  Call to Prayer: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience);
  Salat: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience/salat](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience/salat);
Friday Prayer: http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience/jumah;
Ramadan: http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/experience/ramadan;
Women: http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/issues/women;
Struggling against Stereotypes:
http://www.pluralism.org/religion/islam/issues/stereotypes. Total = 1 hour


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU3s5dLtNfoTBA. 45 minutes.

e. Tariq Ramadan on Beyond Tolerance: Islam and Pluralism.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Igxdcl2dDm0.
Main lecture = approx. 1 hour; total presentation = 1 hour and 50 minutes

f. Discussion Board activities. 2 hours

Third 1000-word essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), 10/25/2015

**Module V: Hindu Theologies of Religious Manyness, October 26 – November 15**

Topics:

a. Hinduism: a brief introduction/review
b. Various Hindu positions vis-à-vis religious manyness
c. Christian responses

Reading:


Vivekananda, Speeches at World’s Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893.


Kauai Aadheenam Monastery, “How Do Hindus View Other Religions?”

Jayaram V, “Hinduism and Religious Tolerance,”
http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_tolerance.asp


Online Learning Objects: 7 hours

a. Introductory Lecture: Lucinda Mosher. 30 minutes

b. Exploration of *On Common Ground: Hinduism* (useful for those with little prior background in Hinduism) – [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/hinduism](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/hinduism);
   Many Gods and One: [http://www.pluralism.org/religion/hinduism/introduction/gods](http://www.pluralism.org/religion/hinduism/introduction/gods);

   [http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/indianart/videoPuja.asp](http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/indianart/videoPuja.asp). 15 minutes

   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQwva2gi4O4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQwva2gi4O4). 1 hour

e. Vivekananda and Pluralism – a panel presentation at USC by Jeffery Long; Makarand R. Paranjape; Anantanand Rambachan; Sharada Sugirtharajah
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-c0LKcVvTo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-c0LKcVvTo). 2 hours

   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17FNZT0IZY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17FNZT0IZY0). 1 hour

g. Discussion Board Activities. 2 hours

Fourth 1000-word essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), 11/15/2015

**Module VI: Buddhist Theologies of Religious Manyness, November 16 – December 6**

Topics

a. Buddhism: a brief introduction/review

b. Various Buddhist positions vis-à-vis religious manyness

c. Christian responses

Reading:


Rita M. Gross, Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, in *Religious Diversity—What’s the Problem?*


Kenneth Tanaka, “Buddhist Pluralism: Can Buddhism Accept Other Religions as Equal Ways?” in Perry Schmidt-Leukel, ed., Buddhist Attitudes to Other Religions.


Online Learning Objects: 7 hours

a. Introductory Lecture: Lucinda Mosher. 1 hour
e. The Dalai Lama on “Is there only one true religion?” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQrUWmzshsI; “Conflicting Philosophies of World Religions” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yQud-ckpJM; “Different Religions Share a Central Message of Compassion” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F6g5g2ieps. Total = 40 minutes
f. Discussion Board activities. 2 hours

Fifth 1000-word essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), 12/6/2015.

Module VII: Course Conclusion, December 7 - 22

Topics:

a. Pulling it all together: revisiting comparative theology
b. Assessment: have the course’s goals been achieved?
c. Final observations
d. Final paper

Reading: whatever the student deems necessary for the final paper

Online Learning Objects: 3 hours

b. Discussion and final observations. 1 hour and 30 minutes
c. Course assessment tool. 30 minutes

NB: Last day to post to website and have it “count” as course participation = 12/22/2015
NB: Final Essay is due via email no later than 11:59 pm (ET), December 23, 2015.

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**For Further Reading:**


*How Do Hindus View Other Religions?*


Martin, Jerry. *Theology Without Walls: Theology from the Ground Up: Opening Remarks*. [PDF]


V, Jayaram. *Hinduism and Religious Tolerance*.  


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1. *Hartford Seminary Master of Arts Learning Outcomes and Key Characteristics*

   1. To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion by:
      a. Knowing Scriptures, authoritative texts, history, and traditions of one’s own religion
      b. Relating one’s tradition to public issues which intersect with faith
      c. Developing an appreciation of the continuum of expressions and interpretations of one’s own religious tradition
      d. Engaging one’s own religion analytically and contextually
      e. Appreciating 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 world views by:
      a. Knowing seminal texts of a religion other than one’s own
      b. Knowing the history of a religious community other than one’s own
      c. Knowing the societal contexts of a faith tradition other than one’s own
      d. Displaying empathy in critical examination of other religions
      e. Communicating sensitively in dealing with another faith
      f. Reflecting on elements in one’s own faith from the point of view of the other

   3. To demonstrate knowledge of the practices of one’s own religious tradition and the capacity to appreciate the practices of other faith traditions by:
      a. Knowing rites and rituals of one’s faith tradition
      b. Understanding the meanings and benefits of engaging in those practices
      c. Knowing the difference between individual practices and communal or institutional norms
      d. Engaging perspectives and practices different from one’s own
      e. Appreciating the spiritual integrity inherent in practices of other faith traditions

   4. To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity by:
      a. Knowing sacred literatures of one’s own and other religious traditions
      b. Appropriating critical theories to engage diversity in a given context (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion)
      c. Being critically reflexive about one’s own social location and how it shapes engagement with others
      d. Displaying capacity to respectfully engage the other
      e. Displaying knowledge and skills that are cognizant of understandings and differences

   5. To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which religion-communities exist by:
      a. Defining and specifying the relevant dimensions of social contexts in which religion-communities exist
      b. Demonstrating how particular social contexts shape a religion-community’s practices
      c. Articulating ways in which social context informs religion-community leadership
2 Based on a rubric devised by Dr. Dan Joslyn-Siemiaiatkoski, who in turn credits:
https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/examples/courselevel-bycollege/cfa/tools/participationrubric-cfa.pdf and