Dialogue in a World of Difference (DI-530)
Course Syllabus -- Fall 2016

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Students and faculty in a collegial setting will learn about the practice and models of interfaith dialogue; be introduced to critical substantive issues related to interfaith relations in today’s globalized context; and appreciatively encounter the diversity of Hartford Seminary’s student body through an ongoing experience of dialogical listening and conversation.

UNDERLYING COURSE ASSUMPTION: This is more than a course about dialogue. It is an invitation to engage in the practice of dialogue in a structured setting and thereby to develop the appreciative capacities that, among other things, will enable you to take maximum advantage of the diversity of students you will have in classes throughout your Hartford Seminary experience. Course outcomes focus on what is learned in the process.

OUTCOMES:
• A sense of collegiality and community across religious, cultural, gender lines
• An experientially grounded understanding of the principles of interfaith dialogue
• The ability to participate meaningfully and constructively in multi-cultural and interfaith conversations and learning
• The critical, intellectual capacity to address substantive issues from a dialogically appreciative perspective
• Familiarity with a spectrum of Hartford Seminary faculty

EXPECTATIONS:
• Complete assigned reading in preparation for the class session for which it is assigned
• Participate fully in class discussions and activities. Timely and regular attendance is especially important, as is familiarity with the assigned reading
• The nature and quality of classroom discussion is critical. Expectations include:
  o Sharing openly and respectfully
  o Empathetic listening (listening with an intention of hearing and understanding the others’ perspectives)
  o Creating and sustaining a safe space for open and beneficial conversations, including respecting the confidentiality of what is said in class.
• Attend and observe two worship services, first a worship at your regular place of worship in the U.S., and second, a worship in a faith tradition other than your own.
• Timely submission of one’s reflection and worship papers.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance at all class sessions is expected. If, for any reason, a student cannot attend a session, notice should be given to the instructors as early as possible, so that any appropriate make-up experiences can be assigned.
THE GRADE FOR THE COURSE WILL BE PASS OR FAIL

COURSE READING: Primary course readings will consist of papers, book chapters and excerpts assigned by guest faculty for their respective sessions. These will either be handed out at the previous class, be available online, or be made available to be copied in the library reserve section. Additionally, students should purchase *Not Without My Neighbor: Issues in Interfaith Relations* by S. Wesley Ariarajah (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999, ISBN 978-2825413081) and *Christianity: A Short Introduction* by Linda Woodhead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, ISBN 978-0-19-280322-1).

*Assigned reading should be read prior to and in preparation for the class session for which it is assigned*

**FIRST WEEKEND: September 16-18**

Session One: Friday, September 16, 9 a.m. to 4 pm

- **Why Dialogue? Why Me?**

Heidi Hadsell—Interfaith Dialogue in a Global Context; Why at Hartford Seminary?
Feryal Salem—Towards Mutual Understanding and Friendship: The Need for Interfaith Dialogue
Vanessa Avery—The Benefits and Risks of Interfaith Engagement

Readings: Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbor* (chapters 1 and 2)
Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (prologue and chapters 10 & 11)

- **Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Beliefs and Practices**

Faculty: Vanessa Avery, Heidi Hadsell, and Feryal Salem

Readings: David M. Elcott, *What's Jewish?* (American Jewish Committee booklet), pp. iii-38
Linda Woodhead, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*

- **Observational Skills for Dialogue**

Heidi Hadsell, convener

**Guest Faculty:** Scott Thumma—How to be a participant observer at another faith community’s worship (1 hour)

*The class will share experiences and apprehensions about visits to other places of worship. A schedule of visits will be organized during class.*
Readings: (Read these descriptive chapters as observational visits into the worship and congregational realities of other faiths rather than for informational content)

Community in a Black Pentecostal Church: An Anthropological Study, Melvin D. Williams, pp. 82-108
Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction, Samuel C. Heilman, pp. 25-62
Without Forgetting the Imam: Lebanese Shi’ism in an American Community, Linda S. Walbridge, pp. 97-127
Ariarajah, Not Without My Neighbor (chapters 3 and 7)

Mid-day: Travel to mosque for jumma’ prayers, return to Seminary for lunch and discussion

Rest of the afternoon: Small-group conversations to practice dialogue skills.

Saturday, September 17, 1 to 5 p.m.

- The Bible and Dialogue

Feryal Salem, convener

Guest Faculty: Uriah Kim and Shanell Smith

Readings: Genesis 16:1-16 and 21:1-21

After Break: Small-group conversations to practice dialogue skills.

Sunday, September 18, 1 to 5 p.m.

- The Qur’an and Dialogue

Heidi Hadsell, convener

Faculty: Feryal Salem Film to be screened: “KORAN BY HEART”

Readings: The Story of the Qur’an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life by Ingrid Mattson, second edition, (Wiley-Blackwell), Chapter 3, pp. 79-139

“Islamic Views of Jesus” by Mustansir Mir, in Gregory A. Baker, ed., Jesus in the World’s Faiths, pp. 115-124

SECOND WEEKEND: October 21-23

Friday, October 21, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m

***1st Paper Due: How do I make sense of a diversity of faith traditions, and how does this relate to my engagement of the religious other?

- Judaism and Interfaith Relations
Feryal Salem, convener

Faculty: Vanessa Avery

Readings:  Jonathan Magonet, *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (chapters 2 and 8)
Yehezkel Landau, “God as Multiple Covenanter: Toward a Jewish Theology of Abrahamic Partnerships,” from *CrossCurrents*, March 2015, pp. 57-78

After Break: Discussion of morning session, then small-group conversations to practice dialogue skills.

Saturday, October 22, 1 pm – 5 pm

- Islam and Interfaith Relations

Heidi Hadsell, convener

Faculty: Feryal Salem


After Break: Small-group conversations to practice dialogue skills.

Sunday, October 23, Morning:
Class visit to Asylum Hill Congregational Church.
Return to Seminary for lunch and discussion.

Sunday, October 23, 2:30 to 5 p.m.

- Christianity and Interfaith Relations

Vanessa Avery, convener

Guest Faculty: Najib Awad


After Break: Small-group conversations to practice dialogue skills.
THIRD WEEKEND: December 3-5

***2nd Paper Due: What practical skills for interfaith or intercommunal dialogue would I like to develop for use in my own work, and in what context(s) could I see myself applying them?

Friday, December 3, 9 a.m. to 12 pm
- Practical Skills for Dialogue

Heidi Hadsell, convener

Guest Faculty: Bob Evans and Phoebe Milliken


Friday, December 3, 2:30 p.m. to 4 pm
- Religion and Race in America

Heidi Hadsell, convener

Guest Faculty: Benjamin Watts

Readings: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a reading by or about Malcolm X to be determined

Friday, December 3, evening:
Class visit to Congregation Kol Haverim for Shabbat evening prayers, followed by refreshments and discussion.

Saturday, December 4, 1 p.m. to 5 pm
- Dialogue and Action at the Local Level

Vanessa Avery, convener

Panel of Hartford-Area Interfaith Leaders: Dr. Andrea Kandel, Rev. Damaris Whittaker, and Ms. Noora Brown

Readings: TBD

- Religion and Ethics

Feryal Salem, convener
Faculty: Heidi Hadsell

Reading: TBD

Sunday, December 5, 1 p.m. to 5 pm

- Religious Traditions in Dialogue with the Secular World

Faculty – Heidi Hadsell, Vanessa Avery, and Feryal Salem

Reading: TBD

- Sharing Worship Experiences and Learnings;
- Student Initiatives and World Cafe

Course Evaluation

***3rd Paper Due on December 12: Reflection on worship observations in your own tradition and in another tradition

***4th and Final Paper Due (December 23): What experiences and insights from this course do you see as helpful for your studies at Hartford Seminary, and why? What questions still challenge you, and how might you address them?