DI 610 Faith in the Neighborhood
An Introduction to America’s Religious Diversity
A Hartford Seminary Hybrid-Intensive Course

June 6–10, 2016

Instructor:
Lucinda Mosher, Th.D.
Faculty Associate in Interfaith Studies
lmosher@hartsem.edu | Cell: (646) 335-2951 | Skype: lucinda.mosher
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Meeting Times:
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Monday and Thursday
9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday (due to an evening field trip or special event)
9:00 – Noon on Friday

Email Policy:
The instructor will use the official HartSem student email addresses for all communications.
Please check your HartSem email account regularly.

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the scope of religious diversity in the United States, to provide you with foundational information about the belief and practices of a number of religions that are part of the fabric of 21st-century America, and to help you become better aware of Connecticut’s own multireligiousness. To these ends, we will explore the concepts, vocabulary, and practices of several religions sufficient for engagement in intelligent dialogue, and sufficient to enable you to be an informed visitor to their religious settings. This course aims as well to equip you with tools to think theologically about your own faith in the presence of persons of other faiths, and techniques for developing interfaith relationship leading to collaborative action. Methodologically, face-to-face instruction will balance formal presentations with experiential and dialogical learning, all of which will be supplemented with online learning facilitated by a Canvas website.
Goals:
Completion of this course will enable the student to:
1) Name at least ten religions which are part of 21st-century America’s religious landscape.
2) Articulate or identify foundational information about core beliefs and practices of at least five religions other than one’s own.
3) Describe at least three aspects of America’s “interfaith infrastructure”.
4) Articulate a personal theology of religious difference
5) List the three core aspects to making interfaith cooperation a “social norm”
6) Explain several methods of interfaith collaboration and leadership in multifaith contexts.

Be Prepared:
A. It is essential that all participants be present for all sessions. Please note: course time includes the evenings of June 7 & 8. (We’ll do our best to wrap up by 8:00 on both nights.)
B. Please complete the pre-seminar-week assignments as described under “Class Participation” below.
C. This course includes visits to sites such as Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh houses of worship. Because we will be entering sacred spaces of particular communities, please keep the following points in mind as you decide to wear during the seminar week:

1. Modest clothing is the norm throughout the week: not too casual; not too tight; not too revealing.
2. Women are welcome to wear slacks (but see #1, above).
3. Wearing shorts may be problematic. (This concern applies to men as well as women.)
4. Occasionally, long sleeves will be necessary.
5. We will be asked to remove our shoes before entering certain houses of worship. (Bring socks if you don’t like to be barefoot.)
6. With regard to head-coverings:
   - Our Muslim and Sikh hosts will expect women will be expected to cover their hair before entering the house of worship; bringing your own headscarf is best.
   - Our Sikh hosts will ask men to cover their hair with a bandanna before entering the gurdwara. The gurdawa will have a supply. However, you are welcome to bring your own. In your professor’s experience, a hat is not considered an adequate substitute.
   - Men may be asked to don a kippah at the synagogue. Your own kufi will suffice.
7. We’ll be walking HartSem’s labyrinth (weather permitting). Our labyrinth’s paths are of crushed stone, so close-toed shoes are better than sandals for this. (You might want to bring a pair of shoes for this purpose; otherwise, sandals are fine.)
Required Reading


Miscellaneous additional required or useful items will be made available as needed via the Canvas website. See also the full bibliography at the end of the syllabus.

Assessment
Grades will be based on the quality of class participation (face-to-face and online) and summary written work (as described below and clarified on the Canvas website for this course).

Class participation: pre-seminar; face-to-face; online [75%]
1) Before June 6th, read the book *Sacred Ground* by Eboo Patel [easily available from Amazon and elsewhere] and the journal essay “Inappropriate Behavior?” by Marianne Moyaert [available on our course website].

2) Well before June 6th, course registrants will receive instructions as to how to access the Canvas website supporting this course. Follow those instructions and log in.
   a. Once on the Canvas site, click on “Announcements” to find further instructions; click on “Discussions” and add your post to the “Getting Acquainted” forum.
   b. Following directions on the Canvas site, complete and post the brief assignments related to the Patel and Moyaert reading assignments.

3) “Face-to-face participation” begins with full attendance! Please note: absence from any session of this week-long seminar will affect one’s final grade.

4) Completion of assessments and short written exercises during the seminar week itself will count toward your “face-to-face participation” score.

5) “Face-to-face participation” also includes entry into class discussion—which will take place in plenary and in small break-out groups.

6) Online participation continues for a week or two after the seminar week, as you access and respond to items added to our Canvas website at the class’s request.
Summary written assignments—to be completed after the face-to-face week and submitted via the Canvas website [25%]

1) An essay on our site-visit experiences that includes an explanation of your own theology of religious difference.

Note: Your paper should be 10–15 pages in length, written in proper academic style. It should mention what you found surprising on these visits, what questions they answered for you, and what questions linger. It must explain your own religious location and should make references to (1) at least three essays of your choice from Learning to Lead; (2) three essays of your choice from Spiritual Guidance Across Religions; (3) Eck’s A New Religious America; (4) Kujawa-Holbrook’s God Beyond Borders; and (5) Moyaert’s “Inappropriate Behavior?”—plus some other course material of your choice.

2) An essay or project on a topic of your choice that has a clear relationship to the themes presented in this course, which Dr Mosher has approved, and which demonstrates your engagement with material assigned for this course. The finished project should be 10–20 pages (or the equivalent, if illustrations or a PowerPoint presentation are involved).

- The written component of your project must explain your own religious location and must make a clear connection to the experiences and materials presented in class and on site-visits. Particularly, it should include substantial reference to at least three items on the required reading list and to at least one item of your choosing. Online resources may be used, but must be given proper credit.

- Interview-driven research for papers and projects must make use of the policy developed by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Your professor can supply you with this document. All papers, including the written component of a PowerPoint presentation (or other approved project) 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! Beware: Hartford Seminary uses TurnItIn, an originality assessment tool!

- Here are project suggestions:
  a) **Mapping Project**: Explore a specific town or neighborhood, noting all religious institutions and other indications of the presence of specific religious traditions. Report this by pinpointing your findings on a map, with an accompanying explanatory essay which explains your research method, your findings, and your own reflections on your findings in conversation with the required reading for this course.
  b) **Research Essay**: Stipulate an hypothesis related to course themes, then explore it by bringing the material assigned for this course into conversation with information gathered elsewhere.
  c) **Book Review Essay**: Select one of the books marked with an asterisk in the bibliography below. Your paper will provide a synopsis of your chosen book, and then will bring it into conversation with the required reading for this course, with reference to site-visits and lectures.
  d) **Site Analysis**: Choose one of the places we visited as a group. Find a contrasting example from the same religion (e.g. two synagogues, or two Buddhist temples, or
two whatever.) Investigate both sites in depth: when they were founded and by whom; who uses them; what happens there on a regular basis; what happens there occasionally. Your paper will report, compare, and reflect upon your findings.

e) **Interview**: Choose a practitioner of a religion of interest to you (perhaps one of the people met on one of our site visits). Conduct a formal interview with that person (30-60 minutes). Get written permission to conduct, record, and transcribe the interview. Write a paper describing your research and contextualizing your findings.

f) **PowerPoint or Prezi lesson (or instructional video)**: Develop an oral presentation on a topic relevant to this course. Submit the script as well as the slide-illustrations or video. As with the previous options, you must make explicit connections to assigned course material, show evidence of further reading, and follow good academic style.

g) **Something else**: If you wish to do a project other than those mentioned above, your professor is happy to discuss this with you.

**Daily Schedule**

Accurate as of 1 May. Each day will begin and end at the times indicated. Site-visit confirmations are still pending, so changes are likely; but posted topics will be covered. Note that the schedule involves Tuesday and Wednesday evenings!

**Monday, June 6**

8:30 Coffee/Tea and conversation; religious and interfaith literacy self-assessment
9:00 Introduction to the Workshop (and to each other); intro to America’s multifaith landscape; religious self-descriptions; identifying the expertise in the room
9:45 *Toward Religious and Interfaith Literacy*: assessing our competency; establishing a base-line
10:15 Break
10:30 “Abrahamic” & “Dharmic”—pros and cons of the umbrella terms
11:00 *Dharmic Religions I* —Hinduism
12:00 Lunch
1:00 On Being “Perfect Strangers”—including a discussion of the Moyaert essay
1:30 *Idol, Image, Icon*
2:30 Break and transition to All Saints Church, 205 Scarborough St
3:00 Visit to All Saints Orthodox Church
4:15 Return to HartSem
4:30 Intro to the labyrinth; *Interfaith Taize*
5:00 Adjourn for the day
BEFORE TOMORROW MORNING: Review Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Islam primers (available on our course website).

**Tuesday, June 7**

8:30 Coffee/Tea and conversation
9:00 Centering – (Labyrinth)
9:15 *Dharmic Religions II* – Buddhism
10:15 Break
10:30  Dharmic Religions III – Jainism and Sikhism
12:00  Lunch
1:00  Interfaith Collaboration as a social norm: engagement with Eboo Patel’s ideas
2:30  Break
3:00  Interfaith Engagement: more models and rationales
4:00  Transition to B’hai Tikvoh-Sholom synagogue visit (180 Still Road, Bloomfield)
6:00  Arrive back at HartSem; Supper Break
7:00  Talking Through Walls: Screening + discussion of a documentary on interfaith collaboration

Wednesday, June 8:
8:30  Gather (NOTE: If you will be late or absent, call or text 646-335-2951)
9:00  Depart for CT Valley Hindu Temple – Sri Satyanarayan (Middletown)
9:45  Site Visit: CT Valley Hindu Temple – Sri Satyanarayan
11:30  Depart for CT Sikh Association – Gurdwara Nanak Darbar
Noon  Site Visit w/lunch: CT Sikh Association – Gurdwara Nanak Darbar (Southington)
1:30  Transition to Farmington Valley American Muslim Center (35 Harris Road, Avon, CT 06001)
3:15  Continue to Dae Yen Sa (Jogye Order) Buddhist Temple (15 Kinsey Road 06057, New Hartford)
4:00  Arrive at Buddhist Temple for introduction, meditation, Q&A, and simple supper
6:00  Reflection on our busy day: delights, surprises, challenges; explore temple grounds
7:00  Adjourn for the day (return to HartSem)

Thursday, June 9
8:30  Coffee/Tea and conversation
9:00  Centering; Debriefing; Labyrinth-walking
10:00  Break
10:30  Judaism and Islam: lingering questions
Noon  Lunch
1:00  Other Faiths in the Neighborhood
3:00  Break
3:30  Centering
5:00  Adjourn for the day. Prep for tomorrow: plan your 15-second elevator pitch and your 7-second sound bite; choose a blessing, prayer, or offering from your tradition.

Friday, June 10
8:30  Coffee/Tea and conversation
9:00  America’s Interfaith Infrastructure: resources for multifaith education, ritual, dialogue, counseling, advocacy
10:15  Break
10:30  Self-evaluation (religious and interfaith literacy re-assessment); seminar evaluation
11:00  Sharing our resources for multifaith education, ritual, dialogue, counseling, advocacy (our 15-second elevator speeches; our 7-second sound bites)
11:30  Tying loose ends; offering of blessings/prayers from our traditions (at the labyrinth, weather permitting)
Noon  Workshop adjourns
Recommended Reading


[NB: This comprehensive reference book is superb, but it is very expensive. If you decide to purchase a used copy, please note that the 4th edition is the oldest you should consider.]


See also: Common Knowledge: interfaith literacy podcasts. [http://www.ifyc.org/podcast](http://www.ifyc.org/podcast)

Well worth your time to listen to some of the items posted here.