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

June 6–10, 2016

Instructor:
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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:
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.

This course includes visits to sites such as Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh houses of worship. Because we will be entering particular communities’s sacred spaces, 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.
**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).

**Face-to-Face and online class participation [75%]**

1) “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.*

2) “Face-to-face participation” includes completion of assessments and short written exercises during the seminar week itself.

3) “Face-to-face participation” also includes entry into class discussion—which will take place in plenary and in small break-out groups. For those of you who are “allergic” to asking questions or making comments aloud, a “question basket” will be provided; also cards on which you may write your questions/comments. They’ll be addressed.

4) Online participation begins with accessing learning objects on the Canvas website. It includes posting to the online discussion board as directed.

**Summary written assignments [25%]**

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

2) An essay or project on a topic of your choice that has a clear relationship to the themes presented in this course (and that Dr Mosher has approved) and which demonstrates your engagement with material assigned for this course.

**Highly Recommended Additional Reading and Listening**


(This is a superb and comprehensive reference book, 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.)


*Common Knowledge:* interfaith literacy podcasts. [http://www.ifvc.org/podcast](http://www.ifvc.org/podcast)

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