



INTERFAITH LITERACY AND COOPERATION SAMPLE SYLLABUS

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY, FALL 2011

Tuesdays, 9:00 – 11:00 am; Monday, Sept. 19 & Oct. 3, 5:00 – 9:00 pm

INSTRUCTORS:

Dr. Eboo Patel, Founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core

Cassie Meyer, Director of Content, cassie@ifyc.org

Office hours will be on Tuesdays from 11:00 – 1:00 and by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

According to Harvard Professor Diana Eck, America is the most religiously diverse country in the world and the most religiously devout country in the West. As national and global religious strife and conflict continue to make the front page news, how can college students step up as interfaith leaders committed to shifting the discourse from conflict to cooperation? What skills and knowledge do these leaders need to make interfaith cooperation a reality on campus and beyond? Recent data suggest that one of the most important factors in increasing social cohesion between people of diverse religious and non-religious perspectives is an appreciative knowledge of different religious traditions, what might be called “interfaith literacy.”¹ Through this course, we will explore the concept of interfaith literacy as an essential characteristic of leadership in a religiously diverse world. We will take a service-learning approach and as such will require academic coursework and co-curricular engagement beyond the classroom. In addition to weekly class meetings, we will have two skills-based training sessions focused on planning an interfaith cooperation event for the rest of the Dominican community.

Through this course, we will:

1. Explore the importance of interfaith literacy and interfaith cooperation in a religiously diverse world.
2. Increase our own interfaith literacy by exploring theologies of interfaith cooperation in various traditions, shared values across different traditions, and historical examples of interfaith cooperation.
3. Explore the practical application of this knowledge through skills-based trainings on interfaith cooperation and by planning and leading interfaith cooperation projects on campus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Weekly class meetings
2. Two 4-hour skills-based trainings focused on planning an interfaith cooperation event
3. Completion of assigned readings, demonstrated by active participation in class discussions
4. Leadership on the Better Together campaign on Dominican’s campus, demonstrated through the organizing and leadership of a successful interfaith cooperation event for the broader campus
5. Final research paper on a topic that explores an aspect of religious literacy

COURSE OUTLINE:

1. August 30: Introduction to course

- a. Andrea Elliot, “A Bloody Crime in New Jersey Divides Egyptians,” *The New York Times* (January 21, 2005), available online here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/21/nyregion/21rift.html>.

2. September 6: Responding to Diversity – Conflict or Cooperation?

- a. Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith* (2007), pp. xi-xixi (introduction)
- b. Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993), pp. 22-49
- c. Diana Eck, *A New Religious America* (2001), pp. 26-79

1. Patel, Eboo and Cassie Meyer, “The Civic Imperative of Interfaith Cooperation for College and University Campuses.” *The Journal of College and Character*, 12, No. 4 (2011).

3. **September 13: The Power of Interfaith Cooperation**
 - a. Robert Putnam, *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity & Community in the 21st Century* (Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2007), pp. 137-174.
 - b. Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict & Civic Life* (2003), pp. 3-22
 - c. Eboo Patel & Cassie Meyer, "The Civic Relevance of Interfaith Cooperation for Higher Education," *The Journal of College & Character* (vol. 12, Issue 1, 2011), pp. 1-9.
 - d. Robert Putnam & David Campbell, *American Grace* (2010), pp. 516-550 (optional)
 - e. **Due in class: Two-page double-spaced statement of research topic**

4. **September 19 (Monday evening) 5:00-9:00 Skills training focused on planning interfaith cooperation event**

September 20: Interfaith Leadership

 - a. Eboo Patel & Cassie Meyer, "Engaging Religious Diversity on Campus: The Role of Interfaith Leadership," *The Journal of College & Character* (vol 10, issue 7, 2009), pp. 1-8.
 - b. Howard Gardner with Emma Laskin, *Leading Minds* (1996), pp. 3-68.

5. **September 27: Religious Literacy and Interfaith Literacy**
 - a. Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One* (2010), pp. 1-24.
 - b. Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy* (2008), pp. 27-72.
 - c. Christopher Hitchens, "Mommie Dearest," *Slate* (10/20/2003). Available online at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2090083/>

6. **October 3 (Monday evening) 5:00-9:00 Skills training focused on recruiting and logistics for interfaith cooperation event**

October 4: Exploring Shared Values across Traditions

 - a. Adam Davis, ed. *Hearing the Call Across Traditions* (2011), readings tbd.

7. **October 11: Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation**
 - a. Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (2002), readings tbd.
 - b. **Due in class: Three-page double-spaced statement of sources for research paper**

8. **October 18: Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation (continued)**
 - a. Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island" in "No Religion is an Island: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue," (Harold Kasomow & Byron Sherwin, eds., 1991), pp. 3-22.
 - b. Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (2002), pp. 24-66; 192-209.

9. **October 25: Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation (continued)**
 - a. Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (2002), pp. 3-27.
 - b. Farid Esack, *Qur'an Liberation & Pluralism* (1996), pp. 1-15

10. **November 1 – Interfaith Action Event, 7pm**
 - a. No class at regular time; prep for evening interfaith action event

11. **November 8: Engaging Non-religious Communities in Interfaith Cooperation**
 - a. Greg Epstein, *Good Without God* (2009), pp. 1-38; 151-169
 - b. Lyz Liddell, "Why We Should Get Involved in Interfaith," *Secular Student Alliance Blog* (available online at: <http://www.secularstudents.org/interfaith/whygetinvolved>).
 - c. Chris Stedman, "Interfaith Dialogue Must Include Atheists," *The Huffington Post* (available online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-stedman/dont-leave-atheists-out-o_b_756120.html)

12. **November 15: The Legacy of Interfaith Cooperation**
 - a. Zachary Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You* (2007), readings tbd.
 - b. **Due in class: Two hard copies of a draft version of your final paper**

13. **November 22: Research Paper Workshop**

14. **November 29: The Legacy of Interfaith Cooperation (continued)**
 - a. Peace Be Upon You, cont.
 - b. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The World House," in *A Testament of Hope* (1991), pp. 617-633.

RESEARCH PAPER ON INTERFAITH LITERACY

You will be required to design, develop, and complete a paper of at least 15 but no more than 20 pages, double-spaced, with a standard bibliography and footnotes or endnotes, formatted according to MLA guidelines. This paper will be on a topic you select, relevant to interfaith literacy, in consultation with the instructors. You might, for example, choose to focus on:

1. **Theologies of interfaith cooperation**, by considering how two thinkers within one tradition articulate the need to work with those of different traditions;
2. **Shared values across traditions**, exploring a value like mercy, compassion, justice, etc. and how two or more religious perspectives speak to that tradition;
3. **Appreciative knowledge of diverse traditions**, analyzing the contributions of a given tradition to recent literature or art;
4. **The history of interfaith cooperation**, researching the role of collaboration between different traditions in various historical moments like Cordoba, Spain, or the American Civil Rights Movement.

You will **analyze the topic, compare different authors' views on it, evaluate their ideas, and develop your own constructive position. You will do some library research and locate at least five different articles and/or books** on the topic. You should plan to read **at least 300 pages of new material** from these sources in preparation for your paper. The best source for articles is the *ATLA Religion Database*, which is available via the Dominican University Library web site. The paper will draw upon these materials as well as appropriate portions of the readings done in common in the class. (Not all of the readings done in common will speak to your topic, but no doubt some will, and you should use them in your paper.) The paper will be developed in the following sequence:

By Tuesday, September 13th you will submit electronically a two-page double-spaced statement (a) naming your topic, (b) describing why it interests you, (c) explaining **two** important things you already know about the topic, and (d) listing **two** important questions you still want to address about the topic.

By Tuesday, October 11th you will submit electronically a three-page double-spaced statement listing the key articles/books you have located, and stating some of the important things you have begun to learn from them in relation to your topic. You need not have read all of these materials by this time, but you should have made a strong beginning, you should have all of them in your possession, and you should know which ones are likely to be most helpful.

By Tuesday, November 15th you will submit **two hard copies** of an eight-page double-spaced draft of your paper. This draft should include the key things you have learned about your topic, drawing from the new materials you have located, as well as some of the materials read in common in the class. By this time you should have read virtually all of the new materials you have located.

On Tuesday, November 22nd you will have the opportunity to discuss the draft version of your paper with your peers. This workshop will provide the opportunity to clarify your topic and argument as well as receive feedback and new insights from other students in the course.

The completed paper is due at the final exam time for our class: Tuesday December 13th at 10:00 am.

You should consult with Cassie regularly throughout this process.