



**DI 550 Introduction to Interreligious Studies**  
**Hartford Seminary**  
**Fall 2021**  
**Syllabus**

**Instructor:**

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**Office Hours:**

Dr Mosher teaches from her office in northeast Florida. She may be “visited” via Zoom or phone on Mondays 8:00–10:00 AM or Wednesdays 8:00 – 9:30 PM (Eastern). Other times are available by appointment (email or text to decide on a time.).

**Course Description:**

The gateway to the MA in Interreligious Studies and a requirement of the MA in Peacebuilding curriculum, this intersectional, integrative course promotes deep understanding of worldviews different from one’s own. It integrates theory and practice in exploring how diverse individuals and groups understand “religion” and how those with differing understandings relate to one another. As students learn about this field’s history, its core principles, and its signature methodologies, they consider such themes as the meaning of “religion,” the discourse of “othering,” theologies of religious difference, comparative theology, interreligious hermeneutics, urban social history methodologies, interreligious dialogue, and faith-based collaboration—all the while improving their religious and interreligious literacy and developing skills necessary for interreligious engagement.

**Outcomes:**

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between interreligious studies and other approaches to the academic study of religion.
2. Demonstrate command of the core principles and methodologies of the field.
3. Demonstrate measurable improvement in religious literacy, plus some degree of interreligious literacy.
4. Present orally and in writing personal plan for future growth in this field. .

**Required Textbooks [students are expected to purchase these]**

Hedges, Paul. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies* (University of California Press, 2021). ISBN 9780520298910

Mosher, Lucinda. *Praying: Rituals of Faith*. Seabury Books, 2006. ISBN: 1596270160.

Omar, Irfan A. and Michael K. Duffey, eds. *Peacemaking and the Challenge of Violence in World Religions*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015. ISBN: 9781118953426

Peace, Jennifer Howe, et al. editors. *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*. Orbis, 2017. ISBN: 9781570759581.

NOTE: Additional course materials are provided on this course's Canvas website.

**Course format and structure:**

***How it takes place:*** This course is asynchronous online, which means you can work on it at any time. It includes an expectation of some experiential learning by each student in that student's own geographic location. The Canvas website will provide the most accurate and up-to-date instructions for all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494. If you have questions about course content, contact your professor.

***What to expect:*** Every module has the following core elements: a checklist; an introductory lecture (typically, fifteen minutes); an item for reflection (a scripture passage, a poem, a short piece of inspirational prose, something else); a substantial reading assignment (usually involving at least two sources) to be engaged for content and analysis; at least two interactives assignments that invite a response (an oral response, in some instances); at least one assignment that requires a substantial written response plus engagement with classmates.

***How we will proceed:*** Each module focuses on a particular aspect of interreligious studies. We will move from one to the next systematically. However, every module also addresses religious literacy in some way; and several shine a spotlight on peacebuilding in interreligious perspective. We will make considerable use of experiential methodologies, including the "case method." Reading assignments for most modules will include portions of each book on the "required" list. Here follows the list of module themes:

Module 1: Orientation: Definitions and Procedures

Module 2: Identity, Othering, Intersectionality

Module 3: Comparative/Contrastive and Historical Methodologies

Module 4: Religion, Violence, and Peacemaking

Module 5: Dialogue: Theory and Practice

Module 6: Lived Religion

Module 7: Privileging the Margins

Module 8: Experiential Learning

Module 9: Theological Ethics

Module 10: Religion and the Arts

Module 11: Interreligious Leadership and Collaboration

Module 12: Critiquing, Synthesizing, Looking Ahead

### **Assessment**

**Reflection and (primarily written) discussion:** *50% of final grade*

This category features end-of-module posting and commenting, plus certain other discussions.

**Lecture-watching:** *30% of final grade*

This category features interaction with lectures that are delivered through VoiceThread.

Responses to lectures delivered by other means may also be included here.

**Miscellaneous graded items:** *20% of the final grade*

Experiential learning activities, quizzes, simple research assignments, and other activities that fail to fall neatly into one of the above categories.

### **Hartford Seminary Grading Scale**

- A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.
- B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (below 70) Is unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

### **Recommended Reading**

Bidwell, Duane R. *When One Religion Isn't Enough: The Lives of Spiritually Fluid People*.

Beacon Press, 2018. ISBN 9780807091241

Gustafson, Hans, ed., *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field*. Baylor Univ. Press, 2020.

Ibrahim, Celene. *One Nation, Indivisible: Seeking Liberty and Justice from the Pulpit to the Streets*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019. ISBN 9781532645709

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology*. Wm B. Eerdmans, 2020.

- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A., *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014. ISBN: 1625644582
- Leirvik, Oddbjørn. *Interreligious Studies: A Relationship Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion*. Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Mosher, Lucinda. *Belonging*. New York: Seabury Books, 2005. ISBN: 1596270101.
- Mosher, Lucinda, et al., eds. *Deep Understanding for Divisive Times*. Newton Centre, MA: Interreligious Studies Press, 2020. ISBN 9780578785080.
- Patel, Eboo, et al. *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*. Beacon Press, 2018. 9780807019979.
- Thatamanil, John J. *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity*. Fordham University Press, 2020. ISBN 9780823288526

### **Hartford Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning**

In our courses, we expect that instructors and students alike will strive to be:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another—history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality—learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

### **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

### **Inclusive Language**

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

### **Accommodations**

The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and prevents discrimination on the basis of a disability. It is Hartford Seminary policy to provide reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis, which may mean working with outside social and governmental agencies to provide the necessary range of services for student success. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students with disabilities are eligible for disability support services when they are enrolled in courses and they have disclosed their disability and requested related accommodations during enrollment and/or before the start of each semester. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the [Request for Disability Accommodations](#) form.

## **Official Handbooks**

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

## **Communication and Technology**

Students will be expected to use their Hartford Seminary email for communication regarding the course. In addition, all students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access readings, videos, mini-lectures and other course materials. Students must also create a free account with VoiceThread and have access via the VoiceThread app, in Canvas, or in a separate browser window. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information “for the good of the order.”

## **About CANVAS:**

This course’s Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course.

- Be sure to explore the site thoroughly before you begin.
- If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the “Help” button (indicated by a question-mark). The “live chat” feature works very well; you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.
- If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom conversation. (Making an appointment ensures that your professor is ready to talk with you seated at her desk rather than standing in the supermarket!)
- On the Canvas website, course material is organized into “modules”. Within each module you will find a variety of items such as detailed instructions for reading assignments; downloadable files; audio-visual lectures by your professor (usually making use of VoiceThread technology); other audio-visual or audio-only items; case studies; or discussion-board prompts requiring responses.

## **Attendance**

Lack of engagement with the Canvas website for seven days in a row constitutes “absence” from the course and can lead to failure. Students who believe they have a legitimate reason for such disengagement must discuss this with the professor—preferably in advance. Failure to submit an assignment or perform a required activity on time is tantamount to absence from class. If you fall behind, skip ahead to the next module so that you can stay current with your classmates in discussions. Later on, you can return to an earlier module to fill in what you missed. Late submissions are permitted, but for fewer points.

## **Email Policy**

The instructor will use the official Hartford Seminary student email addresses for all course communications. Please check your *hartsem.edu* email account regularly.