

Dialogue in a World of Difference (MA-530)

Hartford Seminary Fall 2007

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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 appreciate perspective
- A familiarity with a broad 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:
 - Sharing openly and respectfully
 - Empathetic listening (listening with an intention of hearing and understanding the others' perspectives)
 - Creating and sustaining a safe space for open and beneficial conversations, including respecting the confidentiality of what is said in class and posted on the online discussion board!
- 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 and regular posting of the journaling assignments; and timely submission of your worship reflection paper.

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 available online or available in the library reserve section to be copied. Additionally, you should purchase *Not Without My Neighbor: Issues in Interfaith Relations* (S. Wesley Ariarajah, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999). We will read it in its entirety, with specific chapters assigned to different class sessions as we move through the course.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1) WEEKLY JOURNAL: Each student will write and post to the online course discussion board weekly journal entries based on the week's reading and class session, not to exceed 5, typed, single-spaced pages. Each student will be clustered with four other course participants with whom one's journal postings will be shared, and to whose journal postings one will respond. These responses will offer careful reading, comments, ideas, and reactions to the journal postings. Typically, the reading and class session journal postings will be posted immediately after class; and responses during the ensuing week. Course professors will peruse the postings and responses both to track the timeliness of participation and to assess the course materials' engagement with students.

Each weekly entry should include:

- Session date, topic and reading assignment.
- Major points:
 - Which confirmed/reinforced your pre-existing perceptions/perspectives.
 - Which challenged/contradicted your pre-existing perceptions/perspectives.
 - Entirely new insights and perspectives.
- Personal reactions to the readings: questions, affirmations, *feelings* and connections to one's life.

Material must, obviously, be brief. Therefore a bulleted, semi-outline form is OK. For "Major points" section. The "Personal reactions" section should be in narrative form.

Access information and a brief introduction to the course discussion board will be provided during the September 18 class session.

2) REFLECTION PAPER ON WORSHIP OBSERVATION: A five-to-seven page, comparative reflection on your worship visits. You will receive a worship observation guide and briefing during the October 2 class session, and you will receive an outline for your comparative reflection paper. The reflection paper is due at the last class session, at which we will debrief your worship experience.

Session Outline

Session One: September 11 – Why Dialogue? Why Me?

Heidi Hadsell – Introduction to Interfaith Dialogue

Attend Bijlefeld Lecture: “**Jesus and Muhammad: New Convergences**,” Timothy J. Winter, *University Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, England.*

Session Two: September 18 – Religious Typologies and Theologies

David Roozen – Theologies of Other Religions

Reading Handouts:

Other Religions Are False Paths That Mislead Their Followers, *Ajith Fernando*

Other Religions Are Implicit forms of our Own Religion, *Karl Rahner*

Other Religions Are Equally Valid Ways to the Same Truth, *John Hick*

Other Religions Speak of Different but Equally Valid Truths, *John b. Cobb Jr*

Is the Pluralist Model a Western Imposition? *Paul F. Knitter*

Islam and Pluralism, *Ashgar Ali Engineer*

Not Without My Neighbor, Chapter 1

Session Three: September 25 – Models and Practices of Dialogue

Suendam Birinci – Ground Rules of Interfaith Dialogue

Guest Faculty: Jane Smith

Reading Handouts:

Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue, Leonard Swidler

Encountering Each Other, Jane I. Smith

When Dialogue Goes Wrong, Jane I. Smith

Not Without My Neighbor, Chapter 2

Session Four: October 2 – Worship and Dialogue

Guest Faculty: James Nieman & Sohaib Nazeer Sultan

Reading Handouts:

Mapping the Field of Ritual, Ronald L Grimes

Not Without My Neighbor, Chapters 3 & 7

Session Five: October 9 – Personal and Pastoral Issues in Interfaith Encounter

Guest Faculty: Ingrid Mattson

Reading Handouts: To Be Announced

Not Without My Neighbor, Chapters 4 & 6

Session Six: October 16 – History of (Dialogue or?) Christian-Muslim Relations

Guest Faculty: Ibrahim Abu-Rabi

Reading: To Be Announced

Session Seven: October 23 – Scripture and Dialogue

Guest Faculty: Uriah Kim

Reading:

Genesis 37-50; Surah XII (Surat Yusuf) of the Qur'an

Entire issue (only 35 pages long) of *The Student Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*

(Vol. 1, No. 1, October 2006): **Online at --**

<http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/abraham/sjsr/issues/volume1/number1/index.html>

Session Eight: October 30 – Comparative Theological Concepts

Guest Faculty: Kelton Cobb

Reading: To Be Announced

Session Nine: November 6 – Dialogue and Conflict: A Case Study

Guest Faculty: Mustafa Khattab

Reading: To Be Announced

Not Without My Neighbor, Chapters 5

Session Ten: November 13 – Conclusion: Prayers of Supplication and Thanksgiving

Debriefing of Worship Experiences

Potluck Dinner: Sharing a Meal
