



## DI 550 Introduction to Interreligious Studies Fall 2022

### Synchronous Online Mode 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 9:00–10:00 PM or Wednesdays 8:00 – 9:30 PM (Eastern). Other times are available by appointment. (Email or text Dr Mosher to decide on a time.).

#### **Course Description:**

The gateway to the MA in Interreligious Studies and a requirement of the MA in International Peacebuilding curriculum, this intersectional, integrative course, taught in synchronous online mode, 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. That is, 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. *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies* (Georgetown University Press, 2022). ISBN 9781647121631

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

NOTE: The final syllabus may call for an additional textbook.

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

**Course format and structure:**

**How it takes place:** This course is in synchronous online mode, which means that its weekly meetings via Zoom supplement the materials and activities provided through the course website in Canvas. On Monday evenings at 7:00 PM (Eastern), students are required to be in a secure location that has adequate microphone, camera, and sound capabilities to ensure class participation. Students are also required to use Canvas to access to syllabi, reading materials, instructions, assignments, grades, and some discussions. This course also 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:** This course is a vehicle for learning what "interreligious studies" is. However, because of what interreligious studies is, we shall always be doing several things at once:

- Gaining insight into interreligious studies as an academic field
- Developing (or improving) our multireligious literacy
- Learning experientially
- Gaining knowledge and skills relevant to international peacebuilding

**How we will proceed:** Course material is organized in modules, most of which are designed to be completed in a week's time. Each module focuses on a particular aspect of interreligious studies. 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. Generally, the first part of our Monday night Zoom sessions will provide an opportunity to process what you have been

studying for the previous six days; the last 30–45 minutes will be used to introduce the next module. Here follows the tentative list of themes:

- Theme 1: Orientation: Definitions and Procedures
- Theme 2: Identity, Othering, Intersectionality
- Theme 3: Comparative/Contrastive and Historical Methodologies
- Theme 4: Religion, Violence, and Peacemaking
- Theme 5: Dialogue: Theory and Practice
- Theme 6: Lived Religion
- Theme 7: Privileging the Margins
- Theme 8: Experiential Learning
- Theme 9: Theological Ethics
- Theme 10: Religion and the Arts
- Theme 11: Interreligious Leadership, Friendship, and Collaboration
- Theme 12: Critiquing, Synthesizing, Looking Ahead

### **Assignment Categories**

**Reading:** Weekly assignments, some of which may be skimmed rather than read closely. Guidelines are provided.

**Reading journal reports:** Brief essays (3–5 pages) noting items read, connections made between them, and questions lingering, due after the third, seventh, and eleventh week.

**Zoom prep:** Prior to each Monday night session, students are to submit three observations or questions drawn from the assigned material and germane to the evening's topic.

**Experiential Learning:** Two weeks are set aside for field research, after which a formal report is to be submitted.

**Asynchronous lecture-watching:** Lectures to be watched independently in preparation for a Monday Zoom class are provided via VoiceThread—a tool that invites commenting and question-raising. Points are earned for watching and commenting.

**Summary Reflection:** Replacing “Zoom prep” for the final class session, students are to submit a well-crafted essay entitled “Interreligious Studies: Critiquing, Synthesizing, Looking Ahead.”

**Miscellaneous graded activities:** Simple research tasks, online discussions, and other activities that fall outside the above categories.

### **Assessment**

Zoom preparation: *10% of final grade*

Zoom session participation: *20% of final grade*  
Reading journal reports: *30% of final grade*  
Experiential learning: *15% of final grade*  
Asynchronous lecture-watching: *10% of final grade*  
Summary reflection: *10% of final grade*  
Miscellaneous graded items: *5% of the final grade*

### **HIU 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. Barely meets expectations for the course.
- C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections—or is egregiously late in submitting homework. Barely 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.
- Goshen-Gottstein, Alon, ed. *Friendship across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship* (Wipf & Stock, 2018).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sharing Wisdom: Benefits and Boundaries of Interreligious Learning*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Religious Other: Hostility, Hospitality, and the Hope of Human Flourishing*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014.
- 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.

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.

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.

Patel, Eboo, et al. *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*. Beacon Press, 2018.

Thatamanil, John J. *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity*. Fordham University Press, 2020.

### **HIU 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.

### **Inclusive Language**

Hartford International University for Religion and Peace 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 HIU 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 and university policies at [hartfordinternational.edu](http://hartfordinternational.edu). Academic policies are listed on the HIU website.

### **Communication and Technology**

Students will be expected to use their Hartford International 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**

Active attendance in Zoom class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. In the case of an absence the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a brief essay (250–750 words) on the required reading for that session. Active use of the Canvas site is also required. Failure to log on for seven consecutive days is tantamount to absence from class and may incur a penalty.

### **Email Policy**

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

