

DI 540 Interreligious Dialogue: Theory and Practice
A Hartford Seminary Asynchronous Online Course
Syllabus
Fall 2020

Instructor

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Office Hours

Individual conversations are welcome, but by appointment only. All such conversations will take place via phone or Zoom. Also, at least twice during the semester, your instructor will hold a “virtual office drop-in session” via Zoom. This will be a one-hour opportunity (announced well in advance; optional) to talk informally with your instructor and whichever of your classmates join the call about the course or related matters.

Course Meeting Times

This course commences on September 8, 2020. As an asynchronous online course, it has no component that requires all enrollees to be present online simultaneously. However, students may be invited to enjoy an optional group Zoom Call at some point during the term. (If so, the call will be recorded and made available for viewing at a later time.) A dedicated course website (which will be “live” at least one week before the course’s official start-date) provides and reminds participants of the course framework, calendar, and expectations. Students are expected to log in at least once during every week of the term. All submissions are to be made by Thursday, December 31, 2020, 11:59 PM (EST).

Course Description

Guided by your professor (and informed by reading, viewing, or listening to a range of materials and engaging in various activities made available through a Canvas website) you will be encouraged to develop collegial relationships—indeed, a sense of community and friendship across religious, cultural, social, and gender lines—as you explore in depth the principles, models, methods, and cases of dialogue in a pluralistic world, then are helped to put these into practice in a context of diversity. As it introduces dialogue theory and practice, this course enables you to develop (or refresh) basic understanding of the tenets and practices of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—because such knowledge is foundational for a majority of the courses in the Hartford Seminary curriculum. (Rest assured that the course will not ignore other religions; however, it will engage them with less depth.) This course is limited to students enrolled in the MARS, MATLS, GCID, or International Peacemaking Program. It suffices for the DI-530 curricular requirement. Students who have taken DI-530 previously may take this course as well.

Goals/Outcomes

Completion of this course will enable the student to:

- Account for some of the vocabulary of the academic study of religion and of interreligious dialogue specifically.
- Demonstrate awareness of an experientially-grounded understanding of the principles of interfaith dialogue and leadership.
- Demonstrate listening and communication skills in multi-cultural contexts, thus the ability to participate meaningfully and constructively in multicultural and interfaith conversations and learning.
- Demonstrate the critical, intellectual capacity to address substantive issues from a dialogically appreciative perspective.
- Share or comment on information in a manner that invites further conversation and undergirds community-building.
- Outline and apply methods for discussing potentially divisive issues constructively and without animosity.
- Attain basic knowledge of core Jewish, Christian, and Muslim beliefs and practices to a degree sufficient for more intensive dialogue and for providing a foundation for Hartford Seminary coursework.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following *Hartford Seminary Master of Arts Degree Program Learning Outcomes*: to demonstrate knowledge of the practices of one's own religious tradition and the capacity to appreciate the practices of other religious traditions; to demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following *Hartford Seminary Master of Arts in Transformative Leadership Spirituality Degree Program Learning Outcome*: to share the transformed consciousness of one's own spirituality in ways beneficial to the wider world.

Course Structure

The course comprises a "Preliminary Matters" module plus twelve instructional modules:

Module 1:	9/9 – 9/15	Encounter as prelude to dialogue
Module 2:	9/16 – 9/22	"Through-Talking" – Its Forms and Methods
Module 3:	9/23 – 10/6	Scripture a Foundation for and Topic of Dialogue
Module 4:	10/7 – 10/13	Dialogical Engagement with a Dialogical Book
Module 5:	10/14 – 10/20	Experiential learning as Prelude to Dialogue
Module 6:	10/21 – 10/27	Official Dialogues (Intra- and Interfaith) about Religious Difference
Module 7:	10/28 – 11/3	Interreligious Friendship as Prelude to/Fruit of Dialogue
Module 8:	11/4 – 11/10	Dialogical Exploration of Shared Imperatives: Ethics as Dialogue Focus
Module 9:	11/11 – 11/17	Interfaith Dialogue at the Grassroots
Module 10:	11/18 – 12/1	Interreligious Leadership and Dialogue Facilitation
Module 11:	12/2 – 12/15	Towards Better Disagreement [plus time to Finish site visit reports]
Module 12	12/16 – 12/21	Pulling It All Together

Plan to spend approximately six hours per week on reading and 3–4 hours per week on online learning tasks. Case method figures in most modules. For each module, the Canvas website provides instructions (and most materials) for reading assignments and online activities such as watching or listening to a lecture, answering a question posed by the instructor, commenting on another student's response, or taking a short quiz. Most lectures are delivered via VoiceThread, a tool that encourages conversation.

NB: 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 directly (lmosher@hartsem.edu).

General Expectations

- Log in on the course website several times per module.
- For each module, engage each required item (and take advantage of at least some of the optional items).
- Post in each discussion forum by the date indicated; comment on classmates' posts in a timely fashion.
- Complete three experiential projects, as explained below.

Required Reading/Viewing/Listening

In every module, you will find reading assignments: portions of the required textbooks listed below or articles, blog-post, book-chapters, or scripture passages made available to you on Canvas. In every module, you will also find video- or audio-recordings that you are required to engage. For example, every module begins with a short lecture by your professor. Most of these AV items are delivered via VoiceThread (a tool compatible with Canvas); a few housed on Vimeo and are password-protected. (The password is provided via Canvas in the assignment prompt and may vary from one item to the next.)

Students are expected to procure a copy of each of the following books (which will be read almost in their entirety):

Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, George D. Chryssides, and Usama Hasan. *People of the Book: An Interfaith Dialogue about How Jews, Christian, and Muslims Understand Their Sacred Scriptures*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2019. ISBN 9781785921049

Goshen-Gottstein, Alon, ed. *Friendship Across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship*. Lexington Books, 2015. ISBN 9781532658914

Grundmann, Christoffer H. *Interreligious Dialogue: An Anthology of Voices Bridging Cultural and Religious Divides*. Anselm Academic, 2015. ISBN 9781599826769

Patel, Eboo, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon, 2016. ISBN 9780807033623

Attendance Policy

Participation in all online components is expected; failure to do so is considered an “absence” and (if habitual) may jeopardize your ability to pass this course.

Email Policy

If your instructor wishes to reach you via email, she will use your official HartSem student email address to do so. Please check your HartSem email account regularly.

If you wish to reach your professor, it is possible to “message” her within the Canvas website. If you don't receive a reply in a timely fashion, please re-send your query or comment via regular email to lmosher@hartsem.edu.

In most instances, when your professor has a message for the class as a whole, she will deliver it by means of the Canvas “Announcements” feature. Please check the Canvas “Announcements” board frequently.

Assessment Guidelines

Discussion Forums

This course offers a vast array of reading and viewing possibilities. Reading/watching some items is absolutely required. Students have considerable latitude with regard to the remainder—but are encouraged to read/watch as many of those items as they're able. Discussion forums are the vehicle by which students relate what they have read/watched—plus insights gained and questions raised as a result. Most modules offer at least two discussion opportunities. Discussion forums will take at least two forms; reflection and “question-asking.” The purpose of “reflection” forums is to give the student an opportunity to demonstrate the breadth and depth of his/her engagement with the “learning objects” provided in a particular module. “Question-asking” forums provide an opportunity to bring up items of confusion or to otherwise engage in somewhat informal conversation with classmates. Discussion Board deadlines refer only to the initial post. As a rule, initial posts will be scored within 48 hours of their deadline. The timeliness and quality of the student's engagement with the discussion board will be noted. Additional points received for commenting on classmate posts will be added later. Rubrics for Discussion Forum assessments are provided on the Canvas site. Unless noted otherwise, each discussion forum is marked on a 100-point basis: a maximum of 80 points for the initial post; up to ten additional points for commenting on each of two classmates' posts.

Experiential Learning

When circumstances permit, students are to plan and pay a visit to three religion-sites: one Jewish, one Christian, one Islamic. In the event of ongoing pandemic, “virtual visiting” or some other method of experiential learning will replace “actual” field research. Explicit instructions for planning, conducting, and reporting are provided on the Canvas website and are explained early in the course. Reports will be scored in the same manner as other discussion forums.

Quizzes

Quizzes can be useful in assessing understanding specialized vocabulary; they can also serve a diagnostic function. This course *may* have a few. In every case, they will be short. Numerical scores and corrections will be visible on Canvas.

Summary Paper

Students are expected to prepare and submit a summary paper, which will be posted in the final discussion forum for this course; it will also be submitted as a downloadable document in proper academic format. This essay need be only slightly more formal than the discussion forum post expected at the close of each module. This assignment will be scored twice: as a discussion post, on the usual 100-point scale; and as a formal paper suitable for print-out, on a ten-point scale.

Academic Standards

All posts and papers are to accord with the standards for academic papers posted on the Hartford Seminary website. All papers and projects must accord with Hartford Seminary's stated policy regarding the citing of sources. *Plagiarism is to be avoided!* Guidelines for meeting academic standards

Grade Calculation

Discussion Forums	60%
Lecture-watching (using VoiceThread technology in most instances)	30%
Case Studies	
Final post/paper assessment as a formal document	5%
Quizzes and other activities that do not fit neatly into our other categories:	5%

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 expectations of the course.
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)	Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

Recommended Reading/Viewing/Listening

In every module, you will find items that are “optional”—that is, recommended but not required. Usually, whether—and to what extent—you take advantage of them is up to you. However, in some modules, an assignment may direct you to choose two or three items from the “recommended/optional” collection. The list below comprises items that will expand your understanding of the theory and practice of interreligious dialogue, plus related topics. There exist many other wonderful possibilities.

Abe, Masao. *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue: Part One of a Two-Volume Sequel to Zen and Western Thought*. Springer, 2016.

Clooney, Francis X. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Clooney, Francis Xavier, ed. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*. A&C Black, 2010.

Coppola, David L., ed. *What Do We Want The Other To Teach About Us? Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Dialogues*. Fairfield, Conn.: Sacred Heart University Press, 2006.

This fine collection of essays and exercises, made available free of charge by Sacred Heart University's Open Access program, provides both a model of—and foundation for further—Abrahamic dialogue. See https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shupress_bks/8/.

Cornille, Catherine and Stephanie Corigliano, eds. *Interreligious Dialogue and Cultural Change*. Wipf and Stock, 2012.

- Forward, Martin. *Inter-Religious Dialogue: A Short Introduction*. Oneworld, 2001.
- Hedges, Paul. *Towards Better Disagreement: Religion and Atheism in Dialogue*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017.
- Mackenzie, Don, Ted Falcon, and Jamal Rahman. *Getting to the Heart of Interfaith: The Eye-Opening, Hope-Filled Friendship of a Pastor, a Rabbi & a Sheikh*. SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2009.
- Mays, Rebecca Kratz. *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*. Ecumenical Press, 2009.
- Panikkar, Raimundo. *The Intrareligious Dialogue*. Paulist Press, 1999.
- Peace, Jennifer Howe, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley, eds. *My Neighbor's Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation*. Orbis Books, 2012.
- Schneier, Rabbi Marc, and Imam Shamsi Ali. *Sons of Abraham: A Candid Conversation about the Issues That Divide and Unite Jews and Muslims*. Beacon Press, 2013.
- Siddiqi, Muzammil. *The Abraham Connection: A Jew, Christian, and Muslim in Dialogue: An Encounter Between Dr. David Gordis, Dr. George Grose and Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi*. Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books, 1994.

Strategies for Reading/Viewing/Listening

To get the most out of this course (indeed, any Hartford Seminary course), you will need to spend ample time each week engaging the assigned materials. Further, you will need to read/watch/listen analytically. To aid you in doing so, our Canvas site provides some “handouts” on reading strategies. (Look in the “Preliminary Matters” module for these.)

With every item you engage for this course, identify its genre. (If an essay, is it an autobiographical reflection piece? A case-study? A motivational piece? A piece making a scholarly argument? Something else?) Determine what it has to do with the overarching topic of the module. Identify its thesis or the main point(s) it makes, attending to the reasoning and/or evidence deployed. Drawing connections or contrasts between the items you read, view, or listen to—and between them and your own experiences. Take notes accordingly. These observations will inform your discussion-board posts and comments. In short, adequate preparation is essential to success in this course—yours as an individual and the entire class as a collective.

Participation

In an asynchronous online course, individual participation assumes dimension quite different from a course that requires enrollees to gather in a specific physical space at a particular time. For DI 540, “participation” means logging on to the course site regularly. (Your professor has tools for monitoring this!) It means posting in each and every “discussion forum” (and each forum comes with instructions); it means reading and commenting on classmate posts in a manner that is timely, substantive, supportive, and (when appropriate) scholarly. You are not expected to be profound or to have “the right answer” every time you had something to a forum; in fact, there will be times when the “right” thing to do is to ask questions! However, you must post *something* in each and every forum. Where, in a classroom, failing to raise one’s hand might come across as being shy or unprepared or confused; in an online course, failing to post is tantamount to being absent altogether. So, don’t hesitate! Post something!

A word to the wise: craft your post (or comment, if it will be long or complicated) in a document saved to your hard drive; then, copy and paste it into the discussion forum’s “field.” If something goes awry with the website or your internet service, you’ve still got your work!

What makes an effective post? In most forums, an effective post will synthesize insights gleaned from several sources—doing so in a manner that invites further conversation. It may sometimes challenge the viewpoints of authors, fellow students, guest instructors, or the professor. Challenging, even contradicting, certainly is quite acceptable—as long as it is done respectfully.

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.