



Description

A study in the educational issues raised by living in a world of multiple faiths. The course examines the significance of diverse theological understandings for pastoral practice amid pluralism. The course also considers specific examples of interfaith learning, and the challenges of supporting interfaith families. Prerequisite: EL1515 Education I or EL4522 Foundations of Educational Leadership, or permission from the instructor.

Pre-meeting assignments will be available at MyLutherNet from May 12 to June 5th, we will meet in an intensive setting on Friday, June 6 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm and Saturday, June 7 from 8:30 to 4:30 pm, and there will be time following that weekend to finalize projects (final deadline of June 30th).

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I have suggested an order and timing by which you could complete the pre-meeting assignments (see the calendar below), but given summer exigencies I will understand if you approach them differently. My primary imperative to you is that you have completed all of the pre-class assignments prior to our weekend meeting on June 6th and 7th.

Week of May 12 / Introductions and pressing questions

This is an opportunity to introduce ourselves, and consider why we might “learn in the presence of other faiths” and what our primary questions are in doing so. Your assignment is to respond to the “introductions” prompt at MyLutherNet, and then participate as you feel moved to do so in the ensuing discussion. The learning goal is to begin to figure out how you experience the challenge of “learning in the presence of other faiths.” Do you want to do this? Does it feel problematic? What has your experience told you about the topic of this class? Please read my essay, found on reserve in MyLutherNet.

Week of May 19 / Learning about other faiths

Many of you already have relationships with people from other faith traditions outside of Christianity. Even with these relationships, however, you might not have much knowledge of other faiths. Before we gather it's important to do some basic learning about other faiths. This is "book learning," something which is a place to begin from but certainly not the whole of what we will try to do in this class.

Explore the primary textbook (*Introduction to World Religions*) and its associate study guide (which contains a number of primary documents), and allow your curiosity to draw you into lurking on the net in the various sites named in that textbook as being reliable sources of information.

Week of May 26 / Theologies of religious pluralism

How do we make sense from *within* our faith of the active presence and vitality of *other* faiths? For these questions you need to read the entire Knitter book, and start to think about which of the stances he identifies might be your own (replacement, fulfillment, mutuality, acceptance). Please note that I believe it is possible to hold each of these stances with integrity in particular theological traditions, but not all of them work in every tradition. It's important that you begin to figure out which stance is most resonant with your community's theological convictions.

Week of June 2nd / Pastoral leadership amid pluralism

What can we learn from our reading and local pastors about what it means to lead a community of faith amid pluralism? For this chunk of our learning I want you to have a deliberate conversation with at least one pastoral leader in your community of faith (broadly construed), about the questions you identified at the beginning of our time together, and any other questions you might have for them on this topic. This conversation will help to lay the groundwork for your final project. Please also make sure you've read the Heft textbook.

June 6th / 6 to 9 pm / Leading religious education amid pluralism

This first evening as we gather we will work more deliberately on specific educational challenges. Moving from within your theological model, what kinds of questions are likely in your community of faith? How will you support a specific religious identity in the context of many faiths? We will work within small groups to

design a basic plan for engaging a community of faith. You will be helped by bringing to class examples of curricular, liturgical, and other materials that will support the kind of learning you want to design.

June 7th / 8:30 to 4:30 pm / Walking with a congregation alongside other communities of faith

During this day we're going to visit at least two other faith communities in MN. As of the writing of this syllabus, it's likely that they will be the MN Hindu Temple in Maple Grove, MN, and the Dar Al Quba mosque in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood. Stay tuned for more details!

Required texts

James Heft, ed., *Passing on the Faith* (Fordham, 2006)

Mary Hess, "The pastoral practice of Christian hospitality as presence in Muslim-Christian engagement: Contextualizing the classroom," in *Theological Education*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2013, pp. 7-12. (available on reserve at MyLutherNet).

Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis, 2002)

Christopher Partridge, *Introduction to World Religions (an Inklings text)* (Fortress Press, 2014), and *A Study Companion to Introduction to World Religions* (Fortress Press, 2013).

The Partridge book is an excellent introduction to a variety of world religions. It is the kind of book every leader should have ready access to, but it is essentially an undergraduate level text. You may already own something that meets a similar need, and if so you can substitute that book if you check in with me first. I will note, however, that the Partridge book is an *Inklings* text, which means it is an e-text intended to be read on a computer, smartphone, tablet, etc.. As such it has a lot of electronic features which are quite engaging. It is also a brand new revision, which means it should have "staying power" on your desk.

Recommended texts

Sheryl Kujawa, *God Beyond Borders* (Pickwick, 2014).

Lucinda Mosher, *Praying* (Seabury 2005)

Lucinda Mosher, *Belonging* (Seabury 2005)

Arvind Sharma, *The World's Religions: A Contemporary Reader* (Augsburg, 2010)

I have listed these three texts as recommended, in part because I do not know how much background you will bring to this class. The Kujawa book is a brand new book – it came out too recently for me to include it in the first iteration of this syllabus! But it’s a remarkable book from which I will draw in this course and future courses. The Sharma book is a collection of recent essays by scholars reflecting upon the shape and context of pressing issues across a range of faith traditions. It is not so much a theological text, although it contains theological essays, as it is a sophisticated examination of issues such as war, peace, violence, gender, and so on, from within various contemporary religious communities. The two books by Lucinda Mosher are from the “Faith in the Neighborhood” series, which examines specific practices from multiple religious perspectives. These are books that work well in parish adult education settings, as well as being good resources for your RE plan assignment. I have placed all of these books on reserve in our library, but you ought to consider whether or not they would be good additions to your permanent library. I will also be sharing a more extensive bibliography with you when class meets in person in June.

Assignments

There are three primary assignments in this class.

The first is to work on your own through the short writing assignments and reading prompts offered on MyLutherNet during the weeks prior to our in-class meeting. I have set them up on a calendar, but given summer exigencies I will understand if you approach them differently. My primary imperative to you is that you have completed all of the pre-class assignments prior to our weekend meeting on June 6th and 7th.

The second main assignment is to be fully present for our faith community visits and discussions the weekend of June 6th and 7th. As I note in the short essay that I have assigned as pre-reading, there is no substitute for actually visiting, and being in discussion and relationship with, actual faith communities which are different from your own. Towards that end we will visit at least two during our brief “in person” weekend, and your full attention and thoughtful participation will be deeply important during that time.

The third and final assignment is to develop a religious education plan that draws on the theological model that best fits your beliefs, and which contextualizes that model with appropriate accompanying resources, for your context (or for a context in which you might serve in the future). Please see the rubric at MyLutherNet for the basic elements you'll need to develop for this plan.

Due dates	throughout	30% online reading and participation
	June 6 - 7th	30% participation in field trips
	June 30th	40% RE plan and resources

Special needs

If you have any special learning needs that I should accommodate, please let me know as early in the term as possible.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is any act that represents someone else's work as your own. It is an offense against academic honesty, and as such, subject to disciplinary action. Various steps may be taken in response, and these are detailed in both the student handbook and the catalog. If you have any questions at all about how to handle a particular resource, please simply ask me. I'm happy to work with you on ensuring that your work has academic integrity.