Editor's Introduction

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And

1 Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education

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Editor's Introduction

This book is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our

experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so

many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the

dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of

another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome

language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

1) 'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of

spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

2) World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

3) Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

4) The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

5) *Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story,* J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

*The Philadelphia Story (*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

6) Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will

help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

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David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

1 Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education

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The case studies presented here provide some of the best examples of the types and range of courses offered on interfaith dialogue in American theological education. This is an important topic for seminaries to be engaging. Not only have the demographics and culture changed in the United States so that those who were once considered to be foreign "others" are now understood to be neighbors, but also globalization and a worldwide loosening of borders mean that religious and cultural differences are a matter of course for most Americans. Theological education has traditionally been about preparing and raising up well-trained leadership in the church, but it is also about more than that. It is also about preparing and raising up leadership for the community, and in order to be able to relate to a wider spectrum of community members, religious leaders must be able to navigate interfaith relationships. To be truly relevant to the religiously diverse contexts in which today's clergy and lay people are called to serve means having an understanding of the complexities that emerge as a result of religious plurality.

All of the schools highlighted in this book recognize the importance of training leaders to relate appropriately to non-Christians and to help others relate to non-Christians. Not to do so in the twenty-first century would be irresponsible. Each of the courses presented here also uses dialogue as a key means of engaging the "religious other". That is intentional. Dialogue is where praxis and pedagogy meet. Dialogue is the active outgrowth of classroom learning. Dialogue does not take place in a vacuum, but requires the student to move beyond his or her comfort zone of library and lecture hall to engage members of

other communities. It asks students to suspend preconceptions and remain open to new expressions of serving God and practicing faith.

In its 2008 to 2014 work plan, the Association of Theological Schools counts interfaith education among its three targeted projects. This focus grows from a recognition that the religious landscape of North America has changed and leaders need to be well-equipped to serve in settings that enjoy religious diversity. The work plan states, "Ministers and priests will need to be better informed about the commitments and practices of these religious communities; they will need to expand their own theology with a theology of world religions; and they will need to be able to minister in the contexts of interreligious interaction and engagement in the settings where they will serve." The collection of cases presented here represents this new trend toward interreligious sensitivity that is now an emerging priority in some theological schools. More specifically, what is found here are the successes and challenges that a number of schools from different denominations have had in training leaders to be fluent in the language of interfaith dialogue.

What Does this Work Represent?

Theological schools have been challenged to adapt their curricula in order to meet new needs in a changing society. Dan Aleshire, Executive Director of the ATS, writes of the future work of theological schools in light of current economic and ideological challenges. He comments, "As centers of faithful inquiry, schools support the efforts of faith communities to locate the underpinnings of their beliefs in the intellectual idiom and social realities of their time and culture. ... They are good to the extent that they cultivate the learning, knowledge, skills, sensitivities, and perceptions that the church needs for its leaders. "[1] The "intellectual idiom" of the current time and culture requires conceptualizing the church, its mission and its community outside of previously-conceived boxes. This means building ministries that speak to the multi-faceted aspects of faith, naming areas in which God's people have been neglected or forgotten, and atoning for sins that have created division rather than reconciliation. In response to this, new

[1] Dan Alsehire, Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008) 163, 165.

programs have sprung up that focus on discrete areas of ministry located in areas such as multicultural, generational or urban settings. These concentrated programs are meant to prepare religious leadership for service in the diverse contexts that the churches serve. The list of such specialized ministries is ever-growing, and interfaith awareness is the latest movement in the attempt to speak to the intellectual idiom and social realities of the present age.

This book represents a commitment to prepare leaders for work in a world filled with diversity. It speaks to the need articulated by Aleshire to cultivate specific "skills and sensitivities" among church leaders today. No longer are seminary graduates being called to serve homogenous communities with little difference among forms of religious expression. Instead, most regions of North America in the twenty-first century represent the realities of globalization in concrete ways. Non-Christians are no longer encountered solely by missionaries who take on the challenge of foreign service; rather, engaging the other is around the block, next door, behind the counter at your favorite restaurant or across the hall at work. Recognizing this changing dynamic is what prompted the theological schools featured in this collection of case studies to add courses on interreligious dialogue to their curricula.

This book represents a practical resource for theological educators looking to incorporate interfaith dialogue into their own institutional offerings. The emphasis on dialogue is important and intentional. The courses presented here are not mere survey courses or introductions to world religions. Providing such basic information on neighbors of other faiths is indeed important, but that is not the focus of this research. These cases, instead, represent attempts to cultivate a dialogical sensitivity in theological students. Such sensitivity is important for clergy and religious educators not only as a means of engaging their own constituents, but also as a means of relating to the wider and varied communities in which they will serve. Research indicates that American congregations are more involved in interfaith endeavors today than they were a decade ago. Therefore, it is time for theological schools to acknowledge this and prepare religious leaders to cross faith boundaries and learn appropriate ways of connecting their people with people of other faiths.

The schools invited to prepare cases for this project were selected because they do just that: they recognize the importance of forming leaders who can interact appreciatively with their interreligious

neighbors. This requires a solid grounding both in one's own tradition as well as perceptions of faith which speak to questions of Christian identity. The schools presented here have made interreligious encounter a priority. They have designated it as an essential part of the larger curriculum, and thus they make bold statements about the necessity of interfaith formation as an essential part of theological formation. This type of formation requires students to reflect on Christian identity as well as pastoral leadership. It asks for serious evaluation of the place of doctrine and truth claims in and on one's theology. It challenges students to move outside of their comfort zones not only to encounter difference, but also to truly engage it in meaningful ways. By pushing seminarians to do this, these schools are creating leaders who will be able to walk with communities that are attempting to do the same and challenge their communities that are not yet thinking in this direction to do so.

Similarities and Differences within the Case Studies

This book presents six case studies of courses currently being taught in U.S. theological schools. Each course has its own unique character and flavor, but they all also share certain elements. As stated previously, each case study deals specifically with courses on interreligious dialogue that include a practicum experience of dialogue. They also all fulfill interreligious criteria in their schools' curricula. Regardless of whether the course itself is required or whether it is one of several course options that fulfill an obligatory core, this aspect is important because it points to the commitment to interfaith education that these schools have made. By requiring an interfaith or ecumenical course in the core curriculum, these schools are emphasizing the need for leaders to be comfortable with faith traditions other than their own. In this way, these courses represent an attempt to assist students as they work out their own faith identities in light of religious diversity. Thus, these courses are helping to form religious leaders who can think deeply about both the intellectual and practical encounters with difference and eventually come to reconcile the tensions that this difference can create.

As dialogue is the primary focus of the cases studies, it is worth taking a moment to comment on the various types and aims of interreligious dialogue. This will help to identify whether the courses featured here are attempting to accomplish the same tasks. In its 1991

document on interreligious dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, the Catholic Church identified four forms of dialogue. These shape Catholic levels of engagement but are also labels that have commonly been taken up by others engaged in interfaith endeavors: 1) dialogue of life has an emphasis on neighborliness and openness to those of other faiths; 2) dialogue of action brings people together in joint liberative projects; 3) dialogue of theological exchange sees scholars engaging one another over issues of spiritual value; and 4) dialogue of religious experience invites people of faith to share the practices of their traditions.[2] Each of these has different priorities and allows for a different type of engagement. While the courses outlined here might involve all of these aspects of dialogue, to a certain extent they tend to focus more on the third and fourth types. (It should be noted, however, that the "dialogue of theological engagement" in Catholic parlance assumes specialists in each tradition engaging each other over theological topics, and one of the challenges articulated in some of the case studies presented here is the inequities in theological understanding between lay and clergy dialogue partners.)

Scarboro Missions, a Canadian Catholic mission society, expands the Vatican's four stages of dialogue to introduce five additional components. Dialogue should be *informational* in that it allows one to gain knowledge of another's tradition; it should be *confessional* as it provides people of faith opportunities to explain what it means to live in their traditions; it should be *experiential* as others are invited to join in worship and ritual practices; it should be *relational* as friendships are built through dialogue; and it should be *practical* as it promotes peace and justice.[3] Movements toward peaceful coexistence and sustained friendships, while worthwhile, represent lofty if not unrealistic objectives for a one semester course. The courses featured in this volume tend to concentrate more solidly on the first three of these dialogue aims.

How a dialogue is structured can impact the success of achieving its objectives. The case studies included in this book use dialogues that

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[2] *Dialogue and Proclamation*, paragraph 42, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html

[3] http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#levels

have been structured by the professor as well as those left to the student to initiate. One popular model involves an instructor arranging a visit to a place of worship that also includes interaction and dialogue with the local community. These types of dialogues can be quite informative and interesting for students, but they are unlikely to lead to the more relational or practical outcomes outlined above. Several of the cases presented here require sustained dialogue – whether individually or in a group – between students and people of other faiths. This allows for a richer experience than a one-time encounter permits, and it enhances the possibilities that the dialogue will engage a deeper level of commitment for those involved.

Each of the cases presented here required two types of experiential opportunities for students: visits and dialogues. How these are structured and arranged varies among the courses, and the differences in these experiences can have implications for student engagement and learnings.

A group visit to a new worship site creates a much different experience than a visit taken by an individual, and this is a notable dissimilarity among the courses presented here. A group visit requires more planning on the part of the instructor, of course, but it also provides both a shared experience among classmates as well as a potential "buffer" for interaction with community members. It is entirely possible for more reticent students to visit a new place of worship and simply observe what transpires without truly interacting with members of that community. Yet, at the same time, there is a benefit to having a shared experience among an entire class. This can allow for better group reflection on the visit and discussion of what transpired. When a student plans and executes a visit alone, the dynamic is changed and the experience is reflected on differently. The student-initiated visit requires more research, participation and initiative on the part of the individual. It might even provide an introduction to a community not yet encountered by the professor. Yet, the quality of the experience cannot be controlled or guaranteed as well as with a pre-planned group visit. For better or worse, the individual student trip to a new place of worship also has a smaller impact on the community visited.

Similar questions about the quality and nature of interactions arise in the design of dialogue experiences. The cases presented here introduce dialogue endeavors that are both student-initiated and

instructor-designed. These two models are markedly different and both have their benefits and drawbacks.

Having the students arrange their own dialogue experiences is a valuable lesson. It forces them out of the interreligious frying pan and into the fire, so to speak, as it challenges them to take initiative and overcome potential reticence. By doing their own research on what other communities are present around them and making the initial contact with a representative from that community, the students are better preparing for a future in their own ministry settings where they will be responsible for outreach to their neighbors. It is important to note that the skills garnered through the process of setting up and engaging dialogue are transferrable to other aspects of leadership. A side benefit of engaging in interreligious dialogue, for example, is an enhanced capacity for communication with and about difference. Cultivating this skill can strengthen a person's ability to communicate with myriad audiences, not just those in the interfaith arena. It can also enhance a student's community-organizing and networking capabilities.

Professor-arranged dialogues have their benefits, too. Whether these are set up as an in-class component as is the case with the Hartford Seminary examples, or arranged as facilitated exercises with other faith communities as is demonstrated in the Perkins example, intentional dialogue groups can be a useful tool for introducing students to the nuances of dialogue. As the Perkins case highlights, however, intentionally structured dialogues can be cumbersome to prepare. Facilitators must be trained and equipped with the appropriate guidelines so that all group leaders are "on the same page" about the nature and objectives of the dialogue. Students in these types of sessions might enter into such endeavors with greater expectations of what will be shared and accomplished merely because of the fact that they are moderated and arranged by the faculty member.

Student-initiated dialogues, however, are perceived to be much looser and informal. This does not diminish the potential for these to be an educational experience, however. The expectations of student-designed dialogues vary according to the students involved, but several of the case studies included here demonstrate that even when a dialogue might not initially seem to be a "success" in the student's eyes, it can still yield much fruit in terms of teachable moments and opportunities for insight into another's worldview.

The theological formation outlined in each case study takes different shapes, in part, due to the nature of the student bodies and the institutional priorities at play in each location. A brief examination of each case will highlight some of the unique elements they offer. By clarifying some of the particularities of the cases, one can more easily assess and critique the benefits and challenges provided by the various pedagogical methods.

The "Interreligious Dialogue" course at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California introduces students to the history of dialogue and asks them to reflect on different approaches to the exercise. Interestingly, in addition to required dialogue experiences, the course instructor also emphasizes the cultivation of spiritual practice in each class session. This is a unique aspect of this course in comparison to the others. Dr. Redington goes farther than merely introducing meditation as a component of each meeting. (He does, indeed, do this, and as his case study notes, the students have commented favorably on it.) In the tradition of fellow Catholic theologian Raimon Panikkar, however, Reddington also introduces dialogue, itself, as a religious act – a spiritual discipline to be cultivated. Students are invited, then, to reflect on whether dialogue can become a means or vehicle of salvation. This emphasis on spiritual practice – within the class as well as through dialogue – is an important element in the pedagogical approach outlined in the Berkeley case study. This is, perhaps, reflective of the fact that this course was created in a Roman Catholic institution where spiritual disciplines are often stressed more than in some Protestant traditions.

The Berkeley case study is also important because it is the best example of a course that is tradition-constituted. In other words, it draws heavily on Roman Catholic resources and relates issues broached in the course back to larger Catholic themes. (Compare this to the case study from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia that does not have a Lutheran voice included in the required reading.) Redington writes of the need for interreligious dialogue to have a *locus theologicus*, a legitimate base from which to engage the non-Christian, and he draws heavily on Catholic documents and theologians in his presentations of the many facets of dialogue. While this aspect of the course may go unnoticed by non-Catholic students, it is good to give the Catholics a firm understanding of the place and importance of interreligious dialogue within their tradition. Other denominationally-

affiliated schools would do well to offer their students a similar tradition-constituted rationale for dialogue.

To his credit, Redington also engages Church texts and positions that have been difficult for dialogue-minded Catholics to accept. For example, students are expected to read *Dominus Iesus*, the declaration of the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. This is a statement which many interfaith activists have found troubling due to the negative stance on other traditions that it presents. While it would be easy to dismiss texts that are uncomfortable for those who are committed to building quality interreligious relationships, Redington introduces *Dominus Iesus* because it offers an important aspect of the debate around dialogue. To ignore it would mean not presenting the full story and not introducing students to the full scope of the Catholic responses to dialogue.

The "Philadelphia Story" is noteworthy for its commitment to locating the dialogical experience at the beginning of the student's seminary career. During the first two weeks on campus, students are brought into contact with people of other faiths. They visit houses of worship and meet a variety of religious leaders. The school thus sends a clear message that being able to navigate interreligious relationships is an integral part of theological formation. Additionally, the emphasis on dialogue as a methodology to be employed through the entire educational process is admirable. Dialogue, then, becomes a skill that students can apply across disciplines. In this way, dialogue becomes a habit that orients a student's whole ministry; it becomes integrated and holistic.

The introduction of interfaith issues and the need for dialogue at the beginning of the student's seminary training also speaks to a focus on public theology that is uniquely present at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Public theology recognizes at its core the open exchange of beliefs across many aspects of human life – not just in the pew on Sunday mornings. In true Lutheran form, public theology challenges individuals to participate as people of faith in the world around them. It prepares people for leadership at life's intersections between faith and society. As noted previously, the public world in which students will practice their faith is not only a Christian world; rather it is a religiously complex and diverse world. Thus, the program at LTSP operates with an interfaith sensibility that challenges students early on to articulate their faith in relationship to another's.

The Philadelphia program also has a clear emphasis on theology alongside praxis. Dialogue becomes part of the way in which one does theology. Paul Rajashekar, the Dean of LTSP, refers to this as a cross-referential approach. This is not surprising language for a Lutheran to use, as so much of that tradition is rooted in what Martin Luther referred to as a *theologia crucis*, the theology of the cross. Yet, Dr. Rajashekar's cross-referential approach to dialogical theology is not just about having the cross of Christ at the heart of one's theology; it is also about working across faith traditions to gain a deeper appreciation of one's own faith. To be cross-referential means that one draws on insights from other traditions to gain greater self-understanding. This requires that students learn to appreciate other's traditions, rituals and stories on their own terms and without the taint of the student's own theological assumptions.

The "Philadelphia story" also addresses significant issues around the posture of dialogue for future clergy. In this case the appropriate ways to approach and engage people of other faiths become a component of pastoral training. Dialogue can be an exercise in professionalism for students whose careers will revolve around engaging others and building community. Dr. Rajashekar importantly notes that in the case of interfaith dialogue, especially with multicultural partners, this can bring out questions of race and hospitality among his students. Students must learn to be gracious guests as well as hosts – a role that is sometimes more difficult. If mastered, however, this is a skill that will serve them well in their future endeavors.

The Drew University course introduces an important component that is absent from the other case studies: immersive, international travel. Admittedly, the travel seminar that is introduced in the case study is not the required course in dialogue, but it does deepen the interreligious experience of those who have taken the preliminary class. The impact of a travel seminar can be greater for a student than a typical campus-based course because it allows for a more integrative and intensive learning experience. Relationships are forged and tested in group travel events in ways that cannot be simulated in the classroom setting. In such seminars the world becomes the classroom, and the students are reminded of the interconnectedness of all people.

Dr. Ariarajah's study tours do not integrate an interreligious component into the group's composition, and one has to wonder how these experiences would be different with a group of interfaith travel

companions. While it is clearly meaningful and significant for students to visit ashrams in India, this type of exercise runs the risk of becoming nothing more than spiritual tourism if it is not properly managed and facilitated. Dr. Ariarajah is certainly an adept dialogue facilitator, but to have an interreligious group of participants sharing the entirety of the experiences might add new depth and richness to the enterprise.

The two case studies from Hartford Seminary at first glance are noticeably different from the other four cases because of the diversity within the student body of that institution. Having a mix of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the "Building Abrahamic Partnerships" course makes the class sessions, themselves, dialogical experiences. The dynamic of the dialogue also shifts a bit as participants are "equal partners" at the table: each participant is a student. While each student may be taking the course for different reasons – some are degree seekers, others are life learners – the equal status as students remains. Contrast this to the intentionally orchestrated dialogue sessions in which members of a community sit and talk with members of a class. Whereas the intention of the dialogue experience is intended to be the same, participants in these latter endeavors do come to the experience with different agendas and expectations. Members of the community are "hosts" whereas students are "guests". Regardless of how intentional the facilitator is in her attempts to establish an atmosphere of openness and equality, this type of situation is different than one in which dialogue participants are cohorts. These case studies even admit as much when they speak of dialogues with community groups turning into information sharing sessions or opportunities for evangelism. The religiously diversified student body at Hartford Seminary simply lends itself to a different – and some might say deeper – sort of dialogue experience. This is epitomized in the BAP course where the class composition is intentionally "stacked" to have equal representation among Christians, Muslim and Jews. Admittedly, this demands more work in recruitment on the part of the professor, but it yields invaluable results for the students and the nature of their dialogue.

A similar diversity of religious perspective is set up in the Hartford Seminary teaching faculty, as is demonstrated in both the "Dialogue in a World of Difference" and BAP case studies. Here an interfaith team of instructors teaches the courses. This is different from those other examples where a representative of a particular faith community will meet with the class for one session. The team approach is helpful because it models interfaith cooperation in the teaching faculty, but

also because it allows feedback, instruction and guidance from an interreligious perspective. Having an interfaith teaching team also allows students and faculty to build an on-going relationship. This facilitates deeper engagement than a single presentation or encounter would allow. It also allows for sustained theological reflection on given issues and themes.

The Perkins School of Theology case represents, perhaps, one of the most labor intensive courses from the perspective of the faculty person involved. Both dialogue groups and individual one-on-one interviews are arranged by the instructor. The course itself is an expanded version of a world religions seminar. The dialogical element was added in an effort to help better prepare students for their future roles as pastors. Robert Hunt's hands-on approach to coordinating dialogue opportunities for his students and his commitment to training facilitators in the methods and objectives of dialogue sessions is admirable. The difficulties that he encounters through this process demonstrate an important aspect of dialogue. It is often difficult to manage the outcomes of such initiatives – especially when the exercise is turned over to a community member whose agenda might not match that of the instructor. Thus, an important lesson for students to learn early on in dialogical pursuits is how to manage their own expectations. Helping students to find value in dialogue even when it does not proceed as planned is a valuable, worthwhile endeavor.

The Perkins case also highlights the importance of student-initiated dialogue. The one-on-one interviews that they conduct are counted as being more meaningful and impactful than the facilitated group discussions. Dr. Hunt even reports that some students form genuine interfaith friendships with their dialogue partners. Not many of the cases presented here indicate that participants move into that level of engagement. This is important not only for the benefit of the individuals involved, but also because of the positive impact the dialogue sessions can have on the non-Christian communities. Dr. Hunt points out how the dialogue exercises are helpful not only for his students as they broaden their understandings of other faith traditions but also for the larger community as it learns more about Christianity and the diversity found within it. The course-inspired dialogue initiatives fulfill a Perkins graduation requirement, but also help non-Christians in the Dallas community better understand their Christian neighbors.

Finally, the Perkins case, not unlike the Philadelphia or Berkeley stories, addresses issues of theological concern related to dialogue. In some ways Perkins is, perhaps, the most theologically conservative of the schools represented here. Questions of Christian mission and evangelism drive many students' agendas. These students emphasize conversion and confession in relation to people of other faiths. Conversely, there is also a healthy measure of universalist belief among the Perkins student body. Dr. Hunt points out that either of these groups can perceive dialogue to be "theologically pointless". The universalists believe that everyone is saved, so dialogue merely introduces the interesting aspects of religious diversity. The conservatives insist that confession of Jesus as savior is essential, and see dialogue aimed at anything other than conversion as irrelevant. It is helpful for students from both of these perspectives to understand the importance of the place of dialogue in the larger framework of Christian theology. Questions of salvation aside, dialogue helps inform a distinctively Christian perspective on other traditions that otherwise would be lacking. Courses such as these help students define and determine their own theological understandings of diversity and dialogue in relation to the doctrines of their churches.

What is Missing?

The case studies presented here have much in common and much to offer. Yet, what is presented here is not the full story of interfaith-oriented theological education. Some readers will be left wondering what is taking place elsewhere – in Canada or the developing world. There are parts of the world where interfaith dialogue is more naturally integrated into daily life and practice. How is dialogue taught outside of the American or Western context? What can U.S. schools learn about interfaith relations from the global south, for example?

Also, what interfaith educational opportunities are being offered in non-Christian religious schools? Most of these case studies tell the story of Christian schools with predominantly Christian student bodies and faculties. If non-Christian schools were designing the pedagogy for engagement, how would it differ? A glimpse of this can be found in a relatively new joint venture between Andover Newton

Theological School and Hebrew College near Boston.[4] These two schools entered into a space-sharing arrangement that in 2008 led (in large part by student initiatives) into a much deeper and richer partnership. The two schools have now created interfaith programming, peer groups and a Center for Interreligious and Communal Leadership Education which provides leadership development opportunities for students from each institution.

Every year a course is co-taught by faculty from Hebrew College and Andover Newton on a topic of mutual interest. At times the course is related to shared texts, and students spend an entire term together unlocking the riches found in a given book. The joint course experiments at these schools prove that students can learn much from the different ways Jews and Christian approach sacred texts. Other courses presented in this book also use text study as a means of engaging the religious "other", but they do not enter the exercise as deeply as a semester-long course allows.

The learnings from this enterprise of reading scripture together beg many questions about the place of scriptural reasoning as a dialogical exercise. Can texts serve as partners in dialogue? Is there a parallel that can be drawn between text analysis or interpretive approaches to scripture study that require students to hear ancient commentaries in a text and interfaith dialogue that requires participants to ask questions and listen appreciatively to each others' stories? Perhaps answering such questions is left to the purview of the Scriptural Reasoning movement, but deepening such an experience might add value to the courses outlined in this book.

The Hebrew College – Andover Newton model is a good example of two schools coming together and forging a joint program in interreligious relationship-building. Yet, it is apparent that despite the fact that dialogue is a natural and regular part of the bond they share, these schools have not yet fully worked out the best means of incorporating dialogue training into their curricula. The dialogue that takes place between these institutions does so from practical association, student initiative or in the context of shared courses. They have yet to develop a required course that is devoted explicitly to enhancing dialogue skills. When such a course is designed, it will be a unique contribution to the field as it will demonstrate how two

[4] More information on the cooperative venture may be found at http://hebrewcollege.edu/interfaith.

institutions of different faith traditions can develop a mutually-beneficial course in interreligious dialogue. The BAP introduced here represents a dialogue course designed by a non-Christian, however as a result of its location within a Christian institution it presumably adheres to Christian-oriented learning outcomes and standards. One wonders whether a dialogue course designed in a non-Christian institution for a largely non-Christian student body would emphasize different priorities and objectives.

Another question that arises while exploring these case studies is one of orienting principles. For example, it is worth asking whether each school is employing the term "dialogue" in the same way? The operating assumption of these cases seems to indicate that dialogue is inherently good in and of itself and that it is a valid means of relationship building and appreciative understanding. The Catholic types of dialogue presented previously certainly operate on this belief. Yet one could ask whether all traditions value dialogue or employ it for the same reasons and in the same ways. For example, when does the confessional principle of dialogue become evangelization? The cases presented here do not promote dialogue as a means of evangelism – although the Perkins model acknowledges that this is an issue that must be addressed. This begs questions about whether and how dialogue is being taught in more conservative, evangelical institutions.

The need for interfaith engagement is not lost on conservative Evangelicals today, yet one wonders what the objectives are for Evangelicals involved in dialogue. As with the cases presented here, is the goal appreciative understanding of the religious other? A Southern Baptist Convention resolution suggests this is not the case as it affirms conversation for the means of converting the unchurched.[5] Additionally, the North American Mission Board offers a certification for Southern Baptists who want to become "certified interfaith evangelism specialists". This program equips students to present the Christian gospel to non-Christians and combat what are perceived as false teachings. Is this dialogue?

It is clear that preparing the church leadership for engagement with people of other faiths is on the educational agenda for some conservative Christians. But, how do Evangelicals define and approach dialogue? Is it true dialogue that is emerging as a priority for some

[5] See the Southern Baptist Convention 1994 Resolution "On Roman Catholics" available online at www.sbc.net/resolutions.

conservative Christian institutions, or have liberals completely co-opted that term? These are important questions for those hoping to understand the overall impact of the move toward dialogue-oriented teaching methodologies. Therefore, in this book it would be interesting to have a better sense of the pedagogies and priorities employed across a wider spectrum of Christian institutions by highlighting (if and where they exist) a case study or two from courses taught at conservative Evangelical schools. The lack of information on the availability of such offerings leaves one wondering whether this book represents a liberal bias or the actual landscape of theological education today.

Such a case might shed light on what dialogue would look like – or what the priorities around dialogue would be – if taken up in a variety of settings. The pluralistic approach to other traditions that is commonly promoted by many scholars has come under much criticism in recent years. Yet, the works of leading pluralist scholars Paul Knitter and Raimon Pannikar are a mainstay on the course syllabi presented here. There is a diversity of opinion on the value of this approach in the wider theology of religions debate, and it is worth exploring other ways of engaging in dialogue that seek out a middle way between the traditional pluralist and exclusivist paradigms. For some individuals engaged in dialogue, maintaining the integrity and importance of witness without necessarily engaging in evangelism is as important as gaining an appreciative understanding of the religious other. This is another reason why including a more conservative voice in the volume might help provide a balance of opinions and approaches.

Another aspect that is missing from this book touches on an important question in the wider field of theological education today: distance learning. Can dialogue take place on-line? The Hartford Seminary course "Dialogue in a World of Difference" suggests that this is difficult if not out-right impractical. If a workable method for teaching dialogue on-line can be found, this might allow schools to expand dialogue partners to include those from far off places, and it would certainly extend the reach of the conversation. The very nature of dialogue itself might preclude an on-line option for such courses, yet it is an interesting proposition to consider.

Admittedly, many schools today have international students on campus, and the diversity within North America means that neighbors from other countries are often within easy reach. Yet, contextualization questions arise with dialogue among immigrant populations, and the issues raised by these questions are not the same as issues raised in

dialogue with a person whose context is in another country. For example, Muslims in an immigrant community in the United States might emphasize identity and assimilation issues in a dialogue with American seminary students, whereas Pakistani or Palestinian Muslims living in those countries might have different perspectives and priorities. In this scenario, questions arise about how multicultural training differs from skill-building around dialogue. Is engaging the *religious* other vastly different or actually quite similar to engaging the *cultural* other? Perhaps the answer to this question of international context and participation is found in the marriage of dialogue courses and travel seminars such as are offered at Drew University and some of the schools presented here.

The question of on-line involvement is not merely one of international participation in dialogue, however. If dialogue is an exercise best done face to face, then this has implications for those schools that are committed to offering educational opportunities via distance learning. Many schools today are, indeed, concerned with engaging students who cannot attend regular class sessions, and modern technology is allowing much in the way of expanding the classroom beyond the physical campus. Is there a place for the dialogue course in this model? Are there on-line courses in multiculturalism that could provide a framework for dialogue courses? If on-line courses for dialogue training are unrealistic, then perhaps the intensive course model, such as that presented in the BAP program, is the best option for working students who are not within reasonable regular commuting distance of their programs.

How Can this Book be Used?

This book and the case studies presented herein can be a useful tool for educators looking to integrate interreligious dialogue into their educational offerings. Lessons learned from the examples set forth can help identify the potential challenges and pitfalls for new dialogue initiatives. They can help the educator shape a program that is specifically targeted to the needs of her institution and the realities of her community. Questions of focus and intention can also help the crafters of nascent educational programs hone their purposes and clarify their educational outcomes in the same way that the courses presented here have helped the respective institutions define their own needs and priorities related to interreligious engagement. It is

important to ask contextual or framing questions at the beginning of planning new courses. For example, does the community need a broader introduction to world religions, experience in the exercise of dialogue, or clarification of what it means to be a person of faith in the midst of many traditions? The honest assessments of what worked and what did not work that these cases provide can help others design a curriculum that is sensitive to the issues that interfaith encounter can unearth.

The different methods used in these cases can also help the educator determine how to shape her course and locate it within the larger educational offerings. For example, will the course be a required part of the curriculum? If so, where will it reside in a student's core courses? Will a course on dialogue be required in the first semester or will a student be allowed to take it at any time during his seminary career? As was demonstrated above, answers to these questions can have implications for the place of interreligious dialogue in a student's theological worldview.

Additionally, the various approaches to teaching demonstrated through this set of case studies should help one to determine what his or her role in the interfaith dialogue should be. In other words, is the professor a facilitator, dialogue participant, tour guide or advisor? The cases presented here introduce different scenarios with mixed results. Reading about the challenges that each faculty member has in his course might help the educator who is new to dialogue carefully to consider the function she will serve in the classroom. Oftentimes productive dialogues can be overwhelmed by those who are more experienced, and in those instances where the faculty member has vast dialogical practice, it might behoove him to take a backseat in these encounters. This can help the student find her own voice in the dialogue.

As noted, all of the cases presented here include an experiential element. This comes in the form of structured dialogues as well as visits to other, or new, places of worship. Depending on the size of the community visited, and the frequency of visits by such groups, instructors might be aware of the potential for community fatigue. While each community visited *en masse* surely appreciates the opportunity to share its traditions and build or deepen relationships with the faculty members and institutions involved, it might become tedious to do the same program with students every year. None of the cases presented here discusses whether this is an issue, whether

compensation is offered to the host site, or whether those sites selected for hosting are "rotated" from year to year so as to avoid burdening the communities visited. Yet, this question of fatigue might be important for schools with small budgets or limited resources. In the months following September 11th Muslim leaders often spoke of the volume of invitations they received to speak at churches or discuss their faith with community groups. While they welcomed these opportunities to shed light on an often misunderstood and misrepresented tradition, they did feel the effects of over-committed schedules. Instructors of dialogue courses might be wise to be sensitive to the demands placed on religious leaders from other traditions. Thus, those examples that incorporate pre-existing worship services into the class schedule might provide a better model for integrating student experience into the natural activities of a community than extra dialogue sessions allow. Additionally, those courses that require students to find their own new worship experiences might have the least impact on the community as it is much easier to accommodate one visitor than twenty.

The syllabi and associated reading lists provide a good starting point for a bibliography on the topic of dialogue. The world of publishing around interfaith dialogue, theology of religions and interreligious encounter is vast and growing. Thus, the readings recommended in the case studies can help to narrow the options and lift up some of the "classics" in the field.

Educators who are new to interreligious dialogue in their communities can learn much from the examples presented here. This book provides helpful resources for thinking through the benefits and challenges of cultivating dialogue skills in students. The schools presented here are to be commended for taking the lead on this often neglected aspect of theological education. If every theological school in North America were to add one course in interreligious dialogue to its catalogue, a new religious leadership might begin to emerge. This leadership would know how to navigate the issues that diversity entails and would be better able to help their communities deepen their own faith while exploring the religious difference around them.

2 'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School Of Theology, In the Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley

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Editor's Introduction

"'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School" is one of six cases studies from *Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue,*[1] Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

[1] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological

educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of

dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

*The Philadelphia Story (*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is

an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

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David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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2 'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School Of Theology, In the Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley

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Atmosphere and Context

Whatever you have heard about Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area is no doubt true -- at least somewhere within it -- because openness, progressiveness, freedom, and experimentation are valued cultural hallmarks here. But to focus more precisely on our subject, interfaith dialogue and its pedagogy: virtually every religion in the world is active here, whether old or new, in most if not all of its varieties, with intentionally overarching entities like the United Religions Initiative on an international scale, and the Interfaith Chapel at the Presidio on the local scale, besides. Diversity—as fact and as ideology—is in the air we breathe. And respect for that diversity is so effectively valued that offenses against it are amazingly rare. Presently and recently hegemonic values may take a pounding—and that may be relevant to the many of us who are of traditional churches—but it's secondary to our present point. To be interfaith is a part of diversity and of cool religion.

This case study illumines the interfaith ethos of Berkeley through the particular lens of the course on Interreligious Dialogue that I taught at the Jesuit School of Theology in the Spring of 2007. I begin by stating the course's purpose, and follow that with a detailed description of its content. The different methods used are explained next, and finally I state the goals or outcomes of the course, with a reflection on what I would do differently next time.

The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, of which the Jesuit School is a member, advertises itself as the place "where religion meets

the world" (www.gtu.edu). Started forty-seven years ago as a consortium of nine Christian divinity and theology schools dedicated to ecumenical enrichment as well as more traditional priestly and ministerial training and graduate studies, the GTU has added centers in Jewish, Buddhist, and Orthodox Christian studies, and, newly, a center of Islamic studies. Student interest is relatively high in Buddhism and Islam, with considerable interest in Judaism and some interest in Hinduism—particularly Yoga—and in primal/indigenous religions and new religions.

The more particular context of the Jesuit School of Theology, besides its being Catholic, stems from the Jesuit character of the school, in that the Jesuits' Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, in 1995, identified interreligious dialogue as one of the top three priorities worldwide for Jesuits and their institutions. That priority has been implemented at JSTB in the form of a requirement that each Master of Divinity student take one course in either interreligious dialogue or ecumenism. A clear majority of the M.Div. students take either the Interreligious Dialogue course or one of the other courses that fulfils the dialogue requirement (Theology of Religions, the Theological Immersion course in either India or Indonesia, or the Christ, Krishna and Buddha course). Finally, an estimated one-third to one-half of the students—whether from JSTB or from other GTU schools—who take the Interreligious Dialogue course have not had a World Religions course. This affects the pedagogy, as we shall see.

And the most particular context is the students—thirteen of them in this Spring 2007 class. Four women, nine men; four international, nine American; four Jesuits, one Catholic sister, and seven Christian and one Buddhist/Christian laypersons; and six M.Div. students, and seven M.A. or other students. A Malaysian from Kuala Lumpur has considerable dialogue experience; two Vietnamese—one Jesuit and one sister—have experience with Buddhism. One American woman is deeply and reflectively involved in both Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism. A fifty-year old African-American man, experienced and thoughtful on race issues, is a student of Biblical languages, and wishes "to develop," as he wrote early on, "a model on ecumenism and religious pluralism." Two of the men have had some experience with evangelical Christianity. Finally for the moment, two of the Jesuits are Ph.D.'s—one in planetary physics and one in evolutionary biology—who are both involved in dialogues between science and religion.

And a last, general comment about JSTB students: most are not from Berkeley or the Bay Area, but come instead from an American and Catholic church situation where interfaith dialogue's importance is not as much a foregone conclusion as in Berkeley. So, our situation is not as untypical of a USA teaching situation as it might first appear.

Four Purposes of the Course

1. To introduce an important and rather new aspect of Christianity in the world. For example, interreligious, or interfaith, dialogue dates, as an explicit movement among Catholics and Protestants in India only from the late 1950's (cf. J. Kuttianimattathil, *Practice and Theology of Interreligious Dialogue*, 62-63). Official approval on the Catholic side comes with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* in 1964. Dialogue's history may be brief, but some care must be taken with it in the course because of its sensitivity.

2. To describe the nature of dialogue and show its validity—theologically, spiritually, pastorally, socially, and otherwise.

3. To begin, in the students, a learning process of how to do dialogue—both exterior dialogue with others and interior dialogue with oneself and one's faith.

4. Pastorally, to teach students how to help others begin dialogues; and how to help with others' questions about dialogue and other interreligious relations.

Content

Course Unit I: As for the meat of the course, I start off *in medias res* by assigning a vividly written book in which the author learns about dialogue, shows and engages in dialogue, reflects upon dialogue and raises the large Christian theological questions involved in dialogue, all while teaching a good deal about Hinduism and portraying Hindus both colorfully and credibly: Klaus Klostermaier's *In the Paradise of Krishna; Hindu and Christian Seekers.* Such a book is rare, and it's also valuable that this one was far enough ahead of its time (1969) that it has not aged yet.

Early in the first class I quote Muslim-Christian dialogue expert Dr. Thomas Michel, SJ's informal but perceptive remark (directed to Christians): "What inter-religious dialogue really means is how we relate to people who have no interest in becoming Christians" (*National Jesuit News*, November 1997, 7). This puts concisely the vast numbers and worldwide scope of dialogue, and is helpful as to attitude on both sides as well. Historical and, especially, definitional dimensions of dialogue need to be worked on early in the course. And so, along with Klostermaier's book, I assign the Second Vatican Council declaration on the Catholic church's relation with other religions, *Nostra Aetate* ("In our Times"). Additionally, we read the most authoritative Catholic teaching on dialogue since Vatican II, Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* ("The Mission of the Redeemer," n. 55-57), which advances the theology of dialogue significantly, especially with respect to the role of both Word and Holy Spirit in the world's religions (cf. n. 28).

Further initial reading includes "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," the fifth decree of the Jesuits' Thirty-Fourth General Congregation (1995). The points of greatest emphasis here are two: 1) the very useful formulation of the "fourfold dialogue," and 2) the most complete definition, of a number which we look at, of dialogue. The first elaborates four ways, or modes, of dialogue: "The dialogue of life . . . the dialogue of action . . . the dialogue of theological exchange . . . the dialogue of religious experience" ("Our Mission . . .," n. 4). And the second gives us a definition of dialogue more adequate than John Paul II's similar one, "a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 55), by saying: "Dialogue means all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment" (Cited in footnote 14 of "Our Mission . . ," from the1978 Vatican document, "Dialogue and Mission," n. 3).

Finally, I make the course's first three weeks a unit by requiring a four-page paper on Klostermaier's book at the third week's beginning. In this way the students can join their first, vicarious participation in dialogue, with Klostermaier and his partners, to a good preliminary grasp of the definitions and modes of dialogue set forth in the Vatican and Jesuit documents. This combination of a paper completed and some definition achieved makes for some of the liveliest discussion in the course. Three moments from Klostermaier stood out in this year's discussion. First, several students found the beautifully written but terrifying chapter, "Theology at 120 F[ahrenheit]," in which a goat dies of heat stroke and Klostermaier compares his struggle to write an article in this atmosphere of heat and death with the seventy-degree comfortable library conditions of European theologians, an apt and memorable example of contextual theology—a special emphasis of JSTB and GTU well applied here to dialogue theology. Secondly, Klostermaier's extensive scriptural and meditative dialogue and deep friendship with the Hindu renunciant, Swami Yogananda, show students both a path to God highly valued by Hindus and the place of friendship, which I like to teach as the first pillar of dialogue (cf. Chapter 5, "Yoganandaji, My Brother"). And later, the elderly Krishna devotee, Gopalji, impresses students with his advanced love of God as he and Klostermaier reveal to each other the birth-stories of Krishna and Jesus—especially when Gopalji asks the unexpected but beautifully Hindu questions: "Do you think we will be together in eternity? . . . Would you consider me a Christian, as I am?" (op. cit., 82). An obvious teaching-point is that surprising questions should be expected in dialogue—indeed, such questions show a dialogue to be authentic. In sum, then, the beginning of the course offers some Hindu content and some realistic Hindu-Christian dialogue situations in the reading while devoting the class teaching time to the definitions, modes, and other basics of dialogue.

Course Unit II: Raimon Panikkar's brief but rich series of essays, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Revised Edition, New York: Paulist Press, 1999), is the basis of the course's next unit. Adopting a traditional Indian scholarly style which I believe fits the thought of this Indian/European dialogue theologian, I portray myself as the commentator needed to explain and teach the often concise and elliptical sayings, or *sutra-s*, of the master. Guru Panikkar introduces some useful vocabulary, or "rhetoric", into the discussion of dialogue, by explicitating five theological "attitudes" which are common in the practice of dialogue. Panikkar and others have made these attitudes clichés; one might even say ruts—in the road of discourse about dialogue. But Panikkar hasn't invented them. They were already very much present, though often unconsciously, in people's use.

In "exclusivism," the attitude that my faith excludes your faith (and all other faiths), and is the true faith, Christians recognize—or if they don't, some reality therapy can easily enough be given—their own faith's traditional position. Panikkar helpfully shows how such a position can be expressed in sophisticated terms. But he also leaves no

doubt about its inadequacies. "Inclusivism"—that my religion somehow includes and yet is also more complete than your religion—comes next. And it exists in sophisticated forms, such as that my Christianity "fulfills" your religion (and all other religions), or that your sincere and faithful non-Christian practice shows that you are really an "anonymous Christian," or that your religion—of love of God, for example—is absolutely valid as far as it goes, but Nondualist Vedanta Hinduism's union of Atman with the non-personal Brahman both includes and surpasses your religion; or, more generally, that all sincere believers are *muslim-s* in that they all manifest "submission," or "surrender" (*islam*) to God. Class discussion can be expected—and planned on—to liven up at this point. Many points of information about the theologies and religions mentioned are asked for. And some find that, when Panikkar judges this attitude also too one-sided and "superior" for today's world, they're not so certain they want to give up on inclusivism yet. Philosophical as well as theological thinking becomes part of the process now, too, because while exclusivist thinking often manifests a naïve realist epistemology, inclusivist thinking is prone to be so broad in its assertions as "to make truth purely relative".

"Parallelism" is the next attitude Panikkar introduces. It is an example of a larger attitude—"pluralism"—that forms the third of the now classic set that interreligious dialogue theologians and dialogue practitioners all too tirelessly talk about: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Pluralism is a relationship of the many religions in one or another kind of equality: each relating to an unnamed God, Reality, or Absolute; or, as with Panikkar's example here, proceeding more or less equally along parallel lines toward a final consummation; or embodying other modes, generally of a plural equality moving toward a final unity. The very title, pluralism, seems to forbid putting a cap on how many such theologies there might be. Indeed, Panikkar's major affirmation about the value of pluralism is that it should insist on "keep[ing] the . . . dialogue permanently open".

Whether as attitudes or as rough and ready theologies, this triad of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism arouses lively and welcome discussions, in class and in papers, throughout the course. One drawback, however, is that the discussions tend to limit themselves to these three, as if they were the only alternatives. What starts off as an attractive field of theological debate acquires some aspects of a prison. And so I introduce, somewhere in the middle of the discussion, Paul

Knitter's valiant attempt to remedy this defect. In his *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), Knitter increases the number of alternatives to four: exclusivism becomes "the replacement model—'Only One True Religion'"; inclusivism becomes "the fulfillment model—'The One Fulfills the Many'"; pluralism becomes "the mutuality model—'Many True Religions Called to Dialogue'"; and a new "acceptance model" is introduced ("Many True Religions: So Be It"), exemplified according to Knitter by some newer approaches, among them comparative theology. This newer classification of four may not be utterly comprehensive or correct, either, I emphasize, but it reopens a theological field that had become too narrow. Finally, with respect to both sets of terms: they may not be perfect, but they help students begin to speak with confidence of dialogue and its theology.

Panikkar adds to the useful 'rhetoric' that he is building for dialogue by explaining five "models", which he says are "root metaphors" that are meant "to open" the dialogue, though they may not be useful for closing it. In my opinion three are more useful pedagogically. The first is "the rainbow model", in which the white light "of reality" shining through the prism "of human experience" is diffracted into innumerable colors—"traditions, doctrines, and religions". Two helpful image/insights, at least, come from this. First, speaking of any object that receives the beam of white light, Panikkar says:

> The real body that has received the entire beam of white light keeps for itself all the other colors so that it would not accord with truth to judge a religion only from its outer color (16).

The way the other colors are present in the religion, I add, is to be discovered by and in dialogue. Second, within the spectrum's green area, all will look green, while "[a] similar object within the red area will look reddish". Thus, I suggest, within Buddhism, love will take on a 'compassion' coloring. In Christianity, it might be more a self-sacrificing love between equals; in Judaism, covenant loyalty or loving-kindness (*hesed*), and so forth.

Panikkar next develops a highly complex but credible geometrical model which he calls "The Topological Invariant". Its richest pedagogical output, I suggest, is the discovery of homeomorphisms between religions, which are not analogies but rather "functional

equivalents". Thus students would be able to see that "Brahman" and "God" occupy the same place structurally, and perform the same function, in Hinduism and Christianity, respectively. I give as further examples *moksha* (liberation, freedom) and salvation, and karma and providence. And I give as an example of an apparent but false homeomorphism the Christian trinity and the Hindu *trimurti* (triad, of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer). For, while the trinity is arguably the central teaching of Christianity, the *trimurti* has a comparatively derivative and subordinate role in Hindu theology.

For what he calls his "Anthropological Model", Panikkar takes a language as a root metaphor for a religion. A language and a religion both seem complete in themselves, but in fact both are capable of growth and do grow. And each has relations with neighboring languages/religions, borrowing and influencing and being influenced. Further, says Panikkar: "Religions are equivalent to the same extent that languages are translatable, and they are unique as much as languages are untranslatable". Both languages and religions have "terms," which both know of and which can be translated. But each also has "words", which are unique, culture-specific, laden with emotion and history and personal belonging, and are untranslatable. Whereas "ideal", "creed", even "Supreme Being" are terms, "Allah", "Krishna", "Kali", "Jesus"—perhaps even "cross" and *jihad* are words, I propose. In addition, a person in dialogue must learn her dialogue partner's religion, and be able to convey it thoroughly and recognizably, without forgetting her own, just as a good translator must master the foreign language and convey it well in her own. And finally, this model helps on the subject of comparative religion, for it suggests, says Panikkar, that "there is no language (religion) except in concrete languages (religions)". And, consequently, " . . . a nonreligious neutral 'reason'" cannot "pass comparative judgments in the field of religions". The encounter of religions would thus seem to require a new method, from within religions, not from outside them.

<u>Pedagogy</u>: To relate in an ongoing way with our main topic: discussion can be lively, during this Panikkar period of the course, on any or all of the four topics, at least:

1) Panikkar's three "attitudes" of exclusivism, inclusivism, or pluralism (or Knitter's proposed revision of the scheme into four models); 2) The "fourfold dialogue," or four ways of doing dialogue—in terms of which ways are more appropriate, even essential, for certain groups and

circumstances; 3) Panikkar's three models—rainbow, geometric, and language; and 4) various teachings of the religions—at this point mainly Hinduism, because of Klostermaier's and Panikkar's frequent reference to it, but regularly about Islam, too.

Discussion can be lively both from the viewpoint of students' wanting to ask questions or offer their experiences about these matters, and from the viewpoint of the professor's being able to initiate lines of discussion about these topics or combinations of them. Such student questions can call upon the experience of the professor. Or the professor can start a discussion about an area he senses a weakness or lack of understanding in. Or the professor can request input from one of the students whose cultural or dialogue experience makes her strong in an area in which most other students are "at sea."

Panikkar's second chapter, "The Dialogical Dialogue," is central theologically and philosophically to his presentation of dialogue, and to my dialogue course as well. Theologically, he quickly makes his position clear by rejecting both the monistic and the dualistic positions, asserting instead: "Ultimately I am pleading for an advaitic or nondualistic approach". I explain immediately that "nondualism" (Sanskrit *advaita*) is the central teaching of the Hindu Vedanta system which holds that reality is neither distinctly two nor simply one. But since nondualism has more than one form, I summarize three of them, to provide detailed background. Shankara's nondualism teaches that the deepest human reality, the Self or Atman, is nondifferent from the Absolute Being/Consciousness/Joy, or Brahman, and that the appearance of difference which is the world is illusion, or *maya*. His opponent Ramanuja taught a different Vedanta philosophy—that Brahman/Vishnu, souls, and the world constitute a "Nondualism of the differentiated Reality" (*Vishishtadvaita*), since souls and material things are real but are modes of Vishnu/Brahman, not ultimately different from him. Vallabha's nondualism, known as "Pure Nondualism" (*Shuddhadvaita*), is a third kind, a pantheism which contends that everything and everyone is Krishna/Brahman, even Maya, who is real but is a power of Krishna/Brahman. Within this context it is possible to understand Panikkar's "cosmotheandric" philosophy/theology, which is a nonduality of three interacting poles, or "a threefold polarity" — the world (Greek *kosmos*), God (*theos*), and humanity (root *andr*-). Of the three Hindu nondualisms noted above, I suggest that Panikkar is closest to Ramanuja's "nondualism of the differentiated Reality."

I don't think it will surprise the reader to learn that it was at about this time in this year's (Spring 2007) course that I asked the students to begin considering for future discussion whether a World Religions course, or at least significant World Religions information, is needed in order to do this dialogue course well. Results of this reflection will be presented later.

Panikkar continues to describe his central philosophy/theology by specifying its "epistemological formulation", and, a bit later, its "anthropological assumption". Epistemologically, subject-object knowing cannot completely handle the encounter and dialogue of religions, according to Panikkar, because such knowing cannot be adequate to the knower as knower. And the knowers themselves, the "I" and the "thou" in the encounter of religions, are precisely where the deepest dialogue, which Panikkar calls "the dialogical dialogue", takes place—without excluding the "dialectical dialogue" of "I" and "thou" and "it" (material objects, concepts, beliefs, etc.). And Panikkar makes the point anthropologically when he defines the human person as follows:

> The anthropological assumption is that Man is not an individual but a person, that is, a set of relationships of which the I-Thou-It, in all the genders and numbers, is the most fundamental. (24)

The dialectical dialogue proceeds in its valid and needful way, by knowing the facts and knowables of one another and each one's faith, while the dialogical dialogue adds the greater depth, because it is "I" and "thou" relating in such a way that they are not entirely different from one another, and neither is the "It" of their religious faiths and their symbols. Thus does Panikkar's cosmotheandric nondualism express itself as far as human knowing and human nature are concerned. Or, since Panikkar's own summary from a slightly different angle might be better:

> The relevance of the dialogical dialogue for the Encounter of religious traditions and the so-called Comparative Religion is obvious. I cannot really know—and thus compare—another ultimate system of beliefs unless somehow I share those beliefs, and I cannot do this until I know the holder of those beliefs, the you—not as other (that is, nonego), but as a you. . . (26)

(Note: Panikkar uses "thou" and "you" interchangeably in these pages.)

Panikkar's point is to *add* something to dialectics without denying its validity. Dialogical dialogue *limits* the rational and conceptual thinking that is dialectics by refusing to admit its totality. But it *complements* dialectics by doing justice to the interpersonal—the "I-thou" and its context, which is ontologically present and valid and true, but which cannot be captured by conceptual knowing. Panikkar affirms this and adds to the scope of dialogical dialogue when he says: "Dialogical dialogue is in its proper place when dealing with personal, cross-cultural, and pluralistic problems . . . with situations not totally reducible to the logos".

At this point I teach that here, in Panikkar's second chapter and in his third chapter, "Faith and Belief," we see and learn about the path of a person (Panikkar) who is in the dialogue of religious experience and the dialogue of theological exchange—particularly the former. And I use this moment and context to introduce a principle: that we should see all the levels of the fourfold dialogue—even the deeper ones which not all of us may participate in. Because thus we can see the validity of dialogue—not to mention its depth and beauty. For it has been my and others' experience that these deeper levels of dialogue—especially the dialogue of religious experience—ground and validate our work on the first two levels (dialogue of life and of action); and the first two levels would not last long without (at least) the religious experience level. It is important that the converse is also true: thus, when a student asked whether levels three and four of dialogue were less valid if levels one and two were not present, I happily answered yes.

In his third chapter, "Faith and Beliefs," Panikkar courageously takes on one of our subject's central questions: how does dialogue affect my faith? He approaches the question of faith and beliefs in dialogue by using a fitting combination of autobiography, philosophical anthropology, and theology. In what he calls an "objectified autobiographical fragment", Panikkar recounts his discovery and refusal of religious exclusivism—the exclusivism, rather clearly, of his own Roman Catholicism. He later indicates what he discovered positively when he says: "What I should like to stress is the way faith prompts one to link up different kinds of religion".

Next, Panikkar weds philosophical anthropology fruitfully to autobiography in his definition of faith. For he teaches that faith is each person's connection with "transcendence, with what stands above me . . . with the beyond, however you choose to envision it". Faith is not merely occasional and religious, according to Panikkar, but is a person's

moment-to-moment connection with his or her future, destiny, dreams, and, yes, salvation ("The business of faith is preeminently to save us".) Faith has to do with all our intentionality, desire, creativity, and volition. Belief, then, is our formulation of our faith to ourselves (and others). Beliefs are essential to our faith—as essential as words are to our thought. But, since faith actually connects with the "beyond", which is transcendent and thus inexpressible, faith is not identical with belief(s). Panikkar gives the example of the believer and the atheist. Both have faith in the truth, but one expresses it by the belief "God exists," and the other by the contradictory belief "God does not exist."

The reason that Panikkar takes such care to demonstrate the distinction between faith and beliefs is that he finds himself, in the process of "understanding" the beliefs of his partner in dialogue, somehow sharing those beliefs so that he "judge[s] [them] to be somewhat true", and reaches "convincement" concerning them. In this way they can become beliefs of his faith. Pedagogically at this point I attempt to give some examples of such beliefs, and two profound teachings, central to their religions, come to mind. From Hinduism, the Atman/Brahman identity, by which the deepest interior reality, or "self" (*atman*) of the human person is discovered to be nondually identical with the Absolute or Supreme Being (*Brahman*), the foundation of all reality, is one. And from Buddhism, the chief metaphysical teaching, called "Dependent Co-Arising" or "Conditioned Co-Production" (*pratitya-samutpada*), whereby everything comes into being and passes out of being dependent upon everything else, so that, this and this being present, that arises, and this and this being absent, that perishes, is another example. This "understanding" is a splendid attempt by Panikkar to ground and explain the kind of "mutual enrichment" of faith which Pope John Paul II and others have spoken of as part of the definition of dialogue.

In such considerations of faith, belief, and convincement, the deeper dimensions of dialogue begin to become clear. Panikkar recognizes this by identifying dialogue in the most central Christian terms:

> At this juncture, the dialogue of which I speak emerges not as a mere academic device or an intellectual amusement, but as a spiritual matter of the first rank, a religious act that itself engages faith, hope, and love. Dialogue is not bare methodology but an essential part of the religious act par excellence: loving God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself . . . Love for our neighbor also makes intellectual demands . . . (48-49).

Students need to consider, then, whether and how dialogue is a "religious act." Another way in which Panikkar in this context speaks of the deep dimensions of dialogue is when he says, while defining faith: "So one thing faith effects is salvation . . . " A person's or group's deeper dialogues, upon which many lesser ones can be based, bear upon salvation itself.

Course Unit III: The course's second half (but third unit) begins with Jacques Dupuis' voluminous presentation of the history of Christian theology's relations with other religions, followed by his essay precisely *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997; history and essay are in the same volume). While positive theological relations have not been numerous in Christian history, Dupuis shows some fruitful moments in at least three eras: among the early Church Fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria; in medieval times Ramon Llull of Barcelona, Francis of Assisi (briefly but importantly), and Nicholas of Cusa; and in the era of the great overseas discovery professors in Spain and Rome like Domingo Soto, Robert Bellarmine, and Juan de Lugo as they reflected on the theological consequences of there being so many "new" peoples in the world. In addition, his theological exploration, in the early Fathers mentioned, of the doctrine of "Word" (Logos) of God—both before and after the Word became flesh in Jesus—yields some of the richest possibilities for relating Christian revelation with other religions. Discussion of this theological question offers a great pedagogical opportunity as well. For what Dupuis is doing by exploring what God the Word (Logos) did with respect to humanity before becoming enfleshed in Jesus—as described in John's Gospel 1.1-14—is establishing a *locus theologicus* (literally a "theological place"; but, used as a technical term, "a legitimate basis for theologizing") for relating Christian revelation with other religions and their followers. This is important, I teach, because establishing *loci theologici* for doing interreligious theology from a Christian standpoint has been difficult. Usually scripture (strictly the Bible), authoritative Church teachings such as the Councils, the Church Fathers, and perhaps the great Scholastic or Reformation theologians have been admitted as *loci*, and frankly, those sources don't say much about other religions. So, the dialogue experts and theologians who are experiencing how important and enriching are the other religions are striving to identify such *loci*

theologici and get them accepted. This, I suggest, is one of the important things Dupuis is doing.

Many questions of theological meaning, history and system dominate the discussion and affect the pedagogy and timing during these classes. But let me briefly give examples of thematic statements by Dupuis that my students and I have found creative. The first is an analogy, in which Dupuis opines that, just as the Second Vatican Council has made it clear that the proper relationship between the other Christian churches and ecclesial communities and the Roman Catholic Church is no longer merely that of offending servants who need to bow before their longsuffering Mistress, so there is greater interdependence and mutuality now between the other religions and Christianity. Another rich statement develops the idea that it is trinitarian theology, among the theologies possible in Christianity, that best reflects the plurality of the real situation in the world of religions (206); and thus a theology, and even Christology, of Spirit should prevent a simplistic and improper "Christomonism". And finally, Dupuis puts forth a thesis against reducing salvation history to the Judeo-Christian tradition (217). This is a theologian's prophetic plea that salvation history be seen as coextensive with the history of creation, i.e., of all peoples. I present this as a plea based on Dupuis' dialogue experience, because in another place he says, about a statement of theologians writing at a distance from religions other than their own:

> What strikes the eye in comparing this last text with the Asian ones is the difference of perception which prolonged, everyday interaction with the membersof other religious traditions provides, concerning their significance and value in God's plan for humankind (315).

This unit of the course also requires reading, reflection, and discussion of *Dominus Iesus*, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's declaration in 2000. Its subtitle is the best summary of its contents: "On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church." My reasons for teaching this controversial document are two: 1) I would not be teaching the full Catholic position on dialogue, to many Catholics who need to go honestly into dialogue, unless I taught this work; and 2) the declaration is in some parts a reaction to Jacques Dupuis' book.

I find, and declare, strong agreement with *Dominus Iesus'* main teaching—against the sort of relativism in religion and truth that says simply: "One religion is as good as another" (#22). And I point out that such relativism interferes with a clear missionary proclamation of the Christian message. And, after leading discussion and answering questions on the main topics—Christ, Church, and salvation—I make my major criticism: that *Dominus Iesus* has tried perhaps prematurely to resolve the tension in certain questions—a tension which needs more time in dialogue to mature. I mean such questions as the (other) religions and revelation, the religions and salvation, the notions of faith *versus* belief as discussed in this declaration, the Kingdom of God and the religions, and so forth. In that respect I find my previous emphasis on establishing some new *loci theologici* natural to repeat here. Lastly we discuss how the declaration's treatment of Logos theology—especially as it carries over to the same congregation's *Notification* on Dupuis' teaching — seems, in its opposition to the Logos' activity with respect to other religions before becoming incarnate in Jesus, to be condemning Dupuis' theology on that subject. And it is even possible that Dupuis' aforementioned analogy between greater ecumenical equality among the churches and greater equality of the religions led to the assertion in *Dominus Iesus* that several "ecclesial communities" were not "Churches in the proper sense", which those churches took as a stinging insult—and that from a line of questioning which was not even part of the declaration's main subject matter.

<u>Course Unit IV</u>: For the final unit, the course works in a more practical way, first on a kind of religion—indigenous religion—and then on two of the religions that American Christians are most often in dialogue with—Islam and Buddhism. I treat indigenous religion because of the exhortation in the Jesuit document "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," which says:

> This dialogue of theological exchange can more easily be carried on with religions which have a written tradition. However, the dialogue with indigenous religions is equally important. These religions express a sense of the divine and the transcendent which must be "approached with great sensitivity, on account of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them" (n. 4, with quote from *Dialogue and Proclamation*, n. 14).

I have chosen Michael Kirwen's *The Missionary and the Diviner*, although it is about African rather than American indigenous religion,

because of its literary and scholarly excellence and because it is not just *about* dialogue—with proper qualification, it *is* dialogue. A similarly good, or nearly as good, book on dialogue with Native American religion, however, I would adopt immediately.

Of the many revealing issues that Kirwen highlights, one of the most useful pedagogically is the utter transcendence of the Luo people's High God Kiteme, compared with the relative immanence of the Christian God/Christ/Spirit as perceived by the Luo diviner Riana. For besides the great theological discussions it engenders both in the book and in class, the purity and supremacy of Kiteme gives the lie effectively to the term "animism", by which Luo and other indigenous religions all over the world are inaccurately labeled—implying that the religions are controlled strictly by small-scale spirits barely distinguishable from nature.

One other useful example is the pastoral question raised when another healer-diviner, Okech, perceives that the lay trainee whom the missionary has brought with him has a rare disease, and offers to heal her. The subsequent conversation between missionary and trainee, and the further consideration, by the Christian leaders of the place, of the pastoral/interreligious issue surrounding such a healing, are pedagogically helpful for illustrating that difficult pastoral questions for one's own church, etc., will arise from the dialogue of the religions. The professor's or students' experience can give rise to a fruitful discussion here.

The all-important topic of dialogue with Islam comes next. And I assign for reading and discussion Maurice Borrmans' *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, because, though this short book is twenty-five years old, it is wondrously packed with valuable information and advice. Early on, for example, Borrmans analyzes four different Christian-Muslim circumstances, along two axes—whether the Christian churches in the region are ancient or new, and whether the majority population is Muslim or Christian. As the examples given seem to be largely from "Old World" countries, I make some analyses based on the recently changing New World circumstances. And I teach a principle for dialogue as well: In beginning and continuing a dialogue, strategize *where* you are and what is possible by reason of where you are. Likewise with the other well known question-words: *who?, what?, when?, why?, how?* Such strategizing should not be a fearful attempt to eliminate the unknown, of which there will be much in any case. Rather it attempts to identify possibilities and avoid what does not apply.

Of relevant Qur'an passages, there are at least two which instruct Muslims to dialogue with other believers, particularly with Jews and Christians ("People of the Book"). One runs: "Call thou (people) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition and dispute with them in the better way" (Qur'an 16:125). A further passage provides to Islam something that the Bible does not provide for Christians — a theology of religions, i.e., a statement of the meaning and place of other religions in God's plan: " . . . had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie with one another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return" (Qur'an 5:48; page 40; oddly, Borrmans does not finish the sentence: "and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance" [Arberry's translation]). Muslims cite this verse often in dialogue.

Finally--typical of the sophisticated contrasting advice Borrmans gives in different keys--we hear of both difficulty and profound hope in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Difficulty attends the religions being contradictory to each other in their both claiming universality, in their strong disagreements about revelation and scripture, and in their vastly different teachings with respect to God and Jesus, so much so that the author advises: "Undertake the impossible, but accept the provisional". Lest this be considered pessimistic, however, or giving up too easily, Borrmans elsewhere emphasizes that at the "more specifically religious level" (30) of dialogue, it is one another's salvation that the partners seek: "This, then, is a sharing of the values of faith and can become a 'dialogue of salvation', as the participants face the ineffable mystery of God".

The course's final book, Ruben Habito's *Living Zen, Loving God* helps in at least three ways. Primarily, it introduces students to the many possibilities of Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Secondly, it gives at least one good example of interreligious theology. And finally, it "is a pioneering example of interspirituality," as dialogue expert Wayne Teasdale says in a blurb at the very beginning of the book (I take 'interspirituality' as equivalent to 'interreligious spirituality'). The instance of interreligious theology comes in the course of Habito's explaining the *kensho* (enlightenment) experience he had while meditating on and "living", day and night, the famous *koan* "Mu". Two different Zen masters confirmed the validity of the Christian Habito's enlightenment experience. And, in terms of explaining it, Habito interprets it as a discovery of his "original nature" or "Buddha-nature"

(7). Quoting Ephesians 1.4 then, and citing no fewer than seven other passages from New Testament epistles, Habito carefully points out what "can perhaps be called our *Christ nature*". And he further relates this Christ nature with the "Spirit" that is the "Breath" of the body of Christ, as in *Romans* 12.5.

A strong example of interreligious spirituality is the entire chapter called "The Enlightened Samaritan: A Zen Reading of a Christian Parable". Perhaps two of the many points will suffice here. First, recalling that the lawyer asked Jesus what he had to do "to attain eternal life", Habito reveals, with the help of analogy with the all-absorbing concentration needed to practice the koan Mu, that 'eternal life' is not just the after-life, but this present and this future lived with complete intensity, like the opening announcement in Mark's Gospel: "The Realm of God is at hand!" (Mk. 1.15). Secondly, Habito notes that the word translated as "compassion" in the Samaritan story is more deeply emotional in the Greek; it means "to be moved in one's gut" (76)—viscerally. And the point is for that depth of feeling to become spontaneous and habitual. To make this point, Habito cites a Zen master's answer when asked how the Bodhisattva of Compassion uses her thousand hands: "It is like adjusting a pillow with an outstretched hand in the middle of the night": so spontaneous and natural should be our compassion.

Methods

I'll treat Meditation first, since it is done at the beginning of class, and throughout the course from beginning to end. The idea originated with dialogue pioneer Dr. Matthaeus Lederle, SJ, in Pune, India, who said, as I was interviewing him in 1980 in preparation for my new "Hindu-Christian Dialogue" course: "Jim, you must give them some *sadhana* (roughly, 'spiritual practice'), as we do in our dialogue sessions here." Many colleagues in India agreed, and I was so inclined. So, we do a meditation, or prayer, or combination of the two, for the first ten minutes of each class (2-3 minute introduction, 7-8 minute meditation). I often use Anthony de Mello's book *Sadhana* for its Buddhist meditations of awareness of body and breath; also, many Bible passages, such as the Beatitudes (Mt. 5), or the Passover meal (Ex. 12); the *Cloud of Unknowing* meditation; several passages from the Hindu Upanishads and *Bhagavad-Gita*; the *Fatiha* and other *Qur'an* passages; a Buddhist '*Kuan-yin* with a Thousand Hands' compassion meditation, and others, with some repetitions. The main purpose is atmospheric and mood-setting; sometimes the goals of Buddhist meditation, calming down and sharpening up (*samatha* and *vipasyana*), seem to be achieved. But it's also partly content-oriented, as can be seen from the many different religions and types of meditation. This introduces an element of religious practice throughout the course as well, making the course matter more concrete. Finally, it shows students how easy it is to lead such exercises, in dialogue sessions or other helpful contexts. Does it work? To judge by the pin-drop silence, yes definitely. Evaluations also mention it favorably—commenting negatively on any omission or shortening. What doesn't work? An important point for discernment needs to be made: that neither make-believe nor coercion of students' beliefs are sought—quite the contrary—and yet the content or practice presented should be considered seriously.

Second, a few remarks are required about the papers, in addition to what written assignments normally yield. I assign the first paper quickly — at two weeks — so as to get an initial read of the student as to dialogue, based on Klostermaier's very vivid presentation. I explicitly require the paper to be at least half personal reflection, so as to make such reflection a habit throughout the course in all the written assignments. The most frequent form this reflection takes is as what I call "interior dialogue" (others sometimes call it "inner dialogue" and it is one of the meanings of Panikkar's term "intrareligious dialogue"). This is the dialogue that necessarily goes on within oneself between the faith or faiths one is learning about and one's own faith. Panikkar says of it, for example: "I would like to begin again by stressing the often-neglected notion of an *intrareligious* dialogue, that is, an inner dialogue within myself, an encounter in the depth of my personal religiousness, having met another religious experience on that very intimate level" (73-74). For many years both students and I have found interior dialogue one of the course's most fruitful categories (cf. my "The Hindu-Christian Dialogue and the Interior Dialogue," in *Theological Studies* 44/4, 1983, 587-603).

Thirdly, the immersion at a temple, mosque, synagogue, meditation center, or monastery is an important element of our course. I consider it preferable that this be a 'real-life' experience, and thus involve spontaneity both on the student's part and the religious center's, rather than being too pre-arranged or ordered to formal dialogue. But by way of preparation, I give the students a handout

which lists three or four good centers each for Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in the Berkeley area, with internet addresses and phone numbers, plus the names of some GTU professors whose advice might help. And I instruct the students to visit the center they choose at least three times. As to dialogue, I specify that they should be quite open about their being there to fill a dialogue course requirement, but should expect and engage in dialogue only if and as it develops, as it frequently does. To try to force dialogue in two or three meetings might be counterproductive, and in any case, informal dialogue more often goes deeper, and longer, than formal dialogue. I give a second handout which suggests how the students might best write up their 9-10 page report on this immersion, due in the course's tenth week. Such questions—after a description of the place, whom they met, and what happened—as "what have you learned?", "is there scope for dialogue there?", "has this 'worked', or can it work?", "what does this do to your interior dialogue, or your commitment to external dialogue?", and others are suggested. The results are varied, exciting, and helpful; many students report the immersion to be the most worthwhile part of the course. For a few of the good responses, please read on.

Fourthly, some further word is needed about the place of discussion in the course—especially since it strongly affects one-fourth of the course grade. As in many courses, informational questions will abound—in this case mainly about the less known religions being considered. Theological questions are also frequent, and these lead to invaluable and sometimes long discussions. But as far as discussions which can be planned, my experience is that the best ones are sparked by 1) the interesting personalities whom we see in dialogue, or 2) the papers the students have just done. So, I bring up Klostermaier's vivid friendship with Swami Yoganandaji, and the arresting questions Gopalji asks him about religion, and see where these can open up students' faith along new lines. Likewise with the hour-long video I show, *A Human Search: The Life of Father Bede Griffiths* (More Than Illusion Films: Sydney, Australia), sometimes there's question of whether one can "go that far" and still be Christian. And on point two above, it was students who years ago alerted me that it was when they'd just finished papers that they were most ready to discuss.

Arguably the best student input and discussion of this spring's course came when I asked eight students—generally the ones who had participated little in discussion to that point—to do a ten-minute presentation on their 'immersion' visits to mosques, meditation-centers, etc., and their resulting papers. I thought three particularly good. Our Vietnamese Catholic nun went to a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in San Jose, where she spoke with "an old Buddhist nun." The Catholic student admitted to us that she had never found Buddhist temples good for anything but "landscape." And the old nun wasn't answering her theological dialogue questions very well, either. She was only saying things like: "What would it be like if Buddha and Jesus met today?" It would be wonderful, thought the old nun. In fact, "When you and I meet Jesus and Buddha meet today." Our student eventually "got" that this was what dialogue is, and now goes back to the temple. And our Jesuit physicist went to a different Buddhist monastery, "just to fulfil the requirement," and at first felt ignored by the monk in charge. But soon he met the monastery's novice monk—also a first-rate scientist and interested in the science-religion dialogue as well as Buddhist-Catholic dialogue. A regular dialogue friendship has resulted. Finally, our Baptist student went to a local Hindu meditation center. But the monk in charge didn't seem interested in dialogue or much else. The posted meditation and lecture hours also happened to conflict with the student's class hours. Only one layman talked with him and helped him a bit. But our student found that he learned more, through *not* getting into dialogue, about what he wanted in dialogue, and *that* he wanted dialogue, than he probably would have under so called ideal conditions.

Further matter for discussion sometimes comes from the professor's own dialogue experience, and it can be fruitful, especially when the professor knows when to close his mouth (more about that later). Finally, there's great unpredictability in discussion of vast religions looked at from new angles. So, both originality, good judgment, and self-discipline are imperative on the professor's part, and even then there are going to be many questions, topics, and stories unfinished.

Goals/Outcomes

The big-picture goal is to get students into and involved in the important new dimension of human, world-wide religious life that is dialogue, so they might realize that dialogue is, as Panikkar says, "a religious act". Partly propaedeutic to dialogue, but partly achieved only in dialogue, is a real experience of how impressive and important

religions other than their own are—a repeated experience, preferably, with context and believers of another religion. Finally, to begin to establish in the students a pastoral ability to help their church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc., and its individual members, with relations with other religions. Important subsidiary goals such as learning things about religions other than one's own, and making great progress towards one's own theology of religions, are realistically attainable as well.

What Would I Do Differently?

I might best start with some changes in course mechanics. One of the most involved students suggested that the course meet once a week, for nearly three hours, rather than the present twice a week. This was after very fruitful theological discussions in two successive classes had been cut short by the clock. Other students agreed, and so do I. Each format has had its advantages over the years, but I think the long class (with an intermission) more likely protects thorough discussion. Further, I would lengthen the papers slightly—the first two papers to five pages each, the "immersion" paper to ten, and the final paper to 14-15 pages. The papers are the lone requirements apart from discussion, and this measure would prevent especially the first two from being done too lightly. In addition, a good guest speaker could help distinctly in one or two of the weeks. Also, I am considering changing Borrmans' book on Christian-Muslim dialogue, because of certain student objections, if I can find a book as good or better (a report from '09: Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *The Heart of Islam* works very well). And finally, based on one student's accurate criticism of his/her professor, I need to know when to stop talking (the point was made that even for writing the course evaluations I had talked so long that there wasn't enough time to do them well. Guilty!). Pedagogically this bears upon the question of how much of the professor's own dialogue experience can help. It can help much, as long as it stops short of the course being about the professor.

Aside from those particular points, I want to give more thought to the differences within students' knowledge of relevant materials—especially the so called world religions. This factor has been important every year, but especially important in this Spring 2007 dialogue course and in my Fall 2006 Theology of Religions course. I get a read early in the course by having students introduce themselves, and asking them to

give some other information on a card. But more planning is needed on how, once certain different "sectors" of knowledge-level have been identified in the course, to keep the differing persons and sectors "in" the course, rather than lost in the profound discussions of a few, for example. Lack of knowledge of world religions not their own was, as I suspected, frequently reported as one of the differentiating factors among students. Of the five (out of eleven) evaluations which mentioned this specifically, the most eloquent suggested:

> Perhaps some more structured time spent on presenting foundational beliefs of each religion would be useful for students with little or no background. "Comparative Theology" seemed to come up in a more ad hoc way, which can be confusing for those without even the barest foundations in the tenets of a religion.

I have subsequently devoted fifty to sixty minutes each to presentations of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, with positive student response. I have come to think this necessary in a theology school which does not separately require a world religions course.

And last of all let me give an example of "if I had it to do over again . . ." It occurred to me only after the dialogue course's end that, in the case of an excellent student who is quite fully involved in two religions, rather than letting her do her course 'immersion' in the second, newer religion, I should have had her immerse in another, third religion. Because, as we set it up, she wasn't dialoguing with a religion relatively new to her, which is the point, but with two religions she knew deeply. Next time, then . . . (by the way, I did tell her).

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION – JSTB

RSFT3179 Interreligious Dialogue

James D. Redington, SJ

Spring Semester 2007

This course will involve both study and immersion: study of the history and theology of dialogue chiefly but not exclusively in Catholic Christian circles; immersion by writing and by regular involvement with local temples, mosques, synagogues, meditation centers, etc. Lecture with discussion and meditation. Reflection and research papers, focusing on one's own interior dialogue as well as exterior dialogue. Fulfils the JSTB M.Div. interreligious dialogue/ecumenism requirement.

Required Reading:

In the Paradise of Krishna (= Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban), by Klaus Klostermaier. Available used via Amazon, etc.

Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*, Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (#55-57), and Jesuit General Congregation 34's Decree #5, "Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," all easily downloadable.

The Intrareligious Dialogue, by Raimon Panikkar. Revised edition. Paulist PB.

Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, by Jacques Dupuis. Orbis Books PB.

The CDF Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (from Google, www.vatican.va, etc.).

The Missionary and the Diviner, by Michael Kirwen. Orbis Books PB.

Guidelines for Dialogue between Muslims and Christians, by Maurice Borrmans. Paulist Press PB.

Living Zen, Loving God, by Ruben Habito. Wisdom Publications PB.

Course Requirements:

Feb. 12 Due date for a 3-4 page report-with-reflection paper (= Paperette) on Klostermaier's book.

Mar. 12 Paperette based on Vatican documents, Panikkar and Dupuis so far.

Apr. 12/16 Enhanced paperette (8-9 pp.) on one's dialogue immersion in a local temple, mosque, synagogue, meditation center, etc. (as explained by Prof.).

May 17 Due date for a 12 page final paper on a topic, person, question, etc., connected with interreligious dialogue. Bibliographical help available, but one's own research encouraged.

Grading: 15%, 15%, 20% for first three; 25% final paper; 25% class participation and discussion, including attendance.

Class Meetings and Reading Assignments:

Jan. 29-Feb. 1 Introduction, meditations, Vatican II and John Paul II. Kloster- maier 1-74, *NA, RM.*

Feb. 5-8 Deeper on Vatican Documents and Klostermaier. Klostermaier 75-118; Jesuit Dialogue Decree.

Feb. 12-15 Paperette on Klostermaier due on 12. Classes on Jesuit decree, then Panikkar. Panikkar xv-xx, 1-22; Dupuis 1-52.

Feb. 22 Panikkar's 'Attitudes and Models'. Panikkar 23-40; Dupuis 53-109.

Feb. 26-Mar. 1 Panikkar on Dialogue. Panikkar 41-59; Dupuis 110-70.

Mar. 5-8 Panikkar on Faith and Beliefs. Panikkar 61-71; Dupuis 170-234.

Mar. 12-15 Paperette due Mar. 12. Dupuis, for a change. Panikkar 73-83; Dupuis 235-304.

Mar. 19-22 More Dupuis; and Bede Griffiths. Panikkar 103-117; Dupuis 305-390.

Apr. 2-5 Concluding Dupuis and Panikkar; beginning *Dominus Iesus*. *Dominus Iesus*; Kirwen vii-xxv.

Apr. 9 *Dominus Iesus*; then: Dialogue with African Religions. Kirwen 1-77.

Apr. 12 No class meeting. Vaishnava-Christian Dialogue in Wash., D.C.

Apr. 16-19 Enhanced paperette due Apr. 12 or 16. Dialogue in Africa. Kirwen 77-131; Borrmans 1-3, 9-27.

Apr. 23-26 From Africa to Islam. Borrmans 28-87.

Apr. 30-May 3 Dialogue with Islam. Borrmans 88-114; Habito ix-xvi, 1-25.

May 7-10 Dialogue with Buddhism. Habito 27-101.

May 14 Final Class. Dialogue Present and Future. Habito 103-114.

May 17 Due date for final paper.

Note: For our April 23 class period, our class and Dr. Marianne Farina’s “Islamic Philosophy” class, at the GTU Dean’s invitation, met in the GTU Library Board Room with 14 Muslim professors of Islamic subjects from universities in Indonesia. Format was: a 12-minute presentation by on of the visiting professors on ‘Reason and Faith in Islam’; then questions and discussion or dialogue by students of professors, then by professors of students, etc.

3 World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of The Overall Program of Theological Education At Perkins School of Theology

Robert Hunt

Editor's Introduction

"'Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement" is one of six cases studies from *Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue,*[1] Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology

[1] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological

educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of

dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia Story (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is

an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

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David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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3 World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of The Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology

Robert Hunt

Introduction

For over the past half century, the necessity of interfaith dialogue has become obvious to a growing number of Christians, regardless of their theological convictions in relation to the purpose of engaging with non-Christian religions. Even as this case study was being written, a meeting involving major evangelical and ecumenical groups in Nairobi was preparing a statement of agreement on the need to engage in a wider ecumenism, respect the integrity of both Christian and non-Christian religious communities, and foster dialogue (Global Christian Forum, November 2007). There are several reasons for this growing consensus around dialogue. They range from a realization that effective evangelism begins by listening to and understanding the non-Christian other to a conviction that world peace is possible only through a dialogue aimed at both mutual understanding and appreciation. The course World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective that is discussed in this case study does not presume a single normative basis for Christian participation in dialogue, but does assume that dialogue is a critical part of Christian engagement with non-Christians, and is thus an essential pastoral skill. It is equally important that students develop a theological framework for understanding interfaith dialogue as a legitimate part of the ministry of the church. Unless students can articulate for themselves and their future congregations the Christian necessity of interfaith dialogue, it will ultimately be pushed to the periphery of their concerns and activities. This case study describes the setting within which the course World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective is taught, specifically discusses how inter-religious dialogue is taught within the course, and offers an evaluation of the

course intended to guide its further development and more generally indicate both the possibilities and difficulties of engaging seminary students in inter-religious dialogue.

The Cultural and Religious Demographics of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.

The Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex has grown over several decades through migration from both within the United States and immigration from abroad. The result has been increasing cultural and religious diversity alongside growing fears by previously dominant cultural groups that their identity is threatened by that diversity. The locus of both growing religious diversity and inter-cultural tension has been primarily in the suburban areas. In those areas reside both families of European descent that left the city of Dallas proper to escape the growing presence of Latino/as and African-Americans, and large numbers of middle class immigrants from Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist backgrounds attracted to the professional opportunities of the growing technology sector as well as both public schools and readily available tertiary education. The result has been significant numbers of mosques, temples, mandars, garanths, and churches as well as both fear of and resistance to their development. The City of Richardson is perhaps the most notable example of this diversity. In addition to a decades old Jewish community, it has the largest mosque in the region (with over 2000 worshippers for Friday prayers) as well as two Buddhist temples, a Sikh garanth, and two Hindu mandars. Other suburbs of Dallas (Irving, Farmers Branch, Carrollton, Plano, Frisco, Garland, and Mesquite) have equally diverse, if not so large, non-Christian populations and institutions. The same diversity of religions is found in Dallas itself.

Interfaith Dialogue in Dallas

Interfaith Dialogue in the Dallas Metroplex is being organized and carried out by several different organizations.

1. Thanksgiving Square: This is a well-endowed institution with an interfaith chapel, park and offices in downtown Dallas. It describes its activities as:

> Cooperating with religious, cultural and educational organizations in educational and cultural programming, developing and operating the Multi-Faith Exploration and Exchange Program, bringing together Dallas-area members of more than ten world religions to discuss religious and cultural diversity and issues that affect urban life, and developing gratitude-education materials for use from preschool to university level.

Thanksgiving Square tends to promote understandings of religion that are irenic, pluralist, and non-confrontational. Its public events are presentational rather than dialogical. Its focus on interfaith *thanksgiving* limits the scope of dialogue in which it engages.

2. Post 9/11 Interfaith organizations: It was citizens of Dallas' suburbs who first responded to the attacks of 9/11 by forming organizations to carry out interfaith dialogue and encourage public education. Frisco Multi-faith, for example, has a continuous program of open houses in religious institutions, a creative education program for high school level youth that is used by local school districts, and an annual prayer service. Other ad hoc activities have been organized by local religious leaders in Irving and Carrolton. Since 9/11, suburban mosques have held annual open houses and multi-faith Iftar dinners during Ramadan. Both mosques and churches have taken the initiative to offer educational programs and dialogue sessions that are open to the public. The author of this report participates in 15 to 20 of these 2 to 4 session courses annually in collaboration with different Muslim leaders. Given a participation of from 50 to 200 persons in each event it is clear that there is a strong interest in Christian-Muslim relations.

The weakness of these new efforts is two-fold. Most concentrate on Christian-Muslim dialogue so that increasingly, the Jewish community in particular seems to be marginalized in the process of inter-religious relationship building. Secondly these organizations have given little thought to the complexities of purposeful dialogue. The educational program of Frisco Multi-faith, for example, reflects the primarily intellectual orientation of its participants and its materials make little reference to the ritual and legal aspects of the different religions even when, as in Judaism and Islam, they are key aspects of religious identity.

3. The Institute for Interfaith Dialogue: The Institute for Interfaith Dialogue is a well-funded organization associated with the Gülen movement. Its participants are almost all Turkish Muslims and it has focused on organizing interfaith dinners and educational events both on area campuses and for the public. The focus has been on Christian, Muslim, and Jewish dialogue and its theory is driven by the teachings of Fethullah Gülen. These events tend to stress mutual

understanding and respect among "people of the book" and to eschew discussion of problems of communal relations in the Middle East and Turkey. Their program in Dallas is weakened by a lack of participation by non-Turkish Muslims.

4. The Texas Conference of Churches: The TCC has officially launched programs of Christian-Jewish and Christian-Muslim dialogue. In the Dallas area, the development of these programs has been forestalled by the lack of any Dallas area ecumenical organizations to initiate or coordinate Christian participation in inter-religious dialogue.

Summary: There are multiple initiatives of interfaith dialogue in the Dallas area. They are weakened by a lack of cooperation with each other, the fact that most operate on the hope for goodwill rather than out of any clear conceptual framework of what dialogue might accomplish in a community, and the near total lack of participation by the great majority of Dallas area Christians, who belong to independent evangelical, fundamentalist, or Pentecostal Christian churches.

Perkins School of Theology.

Perkins School of Theology is a graduate school at the Southern Methodist University. The purpose of the school, as stated in its catalogue is as follows:

> "Well-trained clergy and lay leadership are essential to the life of the church. Our primary mission, as a community devoted to theological study and teaching in the service of the church of Jesus Christ, is to prepare women and men for faithful leadership in Christian ministry."

The majority of students at the Perkins School of Theology are preparing for ordained ministry through the Master of Divinity degree program. Almost all come from mainline denominations, with the large majority being United Methodist. The student population is evenly divided among women and men, and ranges in age from 22 years to over 60, with the average age being in the mid 30's. It is a theologically diverse student body, with many coming from theologically conservative churches. Most have never participated in inter-religious dialogue and many have never met a person of another faith.

Teaching Inter-Religious Dialogue at Perkins School of Theology

In addition to courses offered by Perkins in interreligious dialogue (below), the Seminary is involved in interfaith dialogue through the student-led Interfaith Dialogue Group (of which this author is faculty sponsor) and participation in the university-wide Interfaith Dialogue Student Association. Events sponsored by these groups typically take place once a semester and feature not so much dialogue as informative talks on aspects of various religions by their followers.

Perkins School of Theology offers the following courses related to interreligious dialogue:

- World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective.
- National Council of Churches and Jewish Seminarians Interacting: This is an intensive three day retreat focusing on dialogue that is both ecumenical and inter-religious. It centers on a topic of relevance to ministry in a Christian or Jewish congregation.
- The Christian-Buddhist Dialogue.
- The Christian-Hindu Dialogue.
- Contemporary Christian-Muslim Dialogue.
- Eastern Spiritualities and Christian Mysticism.

Of these courses, the most important is *World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective* because it is required of all students, and therefore comprises the most important means of promoting interfaith dialogue, as well as offering the practical tools to initiate and lead such dialogue at a congregational level.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the context of the overall program of theological education at Perkins School of Theology.

Within the Perkins curriculum, the course *World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective* is intended to engage students training for pastor ministry in theological reflection on the inter-related

realities of religious pluralism, globalization, and Christian mission. It has traditionally been a classroom oriented course focusing on, primarily, theological reflection on inter-religious engagement. *For this case study, the course was significantly reworked to include a focus on practical skills and experience of inter-religious dialogue and engagement.* Thus expanded, it complements the skills in fostering dialogue and managing group dynamics taught in courses related to the practice of ministry.

In conjunction with the syllabus revision, experienced student facilitators/evaluators met with each inter-religious dialogue group to guide the dialogue and evaluate its progress over the period of the course. Their final evaluations and recommendations will be included in this case study.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective and Interfaith Dialogue

A. Key aspects of this course related to dialogue are:

- An understanding that the major form of engagement between churches and non-Christian religious groups will be through interfaith dialogue, and that this does not preclude other forms of engagement.
- An understanding that pastors will play a major role in inaugurating and leading this dialogue along with their non-Christian counterparts, and that they must therefore have a fundamental grasp of the theoretical and practical issues in interfaith dialogue.

B. Specific learning goals related to engaging in dialogue are:

- Understanding of the basic issues of developing a Christian theology of religions.
- Understanding the relationship between globalization and religious pluralism.
- Understanding the post-colonial context of interfaith relations, including differences in worldview between the modern and postmodern west and persons from other cultural environments.

- Understanding the basic beliefs, practices, and values of each different religious tradition and developing a framework for understanding religion as a human phenomenon that allows constructive future learning; basic religious literacy.
- Understanding the basic theories and methodologies of dialogue, and the ways that they have developed over the last 50 years, particularly through the work of the Interreligious Relations and Dialogue sub-Unit of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.
- As in all Perkins courses, there is a concern to bring to consciousness both methodological and practical issues related to gender, race, and class. In this course in particular this includes the different ways that human identity and human relationships are construed in different religious traditions.

C. Specific pedagogical methodologies (in addition to lectures and readings) related to teaching dialogue are:

- Class sessions led by persons from each different religious tradition – learning from practitioners.
- A class session or sessions on dialogue as understood from a non-Christian perspective, led by a non-Christian leader in interfaith dialogue. The focus is finding an agreed basis for participating in dialogue.
- Student participation in a series of dialogue meetings with non-Christians from the Dallas community led by trained facilitators.
- Participation in on-campus and other dialogue events during the period that the course is taught.
- Student visits to non-Christian religious centers and individual in-depth interviews with persons of different non-Christian religions.

D. Specific forms of evaluation of the effectiveness of the course are:

- Student self-evaluation regarding their preparation to engage in and lead interfaith dialogue.

- Standard content oriented tests and exams.
- Evaluations of the course design and the effectiveness of the dialogue sessions by the non-Christian participants, as well as their suggestions for improvement.

Case Study

Course Preparation

The major preparation for the course consisted of arranging for students to meet in dialogue groups, training facilitators for those groups, and re-working of final 6 lectures to focus specifically on inter-religious dialogue in relation to spirituality, community building, peace-making, mission, and the development of a Christian theology of non-Christian religions.

As lecturer, I began making contact with leaders of different religious communities in Dallas in early August of 2007. Most were anxious to facilitate dialogue with Perkins students. Groups were formed by a representative of the Hindu community, a local rabbi, two leaders of the Muslim women's community, and a member of the Ismaili community. In addition to these organizers of dialogue groups, I contacted about 20 individuals who would be willing to have one-on-one interviews with students and accompany the students to their religious center.

Several issues also arose immediately as we began to discuss the details of the dialogue meetings. The first regarded logistics in relation to dialogue with Muslim groups. I anticipated the dialogue sessions beginning in mid-September in order to be completed by the end of October. In 2007 much of this period fell during Ramadan and the Eid celebrations that follow. While all Muslim groups that were contacted wished to invite students to Iftar celebrations during Ramadan, few had time to meet for extended discussions. Ultimately this issue was resolved by initiating Christian-Muslim meetings at Iftar celebrations and scheduling Christian-Muslim dialogue groups after Ramadan. Four dialogue groups met on weekday evenings, and Saturday morning at various venues. Each group had between 4 and 6 members of the Muslim community and 4 to 8 students. Equally problematic from a logistical standpoint was the fact that the Jewish high holy days fell in mid-semester, and occupied much of the rabbi's time, as well as that of her community.

The second issue regarded the expectations of how the dialogue groups would proceed. In both phone conversations with non-Christian leaders and in emails, I described the dialogue groups as an opportunity for Christian students to both learn about non-Christian religions and also learn to talk about their own religion in ways that promoted better mutual understanding. I also described the session topics found in the NCCJ Guidelines on Dialogue as the topics we hoped to cover. (These guidelines were developed by the National Conference of Christians and Jews prior to its transformation into the National Conference on Community and Justice, and are no longer in print.) It emerged that despite these efforts to clarify the purpose of the dialogue groups two religious leaders remained committed to almost exclusively educating the students about their respective religions. This in itself gave the students an opportunity to learn about the challenges involved in initiating dialogue and was a reminder that even course learning goals were a matter of constant negotiation with non-Christian partners.

A third issue related to the timing of the dialogue groups, and arose primarily from the nature of the Perkins' student body. Virtually all of the students enrolled in the course held full or part time jobs and often significant church responsibilities as well. About half were supporting families. Thus simply finding times in which they could meet was a challenge. Absences because of sickness, work obligations, family obligations, and church obligations made it difficult for several of the students to be fully engaged in the dialogue sessions on an ongoing basis.

Finding facilitators for the groups proved equally challenging for the same reasons, but in the end two former students of my courses with experience in interfaith dialogue, as well as a member of our faculty with long experience in interfaith dialogue, agreed to moderate the groups. Together we reviewed in some detail the NCCJ dialogue guidelines, expectations of facilitators, and goals. Each facilitator brought his or her own experience and expertise to this meeting, and each agreed to provide an evaluation of the outcome of the dialogue groups.

The Dialogue Groups

The most productive dialogue groups were the two Muslim-Christian dialogue groups arranged by a Muslim woman with long experience in interfaith dialogue, the Muslim-Christian group

organized by a leader of the Ismailia community, and the Jewish-Christian dialogue group arranged by a local rabbi. These groups were able to follow the NCCJ suggestions for dialogue topics and all members reported being satisfied that they were able to openly share their perspectives and experiences as well as listen to and understand those of other participants.

Other groups were confused by the expectations about the nature of dialogue, despite efforts to clarify the purpose of the groups, and the course, in advance. The representative of the Hindu community found it difficult to break with the model of "dialogue" associated with Thanksgiving Square, seeing dialogue sessions as an opportunity for members of the Hindu community to teach our students about Hinduism, with no expectation of an open discussion of Christianity or how Hindus and Christians could fruitfully relate. Indeed it was the assumption in the first meeting that the Hindu participants already fully understood Christianity. This was not in fact the case, and Hindu efforts to draw similarities between Christianity and Hinduism were often wildly off the mark. Thus certain Hindu rituals were referred to as "sacraments" and compared with Christian sacraments, as it was assumed that terms like "salvation," "God," and "worship" had similar meanings for Christians and Hindus. That this should happen is not surprising since the so-called inter-religious dialogue in Dallas has usually consisted of one-way presentations with almost no questions asked and no statements challenged. The underlying ideology of Thanksgiving Square -- in particular, that all religions possess essentially the same underlying human impulse toward thanksgiving to God -- also mitigates against dialogue that exposes essential differences.

Eventually this situation resolved itself as the Christian moderator of the group, a former student with long connections with the Hindu community, invited the group to interact around the comparisons of Hinduism with Christianity. This allowed the Christian students to move from asking questions about Hinduism to pointing out that some of the comparisons being made didn't relate to their understanding of their own faith. As they made it clear to the Hindu participants that the comparisons were actually confusing them with regard to the nature of Hinduism a deeper discussion of just what Christians believed and practiced emerged. This led to a more fruitful encounter in which Hindu participants, who genuinely wanted to clearly communicate their faith to Christians, began to engage in a more mutual exchange.

Ultimately both Hindu and Christian participants judged the dialogue a success, but only after the third session in which there was more personal interaction and sharing, and in which all parties felt as if they fully understood what the others expected. Based on a desire to further extend these relationships several students met additional times with individual Hindu participants.

A similar confusion of goals for the dialogue groups emerged with the groups organized by one of the Muslim leaders who approached me and offered to organize a dialogue group. At the first meeting, however, it was clear that only she and the imam of a local mosque would meet with the group prior to an Iftar meal. During the meal she discouraged Perkins students from talking with other members of the Muslim community and explicitly told the students that they shouldn't trust any information on Islam from other members of the mosque, whom she characterized as ignorant of their own religion. Her fear can be understood by any religious leader; nonetheless it was inimical to real dialogue. After I reiterated our desire to have a conversation with other members of the Muslim community and focus on some of the topics in the NCCJ guidelines, a second session was arranged. In this case, however, it turned out to be attendance at a lecture on basic Islam intended for new Muslims and non-Muslims. The speaker was a senior member of the Muslim community whose representation of Christianity was both inaccurate and offensive. The event was clearly a *dakwa* event intended to persuade non-Muslims to embrace Islam. The organizer herself was unhappy with the presentation, and apologized profusely. Again, it was an excellent learning experience for our students, but scarcely an opportunity for dialogue. The third meeting that was arranged once again involved only the organizer and another imam. In that meeting, it emerged that they had significant disagreements about the role of women in Islam. This was fascinating for my students, but again unhelpful for real dialogue.

All three sessions were arranged at different times and places to match the organizers schedule, and this made consistency difficult as well as creating a sense among the students that the meetings were driven less by a desire for dialogue than the organizers own particular agenda.

As a whole, the three events gave the students excellent insights into some of the challenges of dialogue and the particular needs and fears of the Muslim community, but did not fulfill what had been hoped for and expected. Most of the Perkins students struggled with trying to

objectively analyze their own learning through the experience and the various ways that they had felt offended by the ways in which the imams characterized Christianity and the Christian community. One Christian woman, in the third session, insisted after the initial presentation by the imam that the group sit in a circle rather than in rows facing the imam. Because the imam had spoken extensively of the role of women in Islam she then suggested that the group focus on different understandings of women and men in the two faiths. This led to a somewhat more reciprocal exchange, but the imam's ongoing insistence that Christianity turned women into prostitutes because they were not under the protection and guidance of their fathers, brothers, or husbands both embarrassed the organizer and irritated our entirely female contingent of students.

The dialogue group organized within the Ismaili community had some initial challenges due to the fact that the organizer could not be present at the first meeting, and it took some time to re-establish that the purpose of the group wasn't primarily to inform Christian students about Islam, but to engage with them in dialogue. This issue arose in part because the Ismaili participants felt strongly that Christians confused them with other Muslim groups and did not understand their unique origins and historical experience. Nonetheless it was relatively easy for the group to move into a more dialogical mode, particularly after it emerged that some Christian students likewise felt misunderstood when they were identified with conservative or fundamentalist Christianity. While the dialogue was able to proceed in subsequent sessions, and underlying theme was the ongoing desire of the Ismaili participants to inculcate an appreciation among the Christians of the uniqueness of their practice and spirituality, as well as the richness of their tradition of contributions to human well-being.

In contrast to the groups mentioned below, all of the dialogue groups that experienced a degree of difficulty had problems with their moderators. When they were set up it was understood that the Muslim organizer and a Christian chosen by the course instructor would co-moderate the group, using the NCCJ guidelines. What emerged were situations in which one or both moderators were absent, were reluctant to follow those guidelines because they had a specific agenda beyond the guidelines, or were reluctant to interfere with those who essentially took leadership of the group for their own purposes. It is clear that long term success will depend on having all the moderators meet one

another in advance and be empowered to jointly or individually keep the groups focused on the NCCJ guidelines.

Of much greater success from the standpoint of the participants were the two Muslim groups organized by a leader of the Muslim women's community with long experience in inter-religious dialogue. In these groups, all the participants knew in advance what was expected and the discussions followed the NCCJ guidelines fairly closely. Sessions began and ended in a timely manner. All the participants expressed strong appreciation for the others and in several instances have continued contact beyond the dialogue groups. To a large extent the success of these groups was attributed by the participants to the organizer and the student moderator, who co-moderated and consistently kept the group focused and reminded the group of the basic guidelines for dialogue.

The Jewish dialogue group was a similar success, with the rabbi and a member of the Perkins faculty moderating the group. The only drawback was that due to cancellations and schedule changes the group had a disproportionate number of Christian participants, and was forced to meet in a relatively distracting public environment. Nonetheless the careful work of the moderators insured that all voices were heard. Participant evaluations were uniformly positive, and as in the other groups, some participants arranged to meet with one another after the formal dialogue sessions ended.

Results of the Dialogue Sessions

Non-Christian Participant Evaluations

Evaluations by the non-Christian participants in the groups varied. The Hindu participants noted that they were initially confused about the purpose of the meeting, but enjoyed the opportunity to engage in both educating Christian students and dialogue. Most had little or no actual exposure to Christian beliefs or practices until the meetings. Both the organizer and one member of the temple committee who participated focused on the ongoing need for Christians to understand Hindu beliefs and practices, and hoped that more such groups would be organized by Perkins. Similar assessments were offered by the Ismaili community participants, focusing strongly on the desire that Christians participate in an upcoming program on Ismaili social programs world-wide, and that Perkins continue to organize dialogue groups. Two

participants noted that the Ismaili community has better, longer relationships with Christians, particularly through sponsorship of local and statewide politicians, than other Muslim groups but that they have had few opportunities to discuss their beliefs and practices. They noted that the Ismaili community is defined less by consistency of practice in the mosque than by family and community ties. This was somewhat different than other dialogue groups, which consisted of non-Christians drawn together primarily because of a renewed interest in specifically religious matters.

None of the imams from the less than successful Muslim group provided direct feedback regarding their experience. One, who is a personal acquaintance of the instructor, said that he had never been clearly told what to expect in meeting the group and hoped that similar groups might be organized, perhaps through other means, in the future. He expressed a real interest in dialogue, particularly over women's issues. The other two imams, when contacted, offered to teach classes on Islam but expressed no interest in future dialogue per se.

The evaluations of the other dialogue groups were uniformly favorable. Muslim participants were initially surprised that there would actually be a dialogue over religious beliefs and experiences rather than the more usual listening to presentations. Those participants who responded praised the NCCJ guidelines as a way of doing something they had never done before. In contrast one Muslim leader noted that a long standing dialogue group of women from the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities that did not use the NCCJ guidelines had broken down the previous year after the war in southern Lebanon because there had been no way to mediate the strong feelings over the political situation.

Student Evaluations

Student evaluations of the more positive Jewish and Muslim groups expressed surprise that both Muslims and Jews were so open and friendly. Most students were also surprised to find a variety of beliefs and sometimes substantial disagreement among participants, not least among their fellow Christians. For many the realization that Muslims didn't all hold identical views was the single most outstanding outcome of the dialogue. Second to this was their realization that it was possible to have fruitful conversations with persons of other faiths that included respectful honesty about their own beliefs. A large number of

the students assumed that dialogue meant the suppression of their own religious views.

Students who only met only with different Muslim leaders agreed that they learned a great deal, but gave a negative evaluation of their experience over all. Several reported that they ended with a negative impression of Muslim leaders, and in particular the imams whom they met. They characterized two of these men as closed-minded, largely ignorant of American culture and Christianity, and misogynist. They were more sympathetic with the organizer, but wondered why she was so enamored with the authority of the imams. I spent more time with this group than any other processing their experience, and trying to overcome the negative stereotypes that developed out of it. At my encouragement several of the students met individually with other Muslim women, and all reported that these experiences were far more positive that their experience in the mosques. Individual meetings were thus a way of diversifying the dialogue experience and overcoming the negative consequences of poorly planned or executed dialogue experiences.

Student evaluations of the Ismaili dialogue group were similarly positive, but most noted that problems getting started in the first session kept them from moving toward a deeper sharing of beliefs in subsequent sessions. Similar comments were made by students involved in the Hindu dialogue session. Both groups wished that the NCCJ guidelines had been implemented earlier and more intentionally.

Facilitator Evaluations

Four persons, in addition to the course instructor, acted as facilitators for the dialogue groups. All four reported that the NCCJ guidelines that they followed were helpful. They were likewise uniform in affirming the value of the experience for them as facilitators as well as for the students. Their critiques of the process were specific to the groups they led. The faculty member facilitating Jewish-Christian dialogue noted that in the end the disproportionate ratio of Christians to Jews in the Jewish dialogue group made conversation difficult, and allowed some students to effectively withdraw from participation. The student facilitator of the Hindu-Christian group noted that despite advance preparation and her own familiarity with the Hindu leaders and community, it was difficult to move into a genuine dialogue. This was in part the result of a single strong-minded Hindu leader who

continued to insist that Hindus understood both Jesus and Christianity better than the Christian participants themselves, and who likewise tended to cut short or reinterpret the contributions of Hindu members of the group. Because of this person's status in the community, attempts to open the dialogue to others succeeded only with continual effort. Finally, a student facilitator noted that the Christian-Muslim dialogue groups she led would have been better with more male Muslim voices.

Visits to Religious Centers and Interviews

Students were responsible for formulating a series of interview questions for a person of another faith, reviewing those with the instructor, then making contact with that person for an interview and visit to that person's religious center. This gave the opportunity for discussions with individual students about their conceptions of other religions and an opportunity to brief them individually regarding the basic etiquette of interfaith relations.

The most common problems with the interview questions formulated by the students were:

- The assumption that people of other religions had the same theological, ethical, and spiritual concerns as Christians.
- A tendency toward one dimensional understandings of religion, focusing on just beliefs, or practices, or personal spirituality, or family life.
- A tendency to put all the interview questions in terms of Christian categories.

In my personal visits with the students I emphasized that the initial question of the interview should be to invite the interviewee to share what is most important to him or her about his or her religion, in short to let the interviewee set the agenda. We then worked through individual questions looking for ways to make them meaningful and comprehensible for those outside the Christian context – drawing on the material already available to the student through lectures and assigned readings. *This process of discussing the interview questions became an important means of putting the global lessons of diversity into a concrete form that involved the student's own work in fostering dialogue.*

Most students choose interviewees based on previous personal contacts with persons of other religions, or by approaching a leader or member of a mosque, temple, or other religious establishment in the proximity of their own home or church. The students uniformly reported that these visits were interesting and fulfilling, helped them understand the other person's tradition better, and led to further follow up conversations and even the development of genuine interfaith friendships. *It is my belief that because these interviews were student-initiated, they had as important an impact as the dialogue groups in terms of learning about and appreciating other religions.*

Lectures by Non-Christian Religious Practitioners

While not strictly part of the practice of dialogue, it was essential to the basic presuppositions of the course that each religion be presented in part by a practitioner of that religion. These presentations varied widely, reflecting the personal self-understandings of the different religious practitioners and the understanding they projected on a student audience. Thus the woman who presented Islam focused on issues like the role of women in Islam and the relationship between Islam and terrorism that she assumed were of primary interest to the students. The rabbi who presented Judaism focused, on the other hand, on the "pastoral" duties of the rabbinate that she assumed would be of interest to Christian pastors in training. The representative of the Falun Gong chose to present the "secret" metaphysical teaching of his group that he thought would be more interesting to theologians than the usual focus on practice and health typical of Falun Gong literature, and he certainly did amaze the students. Overall these presentations served well as a buffer against any simplistic understanding of either individual religious traditions or the supposed similarities between all religions.

Dialogue in the Context of the Course

In addition to the dialogue groups and individual interviews and visits to religious centers students were engaged in dialogue in the context of the course. This included not only the informational aspects of lectures and readings, but also the theological and spiritual framework within which both the presence of non-Christian religions and the need and prospect of dialogue were placed. The theological and spiritual dimensions of the study of non-Christian religions framed the entire course. Before the students studied specific religions we reviewed

various theologies of religions. Then, based on participation in both dialogue and the formal study of non-Christian religion, the class returned to theology and spirituality for a fuller exploration. Dialogue as a desirable mode of encounter with non-Christian religions was introduced prior to beginning engagement in dialogue, and was then discussed in depth after the students had experience with dialogue.

Out of the readings and class discussion several persistent questions and issues arose. A certain portion of the students came from backgrounds that emphasize heavily that only those who verbally confess Jesus as their savior and join the Christian community will ultimately live in God's grace and be saved from eternal damnation. These students enjoyed the dialogue from the perspective of learning about other people and religions but sometimes characterized it as theologically pointless. Given their initial framework, dialogue was a temporary approach to solving social problems, but ultimately needed to lead to overt evangelism. Another portion of students, - the majority, - were essentially universalists who likewise saw dialogue as a useful community building exercise, but of no consequence theologically except in perhaps introducing a larger repertoire of spiritual practice into their Christian beliefs.

I found these attitudes unsurprising based on previous experience. Thus, I offered lectures in the form of a framework for understanding Christian relations with non-Christians that focused on the vocational imperative of Christians to "go to the nations" with the gospel. One lecture was devoted to the history of mission as an imperial and colonial enterprise, and the ongoing danger of using dialogue to essentially "colonize" the religion, culture, or even good intentions of others. Other lectures focused on Christian identity in relation to the imperative to engage persons of other faiths with the gospel, while recognizing that "God has not left God's self without witnesses." Other lectures focused more specifically on the history of modern dialogue, and the lessons learned from participation in dialogue found in the Roman Catholic and WCC documents. Describing the full theological framework which I introduced is beyond the scope of this paper, but it can be found in a published article entitled "Christian Identity in a Pluralistic World" (Missiology, an International Review, April 2008). I maintain that a distinctly Christian understanding of other religions cannot be formed except through dialogue, and is compelled on Christian grounds to leave open the question of ultimate salvation in order to focus it on mutual sharing of insights into God's Reign and

related concepts in other religions. These ideas are introduced to students through in depth exploration of the somewhat problematic scripture passages Matthew 28:19 and John 14:6. Only such an exploration of scripture gives credibility to any theology of dialogue or non-Christian religions among students from an evangelical background.

Overall course evaluations were positive, with most students commenting favorably on the combination of dialogue groups, lectures by religious leaders, and the one on one interviews with persons of other religious faiths. In fact, 100% of evaluations suggested that this format be used in all subsequent courses. Most students commented that these would have been more effective if the dialogue groups had started earlier, and saw this as an area for future work in organizing the course. A few expressed skepticism about any theology of religions or any practice of dialogue that did not finally lead to evangelism, and remained unconvinced by either the presentation in the required reading by Paul Knitter or my lectures.

Unanticipated Outcomes

During the period the course was running, I was given an award by the regional Islamic Society of North America for service to the Muslim community through my own rather intense work of interpreting the Muslim experience to non-Muslims in a variety of civic and Christian settings. As a result of the negative experience of one group, and the negative attitudes toward Muslims that it engendered, I initiated a series of conversations with Muslim leaders about the ways in which Muslims themselves portray their faith to non-Muslims. I approached friends among the leadership of ISNA, CAIR, and the Institute of Interfaith Dialogue to discuss the ways in which different Muslim leaders and communities were presenting Islam to non-Muslims. The results of these discussions are beyond the scope of this case study, but do underscore an important concern in the teaching of dialogue in the context of contemporary relationships between Christian and non-Christian communities. While our school and students are acutely aware of their lack of knowledge of their non-Christian religious neighbors, it emerged in the course and its dialogue sessions that non-Christian groups are equally unaware of the Christian community: its diversity, basic beliefs, attitudes in civil society, and particularly self-understanding. Dialogue that is ongoing and emerges out of conversations outside normal institutional controls thus plays an

important role in bringing to light approaches to engagement from any side that may be counter-productive to cooperation in a pluralistic society. Ultimately dialogue can lead to and include a shared project of understanding any particular religion as it wishes to be understood.

Summary of lessons learned:

- Dialogue must be planned to take into account religious holidays of all the involved religions, rather than being subject to only the academic schedule.
- It would be useful to have a pre-dialogue meeting with all those arranging dialogue groups so that they can work together to get a clear understanding of expectations.
- Trained moderators are critical to successful dialogue sessions, in particular as those who bring to each group the expectations previously agreed upon.
- Given the desire of non-Christian groups to first represent their lives, religion, and practice to Christians it is helpful to use the initial session to let non-Christians introduce their religion and worship space, then proceed to dialogue.
- It is useful to have a variety of experiences of meeting with groups or representatives of different non-Christian religions. This not only helps students see the diversity of each religious tradition, but also moderates the effects of individual negative encounters.
- Students continually struggled to form for themselves a theological framework within which to understand relationships between Christians and people of other faiths. For the course to be effective it must finally either offer such a framework, or give the students confidence that such a framework can emerge in the process of both faithful reflection and participation in dialogue.

Further Issues

While not directly related to this case study, there remain a number of questions to be considered in terms of the place of teaching inter-religious dialogue in a seminary setting. The first of these, and related directly to the teaching of this course, is whether dialogue should be related to Christian mission, or whether it more

appropriately belongs in the realm of systematic theology and the identification of religion as an object of inquiry, or perhaps within the realm of ethics and engagement with a pluralistic society. Related to this is the shared object of dialogue, which will vary depending on what the dialogue partners intend to explore together. Students wondered more than once about the explicit point of a course in World Religions and whether it was intended to change the attitudes of student participants towards other religions, develop a theology of religions, encourage further study of other religions, create a better pastoral understanding of care in a pluralistic world, or just encourage thinking about Christian mission. Both the instructor and students were aware that inadequate attention was given to folk/popular religion, particularly in the Latino context, and to so-called new religions such as the Falun Gong and Mormonism. Answering these questions will require a deeper consideration of the entire curriculum and just where, given the realities of a pluralistic world, the correct emphasis lies in training pastoral leaders. It is my own conviction that since mission is the defining activity of the Christian community and that mission necessarily involves encounters with persons of other faiths, the appropriate setting for teaching inter-religious dialogue in the curriculum is in the context of mission. Such an academic setting is consistent with the actual development of theologies of dialogue in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Ecumenical circles.

Conclusion

Overall the course was a success, receiving exceptionally high marks in the final evaluation. Students valued all aspects of the teaching of dialogue, from the dialogue groups, to individual interviews, to having guest lecturers from other religions. In the future these aspects of teaching dialogue will become a regular part of the pedagogical method in the course, taking into account the lessons learned above in order to improve the overall experience. It still remains to do follow up surveys of graduates to determine if the lessons they learned through and about dialogue are being implemented in their ministry.

Fall 2007
WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
Dr. Robert Hunt

Course Description: This course examines religious contexts and issues of Christian mission and ministry, offering resources for theological reflection on tasks of individuals and local church communities from a global perspective. It sets the following concrete objectives:

• To study key features of major religious traditions, for an appreciation and reflective analysis Of the situation of religious diversity in contemporary society.

• To explore the theology and practice of inter-religious dialogue as the primary form of Christian engagement with non-Christian religious traditions.

• To consider the theological, pastoral, and spiritual implications of Christian mission and Ministry in a culturally and religiously pluralistic world, on the global and local levels.

• Students will be expected to both reflect theologically on inter-religious engagement and Learn specific skills related to facilitating and participating in inter-religious dialogue.

Readings and Resources

Required:

• Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings): World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society:

• Esposito, Fasching, Lewis, World Religions Today (Oxford)

• Robert Hunt, Muslim Faith and Values: What Every Christian Should Know, (GBGM Press)

• Wesley Ariarajah, The Bible and People of Other Faiths (WCC Publications)

• Paul Griffiths, Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes (Orbis)

• Paul Knitter, Introducing Theologies of Religion

• Selected articles, including items available on reserve, or as file attachments to be emailed to students, or as internet sites. (See class schedule below for particulars)

• Readings from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Spirituality Vol. 1 and 2. (PDF on Blackboard)

• Readings from Constance Padwick, Muslim Devotions (PDF on Blackboard)

Recommended:

• Ruben Habito, Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth (MKZC Publications)

• Jane Smith, Islam in America. (Columbia University Press)

• Diane L. Eck, A New Religious America (Harper San Francisco

Video Resources:

Puja (29 min); Four Holy Men (37 min) (Hinduism); Guests of God (Islam); Land of the Disappearing Buddha (52 min); Spirit and Nature (88 min) (Religion and Ecology); ??JUDAISM??

Course Requirements

Required For Credit:

• Report – "Religious Groups in my Home Town or Neighborhood" due Sept. 10th. The report is due in writing.

• Participation in assigned dialogue groups. These groups will meet 4 times during the semester.

• A four page report and analysis of each dialogue meeting demonstrating an awareness of key issues in the theology and practice of dialogue found in the required readings.

• Scribblings – a half page note written immediately after each class and reflecting on personal reactions and questions arising from the class. These notes are due immediately after class had written or by email within 24 hours of the class.

• Visit to a religious center of another religious tradition and an in-depth interview with a member of that tradition.

o You must make an appointment with Dr. Hunt and present your proposed interview questions before the interview.

o You must submit a reflection paper on the visit/interview (7 – 10 pages, double spaced, 11 point type. Your report must have page numbers and your name at the top right hand Corner of each page. Reports should be stapled in the upper left hand corner and should not be in a folder or binder.). You must make this visit and interview by November 1st. The interview reflection paper will be due on December 1st.

• Mid-term examination on October 15th

• Final essay/exam (Due December 10th.)

Desirable: An open mind and open heart, willingness to learn new things, see different perspectives, and consider various theological, spiritual, and pastoral options in the face of contemporary realities.

Grading

• The report "World Religions in My Hometown" should be a listing with address of institutions or other indications of your sources of information.

• The mid-term exam will be an hour long short answer test taken by each student and based on the readings in World Religions Today.

• The interview paper should clearly characterize the interviewees responses to your questions, what you learned from his or her responses, how these compare/contrast with what you have observed visiting the interviewee's religious community and learned in the classroom and reading. Finally it should include briefly what implications you see for ministry.

• The final essay will be based on a case study. You will be required to analyze the case in light of the question: "How would I be faithful to the gospel in this situation." You should expect to answer 4 subsidiary questions in your essay: a. What are the central religious features of this situation? b. What are the possible Christian responses? c. What should be the primary response, and why? d. What would you expect for an outcome in this situation?

• Reports and essays should have a clear structure with a single sentence thesis, arguments for the thesis, and a concluding summary pointing toward implications for ministry. Essays should be double spaced,
with 11pt Times New Roman type. They should be left justified and have the students name in the upper right hand corner. Multiple pages should be stapled. Footnotes should be in a standard style. All papers are due in printed form. No emailed papers will be accepted. All late papers will be graded down for lateness.

• Course grade based on Dialogue Group Reports [20%], Midterm [20%], Final Exam [30%], and Interview Paper [30%] with up to one-half letter-grade deducted based on class presence, participation, and other assignments.

Guidelines for Classroom and Dialogue Dynamics. (Source: NCCJ Manual on Dialogue)
Protocols for Interviews related to Human Subjects in Research (Source: Jack Seymore, Garrett Evangelical School of Theology)

Class Schedule

Part I. The Contours of Religious Diversity

- Prior to the beginning of the course 6 persons will be trained as interfaith dialogue facilitators using the NCCJ Manual
- Dialogue Sessions Begin: Meetings every 2 weeks for 8 weeks.
- Reading: Paul Knitter Introducing Theologies of Religion. Reading of this text should be completed by the 4th class session.

Session 1: Christian Mission and Evangelism in a Pluralistic World – outline of a Vocational Theology of inter-religious engagement.

Session 2: Dialogue: Key Documents and Concepts
Obstacles to Dialogue: Sources of our fears and prejudice oncerning people of other faiths.
Reading: Interfaith Dialogue (WCC Ecumenical Dictionary Entry)
Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (WCC)
Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions (WCC)

Session 3: Facilitating and Participating in Dialogue – (Guest Lecturer: Isobel Docampo of the Perkins Faculty.)
Readings: NCCJ Guidelines and Training Manual for facilitating Interfaith Dialogue.
"The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" by Leonard Swidler. Journal of Ecumenical Studies 20:1, Winter 1983, 1984.

Session 4: Hinduism – Origins
Readings: World Religions Today, pp. 270-339
Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes, pp. 191-246
Bhagvagad Gita, http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/ANCINDIA/GITA.HTM. Read all, Carefully read sections 1-5, 9, 12, 13.

Session 5: Hinduism – Contemporary Manifestations

(Report from and discussion led by Hinduism Dialogue Group)
Readings: Solomon Raja – Folk Hinduism, Chapter 3 (PFD file on Blackboard)
Video: Puja, Four Holy Men
World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV.

Session 6: Guest from the Hindu Community

Session 7 Religions of China - Confucianism, Taoism, and the Chinese religious system
Readings: World Religions Today pp. 34 – 62
Students may select readings from Lao Tze, Confucious, Han Fe Tze, Mencius. (Asiapac Comic Series on Blackboard and on reserve in Bridwell)
www.beliefnet.com ,
www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralsm/

Session 8 Chinese Religions – Contemporary Manifestations
(Report from and discussion led by the Chinese Religions Dialogue Group)
Readings: World Religions Today, pp. 416 – 494
http://www.falundafa.org/eng/index.htm (Review this site and learn the origins and beliefs of the Fu Lan Gong.)
World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 9 Guest from the Taoist/Confucian Tradition

Session 10 The History of Buddhism
Readings: World Religions Today pp. 340 – 415.
Video: Land of the Disappearing Buddha.
Reading from the Sutras. The Teaching of the Compassionate Buddha, "The Sermon of Benares" p. 5, "Questions Tending to Edification", p. 8 (PDF on Blackboard)

Students may select readings from The Flowering of Zen in China, or The Book of Zen, (Asiapac Comics on Blackboard and on reserve in the library)

Session 11 Contemporary Buddhism
(Report from and discussion led bythe Buddhism Dialogue Group)
Readings: Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes, pp. 130 – 181
Reading from the Sutras. The Teaching of the Compassionate Buddha, "The parable of the Burning House" p. 119, "Nagarjuna's Analysis" p. 147, "The White Lotus Ode" p. 188, "The Seasons" p. 193" (PDF or Blackboard)
World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 12 Guest from the Buddhist Tradition

Session 13 Survey of Muslim History and the development of Islamicate Civilization
Readings: Muslim Faith and Values Chapter 1
Constance Padwick, Muslim Devotions (Read chapters 10a, 10 b, 11a, 11b, and 5a)

Session 14 Basic Muslim Beliefs and Practices
Readings: Muslim Faith and Values (Chapters 2 and 3)
Islamic Spirituality Ed. Nassar (Chapter 16)
Video: Guests of God

Session 15 Muhammad and the Qur'an
Readings: Muslim Faith and Values (Chapters 4 and 5)
Qur'an, Surahs 100 – 114
Islamic Spirituality (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Session 16 Shari'ah Civilization – Contemporary Islam
(Report from and discussion led by the Islam Dialogue Group)
Readings: Muslim Faith and Values (Chapter 6)
Selections from Mawdudi, Towards Understanding

Islam, Chapters 6 and 7. (Available online at http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/ Books/M_tui/chapter6.html and http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/M_tui/cha pter7.html)

Striving Together in Dialogue, A Muslim-Christian Call to Reflection and Action (WCC)

World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 17 Guest from the Islamic Tradition

Session 18 Judaism - Historical Development

Readings: World Religions Today, pp. 64 – 129

Session 19 Contemporary Judaism

(Report from and discussion led by the Judaism Dialogue Group)

Readings: Christianity through non-Christian Eyes, pp. 13 – 53

World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 20 Guest from the Jewish Community

Session 21 Mid-Term Exam.

Part II. Implications for Theology, Ministry, and Spirituality – Directions in Dialogue. One or more of the following classes is to be presented by a member of a different religious community.

Session 22 Dialogue and the Sanctity of Creation

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Section I, Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 23 Dialogue and Peacemaking

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito,

and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 24 Dialogue and Shared Community Life

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 25 Dialogue and Shared Spirituality

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Relevant Essays from Section IV

Session 26 The History of Christian Attitudes toward Non-Christians

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Section II

Session 27 Contemporary Theologies of Religion – A review and discussion

Readings: World Christianity Among World Religions: Mission and Ministry in a Global Society: Brockman, Habito, and Hunt (draft essays and readings) – Section III

Session 28 The Christian Vocation in a Pluralistic World

Session 29 Final Examination

4 Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary

Yehezkel Landau

Professional Background and Institutional Context

Since June of 2004, Hartford Seminary has sponsored an interfaith training program for Jews, Christians, and Muslims called *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* (*BAP*). An eight-day intensive course (*BAP I*), aimed at developing basic concepts and skills, is offered every January and June as part of the Seminary's Winter and Summer terms. In addition, since 2007 advanced-level leadership training has been offered in the summer (*BAP II*, primarily for veterans of the basic course). I have served as *BAP* Program Director since its inception, as Faculty Associate in Interfaith Relations at the Seminary. In this capacity I have designed, coordinated, and taught in both courses. My responsibility also includes financial and logistical administration, enlisting other members of the teaching staff, and recruiting participants.[1]

In this paper I describe briefly the elements of the advanced *BAP* training and the skills needed for professional interfaith leadership. But my primary focus is the basic *BAP* course, which as of July, 2009 has been offered eleven times.[2] This reflection is a preliminary assessment of its effectiveness as a model for adult-level interfaith

[1] Tuition income alone could not cover the costs of the program. I am profoundly grateful to the three foundations whose funding has made *BAP* possible: The Henry Luce Foundation, the William and Mary Greve Foundation, and the Alan B. Slifka Foundation.

[2] The full course syllabus, which is appended, provides an overview of the content and character of the experience.

education. The course is still evolving, partly in response to participants' evaluations and accounts of their experiences.[3]

Hartford Seminary is known nationally and internationally as a Christian institution for theological education with the highly regarded Macdonald Center for Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations. My appointment to the faculty in the fall of 2002 added a Jewish dimension to the communal life and academic program of the Seminary, as it deepened the school's commitment to, and capacity for, interfaith study and conversation. That conversation was broadened from a bilateral dialogue to an Abrahamic trialogue, while retaining the specialized focus on Christian-Muslim relations. My role as *BAP* Director also reflects my own professional interests and commitments. From 1978 until 2002, I lived in Jerusalem and was active, as a dual American-Israeli citizen, in various interreligious peacemaking efforts involving Jews and Palestinians. In the 1980's I directed the *Oz veShalom-Netivot Shalom* religious peace movement, and from 1991 until 2003 I co-founded and co-directed the Open House Center for Jewish-Arab Coexistence and Reconciliation in Ramle, Israel.[4] For over twenty years I also taught Jewish tradition and spirituality at several Christian institutes and ecumenical centers in Israel.

Educational initiatives like *BAP,* while so urgently needed, are tragically stymied in the Middle East right now by political, cultural, and psychological obstacles. The success of *BAP* is partly due to its setting, the United States in general and Hartford Seminary in particular. The Seminary's history of sponsoring interreligious encounters, studies, and events is one conducive factor. Another factor is that Hartford is situated in the heart of New England—a generally liberal and tolerant region—making it accessible to students along the east coast, from Washington, D.C., to Maine. Some of the almost 300 participants in the eleven basic *BAP* courses conducted so far have come from more distant places, including Alabama, Colorado,

[3] A systematic evaluation of the *BAP* program is being undertaken this summer (2009), using e-mail questionnaires and selective phone interviews with past participants.

[4] For information on *OZ veSHALOM-NETIVOT SHALOM*, see www.netivot-shalom.org.il; for information on *OPEN HOUSE*, see www.friendsofopenhouse.org. See, also, my research report "Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine," Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, *Peaceworks* No. 51, September 2003, accessible through www.usip.org

Wyoming, California, western Canada, the Netherlands, Israel, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Since there are sizable Jewish and Muslim communities in New England, we can draw students (degree candidates and auditors) from all three traditions relatively easily. In addition, there are already scores of American and international Muslim students in the Seminary's degree programs and its unique Islamic Chaplaincy program.

Equally important is the presence of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities in the greater Hartford area. This allows for visits to synagogues, mosques, and churches for the worship experiences built into *BAP*. The local congregations that have welcomed *BAP* students to their prayer services have been gracious and accommodating. The ongoing relationships with local congregations are beneficial for the *BAP* participants who interact with them, for the congregations that are enriched by the curiosity and insights of the visiting students, and for Hartford Seminary in sustaining relationships with local communities of faith.

One more introductory point: using the term "Abrahamic" in the name of the program evokes the figure of Abraham/Ibrahim, a shared spiritual ancestor and role model for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Such terminology is not unique to *BAP*. Many interfaith trialogues use "Abrahamic" as an alternative to "monotheistic." Aside from the symbolic and sentimental value of using Abraham in this way, the wisdom in this choice is debatable. In the compendium of supplemental readings for the basic *BAP* course, I include two articles that question whether Abraham is a unifying figure at all. Both articles are written by rabbis. Their reservations are motivated by different factors, but their conclusion is the same: each of the three traditions has "its own Abraham," and evoking the patriarch risks fostering division as readily as harmony.[5] Another problematic issue is raised by Prof. Ingrid Mattson, my Hartford Seminary and *BAP* colleague, who is currently serving as President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). She rightfully cautions that holding up Abraham/Ibrahim for

[5] Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Abraham and 'Abrahamic Religions' in Contemporary Interreligious Discourse," in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 2002, pp. 165-183; and Rabbi Avi Safran, "Avraham Avinu—the 'interfaith superstar,'" in the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, October 11, 2002, p. 11.

veneration and emulation risks excluding Sarah and Hagar (and potentially all women) from the picture.

Program Rationale and Goals

To my knowledge there is no Jewish-Christian-Muslim training program similar to *BAP* at any other seminary or religious studies department.[6] The lack of other such initiatives, almost eight years after September 11, 2001, amazes me. By now it should be abundantly clear that all our faith communities need help to overcome mutual ignorance and estrangement. Because this is a painful process, we need trained clergy, educators, and facilitators to help us confront the exclusivism and triumphalism that have, at times, turned each of our sacred traditions into a weapon of unholy war.[7] In a U.S. Institute of Peace *Special Report* issued in February, 2003, Rev. Dr. David Smock, who directs the U.S.I.P.'s Religion and Peacemaking Initiative, wrote:

> The overarching question is how to develop interfaith trust in the prevailing atmosphere of fear and mutual suspicion. In situations of trauma, as experienced continuously in the Middle East and as experienced in the West since 9/11, people

[6] A U.S. Institute of Peace *Special Report*, written by Rev. Dr. David Smock and entitled "Teaching about the Religious Other" (Washington, D.C., July 2005), summarizes presentations by 16 participants in a two-day workshop on programs and curricula for teaching about the Abrahamic Other, in America and abroad. I took part in that workshop, sharing information about the *BAP* program (see p. 4 of that report).

[7] For examinations of how our understandings of the sacred can be used to justify violence, see R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000; Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002; Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001; and Ian Markham and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', editors, *September 11: Religious Perspectives on the Causes and Consequences*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002. For an analysis of how Abrahamic religions (Judaism and Islam especially) can be forces for both conflict and reconciliation, see Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

> are likely to turn inward. Accordingly, they have great difficulty in reaching out to the religious 'Other.' The prevailing attitude is often that no one's suffering can compare to our own suffering. In this climate of victimhood, the Other—whether nation, ethnic group, or religious community—is often labeled simplistically and unhelpfully as either good or evil. [8]

Overcoming ignorance is one challenge. Imparting information to enhance knowledge and understanding is standard fare for institutions of higher learning. This is certainly one of the aims of the basic *BAP* course. Three full days are devoted to presenting the basics of each tradition: historical development, beliefs and practices, denominational variety, and attitudes towards other faiths. Yet there is another challenge that such a program has to address to be effective: helping participants overcome their fears and suspicions of one another.[9] Conditioned reflexes, including competing victim scripts, are very difficult to transform. Building trust takes time. It also takes a willingness to acknowledge and question one's own ego-based and emotional investments: the need to be right, the assurance of being special if not superior, resistance to change, and loyalty to a faith community with its history and behavioral norms. For most Jews and Christians, *BAP* is their first opportunity to engage Muslims and experience prayer in a mosque. For most of the Muslim participants, it is their first encounter with Jews and the inside of a synagogue. Such face-to-face encounters, and the crossing of experiential thresholds, demand a level of openness and vulnerability which few people have the courage to risk.[10] Those who rise to the challenge may have to confront suspicions from co-religionists -- even accusations of disloyalty. This is not an easy burden to carry. An interfaith activist soon learns that

[8] David Smock, "Building Interreligious Trust in a Climate of Fear: An Abrahamic Trialogue," *Special Report* 99, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, February 2003, p. 3.

[9] For a Jewish approach to these challenges, see Jonathan Magonet, *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (London: I. B. Taurus & Co., 2003), especially Chapter Two, "The Challenge to Judaism of Interfaith Dialogue" (pp. 11-22), and Chapter Eight, "Risk-taking in Religious Dialogue" (pp. 90-106).

[10] One of the reasons the course includes several shared *kosher/halal* meals, starting with an opening dinner, is to create a gastronomic and cultural "comfort zone" for mutual engagement.

*inter*religious cooperation needs to be complemented by *intra*religious work in our respective communities. The latter keeps us grounded in our own traditions and communal loyalties. At the same time, it enables us to sensitize our co-religionists to the challenges and benefits of interfaith encounter.

How much can be accomplished in a one-week course? Surprisingly, a great deal—though everyone involved in *BAP* acknowledges that the January or June basic course is only the first step in a lifelong journey toward deeper understanding and, ultimately, spiritual fraternity and solidarity. The four stated goals of that course reflect serious intellectual and emotional challenges: (1) *educating participants about the beliefs and practices of the three Abrahamic traditions*; (2) *creating a supportive learning community in which clergy, lay ministers, religious educators, and chaplains can forge mutually beneficial relationships across communal boundaries*; (3) *helping participants acquire pastoral skills useful in interfaith work*; and (4) *developing leadership strategies for promoting interfaith relations in increasingly heterogeneous societies*.

To achieve these goals, I have assembled a teaching staff for each round of the basic course comprised of five or six Hartford Seminary faculty members[11] and three "pastoral adjuncts," clergy from each of the traditions with experience leading local congregations. The Seminary professors other than myself are present for designated segments of the program, while the rabbi, minister, and imam accompany the course with me from beginning to end. The three clergy adjuncts are expected to share their theoretical and practical expertise and to intervene when pastoral difficulties arise. Personal discomfort can provide a potentially rich learning opportunity for that individual and the whole group. Each *BAP* round has ample opportunities for turning irritation into insight, and to address such opportunities, we have evolved a two-pronged strategy:

[11] To ensure that the Seminary as a whole has a stake in the *BAP* program and that its varied resources are tapped for the benefit of the participants, the faculty members who teach in the basic course represent all three of the school's centers: the Center for Faith in Practice, the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, and the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

- At the outset of the course, participants are told that their comfort zones will be challenged during the week and that we need a consensual agreement to maintain fidelity to our overall goals. A list of ten ground rules for respectful dialogue, as opposed to debate, is read aloud and adopted, sometimes with an addition or amendment. When necessary, these ground rules are reiterated during the course to bring the group back to its agreed-upon norms for communicating;
- When someone hears a statement that disturbs or offends, s/he is encouraged to say "Ouch!" so that the group can address that person's feelings in real time. Often the "ouches" are sparked by one person speaking on behalf of an entire faith community, with co-religionists feeling misrepresented. Conversely, if someone experiences surprise and delight in learning something new, s/he is encouraged to say "Wow!" The late Krister Stendahl, my Christian mentor and friend, called this "holy envy," and he considered such an experience to be the ideal outcome of interreligious encounter. In *BAP*, there are usually more "ouches" than "wows," requiring sensitive and effective leadership to facilitate the group process productively.

Content of *BAP I*

The content of the basic *BAP* course is about half academic and half experiential, in keeping with its intellectual and affective goals. Students taking the course for credit are required to submit two assignments: a 15-to-20-page research paper or an approved artistic project with rationale and bibliography; and a personal journal recording the student's insights and feelings during the week.[12] The academic element of the program consists of:

- Three days devoted to each of the three traditions, mixing frontal presentations and facilitated discussions. These include treatments of controversial topics, often the subjects of widespread misconceptions and prejudices—for example, what Israel and Zionism means to Jews, what the Trinity means to Christians, or what *jihad* means to Muslims.

[12] I have the privilege of reading and grading the materials submitted. The journals, in particular, have taught me a great deal about how the course, including interactions outside the classroom, impacts the students.

- Two evening sessions devoted to specific subjects. On the second evening,we address "What Do We Mean by Spirituality?" with interfaith triads sharing accounts of personal religious experiences before three clergy adjuncts offer their reflections and on the third evening we explore the topic "Religion and the Media," with professional journalists from the newspaper and television industries sharing examples of their work.
- Three half days of comparative text study, in four small groups and then plenary discussions. The texts we choose for examination are of two kinds: passages that evoke inclusive justice, peace, and loving behavior; and others that are problematic, at least to outsiders, for they seem to summon the faithful to exclusivist or belligerent behavior toward those who are different. In the first rounds of the course, the text study took place before the day-long introductions to the three faiths, but we found that it is more effective to have the overviews first and then the text study, to make the passages more meaningful to those who are not familiar with their neighbors' scriptures.

The experiential dimension of the basic course includes:

- Worship in a mosque on Friday, a synagogue on Saturday, and a church on Sunday, followed by group discussions of the respective prayers and practices;
- Two to three artistic or symbolic exercises providing non-analytic ("right-brain") modes of self-expression;[13]

[13] At the opening dinner one of two exercises is used for self-introductions and initial group bonding:
(1) three condiment containers (clear salt and pepper shakers plus an opaque bottle of soy sauce) are presented as representing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Participants are asked to group them so that two traditions (represented by the salt and pepper shakers) are deemed closer in nature than either is to the third (the soy bottle), and to explain this choice in their self-introduction. Three alternatives are possible, and each is valid according to its own criteria for relating the faith traditions. Many Jews and Christians use the soy bottle to represent Islam, which is "opaque" to them. Often Muslims and Jews see Christianity as the "opaque" and distant Other, finding more affinities between Islam and Judaism as ways of life centered on normative behaviors like dietary rules. A few students resist the premise of the exercise, and they either refuse to do it or they change the rules, e.g., by suggesting that the ingredients of all

- In addition to seven *kosher/halal* meals eaten together, long lunch and dinner breaks to encourage fellowship and networking--many participants have reported that these unprogrammed mealtimes are a rich and essential part of the course, allowing them to cross boundaries, overcome fears and prejudices, and forge new friendships;
- In recent rounds of *BAP I*, a four-part "fishbowl" exercise[14] focusing on Israel/Palestine and extending over three days, as a way to practice compassionate listening around one of the most controversial and polarizing topics in Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations; at the end of each afternoon session on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, members of one faith group sit in an inner circle and speak in turn (for 3 minutes each) on what the events in the Holy Land mean to them, while members of the other two faith groups form an outer circle, listening without commenting; on Thursday, most of the evening session is devoted to processing these "fishbowl" experiences; also, those who are journaling during the week have an opportunity to record their reactions along the way.[15]

three containers be poured into one vessel; or (2) an 8" x 11" piece of paper with a serrated border, representing a postage stamp, is given to each student. Everyone is asked to draw his or her own religious stamp, serving as an "ambassador" image to adherents of other religions. Colored markers are provided, and each person gets a chance to share her/his stamp and explain its symbolism.

On the last day of the course, before the closing dinner, one of two creative and fun exercises is used to achieve closure to the week-long experience: (1) in one exercise, large A3 sheets of paper are disseminated, each with a blank circle surrounded by the words *shalom* (in Hebrew), *a-salaam* (in Arabic), and *peace*. (These were created by Artists for Middle East Peace in Lexington, MA). Most participants use colored markers to draw their visions of interreligious peace. Others make collages out of colored paper. Then the group members share their creations in turn, while sitting in a circle, after which they all walk around the circle in silence, looking closely at each of the artistic visions placed on the chairs; (2) the alternative exercise has the group divide into three Jewish-Christian-Muslim construction teams. Each team is given a box of Legos and is asked to design together a sacred space/environment in which all feels welcome and included. The process of "negotiation" and mutual accommodation, over symbols and spatial configurations, yields rich learning opportunities. After all three group have finished, each shares its design and something of the group dynamics that went into constructing it.

[14] See Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright, *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things Are Hot*," Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006, pp. 54-55.

Over eleven rounds of the basic *BAP* course, some common denominators stand out in regard to content. On the day devoted to Jewish tradition, the brief introduction to the meaning of *Shabbat* and how it is observed by Jews invariably elicits "wows" from Christians and Muslims. Participants are generally intrigued by unfamiliar spiritual disciplines in each other's lives, and Sabbath observance is one such practice.

For Islam, it is the *hajj* pilgrimage and the five daily prayers that evoke "wows" of "holy envy" among Jews and Christians. Prof. Ingrid Mattson, in her presentation, counters misconceptions about Muslim women and helps the students understand the difference between the teachings of Islam and the different cultural manifestations (including distortions of that normative tradition) in nominally Muslim societies. Christians react in different ways upon learning that Muslims revere Jesus and Mary but do not accord them divine or superhuman status. Some Christians are pleased by this positive outlook toward their Lord and his mother. Others are disturbed, feeling threatened by another tradition that has its own view of Jesus, as prophet rather than savior. The Jewish participants, on the whole, are fascinated by this conversation but are outside it, since Judaism has (alas) essentially ignored Jesus.

On the day allotted to Christianity, Prof. Ian Markham[16] has begun with a very effective exercise, evoking surprise and irony. On the blackboard he writes the word "God," followed by "Trinity," "Incarnation," "Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," "Virgin Birth of Jesus," "Hell, Demons, and Satan," "Substitutionary Atonement," "Historical Inerrancy of Scripture," and "The Incompatibility of Christianity with Evolution." He then asks the Christians to raise their hands if they believe in God. All the Christians raise their hands. Then he goes down the list, and hands drop as the different Christian doctrines are

[15] See the appendix on the "fishbowl" exercise and the insights drawn from the June, 2009, rounds of *BAP I* and *BAP II*.

[16] The Very Rev. Ian Markham is the former Dean of Hartford Seminary. He is currently President and Dean of Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA.

considered, with the more liberal Protestants experiencing increasing discomfort, doubt, or outright disbelief. Markham then asks the Muslims in the group to do the same exercise. The Christians (and Jews) are amazed to discover that the Muslims affirm more of the classical Christian doctrines than do many of the Christians, since they are also taught in the Qur'an. This is a wonderful teaching moment, as Muslims and Christians, with Jews joining in, discuss the authority of sacred texts, the nature and meaning of revelation, and the place of subjectivity and rational criticism in the interpretation of scriptures. These concerns surface again when we study texts in all three traditions on Thursday and Friday.

Understandably, the "fishbowl" exercises on Israel/Palestine are emotionally charged; but this technique allows participants to address the issue, and the feelings evoked by it, in safe, *in*structive, and *con*structive ways. Ideological polarization, even long-held grievances and recrimination, can be supplanted by empathy, alternative angles of perception on a painful subject, and envisioning strategies for healing the personal and collective wounds engendered by the tragedy in the Holy Land.[17]

[17]In the early rounds of *BAP I*, before we incorporated the "fishbowls," Imam Yahya Hendi (Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University and an M.A. graduate of Hartford Seminary) was the Muslim pastoral adjunct. The example of a Palestinian-American imam and an Israeli-American professor overcoming enmity and embracing one another in mutual affection served, in its own way, to model a path toward reconciliation. See Yehezkel Landau and Yahya Hendi, "Jews, Muslims, and Peace," in *Current Dialogue*, Vol. 41, June-July 2003, Geneva: World Council of Churches, pp. 12-13. In case the reader thinks that the *BAP* "laboratory" has produced some wonder drug to cure the pathological fallout from the Middle East, it is worth citing some sobering reminders of what the "real world" is like. In the June, 2007, round of *BAP I,* a painful but educationally powerful incident occurred in my modern Orthodox synagogue in West Hartford, following *Shabbat* morning prayers. The rabbi conducted a question-and-answer session for the *BAP* students and some members of the congregation, as he had done several times before. This time the Middle East situation became the focus for intense, and increasingly bitter, exchanges. A few Jewish congregants got defensive and made some bellicose statements that hurt the Muslim students (including four women from Damascus, Syria, studying at Hartford Seminary) and that shattered the "safe" learning environment we had been creating all week. Later that afternoon the whole group re-convened at the Seminary to process what had happened.

Holistic Interfaith Engagement

A few additional aspects of *BAP I* are worth highlighting. The formal worship in the mosque, synagogues, and churches toward the end of the course, as well as the devotions offered by participants at the start of each morning and afternoon session, are two complementary experiences that are spiritually and symbolically enriching. In the discussions over lunch that follow the public prayers on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, participants ask clarifying questions and share "ouches" and "wows" that emerged for them during the worship. By the end of the week, Jews and Christians have generally overcome any initial apprehensions about entering a mosque, a new experience for almost all of them. The Christian and Jewish women feel solidarity with their Muslim sisters at the mosque, as they don headscarves (helped by the Muslim women in the group) and share the same-gender piety in the women's section. Here is a poem written by a U.C.C. pastor, Rev. Laura Westby, following her experience at the mosque:

Hair covered
Forehead to the floor
There I found You, at last

Nose to the carpet
Smelling fibers and feet
There I inhaled the Blessedness

Many tissues were consumed as students and teachers shared their pain over the verbal assault, along with mutual affection and care. Despite the shock and pain caused by this experience, it proved beneficial in taking the group to a deeper level of empathy and solidarity with one another. It did challenge me, however, to engage more deliberately in *intra*faith work, especially with my rabbi, before subsequent *BAP* groups were brought to that synagogue. A similar incident, in reverse, happened this past June (2009) in the local mosque, where the hosts invited a Palestinian-American speaker to present a partisan viewpoint on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the lunch that followed mid-day prayers there. Once again the group felt that its "safe" space, and the consensual ground rules governing our conversations, were violated. What both incidents demonstrate is the necessity to sensitize host communities before *BAP* groups are brought to their places of worship for discussion. Until this is done (and so long as the Middle East remains a source of bitter feelings), it is probably better for the group to attend the respective weekly prayers and then move to a neutral venue (like the Seminary) for the shared meals and the discussions about the experiences of communal prayer.

Eyes closed
I was at last blind to all
But Your Presence

Bowing and bending I danced the holy round
Foreign words in my ears
You spoke silence

In this alien place
Where I was guest
I knew You, the One I have been seeking
The One who found me
On the floor of a mosque
And called me beloved.

Through their first-ever experience at a synagogue, whether modern Orthodox or liberal, Muslims develop a deeper appreciation of how Jewish tradition and the Hebrew language are very close to Islam and Arabic. Heba Youssef, a Muslim woman in the January, 2009, round of *BAP I* and a student at Hartford Seminary, attended *Shabbat* morning prayers at my modern Orthodox synagogue and wrote about the experience in her journal:

> I enjoyed just observing the people and how the young ones were playing around with each other, how the older ones were more focused, how everyone was dressed and also all the rituals that took place. The ceremony of removing the Torah from its safeguarded spot; the bowing, the chanting and the designation of specific duties were all pretty fascinating to me.
>
> We mingled a little afterwards with some of the people there and I met this nice young Jewish couple who had just recently gotten married. It was nice because they were about my age and we were discussing kosher spots in the area (because for Muslims kosher = halal) and we had a great conversation about how hard it is to find decent places for us to eat! It's nice to see how much people of faith actually have in common.

And a Catholic participant in another round of the course had what she called a "theophany" when the Torah scroll emerged from the Ark and was carried around the synagogue, with congregants singing and kissing it as it passed.

On Sunday, the discussion over lunch following the Episcopal and U.C.C. church services helps to clarify denominational differences among Christians, and it allows Jews and Muslims to honestly share any discomfort they may experience in Christian worship. This emotional estrangement is particularly acute for Jews when a New Testament reading, hymn, or sermon refers negatively to "scribes and Pharisees," or "the Jews" in the Gospel of John are castigated, or some other subject that has engendered Jewish-Christian animosity over the centuries arises.[18] These are the moments, holistically engaging head and heart and gut, where I believe *BAP* is most interpersonally genuine, spiritually and ethically concrete, and ultimately transformative in positive ways. For it is, above all, the hurt and the fear which we all carry that we are challenged to confront honestly and work through together. Theological discussions take us only part of the way toward reconciliation. Without the honest exchange of negative feelings and conditioned resistances, we are not being true to ourselves or to one another, and we are not living up to what this moment in history demands of us. Instead, we are playing it safe by remaining superficial and abstract. It is necessary, but insufficient, for example, for Christians to examine, together with Muslims and Jews, the theological underpinnings of Christological prayers and hymns, or the meaning of a sacrament like the Eucharist. What Christians also need to know and understand is that most Jews and Muslims will react to these central aspects of Christianity with profound spiritual and emotional dissonance, sometimes even revulsion, engendering self-protective distance. This response is far deeper than cognitive disagreement. It is a kind of "spiritual allergy" -- a discomfort that touches the soul. And it is precisely this kind of reaction—by anyone in an Abrahamic trialogue—that needs careful and caring examination, once sufficient trust has been established within the group.

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[18] See my "Foreword" to Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, *The Synoptic Gospels Set Free: Preaching without Anti-Judaism*, New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009, pp. ix-xii; and my essay "Pope John Paul II's Holy Land Pilgrimage: A Jewish Appraisal," in *John Paul II in the Holy Land: In His Own Words*, Lawrence Boadt, CSP, and Kevin di Camillo, eds., New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005, pp. 129-156.

A Jewish psychologist, Marcia Black, shared her experience in the program with members of her Amherst, MA, synagogue during a *Shavuot* sermon in June, 2005:

> Through my encounter with Muslim and Christian prayer, I understood more clearly our rabbis' entreaty that prayer be the vessel for the eternal fire of Divine love that burns away the separate self. ... with a heart of humility, we need to listen to these and those voices, Muslim, Christian, Jewish so that the agony of splintered time will cease, so that we may find our way to *shleimut*, wholeness.

It is worth adding that there is a deliberate attempt in both the basic and advanced courses to include musical selections and artistic exercises, in order to add an aesthetic dimension that engages the heart and soul as well as the intellect. There is also a conscious attempt to make the *kosher/halal* meals that are eaten together experiences of consecrated fellowship. Blessings from all three traditions are offered before the food is taken. All these exercises and experiences are ritualistic expressions of community across theological boundaries, and they create soulful bridges that allow for less inhibited exchanges in the classroom.

When people of different faiths share a prayer experience, the question that arises is: are they praying together as one fellowship, affirming a common set of religious truths, or are they spectators in each other's worship settings? Either mode of worshipping together is possible, and each has its own legitimacy and value depending on the desired outcome.[19] Any of us may choose to opt out of a prayer experience because of conditioned resistances or sincere theological reservations. For example, in the very first *BAP I* course, some conservative participants (primarily Muslims) felt uncomfortable when

[19] On the last day of *BAP II*, the advanced training, participants experience both kinds of worship: single-faith liturgies and inclusive devotions, both designed by participants in the course. For an example of a Christian participant observer analyzing Jewish prayers and customs, see Harvey Cox, *Common Prayers: Faith, Family, and a Christian's Journey Through the Jewish Year*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001; and for a chronicle of a Jew's journey through Christian and Muslim devotional rites, see Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land*, New York: William Morrow, 2001.

the U.C.C. church we attended gave its blessing to same-sex relationships through some hymns included in the worship. Over lunch afterwards, some of the participants shared their discomfort and said they would have preferred to watch the service from the balcony, establishing a clear distance from the congregation. In subsequent rounds of the course, this option was offered to the students in order to prevent such spiritual discomfort.

Other Factors in the Success of *BAP*

I want now to reflect on the intersection of the qualitative and the quantitative dimensions of *BAP*. In order for the program to succeed, there has to be in each round a critical mass of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Ideally there should be a minimum of eight from each tradition, to ensure sufficient diversity in the small groups. This recruitment goal requires a lot of effort, and it sometimes necessitates allocating scholarship assistance to achieve parity among the three subgroups. A minimum number from each faith yields two interrelated outcomes. The first is "safety in numbers" for the participants, not feeling so "alone" or underrepresented in one's own subgroup. The second is a more enriching experience for everyone in the course, with a strong and diverse group representing each of the Abrahamic faiths. Once assembled, the participants need to feel that their needs are honored, that everyone is treated equally with no favoritism shown, and that the ground rules for respectful communication are adhered to. In the classroom and outside, the pastoral support of the teaching staff is sometimes required to meet these needs. At other times the participants themselves demonstrate mutual solidarity by supporting one another emotionally and practically (e.g., carpooling from the hotel to the Seminary or sharing a picnic in a nearby park).

One experience in the second round of *BAP I* is worth noting (especially since it is, until now, unique). Among the participants were six African-American Christians, a sufficient number to make race as relevant an issue as religion. This necessitated greater sensitivity and responsiveness, from the other participants as well as the teaching staff. It also brought additional "ouches" and "wows." One Jewish participant, for example, objected to the use of the term "Zion" by African-American Christians, sparking a difficult but educationally valuable discussion. One adaptive outcome was to add an optional visit to an A.M.E. Zion church service on Saturday evening.

The teaching staff for a program like *BAP* clearly needs to have the pedagogical skills needed for both interfaith exploration and community building. The pastoral skills of the three clergy adjuncts and the program director are crucial. The professors who are present for shorter periods also need pastoral sensitivity, along with their academic expertise, in order to teach effectively within this framework. Frontal lectures, which may be sufficient in other courses, need to be enhanced and deepened by facilitated discussions on the relevant material. The formal text study oscillates between small group examination of assigned passages and plenary discussions in the main classroom, with the professors and pastoral adjuncts co-leading these sessions. The students, for their part, come to appreciate the unique gifts of each faculty member. Some students may see the teachers as "official" representatives of their respective faiths. When this role is projected onto a teacher, a student may be disappointed if his or her tradition is presented in a way that does not conform to preconceived notions. This frustration can be minimized if the issue is addressed directly by the teachers themselves. The course staff includes both academics and clergy adjuncts so that the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of interreligious encounter are honored and addressed. As I say at the opening dinner, the course is not called "Interfaith Relations 101," but rather "*Building* Abrahamic Partnerships," because we are engaged in an active process of forging and nurturing relationships. This is a process that takes effort. It requires compassionate acceptance of each person's uniqueness, and it tests our commitment to work together for a common goal.

The characteristics of the sponsoring institution—both its advantages and limitations—also need to be considered. At Hartford Seminary, white American Protestants have been in the majority since the school was founded in 1834. They still are the predominant group, welcoming into their midst Muslims and Jews, along with Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and racial or ethnic minorities, as part of the school's mission to foster conversation across communal barriers. No one is *ex*plicitly privileged or favored as a result of the Seminary's history, but some *im*plicit cultural norms and nuances are inevitably at work. My Muslim colleagues and I are sensitive to the conditioned apprehensions, the cultural cues, the gestures of hospitality, the dietary requirements, the prescribed prayer times, and the nonverbal communication styles of Muslims and Jews. This sensitivity serves to make the ambiance at Hartford Seminary more inclusive for *BAP* participants, especially non-Christians. And this inclusiveness helps to

overcome feelings of marginality or alienation that representatives of minority groups might otherwise feel.

Another feature of the sponsoring institution is its academic "neutrality," which tends to relativize the truth claims of any religious tradition. On academic turf, even with the Christian roots of Hartford Seminary, Jews, Christians, and Muslims can meet as intellectual and spiritual equals. This adds to the safety factor: no one need fear that the institution is promoting a particular theology. In fact, Hartford Seminary now sees, as one of its central goals, the promotion of interreligious dialogue and understanding. This makes the Seminary a suitable place for conducting Abrahamic conversations. If *BAP* were sponsored by a synagogue, church, or mosque—or an agency like the Synagogue Council of America, the National Council of Churches, or the Islamic Society of North America—the underlying assumptions and resulting dynamics would be quite different. Once none of the faith traditions is privileged, the power dynamic shifts to favor all of them rather than any one. By this logic, it might be argued that a religious studies department in a secular university would be an even better setting for *BAP*. But a counter-consideration, no less compelling, is that Hartford Seminary's ethos encourages spiritual expression, not only intellectual exploration. Devotional experiences within the classroom or chapel, over shared meals, and at the various houses of worship are celebrated rather than just tolerated or analyzed intellectually, as might happen at a university.

Another political consideration is that of gender equality and inclusiveness, given that each of the three Abrahamic faiths has a history of male dominance or patriarchy. Within *BAP* we try to ensure equal representation of women and men on the teaching staff and, if possible, a gender balance among the participants. Despite our best efforts early on, it was only from the fourth round of *BAP I* onwards that we succeeded in pairing an academic from the Seminary faculty with a pastoral adjunct of the opposite sex. I believe this contributed to making the subsequent courses more successful. The gender balance also pre-empts a collective feminist "ouch," as occurred in the second round of *BAP I*, when some Christian women demanded time in the program to present their own perspective on Christianity. Having women clergy and professors on the teaching staff provides female role models for both women and men, demonstrating that women have their own distinctive contributions to make toward interreligious partnerships.

One final observation regarding the composition of the *BAP* teaching staff and the participants: by restricting these courses to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the wisdom of other faith traditions (including those of the Far East) is not being tapped, even though passing references may be made to them. This is an obvious limitation and, I would add, a loss. (My own conviction is that adherents of the Abrahamic religions, which originated in the Middle East, need to develop greater humility and compassion, qualities associated more with the traditions of the Farther East). At the same time, there is a commonality of worldview and self-understanding that Jews, Christians, and Muslims share—including belief in God's oneness, a reverence for sacred texts, and values grounded in a common prophetic heritage—that would be lost, or at least diluted, if the triad were expanded to a larger multi-faith purview.

The Advanced *BAP* Training

After examining the challenges and achievements of *BAP I*, I want to offer some brief reflections on the advanced *BAP II* training, which Hartford Seminary has so far offered three times within its Summer session (2007, 2008, and 2009—see the appended syllabus from the most recent round). Like the basic course, *BAP II* begins with a dinner on Sunday evening, allowing the participants—most of whom took part in *BAP I*—to introduce themselves and enjoy an initial experience of fellowship. The rest of the course runs from Monday morning until Friday evening. The primary goal, which shapes the content of the course, is to help participants develop conceptual frameworks and practical skills or tools for interfaith leadership. The second major goal, a process objective as in *BAP I*, is to create an educationally enriching interfaith community based on trust and respect. The combination of competent resource people as instructors and facilitators, the variety of educational experiences during the week, and above all the chemistry of the group, all contribute to the success of this course.

Rev. Karen Nell Smith and Imam Abdullah Antepli (both participants in *BAP I*), have served as my co-facilitators for all three rounds of *BAP II*. The theoretical and skill areas we focus on are:

- Facilitating interfaith activities (events, dialogue groups, and workshops);

- Compassionate listening and nonbelligerent communication;[20]
- Understanding group dynamics and multiple identities in interfaith settings;[21]
- Healing personal and collective trauma;[22]
- Comparative study of sacred texts from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an;[23]
- Spiritual resources for conflict transformation, and
- Designing interfaith worship experiences

We have chosen five symbolic themes with universal resonance for the devotional offerings that begin each day: *light/fire*, *water*, *earth/soil*, *tree*, and *bread-and-table*. The opening dinner features an exercise in which everyone shares an object that has some personal symbolic meaning, as a means of self-introduction. Each participant places his or her object on a table in the center of the room, which has on it beforehand a candle and copies of the three sacred scriptures—this table is the central point of reference and reverence for the whole week. The candle is lit at the start of every morning, afternoon, and for the one evening session. These and other ritual elements lend the course a sacramental dimension, making it more than a strictly academic program. They also provide some spiritual coherence to the disparate experiences throughout the week.

Guest trainers share their theoretical and practical expertise on two of the five days (see footnotes 20-23). On the other three days, the various sessions are led by one or another of the three co-facilitators, while the other two serve as supportive allies, ready to intervene when

[20] Gail Syring and Jan Bennett, who are trained in the "Nonviolent Communication" methodology of Marshall Rosenberg, lead this session on Tuesday morning.

[21] Tamar Miller, trained in social work and public administration, conducts this Tuesday afternoon session

[22] Tamar Miller also leads this session, which we included for the first time in the 2009 round of *BAP II*

[23] In 2007 and 2008, Prof. Raquel Ukeles facilitated this Wednesday session; in 2009 Prof. Mahmoud Ayoub from Hartford Seminary and Rabbi Or Rose from Hebrew College teamed up to lead this day-long examination of Biblical and Qur'anic texts, focusing on the experience and role of prophecy in our respective traditions

called for and scribing for one another on large post-it sheets which are then affixed to the classroom walls. Karen Nell, Abdullah, and I model distinct pedagogical styles or modes, letting the group know when we are shifting from one to the other. In the mode of **training** or **instruction,** one of us presents the rationale and concrete "hows" of a particular methodology. The second mode, which we use more often, is **elicitive facilitation**, framing a subject and then drawing forth from the group its collective wisdom.

Friday is devoted to the practicalities of designing interfaith worship. This challenge is deliberately scheduled on the last day of the course, to allow trust and familiarity to develop beforehand. There is also a very practical concern reflected in this choice: early in the week, the group is divided into two Jewish-Christian-Muslim teams of "liturgists," so that they have ample time (during breaks and evenings) to design the two interfaith worship experiences. The day's program moves back and forth between single-faith prayers (in each of the three traditions) and the two inclusive worship opportunities. Group discussions are conducted following each of these devotions, which can include prayer, readings from texts, song or chant, sounds from sacred instruments—drums, bells, chimes, or a *shofar* (ram's horn)—silence, and body movement.

Prayer is a very personal act of faith, even when done in a communal setting; so talking about it, let alone planning it, with others from a different tradition (or another branch of your own), can raise sensitive issues that are often not addressed in interfaith encounters. In the 2007 round, a Christian participant asked the Jews how they feel when Christians adopt Jewish prayers like the "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" affirmation of God's Oneness. A rich discussion about the asymmetrical relationship between Judaism and Christianity, along with the dangers of "spiritual plagiarism," ensued. In these honest conversations, Jews have an opportunity to share their fears and negative reactions when encountering a cross or other symbols in a church. We also address the sense of self-negation or inauthenticity that Christians often feel when asked to give up Christological language in order to accommodate Jews and Muslims in common worship. Should they ever comply, and, if so, on what occasions?

In all three rounds of *BAP II*, the interfaith worship services have been truly inspirational and a memorable highlight of each course. They demonstrate how closely connected the participants are by the end of their week together. The process of accommodating different

theologies and liturgical styles, and the opportunity to present the fruits of creative collaboration to the rest of the group, yield spiritual gifts that are genuine blessings for everyone.

Evaluation forms indicate that the students in *BAP II* take from the course a set of concepts, skills, and sensitivities that can empower them both personally and professionally. Their interfaith leadership "tool kits" are enhanced, and the practical lessons can be applied in their particular work settings.

A Theological Underpinning for *BAP*

As I work for mutual understanding and solidarity among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, my own theological assumptions are constantly challenged. A key question is whether one can develop a theology, or multiple theologies, of religious pluralism to undergird the building of Abrahamic partnerships. One theology, acceptable to all, that accounts for religious diversity within God's plan is inconceivable. The three traditions have disparate understandings of why the One God has allowed different, mutually irreconcilable theologies to coexist.

One can, of course, bracket the theological dimension entirely and promote interreligious encounter on the basis of practical necessity: humanity as an endangered species that requires collective effort in order to survive. No talk of redemption or reconciliation is necessary, according to this utilitarian perspective. But *BAP* has a deeper goal. It seeks to heal the historic wounds that have traumatized us and left us, as Abrahamic siblings, estranged from one another. It has a vision of interreligious reconciliation and cooperation that is hopeful—one might even say messianic—for it is rooted in our shared summons to emulate God by living lives of justice, peace, and love. To overcome our deep-seated fears and to bring us closer to the hoped-for Kingdom of God, we need new religious paradigms. One of the obstacles to such new, visionary thinking is the narrow way in which our traditions have formed our identities.

Redefining our particular identities in other than dualistic ways (us vs. them, theologically valid vs. heretical, saved vs. damned, righteous vs. sinful), requires humility and an appreciation for human diversity as a blessing rather than a threat. The intellectual challenge of dialectically affirming the Oneness of God and the multiplicity of

theologies is compounded by the emotional challenge of transcending our victim scripts and demythologizing the adversarial relationship with our traditional "enemies." Long-standing conflicts over land, power, or economic resources have been, all too often, "theologized" into cosmic struggles between God and Satan, Virtue and Evil, or the forces of Light and Darkness. In this way our religious identities have been skewed by simplistic and essentialistic thinking, along with emotional investments in self-referencing understandings of love and loyalty. *BAP* encourages participants, in a relatively "safe" setting, to undertake transformations in both, the intellectual and the emotional sheres. The theological link between the two is the symbolic transfiguration *of God* (favoring more than one faith community), *of ourselves* (seeing ourselves as distinct but not superior or victorious over others), and *of our relationship with others* (as allies or partners rather than adversaries).

Sadly, none of our traditions has adequately prepared us for this theological transfiguration, and that is why programs like *BAP* are needed. At this point in history, humanity is in dire need of more inclusive religious concepts and norms—what may be termed "paradigm shifts." We need new understandings of what it means to be faithful to God and to one another. One direction for my own theological thinking is exploring the implications of seeing the One God as a "multiple covenanter," inviting all of humanity (through Noah) and then different faith communities into complementary relationships of sacrificial service for the sake of God's Creation. This may be one helpful paradigm of inclusiveness and mutuality; there are many others worth exploring. We need to experiment with new ways of doing theology together, new ways of living together, and new ways of integrating the two. Familiar spiritual practices like prayer and text study can be transformed through interreligious engagement and creativity. In this spirit, *BAP* participants are pioneers venturing onto unfamiliar terrain, where we are all equal in God's sight and where we all have unique insights to contribute toward a future of shared promise and blessing. Let us recall that in the Biblical account (Gen. 12:3), Abraham is promised: "In you all of the families of the earth shall be blessed." It does not say that all of humanity will merge into one family. The verse implies, instead, that distinct family and faith identities will remain, but that we will all share a common blessing. *BAP* is one step on a journey toward that shared blessing. Its theological underpinning, which I would call "pluralistic, multi-covenantal monotheism," together with a holistic pedagogy that

integrates the cognitive, the affective, the aesthetic, and the spiritual dimensions of religion, together create an educational model that, I believe, could be replicated or adapted in other seminary settings.

Conclusion

As Jews, Christians, and Muslims sharing a fragile planet in a time of collective peril, we are called to face one another in repentance and humility. We all proclaim a messianic future unfolding and anticipated, but we have all failed to translate those proclamations into effective action. Instead, we have undermined our own beliefs and aspirations. We desecrate what we call holy, and we become our own worst enemies. Entrenched fears rooted in past or present traumas cripple our imaginations.[24] Instead of envisioning a future in which we are all redeemed and blessed, we compensate ourselves for our insecurities by fantasies of unilateral victory and vindication.

We need new theologies of inclusiveness that simultaneously affirm, the oneness of God and a plurality of ways to worship and serve God. We also need new models of religious and interreligious education. And we need pedagogies that help us grow in faithfulness to

[24]For a helpful way of conceiving the process of interreligious transformation, in the service of inclusive justice and reconciliation, see John Paul Lederach's *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Lederach argues (especially in pp. 31-40) that peacebuilding is both a skill and an art requiring "moral imagination" in four distinct "disciplines": (1) adversaries need to "imagine themselves in [a positive] relationship" by "taking personal responsibility and acknowledging relational mutuality"; (2) parties in conflict need to "embrace complexity" and adopt a stance of "paradoxical curiosity" in order to rise above dualistic antagonism and, instead, "hold together seemingly contradictory social energies in a greater whole"; (3) space needs to be provided "for the creative act to emerge" and allow the estranged adversaries to "move beyond the narrow parameters of what is commonly accepted and perceived"; and (4) to move beyond enmity and violence (what is known) to the prospect of peaceful relations (the unknown and mysterious) requires a capacity to take risks "without any guarantee of success or even safety." Lederach deepens the last point by connecting "the deeper implications of risk and the longer-term sustenance of vocation." The vocation of interreligious peacemaking requires these different "disciplines," or leaps of faith-imagination, in the areas of theology, spirituality, and ethics.

the tradition of our forebearers while we learn from the traditions of our neighbors, affirming them as valid and mutually enriching. Above all, we need new understandings of those neighbors. We must come to know them not only intellectually through increased factual knowledge—*yeda'* in Hebrew, a cognitive knowing based on new information. More important, and urgently needed, are new heart-understandings of each other, grounded in mutual affection and appreciation. In Hebrew this is *da'at*, the kind of intimate knowledge and spiritual *trans*formation that Adam and Eve shared after leaving the Garden and its childlike innocence.[25] None of us are innocent of wrongdoing. At one time or another, each of our religious traditions has been complicit in domination and mass slaughter.

If we are to write a new historical chapter that redeems our tragic past and present, we need collaborative initiatives in mutual re-education. We should be corrective mirrors for each other, so that we do not repeat our past mistakes. Many of those mistakes originate in the act of projecting evil onto others rather than acknowledging it in ourselves. If we can be helped to see our own limitations and moral lapses through the eyes of our Abrahamic siblings, we have a chance to truly experience the Kingdom of God on earth. The beginning of redemption is the humble recognition that we need one another to be redeemed. *BAP* is one modest effort to foster that recognition among Jews, Christians, and Muslims and to develop a praxis of partnership in that spirit.

In summary, the pedagogical praxis modeled in the BAP program aims for a redemptive transformation of Abrahamic relationships by *expanding knowledge* about each other's faith traditions, *evoking and healing legacies of pain* within a safe and supportive learning environment, and *building a spiritual community* in which everyone is nourished and blessed. I am grateful to all of my colleagues—teachers and students—who have joined in this pioneering effort to explore an interior terrain linking mind, heart, and spirit. We engage in this undertaking with the hope of becoming better interfaith leaders and peacemakers in the wider society.

[25] For examples of such transformation of the heart, see Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden*, *op. cit.* (fn. 19), and Donald Nicholl, *The Testing of Hearts: A Pilgrim's Journey*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Building Abrahamic Partnerships (*BAP*)
(DI-650)

May 31-June 7, 2009

BAP Program Director: **Prof. Yehezkel Landau**

Course Faculty: Prof. Yehezkel Landau, Prof. Ian Markham, Prof. Ingrid Mattson, Prof. Mahmoud Ayoub, Prof. David Roozen, Rabbi Debra Cantor, Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern, and Imam Abdullah Antepli

Course Overview: Hartford Seminary, building on its strengths as an interfaith, dialogical school of practical theology, has designed this innovative program to be a practical resource for Jews, Christians, and Muslims who seek a solid foundation in interfaith ministry. The format is an 8-day intensive training program, beginning with an informal dinner on May 31 and concluding with a dinner on June 7.

Course Rationale and Objectives: Our society needs a new kind of religious leadership, grounded in a particular tradition and, at the same time, able to interact effectively with other faith communities. This is especially true given the prevalence of fear and mutual suspicion, exacerbated by violence committed by religious extremists.
We need to develop educational strategies to overcome the ignorance that leads to prejudice, which in turn leads to dehumanizing contempt, which in turn breeds violence.

The goals of the course are fourfold:

- Educating participants about the beliefs and practices of the three Abrahamic traditions
- Creating a supportive learning community in which clergy, lay ministers, religious educators, and chaplains can forge mutually beneficial relationships across communal boundaries
- Helping participants acquire pastoral skills useful in interfaith ministry
- Developing leadership strategies for promoting interfaith relations in our pluralistic society

Course Content: Topics for discussion and shared experiences will include:

- Presentations clarifying the tenets and practices of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- Historical overviews of the three traditions and how they have interacted in history
- Shared text study using source material from all three traditions
- Visits to a mosque, a synagogue, and a church for worship and subsequent discussion of those liturgical experiences
- Demographic and sociological data on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities in America
- Skills and sensitivities needed to establish and sustain effective interfaith partnerships
- The role of the media in creating images of one another, and strategies to counter negative media stereotypes
- Developing ideas for joint interfaith projects in local communities

Methods of Delivery: Lectures, panel discussions, text study, artistic exercises, sacred music, videotapes, facilitated discussions, interpersonal exchanges in small groups, extended exercise (over several days) in deep listening and honest dialogue, visits to houses of worship, shared meals

Methods of Assessment: For those taking the course for credit, class participation will count for 20% of the course grade; a daily journal of one's reflections on the experience will count for an additional 30% of the grade; and a final paper approximating 15 double-spaced pages will count for 50% of the grade. **The paper and the journal reflections are due by September 1, 2009.** The final paper should relate to one or both of the two themes addressed by the course: (1) theoretical approaches to improving interfaith relations, and (2) practical strategies or initiatives aimed at promoting Abrahamic partnerships. It is recommended that a student consult with one or more of the course faculty before writing the final paper, to get input on how to approach the intended topic and what resources to use in researching it.

Course Schedule and Readings

(Note: the four assigned books, which are required of credit-seeking students, are available from the Hartford Seminary Bookstore; the "suggested readings" are optional and are meant primarily for those seeking additional resources for course papers).

Sunday, May 31: Informal opening dinner, 6:30 p.m., in the Seminary Meeting Room (ground floor, to the right of the lobby). Preliminary introductions and general overview of the course program; an interfaith exercise as a way of engaging one another; distribution of materials, including a looseleaf collection of *Supplemental Readings*. "Before" questionnaires will be handed out for completion that evening.

Monday, June 1: Morning session, 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
Welcome by course faculty; explanation of course objectives and requirements; ground rules for interreligious conversation for adoption by the group

SUGGESTED READINGS: "*The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue*" by Leonard Swidler, Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 20:1, Winter 1983 (September, 1984, revision); NOT WITHOUT MY NEIGHBOUR: ISSUES IN INTERFAITH RELATIONS by S. Wesley Ariarajah, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999, chapters 1, 2, and 3 (both in *Supplemental Readings*) Introduction to Jewish identity, beliefs and practices; Biblical and Rabbinic (Written and Oral Torahs); and contemporary Judaism in its different forms (*Prof. Yehezkel Landau* and *Rabbi Debra Cantor*).

ASSIGNED READING: *CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM FOR MUSLIMS* by Reuven Firestone, New York: Ktav Publishing House/ American Jewish Committee, 2001.

SUGGESTED READINGS: JEWISH LITERACY by Joseph Telushkin, New York: William Morrow and Company, 2001; JUDAISM: REVELATION AND TRADITIONS by Michael A. Fishbane, New York: HaperCollins Publishers, 1987; SACRED FRAGMENTS: RECOVERING THEOLOGY FOR THE MODERN JEW by Neil Gillman, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990; A JEWISH THEOLOGY by Louis Jacobs, New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1973; THE SEVENTY FACES

OF TORAH: THE JEWISH WAY OF READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES by Stephen M. Wylen, New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005; THE JEWISH WAY: LIVING THE HOLIDAYS by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988; STANDING AGAIN AT SINAI: JUDAISM FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE by Judith Plaskow, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991; ON WOMEN AND JUDAISM: A VIEW FROM TRADITION by Blu Greenberg, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1981; LIVING JUDAISM by Rabbi Wayne Dosick, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998; FINDING OUR WAY: JEWISH TEXTS AND THE LIVES WE LEAD TODAY by Barry W. Holtz, New York: Schocken Books, 1990; THE JEWISH APPROACH TO GOD: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION FOR CHRISTIANS by Rabbi Neil Gillman, Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003; ONE PEOPLE, TWO WORLDS: A REFORM RABBI AND AN ORTHODOX RABBI EXPLORE THE ISSUES THAT DIVIDE THEM by Ammiel Hirsch and Yosef Reinman, New York: Schocken Books, 2002; TALKING TO THE OTHER: JEWISH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE WITH CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS by Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, London/New York: I. B. Taurus, 2003.

Afternoon session, 1:45 to 4:45 p.m.
Introduction to Jewish tradition, continued, with attention paid to stereotypes and misunderstood aspects of Judaism, including: election/chosenness, Torah as "sacred teaching" rather than legalistic rules; the land and state of Israel, and the connection between Zionism and Judaism (*Prof. Yehezkel Landau* and *Rabbi Debra Cantor*) First of three "fishbowl" exercises on Israel/Palestine, with Jewish participants speaking and Christians and Muslims listening deeply without interruption or comment.

SUGGESTED READINGS: ISRAEL: AN ECHO OF ETERNITY by Abraham Joshua Heschel, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969; A LAND OF TWO PEOPLES: MARTIN BUBER ON JEWS AND ARABS, edited with commentary and new preface by Paul Mendes-Flohr, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005; IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL by Amos Oz, London: Flamingo/Fontana Paperbacks, 1983; VOICES FROM JERUSALEM: JEWS AND CHRISTIANS REFLECT ON THE HOLY LAND, edited by David Burrell and Yehezkel Landau, New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992; AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN: A JEW'S SEARCH FOR

HOPE WITH CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN THE HOLY LAND by Yossi Klein Halevi, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002; THE END OF DAYS: FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE TEMPLE MOUNT by Gershom Gorenberg, New York: The Free Press, 2000; HOLY WAR, HOLY PEACE: HOW RELIGION CAN BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST by Rabbi Dr. Marc Gopin, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; *HEALING THE HOLY LAND: INTERRELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE* by Yehezkel Landau, PEACEWORKS No. 51, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, September, 2003; "*Jews, Muslims, and Peace*," by Yehezkel Landau and Yahya Hendi, CURRENT DIALOGUE, No. 41, June-July, 2003, Geneva: World Council of Churches, pp. 12-13 (in *Supplemental Readings*); THE TESTING OF HEARTS: A PILGRIM'S JOURNAL by Donald Nicholl, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1998; HEALING ISRAEL/PALESTINE by Rabbi Michael Lerner, San Francisco: Tikkun Books, 2003; THE LEMON TREE: AN ARAB, A JEW, AND THE HEART OF THE MIDDLE EAST by Sandy Tolan, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006.

Evening session, 7 to 9 p.m.
Small-group sharing of encounters with the sacred or transcendent, followed by a panel discussion on *"What Do We Mean by Spirituality?"* co-led by *Rabbi Debra* Cantor, *Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern*, and *Imam Abdullah Antepli*. Relevant topics include: comparative mysticism; language as a medium of spiritual devotion, including gender-specific references to the Divine; silence, meditation, chanting, and body movement as alternative modes; liturgical commonalities and differences in styles of prayer; how prayers in one tradition are heard/experienced by adherents of another, especially prayers that refer to the Other.

SUGGESTED READINGS: JEWISH SPIRITUALITY: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION FOR CHRISTIANS by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001; A GUIDE TO JEWISH PRAYER by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, New York: Schocken Books, 2000; MAN'S QUEST FOR GOD by Abraham Joshua Heschel, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954; ENGENDERING JUDAISM by Rachel Adler, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998; SHE WHO DWELLS WITHIN: A FEMINIST VISION OF A RENEWED JUDAISM by Lynn Gottlieb, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995; JEWISH PRAYER: THE ORIGINS OF THE CHRISTIAN LITURGY by Carmine

Di Sante, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991; PRAYING THE PSALMS by Walter Brueggemann, Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1986; EXPLORING CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY ed. by Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2006; THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM, ed. with introduction by Bernard McGinn, New York: The Modern Library/Random House, 2006; THE INTERIOR CASTLE or THE MANSIONS by St. Teresa of Avila, Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1997; FRANCIS OF ASSISI'S *CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES*: A MODERN SPIRITUAL PATH by Paul M. Allen and Joan deRis Allen, New York: Continuum, 2000; THE SINGER AND THE SONG: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE SPIRIT by Miriam Therese Winter, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999; SON OF MAN: THE MYSTICAL PATH TO CHRIST by Andrew Harvey, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1999; PRAYING WITH ICONS by Jim Forest, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997; MUSLIM DEVOTIONS by Constance E. Padwick, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1996; THE BOOK OF ASSISTANCE by Imam Abdallah Ibn Alawi Al-Haddad, Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003; THE SOUL OF RUMI: A NEW COLLECTION OF ECSTATIC POEMS, translations, introductions, and notes by Coleman Barks, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001; THE WAY OF PASSION: A CELEBRATION OF RUMI by Andrew Harvey, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1994; MY SOUL IS A WOMAN: THE FEMININE IN ISLAM by Annemarie Schimmel, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998; MUSLIM PREACHER IN THE MODERN WORLD by Richard T. Antoun, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989; THE EARLY MUSLIM TRADITION OF DREAM INTERPRETATION by John C. Lamoreaux, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Tuesday, June 2: Morning session, 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Introduction to Muslim beliefs and practices, with attention given to cultural variety within the Islamic *umma*/global community (*Imam Abdullah Antepli*)

ASSIGNED READINGS:
THE STORY OF THE QUR'AN: ITS HISTORY AND PLACE IN MUSLIM LIFE by Ingrid Mattson, Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. *THE HEART OF ISLAM: ENDURING VALUES FOR HUMANITY* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

SUGGESTED READINGS: ISLAM: RELIGION, HISTORY, AND CIVILIZATION by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, New York: HarperOne, 2001; ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY by Frederick M. Denny, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998; WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ISLAM AND MUSLIMS by Suzanne Haneef, Chicago: Kazi Publications/Library of Islam, 1996; READING THE MUSLIM MIND by Hassan Hathout, Burr Ridge, IL: American Trust Publications, 1995; THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING ISLAM by Yahiya Emerick, Indiana: Alpha Books, 2002; UNDERSTANDING ISLAM: A GUIDE FOR THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN READER by Jerald Dirks, Maryland: Amana Publications, 2003; THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF AL-GHAZALI by W. Montgomery Watt, Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982; THE STORY OF A MOSQUE IN AMERICA by Dr. Faroque Khan, Westbury, NY: Islamic Center of Long Island, 2001; DAUGHTERS OF ANOTHER PATH: EXPERIENCES OF AMERICAN WOMEN CHOOSING ISLAM, by Carol L. Anway, Lee's Summit, MO: Yawna Publications, 1996; TO BE A EUROPEAN MUSLIM by Tariq Ramadan, Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1999; MUSLIMS AND JEWS: BUILDING A HOPEFUL FUTURE, edited by Norman Hosansky and Mazhar Jalil, Columbus, OH: The Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio, 2003.

Learning lunch, 12 noon to 1:30 p.m.
Presentation and discussion facilitated by *Prof. David Roozen* on three topics:
"*Motivations for Participating in Interfaith Dialogue,"*
"*The Nature and Sources of Prejudice"* and
"*Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Congregations in America: Current Trends"*

ASSIGNED READING: *"Meet Your Neighbors: Interfaith Facts*" booklet, Faith Communities Today/Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003 (distributed Sunday evening)

SUGGESTED READING: THEY AND WE: RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES (5th Edition) by Peter I. Rose, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.

Afternoon session, 1:45 to 4:45 p.m.

Presentation and discussion on stereotypes and misunderstood aspects of Islam, including rights and opportunities for women, Greater and Lesser *Jihad*, attitudes towards non-Muslims, and concepts of the afterlife (*Prof. Ingrid Mattson*)

Third of three "fishbowl" exercises on Israel/Palestine, with Muslim participants speaking and Jews and Christians listening deeply without interruption or comment.

SUGGESTED READINGS: QUR'AN AND WOMAN: REREADING THE SACRED TEXT FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE by Amina Wadud, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; "BELIEVING WOMEN" IN ISLAM: UNREADING PATRIARCHAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE QUR'AN by Asma Barlas, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002; MUSLIM WOMEN IN AMERICA: THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY TODAY, by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and Kathleen M. Moore, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006; WINDOWS OF FAITH: MUSLIM WOMEN SCHOLAR-ACTIVISTS IN NORTH AMERICA edited by Gisela Webb, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000; "*Islamic Ethics of Killing and Saving Life*," special issue of THE MUSLIM WORLD, guest editor Jonathan E. Brockopp, Vol. LXXXIX, No. 2, April 1999; REBELLION AND VIOLENCE IN ISLAMIC LAW by Khaled Abou El Fadl, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; NONVIOLENCE AND PEACE BUILDING IN ISLAM: THEORY AND PRACTICE by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003; "*Stopping Oppression: An Islamic Obligation*," by Ingrid Mattson, in SEPTEMBER 11: RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, edited by Ian Markham and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002, pp. 101-110 (in *Supplemental Readings*); QUR'AN, LIBERATION & PLURALISM by Farid Esack, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997; COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF EMIR ABD EL-KADR by John W. Kiser, Rhinebeck, NY: Monkfish Book Publishing, 2008.

Evening Discussion, 7 to 9 p.m.
A conversation on "*Religion and the Media*" with guest presenters *Anisa Mehdi*, producer of TV documentaries including "Inside Mecca," and *Tamar Miller*, consultant to social change organizations with a focus on the Middle East and initiator of a radio series called *The PeaceBeat >>> some good news, some of the time*!

Wednesday, June 3: Morning session, 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Introduction to Christian beliefs and practices, including an overview of different Christian denominations (*Prof. Ian Markham* and *Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern*)

ASSIGNED READING: *UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE* by Ian S. Markham, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

SUGGESTED READINGS: CHRISTIANITY: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION by Linda Woodhead, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; CHRISTIANITY 101: TRACING BASIC BELIEFS by James W. White, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006; INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY by Michael Keene, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998; TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH by Martin B. Copenhaver, Cleveland: United Church Press, 1994; "*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*," and "*Psalm Eight*" from THE DEATH OF ADAM: ESSAYS ON MODERN THOUGHT by Marilynne Robinson, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, pp. 108-125 and 227-244 (in *Supplemental Readings*); CREDO by William Sloane Coffin, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004; MY STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM: MEMOIRS by Hans Kung, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003; PRACTICING OUR FAITH: A WAY OF LIFE FOR A SEARCHING PEOPLE, edited by Dorothy C. Bass, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997; MANY MANSIONS: A CHRISTIAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH OTHER FAITHS by Harvey Cox, London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1988; COMMON PRAYERS: FAITH, FAMILY, AND A CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE JEWISH YEAR by Harvey Cox, Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001; MUHAMMAD AND THE CHRISTIAN: A QUESTION OF RESPONSE by Kenneth Cragg, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984; THE MONKS OF TIBHIRINE: FAITH, LOVE, AND TERROR IN ALGERIA by John W. Kiser, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002; JOHN PAUL II IN THE HOLY LAND: IN HIS OWN WORDS, with Christian and Jewish Perspectives by Yehezkel Landau (in *Supplemental Readings*) and Michael McGarry, CSP, edited by Lawrence Boadt, CSP, and Kevin di Camillo, New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005.

Afternoon session, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Stereotypes and misunderstood aspects of Christianity, including: the doctrine of the Trinity; the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus; and the meaning of evangelism: mission or witness? (*Prof. Ian Markham* and *Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern*)

SUGGESTED READINGS: THE MEANING OF JESUS: TWO VISIONS by Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999; PAIN AND POLEMIC: ANTI-JUDAISM IN THE GOSPELS by George M. Smiga, New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992; PREACHING WITHOUT CONTEMPT: OVERCOMING UNINTENDED ANTI-JUDAISM by Marilyn J. Salmon, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006; CHRIST KILLERS: THE JEWS AND THE PASSION FROM THE BIBLE TO THE BIG SCREEN by Jeremy Cohen, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007; PONDERING THE PASSION: WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS? edited by Philip A. Cunningham, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004; "*The Rehabilitation of Mission*," presentation by Prof. Dale Bishop delivered at Hartford Seminary, February 12, 2004 (in *Supplemental Readings*).

Wednesday evening: OFF, OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIALIZING OR REST

Thursday, June 4: Morning session, 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Interfaith text study: understanding the ambivalence of sacred texts—the exclusive as well as inclusive dimensions, the messages that seem peaceful and those that seem intolerant or violent—using selected passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, New Testament, and Qur'an (morning session devoted to Christian texts, led by *Prof. Ian Markham* and *Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern*)

SUGGESTED READINGS: THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE SACRED: RELIGION, VIOLENCE, AND RECONCILIATION by R. Scott Appleby, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; "*Violent Faith*," by Kelton Cobb, in SEPTEMBER 11: RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, edited by Ian Markham and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002, pp.136-163 (in *Supplemental Readings*); VIOLENCE IN GOD'S NAME: RELIGION IN AN AGE OF CONFLICT by Oliver McTernan, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003; WHEN RELIGION BECOMES EVIL by Charles Kimball, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002; THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE BELOVED SON: THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHILD SACRIFICE IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY by Jon D. Levenson, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993; THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC IN THE THREE MONOTHEISTIC TRADITIONS, edited by Frederic Manns, Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1995; VIOLENCE AND THE SACRED by Rene Girard, Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; THE BIBLE, VIOLENCE, AND THE SACRED: LIBERATION FROM THE MYTH OF SANCTIONED VIOLENCE by James G. Williams, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991; CONSTANTINE'S SWORD: THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS by James Carroll, Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001; THE ART OF FORGIVENESS: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON HEALING AND RECONCILIATION by Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997.

Learning lunch, 12 noon to 1:30 p.m.
Presentation and discussion facilitated by *Prof. Mahmoud Ayoub* on "*Shi'ite Islam and Shia-Sunni Relations*"

SUGGESTED READINGS: A MUSLIM VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY: ESSAYS ON DIALOGUE by Mahmoud Ayoub, edited by Irfan A. Omar, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007; THE CRISIS OF MUSLIM HISTORY: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN EARLY ISLAM by Mahmoud M. Ayoub, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005; SHI'ISM, Second Edition, by Heinz Halm, translated by Janet Watson and Marian Hill, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; A SHI'ITE ANTHOLOGY, Selected and with a Foreword by 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, translated with explanatory notes by William C. Chittick, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981; THE SHIA REVIVAL: HOW CONFLICTS WITHIN ISLAM WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE by Vali Nasr, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Afternoon session, 1:45 to 4:45
Continuation of interfaith text study: inclusive and exclusive passages from the Jewish tradition, led by *Prof. Yehezkel Landau* and *Rabbi Debra Cantor*

Evening session, 7 to 9:30 p.m.: *Sensitivities and Skills for Interfaith Partnerships*. Processing the three "fishbowl"

exercises and people's reactions, leading to a general discussion: what kinds of communication skills are required for establishing and sustaining interfaith relationships? How can we listen more compassionately and speak with sensitivity to the Other's situation? To what should we give attention in reaching out to or hosting someone from another faith community?—e.g., language that honors the Other, sacred calendars, prayer times, dietary restrictions, etc. How do we find common ground, or at least agree to disagree respectfully, on controversial issues such as proselytizing, shared worship, and intermarriage? (discussion facilitated by *Imam Abdullah Antepli*, *Rabbi Debra Cantor,* and *Rev. Dr. Brita Gill-Austern*)

Friday, June 5: Morning session, 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Continuation of interfaith text study, inclusive and exclusive passages from the Islamic tradition, examining the principles and methodologies for Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), led by *Imam Abdullah Antepli.*

Mid-day: Visit to mosque in Berlin, CT, hosted by *Imam Prof. Ali Antar and Prof. Fatma Antar*, followed by lunch and a discussion led by the Antars

Evening: Shabbat prayers and dinner at Congregation B'nai Sholom in Newington, CT

Saturday, June 6: Visit to modern Orthodox or liberal synagogue for Sabbath morning prayers, followed by lunch and discussion at Beth David Synagogue led by *Rabbi Yitzchok Adler*

Remainder of Saturday: OFF, OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIALIZING OR REST

Sunday, June 7: Visit to Immanuel Congregational Church or Trinity Episcopal Church for Sunday worship, followed by lunch and discussion at the Seminary.

Late afternoon, 3:30 to 6 p.m: Artistic exercise and closure on the week's experiences; "After" questionnaires distributed for completion before leaving

Evening, 6 to 9 p.m: Closing dinner and farewells…*SHALOM, SALAMAT, PEACE*

Yehezkel Landau
Hartford Seminary

***BUILDING ABRAHAMIC PARTNERSHIPS*: THE "FISHBOWL" EXERCISE**

The "fishbowl" exercise is a very simple one, in terms of structure and what the participants are expected to do. Yet its simplicity belies deeper challenges: taking on the discipline of active, compassionate, and respectful listening; and using a spiritual lens through which to view, and ideally transform, situations of conflict.

In *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics*, Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright devote two pages to this exercise.[1] They write: "One group sits in a circle and has a conversation, surrounded by a larger circle of listeners. Only people in the inner circle can speak; the surrounding group listens in silence. Usually both groups [in the case of *BAP*, three groups] get a turn in the inner circle. This is a simple, sturdy, flexible tool that can serve dialogue, analysis, or decision-making."

In the spirit of flexibility, one change we have made is to have each member of the inner circle speak for UP TO THREE MINUTES, so that each participant in *BAP* has an equal chance to talk, and two opportunities to actively listen. We have not extended the sharing to a full conversation within the inner circle, but that is still an option.

In recent rounds of *BAP*, we have chosen for this exercise what is usually the most contentious, and often painful, topic impinging on Jewish-Christian-Muslim encounters everywhere: the ongoing tragedy in the Holy Land/Israel/Palestine. Each of these names for the territory suggests different associations—and all thoughts and feelings related to this subject are welcome and valuable for the overall process of deepening understanding, of the topic and one another. In a climate of political polarization, often fraught with intense passions, we are trying to develop (inter)religious perspectives on this conflict and dialogical skills that can help transform its potentially negative ramifications in our own lives.

To help focus the exercise, two questions are posed: ***(1) Does the land itself, called holy by different faith traditions, have any degree of sanctity or special significance for you, and, if so, in what sense? (2) How does the conflict over it, throughout history and today, affect your own identity as a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim?***

Over the course of the week-long *BAP I* course, we have a sequential process for conducting the exercise. On Monday (devoted to Judaism), the Jewish participants, both students and teachers, comprise the inner circle, with the Christians and Muslims listening outside the circle without commenting. On Tuesday (Islam day), the Muslims make up the inner circle; while on Wednesday (Christianity day) it is the Christians' turn in the inner circle. While it is permissible to engage one another outside the class setting, and *BAP* participants are encouraged to journal about their experiences throughout the week (including the different stages of the "fishbowl"), the formal processing of the three exercises BY THE WHOLE GROUP happens on Thursday, as part of the evening program on "Sensitivities and Skills for Interfaith Dialogue."

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[1] Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright, *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things Are Hot*," Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006, pp. 54-55.

Summary of fishbowl exercises in *BAP I*, June 2009

In the fishbowl exercises I learned:

- that there is a lot of pain everywhere, on all sides, in personal stories
- that people carry feelings of being victimized (past, present, and future)
- that it is good to share pain when others are sincere—in a safe space, where the barriers are lowered and people grow closer to one another
- that it is helpful for evoking empathy for different narratives
- it was a good time of story-telling and truth-telling
- that "holy envy" can include identifying with another's suffering
- that the suffering includes me, and I am more involved than I thought I was
- that Jews recognize the suffering of Palestinians, too
- to know the person in front of me, changing my prior thoughts about others' caring for me (including other Muslims)
- how to create such a container, without arguing back
- about the need for closure
- I was reminded that I have a way to defend against pain by sectioning it off
- that keeping to 3 minutes is very helpful, so that the testimonies do not go on and on
- there are more dimensions to what I don't know than I was aware of—I now have more lenses to look through
- I was surprised by the lack of anger, and I felt profound sadness
- that there *was* anger there, but it was not expressed overtly
- how to express anger constructively
- there was not enough time—I wanted to hear more and to speak more
- that a physical embrace after a cathartic experience is very important
- that I need to hear multiple narratives
- I had hope in God, that something good will come for us all…*insha'Allah*
- that the exercise was a little fake/contrived, and I felt a need to be really careful
- that I need to move to deeper dialogue
- that I feel disconnected from this issue and left with the question: what do I do about it?
- that such a container was wonderful, helpful; the chapel was a better space, set apart and sacred
- it was good to have the Christians' testimonies last
- the intensity of immersion was helpful to confront emotional defenses
- how much pain can be handled
- safety, trust, and care allowed so much to come out
- I need to listen
- the language blew my mind
- I never heard that "the land" was part of my faith
- what "we" are allowing to happen never goes away
- risk-taking in the face of not knowing how we are being heard
- the need to detach oneself in order to move on
- the calmness and attitude of the facilitators are important
- the community itself creates healing
- where do we go next in terms of action?

<u>Summary of fishbowl exercise in *BAP II*, June 2009</u>

In the fishbowl exercise I learned:

- that everybody hurts from the conflict in Israel/Palestine
- that people can listen respectfully, even through the pain
- many hold the physical/territorial as holy, although I consider it a romantic myth
- those engaged in interfaith work have far more in common (than what divides)
- there is much commonality
- holiness is meaningless without peace and security
- how much compassion is among us for all sides—this process is indeed transformative
- the pain has not extinguished the hope
- it had not occurred to me how the Israel/Palestine conflict clouds the big picture for many Muslims
- truthfulness and sincerity
- people are willing to take risks
- no anger was directed, no blaming or name-calling; instead, the pouring out of love and concern for those in pain—this was a surprise
- again, how important ground rules are…they shaped the space and gave each person an equal opportunity, and from that foundation we could be generous in offering those who needed it extra time
- objective timing makes me feel safe as a participant and an observer/listener
- Thursday is a good day to do this exercise, with sufficient trust established
- a common hope can spread from a small group to wider ones
- we don't have to shy away from difficult topics
- this exercise allows you to speak from the heart
- this is a rare opportunity to speak about a difficult issue and a chance for healing
- I'm uncertain where to go from here

5 The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology

S. Wesley Ariarajah

Editor's Introduction

"The Challenge of World Religions" is one of six cases studies from *Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue,*[1] Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a

[1] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological

educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of

dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

*The Philadelphia Story (*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is

an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

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David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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5 The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology

S. Wesley Ariarajah

Introduction

The much re-visited statement, "The only way to be religious in our day is to be inter-religious" speaks volumes to the changes that have taken place in interreligious relations over the past several decades. The increasing religious diversity of most nations, increase in movements of populations, rapid progress in communication technologies, growing mutual interdependence of nations and peoples have pushed religious communities to the point where they dare not continue to live in mutual isolation or in ignorance of one another's beliefs and practices.

That challenges does this new reality bring to the majority Christian population of the country, to the churches, to their self-understandings, to their understanding of others, and especially to their relationship with their new neighbors? More significantly, what challenges do they present to seminaries that prepare students for the diverse ministries in churches and the wider community? And more specifically, what are the courses that need to be added to meet this challenge? How must they be taught? And what goals we should seek to achieve?

What follows is an account of the assumptions, directions, programs and courses that are in place to address this issue at the Drew University School of Theology.

Location

Drew University is situated in Madison, New Jersey. Even though many parts of New Jersey are rich in ethnic and religious diversity, Madison itself is a rich, white suburb. The Theological School is part of the University that also has a College of Liberal Arts of some two thousand students and a Graduate School. The College of Liberal Arts draws students from all parts of New Jersey and from outside the state, giving it the ethnic and religious diversity not found in the town of Madison, which is predominantly Christian with a significant Jewish population. The College of Liberal Arts has strong Christian, Jewish and Islamic students associations and a multi-faith Chaplaincy program that organizes interfaith encounters and events to mark significant religious holidays of the three religious communities. The College also has a strong Religious Studies department and a Center for Holocaust Studies. In other words, even though the town of Madison does not provide significant religious diversity to the Theological School, the university campus, of which it is a part, is sufficiently diverse to keep interfaith dialogue as an important concern. Both New Jersey and the adjoining city of New York have several local interfaith organizations and dialogue groups that regularly organize interfaith encounters, interfaith educational opportunities and events. Several townships within driving distance to Madison have Mosques, Synagogues, Sikh Gurdwaras, and Buddhist, Hindu and Jain temples. This means that any interested student would be able to be in contact with a religious community or communities other than his or her own.

Nature of the Student Body

Drew School of Theology is a Methodist seminary in the country, but both its faculty and student body are drawn from the full spectrum of the main branches and denominations of the Church. Further, students come from all parts of the country and from a number of theological streams. Even though the Seminary has the reputation of being “Progressive” or “Liberal”, many students from the mainline evangelical churches, evangelically inclined Baptist and African American churches opt for Drew. A sizable international student body, mainly from North East Asian countries with evangelical formation, also come to Drew. Most students (with rare notable exceptions) come with little or no knowledge of what neighbors of other

religious traditions believe in and practice, and with hardly any experience of engaging in interfaith dialogue.

At the same time, it is most likely that they will go back to ministerial situations that will increasingly require them to be involved in wider multi-faith communities. Those who eventually become hospital chaplains and social workers will be called upon to minister to persons of many religious traditions. It is very likely that some members in their parishes and congregations are engaged in spiritual practices like yoga, meditation, interfaith retreats etc. and would want to ask questions of them about the implications of adopting spiritual practices across religious barriers. It is most likely that they will have to deal with and take pastoral responsibilities for parishioners who enter into interfaith marriages. Increasingly they are likely to be asked to become members of multi-faith clergy group meetings and interfaith events in the places they will eventually go to minister.

Most of the students who come to the Seminary, however, have had theological and spiritual formations that paid little attention to the growing religious plurality of the United States and its implications for Christian ministry. More importantly, it is most likely that from sSunday School on they would have been taught that Christianity is the only true religion, that the other religions are in error, that others need to accept the Christian Gospel to be saved, and that it is their responsibility to witness this truth to those in other religious traditions. Even those students that have serious questions about this position do not quite know what to make of other religious traditions or whether it is at all possible to be a believing Christian and yet to be open and affirming about other ways of believing and being. In other words, in the area of interfaith relations there is much to learn as well as to unlearn, and the unlearning process can be quite threatening and painful.

If the student had come to the Seminary with such a theological formation and with the aim of equipping him or herself to the classical practice of Christian mission and ministry, it is very likely that the student would undergo a vocational and spiritual crisis during the unlearning process. The pedagogy adopted in the seminary context needs to have a pastoral dimension. It should both help the student move to a new understanding of other religious traditions and also help him or her to make sense of his or her own faith and vocation in a multi-faith context.

Teaching Faculty

Drew's reputation as a progressive seminary comes from the fact that the Deans and the faculty of the School are committed to taking on the cutting edge issues of our day in the curriculum and in the work in the classroom. Therefore, the Seminary as a whole is aware of the challenge of religious plurality and is deeply committed both to the promotion of interfaith relations and to prepare the students for a religiously plural world. Before I was hired as Professor of Ecumenical Theology to teach ecumenism and interfaith issues, I had been the Director of the Interfaith Dialogue program at the World Council of Churches in Geneva for over ten years. My responsibilities at the WCC had included promotion of interfaith relations, organizing bilateral and multilateral dialogues, and conducting seminars and workshops on dialogue in many parts of the world. I had by then also written widely on interfaith dialogue and on issues in interfaith relations. The new responsibilities at Drew gave me the opportunity to design a few courses that together would meet the different types of preparation needed for ministries in multi-faith communities. The preparation needed to go beyond a course on Interfaith Dialogue.

Pedagogical Assumptions that Underlie the Drew Program

Several assumptions, based on the discussions above, have gone into the way the program was built, which is clearly aimed at a specifically Christian classroom. The following five principles stand out:

1. In order to build mutual understanding, respect, appreciation, and dialogue among persons of different religious traditions, all concerned need to acquire an informed understanding of what the others believe in and practice, and how they hold their faith. This understanding is necessary to remove misunderstandings and prejudices that one had acquired over the years, often without being conscious of it.

2. As far as possible, we should seek persons of each religious tradition to speak for themselves and explain their own faith. Where this is difficult, the classroom should provide the opportunity for students to read original sources and material written on a specific tradition by persons of that tradition. It is also important that the students come to an understanding of other religious traditions as *living* faiths that provide meaning to their adherents in our day. Direct exposure to places of worship, conversations with persons in their own worship environments, and attempts to build ongoing relationships with persons of other traditions would help build trust and confidence.

3. It is important that the students understand the different histories of Christians in relation to other religious traditions. Christian-Jewish or Christian-Muslim relations, for instance, has a long history of conflicts and misunderstandings that continue to influence the way these religious traditions look at and relate to each other in our day. It is important to grasp the issues and historical circumstances that contributed to mutual suspicion, misunderstandings and conflicts, and how they are being dealt with today in the interfaith context. Similarly, study of Hinduism and Buddhism should include issues related to Christian world missions and their impact on religious traditions that had come under colonial rules.

4. The study of other religious traditions and Christian relationships with them should help Christians to look critically at their own religious tradition. In other words, the study of other religious traditions and interfaith dialogue should help students to place their own tradition within the interfaith milieu. It should help them appreciate the different ways in which human communities have dealt with the mystery of life, the commonalities and differences they have in dealing with ultimate questions, and the contribution each religious tradition brings to the human spiritual quest.

5. The student should also be enabled to identify and deal with specific doctrines, teachings, theological understandings, and claims within their own faith that makes meaningful interfaith relations difficult. It has been said that we not only need to know the other, but we need the other to know ourselves. What challenges do the study of other religious traditions and interfaith dialogue bring to Christian faith and practice? In what ways do they challenge Christian self-understanding? In other words, the study of religions and interfaith relations should lead to mutual enrichment, mutual correction, and mutual self-criticism that enable all religious traditions to rethink their faith for a pluralistic world.

Courses designed to meet these requirements

It is evident that it is almost impossible to design courses that would meet all the ideals listed above. The student who comes to the Seminary seeks to be equipped in many other areas like theology, philosophy, ethics, biblical studies, church history, social issues, and skills in preaching, teaching, counseling, and pastoral ministry and so on. However, taking advantage of the fact that the student will spend three years in the Seminary, three complementary courses have been designed that seek to meet at least some of the expectations above:

1 Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice

2 Theology of Religions

3 Cross-Cultural Immersion Course: India (Three weeks)

The course on World Religions and a Cross Cultural Immersion Course are required courses for all M.Div. students. Theology of Religions is an elective. While I lead the cross-cultural course to India, other professors lead cross-cultural courses to places like Turkey (for interaction with Islam), and Ghana (for interaction with African Traditional Religions) etc. But all students have to have this immersion experience in a culture and religion other than their own as a requirement for graduation.

In what follows I give the intention behind each of these courses and their content, with a more detailed examination of the course on the Challenge of World Religions.

The Course on the Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice.

This is an outline course on World Religions that has been modified to meet goals beyond only acquiring knowledge about the beliefs and practices of other religious traditions. The title of the course has been formulated to indicate that in addition to studying other religious traditions, as Christians, we are also hoping to relate it to our own faith tradition to understand the ways in which they challenge, correct, enhance and enrich the way we understand and practice our own faith. It is not, however, not a course on comparative religion or comparative theology and it has no apologetic interest. An example would show the intent of the course:

Christians, for instance, have a variety of understandings on the authority of scripture to their faith and practice. Churches are divided over the nature of the authority given to scripture and how the scriptures are to be interpreted. Major divisions of the church relate to the comparative importance given to the authority of scripture and that of the traditions of the church. It is in this context that we study the native traditions of the Americas and African traditional religions that do not have written scriptures at all. Then we come to Hinduism with numerous scriptural texts, and a studied reluctance to institute a formal "canon" so that different groups texts become authoritative to different groups of Hindus; the fact that one group accepts the authority of a group of texts does not mean that another group is in error because they take a different group of texts to be authoritative to them.

With Buddhism we encounter the reality of multiple canons within the same tradition, depending on the language and the nation in which the original teachings were elaborated. In Judaism and Islam we again find different attitudes to the scriptural texts and their interpretation. While both the Torah and the Qur'an are believed to have been directly revealed by God to a human agent, views differ on the nature of the text and how much liberty one can take in its interpretation.

What the students are challenged to do is to examine the Christian approaches to the authority of scripture in light of these many ways of understanding authority without having to lose the centrality of the text to a tradition. Although no position is advocated by the instructor, students are able to revisit their own attitude to the Christian scriptures and put it in a new perspective. Similar "inner dialogue" is encouraged as we study the different understandings of the human predicament, salvation/release/ liberation/moksha/nirvana, and the ideals for fuller human life etc.

The course work itself is built on three pillars:

1. Class work
2. Visits to places of worship
3. Students' semester-long projects on and with a selected religious community.

Class Work

After a general introduction to 'traditional religions', including the spiritual traditions of the first nations of the USA, the course concentrates on major religions that students would encounter in the course of their ministries: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Islam, Confucianism and Taoism. The last two religions are included because of a number of Korean students that study at Drew.

Two volumes are assigned as basic texts for the students to get information on the beliefs and practices of the religious traditions:

1. *Our Religions,* edited by Arvind Sharma, where the chapter on each religion is written by a scholar of that religious tradition. Also recommended as an alternate is *Introduction to World Religions* edited by Christopher Partridge, which has a number of illustrations lacking in *Our Religions.* (Reservations have been expressed on the presentation of Judaism in Partridge's volume.)

2. *New Religious America* by Diana Eck. This is added as a required reading alongside *Our Religions* because it gives the history of each of the religious traditions in the United States. This helps the students to deal with Hinduism, Buddhism etc, not as religious traditions in Asia, but as traditions that are alive in their own communities.

In addition, shorter texts are assigned for reading in relation to the major traditions, dealing in greater depth with a specific aspect of that religion. Students read *Darsan- Seeing the Divine Image in India* by Diana Eck to get deeper into image worship in India, Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught*, to have fuller understanding of the basics of Buddhism, and Rollin Armour Sr.'s *Islam, Christianity and the West - A Troubled History* to get some understanding of the tensions that have marked the history of Christianity with Islam. The BBC documentary *Chosen People* is used to get an understanding of the place of the Torah in Jewish life, to learn the spiritual significance of the Sabbath, and to have an impression of impact of the Holocaust on Jewish life and Jewish-Christian relations. All these books and the video could be replaced with more recent books if they cover the areas of concern with similar depth and breadth.

This aspect of the course has two goals. The first is to get an understanding of the basic beliefs and practices of the tradition and to be aware of the way in which they find expression in the United States.

The second goal, covered by the presentations made by the instructor, is to have an understanding of the history of the relationship of the given tradition to Christianity, highlighting some of the theological controversies, historical encounters, and issues and concerns that are central to the Christian relationship and dialogue with the tradition concerned.

The last two sessions of the course deal with two topics:

1. What challenges does the study of religions bring to Christian faith and practice?
2. What are the basic assumptions and principles of dialogue? What are the kinds of dialogue? How does one begin and sustain dialogue between religious communities?

These sessions, with greater emphasis on participation and discussion, reveal the transformation that takes place in students, both in their approach to other religious traditions and to the way they look at the doctrines and practices of their own Christian tradition. The course does not provide the opportunity to work these questions out in detail, but feedback from other professors who teach Theology, Bible, History, etc., shows that this experience is taken into the discussions in other classes.

Visits to Places of Worship

The second and a very important aspect of the course are visits to places of worship. Students are required, as part of the course, to be available on two Friday evenings, outside class time, to visit two places of worship:

1. Sri Venkateshwara Hindu Temple, Bridgewater, N.J.
2. The Sikh Gurdwara, Pluckemin, N.J.

After an introduction to the temple and what to expect during the visit, the class makes a bus journey to the Sri Venkateshwara temple in Bridgewater on a Friday evening, the time when the temple is very active with a large number of devotees. At the temple they receive a general introduction to the temple, receive explanations about most of the images and the rituals related to them, participate in the main puja, and hold informal conversations with worshippers.

A similar visit with advanced preparation is made to the Sikh Gurdwara on another Friday. Here they are received by the leaders of

the Gurdwara, given an introduction to Sikhism, and are taken to the main worship space. At the end of worship students sit down for the community meal, langar, which follows Sikh worship events. This gives them the opportunity to chat informally over the meal and to ask questions related to personal Sikh religious practices.

When we meet as class after each of these visits we do an evaluation of our experience. These experiences without exception turn out to be the highlights of the semester for most students. They are struck by the openness of these religious groups to have us involved in their worship. They are impressed with the deep devotion they witness, and are especially moved by the hospitality offered through the sharing of the Prasad ('sacraments') at the Hindu temple, and the invitation to the langar at the Gurdwara. To most students these would have been the first and only experiences of having been in a place of worship other than their own. I am yet to come across a student that had not been deeply impacted by the visit.

Semester Project

The semester project is the third dimension of the course on the Challenge of World Religions. The course does not require a semester paper but a project report. Two to three weeks into the course, all students are required to select a religious community other than their own for a semester project. As part of the project they are required to get in touch with the leaders of that community, interview the person in charge of its place of worship on the history and stages of development of the religious community in that place, find out the various ministries carried out by the place for its members and others, and seek to get an idea of the issues and problems they face as a religious community in the United States.

As part of the project, the student also participates in a few worship events in that community and interviews a few laymen and women to get their perspectives on their religious tradition and the issues they face in our day. The written report on the project is required to end with the student's own personal experience of relating briefly to the specific community.

The project is intended not so much to get information on the place of worship and the community that meets there, but to help the student take the first step to relate to a community other than his or her

own at the religious level, to shed unconscious fears and uncertainties about attending the worship of an unfamiliar community, to get some knowledge of the issues and problems faced by minority religious communities in the United States, and to build relationships with at least one or two persons of a different religious tradition.

Students are baffled when they first hear me explain the requirement. Most of them feel that this is a difficult if not an impossible assignment that they had not bargained for when they signed up for the course. Most believe that there are no such religious communities in their area and that it would be difficult to find a community that would be open to become part of their project. Many worry about it because they have no idea where to begin or how to go about it. I hold the line that it is requirement, and begin to give some thoughts on how this might be done, because much of the reluctance has more to do with the hesitation to cross boundaries and the unconscious fear of the 'other'. The hesitation begins to ease with the first class trip to the Hindu temple. In the safety of the group, most who doubted that anything can come out of a visit to a place of worship begin to see how exciting the experience would end up to be.

In fact, the Hindu temple is the best place to begin an introduction to those who have hesitations about being in a place of worship other than their own for the first time. To begin with, there is no structured, formal or congregational worship in a Hindu temple; this means that one can enter and leave the worship "event" at any time, and there is little that one needs to do to "fit into" the event. The temple authorities do not feel the need to recognize us as an "outside" group that needs to be formally welcomed. We are normally a group of Caucasians, African Americans, Koreans and a few Africans and other Asians that are immediately recognizable as "visitors" and not the regular Hindu worshippers. In fact, as soon as the priests see me they know that it is a Christian group from Drew. Yet, a warm hospitality is extended to us by treating us like all other worshippers, allowing us to walk around and see what we wish to engage people in conversation, and stand in line with the Hindu worshippers to receive the *prasad* at the end of the main Puja. While the students are taken aback by the many images in the temple, they are also impressed with the deep devotion of the worshippers.

An evaluation session in the next class meeting always brings out words like "informality", "freedom", "welcome", "hospitality", "holy atmosphere", "undeniable devotion" and the like. The organized and

guided Hindu Temple visit gives courage to the students to venture on the class project that throws them into the deep end of a dialogue experience. Every student that had done the project experiences a profound sense of having been in a dialogue, and gets over the fear of approaching the 'other' and the unknown.

The following extracts from the project reports are typical and witnesses to the value of the exercise:

HINDUISM:

> "I chose Hinduism as the topic of my project. For this project I visited the Hindu Temple and Cultural Society of USA- Sri Venkateshwara Temple (Balaji Mandir), Bridgewater, NJ. I also interviewed a Hindu friend, Kumar, and had a phone interview with Dr. M.G. Prasad (Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Temple).
>
> ... After the long chanting ... the worshippers lined up to receive the "communion", adults and children. While we were receiving the holy water and the "cup of blessing" I noticed how the worshippers were yearning for God's blessing and tried so hard to get their children close to the priests so that they might not be excluded from the "divine touch". How many Christian parents would try this hard for their young children to receive Holy Communion, I wondered. Their devotion and yearning for contact with the deity truly impressed me. Without either criticism or romanticism towards Hinduism, the heated yearning for divine connection that I witnessed in the temple made me look at my own religious community. When I was doing my internship at ... I was very disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm and yearning or love for their church ... it would not be fair for me to over generalize the Christian communities lacking enthusiasm and yearning for a divine contact. Nevertheless in the midst of all these thoughts in my mind, I could feel the common human yearning for the Eternal One and Hindus felt like my brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends, to whom we can relate as people of faith. ...
>
> The other thing that struck me as I first stepped inside the temple was the sound of a ringing bell. Dr. Ariarajah explained to us that they are ringing the bell to get the god's attention since darsan (worship) is not merely about "seeing" but also about "being seen" by gods. ... Hindu use of different senses intrigued me, not only as a pastor but also as a former educator. As a teacher, I learned to use different senses to help students learn more effectively and have practiced in the educational field. In the liturgical studies class, we learned to be creative to use different senses for a more effective worship experience. The colorful images I saw, the scent of the incenses I smelled remain in my mind quite vividly even now. ...
>
> I remember a couple of years ago, when my close friend came back home from their visit to the Hindu temple (from an earlier World Religions class) with a little food they received after the puja. We shared that food together to show our openness and receptiveness to Hindu religion. It was the first time for me to eat something from another religious temple but I believed that it was okay. I know a lot of Christians would feel it sinful to partake in other religious communities' "communion" elements, thinking that they will be affected by the "evil spirit" with which "heathens" from other religions interact; however, I felt good about showing my acceptance to their hospitality by graciously receiving the water of blessing.
>
> What I found interesting when receiving the water was that the priest who gave the water to me said, "Drink it", not knowing that we were already taught by Dr. Ariarajah. He just assumed that we would not know what to do with it, being visitors from outside the Hindu culture. However, I thought it was good of him to explain to me as he poured the water into my palms. Again, this part of the service was a good opportunity to see worshippers pulling their children closer and lifting them higher so that they can share the water and the blessing also. The scene reminded me of people in the street rushing to touch or be touched by Jesus. ...
>
> I hope more Christians will have opportunities to learn about other religions without the agenda of evangelization. Learning experiences such as this one make us realize how ignorant and misunderstanding we are towards each other. Prejudices come from ignorance. To live with other religious groups peacefully as our neighbors, all our religious communities should learn about each other and learn to respect each other. Like my friend Kumar said, the Eternal

One is manifested in different ways for different people. And this attitude of religious pluralism is the only way to practice justice in inter-religious/inter-racial relationships. ..."

ISLAM:

Islamic Center, 55th Street (between Lexington and Third Avenue)

"I attended the late afternoon prayer meeting and then had the opportunity to sit and talk with the Imam. .... I was not sure if I would be permitted to join the prayer meeting because I am not a Muslim, but the Imam led me downstairs and brought a chair in for me to sit on. ... The prayer lasted for about 15 or 20 minutes, and at various points of time the Muslim devotees would kneel and lower their foreheads to the ground. The atmosphere of the room felt very spiritual. Have I understood the words I may have even joined in the prayer. ....Everyone was very friendly. At the conclusion of the prayer, several people came over to introduce themselves to me and talk for a few minutes. I had the chance to meet a young man, probably only 26 or 27, named Deno. He was born into a Catholic family in Macedonia and had converted to Islam several years ago. ... I was surprised how willing the Imam was to give me an extended block of his time- we spent a good hour or more conversing, and actually ordered Moroccan food for the two of us. The Imam was originally from Egypt. ....

I did not want to ask the Imam anything that would even suggest radical militancy, but even without my prompting he brought up the prejudice against Islam several times during the conversation. He said that most of the prejudice is from ignorance, and that we do not like the things that we do not know, and when we do not have the desire to know about something it becomes easy to develop animosity. The Imam has the desire to promote interfaith dialogue, which was encouraging. He decided to send his kids to the public schools because he did not want them to be sheltered from the rest of the world. ...

Overall, I had a very positive experience at the Islamic Center of Mid-Manhattan. I was encouraged by their acceptance of me, and the hospitality shown. I think the Imam is correct that there are a lot of misconceptions and prejudices around

Islam, worldwide and especially in America. I would like to continue my relationship with the Imam and some of the people I met while visiting."

JUDAISM:

Temple Emeth of the Reformed tradition.

"... Despite the similarities (to aspects of Christian worship), there was something that I would call unmistakably 'Jewish' about the service. It is hard to put my finger on what it is; perhaps it was the style of music or the intonation of the text. Perhaps it was the Hebrew language interspersed with English .... I told the Rabbi that the service had more of a feeling of prayer than most church services, that are loaded with announcements and things that take our attention away from the task of worshipping God....

(Rabbi) Chuck set me straight about my misunderstanding of the acceptance of African Americans in Judaism. He noted two famous African American converts: Julius Lester, who was an Orthodox Jew, and Sammy Davis Jr. He also talked about the many Jewish people who stood with Martin Luther King (Jr.) during the civil rights movement. Rabbi Heschel was noted for saying that when he walked with King, "his feet were praying."...

I was interested to know how Ruth (Rabbi Ruth Gias) felt about God and the Holocaust. She said, 'I follow Abraham Joshua Heschel. He did not reject God in the face of the Shoah. Hasidic thinkers and others say that God was in the Shoah along with those who suffered. It means that God may not be omnipotent, but God is omnipresent.' ...

Ruth is the Rabbi of *Chavurat Lamdeinu* Synagogue in Madison NJ. Since my church is in Livingston, we have already begun to talk about ways of working together. Passover and Easter are at different times this year, so we are talking about having her come and teach about Passover. I would also like her to come to my Sunday school class and talk about Hanukkah next year..... I would like to continue the conversation that was started by this assignment ... Having had my eyes opened to a better understanding of the Jewish faith and community, I can better see the possibility of

building bridges in the future for interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and social action."

BUDDHISM

Kadampa Meditation Center and Temple, Glen Spey, NY.

" … Although I have been gradually coming to recognize my shortsightedness and narrowness in understanding Christianity and the other religious traditions, the experience of visiting the Hindu temple and Buddhist temple truly contributed in broadening my understanding of other religious traditions. Having grown up within Christian communities in a "Christian" country all my life, I believed that Christianity was the "right" religion and the only way to salvation even after reading about other religions and coming into contact with non-Christians at a social level. Fortunately, I came to study at Drew and my views have changed completely. So completely that I have been becoming more disillusioned with the way Christianity is generally understood and practiced in many, if not most, of the churches in the US and South Korea.

Feeling that my pluralistic belief that all religious traditions are valid in their own right no longer fit in with my conservative Korean-American Christian communities, I was searching for other understandings, experiences and vocabulary to assist me in understanding and expressing my ongoing journey with God. Thus it was wonderfully refreshing for me to study the various religious traditions in this class. It introduced me to new ideas and vocabulary that I can study further and use in my journey with my communities and the divine.

… I chose a Buddhist community and this temple for many reasons. First, visiting this temple allowed me take care of the basic assignment requirements in one trip. A single visit provided me participate in meditation and teaching, while providing me the opportunity to interview several ordained monks and nuns. Second, my wife, a daughter of a conservative, Korean-American UMC pastor, was the least resistant to visiting a Buddhist temple. Throughout my studies here at Drew and my drastically changing theology, I have tried to share with my wife as many of my new

experiences as possible so that she wouldn't wake up one morning next to a stranger. She has been my constant conversation partner and read most of my papers that I have written for Drew so that she would at the very least have some understanding of my changing theology and of why they were changing. Third, I still interacted with my Korean-American communities and because Buddhism was the main religious tradition of South Korea before the coming of Christianity, it was most likely that I would meet Korean-Americans that were either practicing Buddhism themselves or have someone in their family practicing Buddhism. Finally, I felt that certain concepts in Buddhism strongly resonated with many of the theological ideas I was currently being introduced to and found the resonating echoes highly exciting and helpful in the ongoing process of constructing my theology. …"

I have given an extended account of the project report for two reasons. First, for all the fears expressed in the beginning the class ended up doing projects related to a great variety of religious communities. The reports received, without any exception, point not only to a great deal of learning but also to transformation of attitudes. It is clear that the project requirement helps students to cross the physical and psychological barrier that needs to be crossed before they can engage in any meaningful interfaith dialogue when they leave the Seminary.

The Course syllabus is appended at the end of the essay.

The Course on Theology of Religions.

The Course on the Challenge of World Religions is designed, as seen above, to achieve two ends: namely, to have an informed understanding and to directly encounter people of other religious traditions. There is no doubt that these encounters would invariably raise questions in the minds of the students about their own religious tradition. As said earlier, most of them arrive at the Seminary with the view that Christianity has the truth and other religious traditions in one way or another are incomplete, deficient or wanting. Some among them would go even further to believe that the other religious traditions are in error, misleading people away from the truth.

These beliefs are formulated not on the basis of knowledge about the teachings of other religious traditions or the religious experiences of their adherents, but on the basis of the teachings of the church, both about itself and about "others". In other words, the Christian theological understanding of the reality of other religious traditions or the Christian theology of religions is as major obstacle to interfaith relations and dialogue. If the students are not helped to re-think their theology of religions, interfaith dialogue would remain only at a superficial level of promoting good relations. This means that we need to help the students to situate the Christian faith in a religiously plural world and to be at home in it.

An attempt is made to achieve this by introducing the course on the Theology of Religions. This is not a required course, but those who take this course would have already done the courses in Systematic Theology and World Religions. The course has two components. The first part is an attempt to trace, study, and evaluate Christian approaches to other religious traditions in the past, and do a close examination of some of the recent scholars who seek theological foundations for Christian theological self-understanding that is relevant to a world of many religious traditions.

The second component looks at specific doctrines of the Christian faith and how they are being reconceived or are in need of re-conception. It attempts to struggle with issues raised by Christians who feel that the traditional ways in which the faith was understood promotes exclusivism and alienation and are unable to equip them for a religiously plural world. This involves re-visiting Christian doctrines of God, Christ, Salvation, Holy Spirit, Mission etc.

This course ends with a more detailed look at the implications, issues, problems and possibilities of interfaith dialogue, with study of some of the important documents on interfaith dialogue produced by the churches and the ecumenical movement. I am convinced that interfaith dialogue and theology of religions are deeply interrelated. Genuine dialogue demands a good theology of religions; a good theology of religions opens our hearts and minds to dialogue.

Cross-Cultural Course Immersion Trip to India

A semester long course on World Religions, even with a required project on another religious tradition, and a seminar on the Theology of

Religions can only help the students to rethink their attitude to other religions and to raise questions about the way they have defined their own faith in a pluralistic world. The cross-cultural trip to India helps students to immerse themselves in the Hindu religion and culture for three weeks. This helps them to understand how the religion expresses itself in the daily life and how it forms and shapes the culture and spirituality of its adherents. What follows is a description and evaluation of the Cross-Cultural Immersion Course in India (Hinduism) that was taken by 20 students in January 2008. I led the course along with another professor of the Seminary.

After 10 contact hours of preparatory presentations and discussion, supported by background readings at Drew, the trip was taken from 4th-24th January and covered six cities in South India: Chennai (Madras), Bangalore, Mysore, Tiruvallar, Coimbatore, and Madurai.

The goals of the course:

- To have a direct experience of living briefly in, and relating to, a religious and cultural context other than one's own;
- To become aware of the religious and cultural heritage of India and to gain an appreciation for a different way of life;
- To study the social, religious, economic and political realities, issues and problems faced by the country and its people and to see them in the context of global relationships;
- To get to know the life and ministries of the churches and the teaching and learning methods in theological seminaries in a religiously plural environment;
- To attempt to build a solidarity network with some institutions and groups in India in order to promote international and intercultural relationships.

The three week trip included exposure to the following:

- Visits to three seminaries in South India to get an understanding of theological education in the Indian social, religious and cultural context.
- Visits to two *Ashrams*. An *Ashram* is a community of people that share a common vision and commitment and come together to live a simple shared life according to commonly

agreed principles and disciplines. The first, Fireflies Ashram, where the students lived for three days, is committed to social justice and renewal through interfaith cooperation. The second, Shanti Ashram, led by Hindus, is run on Gandhian principles towards village upliftment. It also has an interfaith emphasis.

- Visits to several social service projects among the poor, orphaned and destitute children, women and other socially disadvantaged groups.
- Visits to the villages of the dalit (outcast) peoples and projects related to their economic and social improvement. Visits to these villages and projects (including lectures and a cultural program) expose the students to the social evils that are perpetuated by the Hindu caste system.
- Exposure to cultural events: The annual harvest festival (which included ceremonial cooking of the first grains of the new harvest, bull festival to honor and celebrate the bull, and a buffalo race), Indian classical dance, and Indian classical music recital.
- Lectures by experts on: The Indian economic situation, India and Globalization, Hindu-Christian relations in India, the situation of Indian women, Church in India, the plight of the Dalits (outcastes) etc.
- Visits to four Hindu temples and one Dalit temple, Sunday worships in churches.
- Visits to some places of interest.

Students that have not been outside the US before this trip came back from the experience radically shaken, challenged, and changed. The comment, "We will never see the world the way we saw it before," captures the mood at the end of the trip. They would, of course, need several months to process their experience and to integrate it within their understanding of their ministries.

During the trip the students are required to keep a journal of their daily experiences. On their return they meet a few times to evaluate and reflect together on their experiences. They are also expected to write a 10-15 page paper on their experience in India,- what impact it has had on their self-understanding, their understanding of the world, and on the ministries they hope to do.

Comments on Pedagogy

When I was given the opportunity to design a few courses that deal with the Christian response to religious plurality, I was faced with some choices. One of the options was to design a course on interfaith dialogue, dealing with the history of the Christian relationship to peoples of other religious traditions, moving on to the principles, assumptions, methods and kinds of interfaith dialogue. A second part of this course would have dealt with the specific histories of Christian-Muslim and Christian-Jewish dialogues using some of the significant documents produced by the WCC, the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, the churches, and some interfaith organizations on these relationships. Such a course would be valuable and needs to be introduced into the seminary curriculum.

When I looked at the student population at the seminary, however, I decided to go in a different direction. Most of the students did not have any idea of what their neighbors believed in. Many of them have never met another religious person at the religious level or have been to a place of worship other than their own. As mentioned earlier, they had theological formations that looked at Christianity as the only true religion and other religious traditions as erroneous and leading people away from their true destiny. This meant that there was a need to have a learning and unlearning process that prepared them for dialogue. At the same time, since the opportunity to add courses was limited, I had to build into these "preparation for dialogue" courses actual principles and methods of dialogue.

As for pedagogical methods, I had to incorporate the intellectual, experiential, practical, participatory, and transformation dimensions into the three courses. The course on the Challenge of World Religions has a significant emphasis on acquiring intellectual knowledge through readings, lectures and video clips. But it is fortified by the introduction into the same syllabus visits to the Hindu and Sikh temples that place enormous emphasis on participation and experiential learning. The project requirement to individually relate to a specific religious community, to participate in worship events, to hold conversations with persons at that place of worship, and to write a report and reflections on the experience, as seen from the quotes I have incorporated, have a transformational impact. They help to remove fear, prejudice, and

exclusivism and enable students to learn the art of taking the first steps to promote interfaith relationships and dialogue.

As far as the transformational dimension of the pedagogical processes, the course on the Theology of Religions and the Immersion Trip to India play a very significant role even though they are vastly different in format and character. The course on Theology of Religions takes heads on some of the basic theological formations that make interfaith dialogue difficult for most Christians. Even for those who hold a more open attitude to other religious traditions, the course gives the opportunity to rethink their faith in new and creative ways for a religiously plural world. It is here that they get the conviction that 'different' does not mean 'wrong', and 'all' does not mean 'any'; it is here that they learn that one can be both 'committed' and be 'open', and say 'yes' and 'no' to aspects in other religions as well as their own.

Perhaps the most significant transformational aspect of the learning process is the immersion trip to India. The course is designed to expose students to dimensions of Indian culture and religion, social injustices and abject poverty that takes away any undue fascination or romanticism about India and Hinduism. At the same time, they get ample opportunity to come to appreciate the depths of devotion, the richness of the cultures, and the studied acceptance of the plurality of ways of being and believing that makes India a text book case of a nation that this held together by a culture of dialogue and commitment to plurality. Both the official course evaluations and the semester papers by the students that go through these courses indicate that these courses effect a discernable spiritual transformation that widens their spiritual and theological horizons.

SYLLABI

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice.

Christian faith has always been practiced in the context of other religious traditions. There is a long history of Christian relationship to almost all the religious traditions of the world. Over the past several decades, however, there is a new awareness of religious plurality. With increased population movements, people in almost all parts of the world are challenged to live as neighbors with people who follow religious traditions other than their own. Recent rise of militant expressions of religion has increased the interest in knowing more about religious traditions, their beliefs and practices and their role in contemporary society.

This is an outline course that seeks to give a broad understanding of the major religious traditions through an attempt to grasp their basic beliefs and practices, and through visits to the respective religious communities in their places of worship. An effort to understand the history and the issues in Christian relationship to these religious traditions is also built into the course. The required readings as well as the class work can only hope to open up an interest in these religious traditions. It is hoped that interested students would do wider reading beyond what is required by the course and would learn more by actual contact and dialogue with people of other religious traditions in their respective communities. There is no better way to learn about our neighbors.

The main text for the course is *Our Religions* by Arvind Sharma. The strength of this volume is that the chapters on different religious traditions are written by scholars who practice that particular faith. Readings from "*A New Religious America*" by Diana Eck gives the reality of each of these religious traditions in the American context. Where necessary there are also additional readings.

COURSE OUTLINE

Sept. 7th

General introduction to the Course, Readings, Course Requirements, and Visits to places of worship.

Introduction to the study of religions as living faith traditions.

Traditional Religions: Religion of the Native Peoples.

14th HINDUISM
Preparatory readings:
"Our Religions" p. 2 - 67.
"New Religious America" p. 80 - 141
Hinduism: Its origins, history, main branches, and basic beliefs.
Contemporary developments, Hinduism in America.

21st HINDUISM (CONT.)
Devotional Hinduism: Temples, Images, Rituals and Pilgrimages.
Issues in Hindu-Christian relations
Reading: "Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India"

28th Visit to the Hindu temple

OCT.
5th BUDDHISM
Preparatory readings:
"Our Religions" p. 71 - 137.
"New Religious America" p. 142 - 221.
Origins of Buddhism; Buddha the teacher, Basic teachings.

12th Reading Week (No class)

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE ON 19th. OCT:
TOPIC: "A Critical Assessment of the Hindu and Buddhist ideas of Reincarnation."

19th BUDDHISM (cont.)
Plurality of Buddhism, Buddhist practices, Buddhism in America.
Buddhism through exposure to Buddhist monastic life (Video).
Reading: "What the Buddha Taught"

26th SIKHISM and JAINISM
The rise of Sikhism; Guru Nanak the teacher; Sikh beliefs.
Sikhism in America; The impact of Asian religions on America.
Preparatory readings: Search and read on Sikhism and Jainism in the Internet

Nov. 2nd. Visit to the Sikh Temple

9th CONFUCIANISM AND RELIGIONS OF NORTH ASIA
Reading: "Our Religions" p. 141 -227.
Confucius, his teachings and its impact on East Asia.
Taoism and Shintoism.

16th JUDAISM
Preparatory readings:
"Our Religions" p. 239 - 355.
Basic Jewish beliefs, observances, and festivals; Branches of Judaism in America.
Video on Jewish prayer life and celebration of the Sabbath.
Issues in Jewish-Christian relations.

23rd Thanksgiving (No class)

30th ISLAM
Preparatory readings:
"Our Religions" p. 427 - 532.
"New Religious America" p. 222 - 293.
"Islam, Christianity and the West - A Troubled History"
Rise of Islam; Mohammad the Prophet; Basic teachings of Islam.
Understanding Islam through its basic practices. (Video)
Issues in Christian-Muslim relations

DEC. 7th Christianity and Other Religions.

Outline of the history of Christian relationship to other religious traditions; the rise of interfaith dialogue; kinds of dialogue; principles of dialogue; dialogue related documents.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Attendance and participation in the discussions
Four to five pages reflection paper due on Oct. 19.
A Project Report

In addition to the field trips, each student is expected to get in touch with a religious community other than their own during the course of the semester in order to produce a project report of about 15 pages on

the specific community chosen for study during the semester. The project should be based on:

- Background reading on the history of the specific community and their place of worship in the New Jersey or New York area.
- A number of visits to the community to participate in their worship life as appropriate; Interviews with members of the religious community concerned.

The Project Report should contain the following:

- History of the specific place of worship and the community attached to it.
- Activities carried out by the student as part of the project.
- The programs and activities carried out by the community as part of their worship and community life.
- Issues and concerns faced by the community in practicing their tradition in the USA.
- General evaluation, and reflections on the impact of the project on the student.
- (A separate paper would be distributed in class on how to contact religious communities and the sensitivities that must be respected in carrying out the project.)

REQUIRED BOOKS: (other sources will be indicated in the class as we deal with each religious tradition)

- Arvind Sharma (Ed.), *Our Religions,* Harper San Francisco, 1993 (Paper back)
- Diana Eck, *A New Religious America,* Harper Collins, 2001, (0-06-062159-1) pbk.
- Rollin Armour, Sr. *Islam, Christianity, and the West- A Troubled History,* Orbis, 2002, (1-57075-407-1) paper.
- Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught, (Revised and Expanded Edition),*

- Grove Press, 1974, (0-8021-3031-3)
- Diana L. Eck, *Darsan, Seeing the Divine Image in India*, Anima Books, 1981.
- (0-89012-024-2)

Instructions on the Semester Project Report.

- Your final paper (project report) should emerge from an encounter that you have had with a religious community other than your own during the course of this semester. This normally means that you will have to visit a specific religious community a few times to get the material necessary for your paper.
- Your paper could relate to a Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, Native American or any other religious group that does not draw its primary inspiration from the Christian tradition. Please speak to me if you are in doubt whether the community you had chosen is acceptable for the final project report.
- The essay, not less than 10 and not longer than 15 pages, should normally contain three sections. First (about 5 pages) some background information of the religion itself and why you have chosen to study it. Second, a description of how you went about the project indicating the persons, places and events that you covered, and third, what you have found out about the particular community, its origins, its structure, its experience of being a religious community in the United States, the kind of programs they have for their followers and their outreach, and the issues they face etc., ending with your own evaluation of the situation.
- It is permissible to do a group project made up of no more than four persons, but please talk with me before you undertake a group project.

How to go about it?

You may already know of a religious community in your area. If so, please do your project on that community. If you do not know any religious community or where they may be located, go into the Internet

and search under the name of the religious community you are looking for. You would find a long list of possibilities, and choose one that is most convenient for you.

Go directly to the place of worship or telephone the person in charge directly and introduce yourself. Tell the person that you are studying their religious tradition in class and that you would like to know more about their community and their worship life. Fix the first appointment, and later on go as often as you need to. If the first experience is negative, chose a different place for your project.

Most of the religious communities will welcome you and would be happy to know that you are studying their religious tradition. With their permission you may also attend one or more of their worship events and also hold informal conversations or formal interviews with some of the worshippers.

Most places of worship in the USA would have literature about their place, their history, the kinds of program they have, and News Letters. They may also have websites that gives this information. Collect these for they would provide you with valuable information for your project.

Make sure that you do not ask questions that might lead to the suspicion that you may be collecting information for the government or other intelligence agencies. For instance you do not ask in the Muslim place of worship questions like "What are your connections outside your country?" or "Are you funded by people outside for your mission?" or "What is your attitude to terrorism?" These may be valid questions, but in the present atmosphere they are likely to be misunderstood. Your questions must show that you have a genuine interest to know and learn about the religious tradition, its ministry, its experience of being a religious community in the USA and the issues they face as a religious community.

If you want to tape any conversation please ask their permission first.

Submission of the essay.

Do not wait to begin the project in April. It would be too late, because there would be many delays in getting appointments etc. Do not leave your name and ask them to call back. Most Asian religious leaders are happier to deal with you in person than on the telephone. Begin your project in about three weeks into the semester (it is independent of what we learn in class). Hand it in as soon as you have completed it. The last possible date for submission is April 28. If the paper is not in by April 28 you will need to file an 'Incomplete' with the Registrar's Office.

The previous classes have found the project they undertook very stimulating and rewarding. It took away the hesitation they have had in meeting people of other religious and cultural origins. All of them were warmly received by the community they had approached for their project. You too will find it an enriching experience.

THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Christianity was born in the Jewish environment and soon it came into touch with the religious traditions of the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, Christian attitude and approach to other religious traditions has occupied the church and its theology from the very beginning. The question became even more crucial when Christian missions expanded into Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world. Preaching of the Gospel had to be based on some theological assumptions about the faith of those to whom it was brought.

What has been the history of Christian approach to other religions? What advances have been made on this question within the ecumenical movement? What are some of the contemporary thinking on this issue? This course seeks to study this history and attempts to lift up some of the main issues that Christians need to face in relation to religious plurality. These include the doctrines of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and the churches' approaches to Mission and Evangelism. We would also look at the writings of the main personalities associated with this discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course will include lectures by the professor as well as class presentation by the students. The final grading will be based on the following:

Class attendance and quality of participation in the discussions: 20%

Student presentation to the class: 30%

A final paper of 15-18 pages on a topic related to the seminar: 50%

The student must select the topic of the paper and get the approval of the instructor in advance.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Sep. 6 General introduction to the course, its aims; expectations and assignments.
13 Theology of religions: A historical background with special emphasis on the history of the discussions in the ecumenical movement (Lecture)
20 An Evangelical Perspective on the Theology of Religions. Read: Pinnock, *Wideness in God's Mercy*
27 Roman Catholic Approaches. Read: Jacques Dupuis, *Towards a Theology of Religious Pluralism*

Oct 4 Roman Catholic Approaches (Continued). Documents of the Second Vatican Council. (Distributed in the previous class)
11 Reading Week (No classes)
18 A Liberal Protestant approach. Read: John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions*
25 Postmodern approach. Read: Mark Heim, *Salvations.*

Nov. 1 Problems and issues in Theology of Religions. Read: Paul Knitter, *Introduction to Theologies of Religions*
8 Christian Theology for a Theology of Religions. (Please indicate in advance the doctrine on which you wish to lead the discussion.) Re-visiting the doctrines of God, Christ, and Salvation in the context of religious plurality.
15 Christian Theology for a Theology of Religions (Cont.) Re-visiting the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the Church and Christian Missions in the context of religious plurality
22 Thanksgiving Recess (No classes)
29 Interfaith Dialogue: A Historical Survey; theology of dialogue; principles of dialogue; kinds of dialogue and how to initiate and sustain dialogue. Significant documents.

Dec 7 Issues in Interfaith Relations. Read: *Not without My Neighbour*: *Issues in Interfaith Relations.* Issues raised in each of the

chapters of the book will be introduced for discussion by a student. (Please indicate the chapter you like to introduce)

REQUIRED BOOKS:

1. Clark Pinnock, *Wideness in God's Mercy.*
2. Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Theology of Religious Pluralism.*
3. Raimon Panikkar, *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*
4. John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions.*
5. Mark Heim, *Salvations.*
6. Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions.*
7. S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Not without My Neighbour - Issues in Interreligious Relations.*

CROSS-CULTURAL IMMERSION COURSE TO INDIA

Pre-Departure Course:

This 10 hours course is *required* for all who are traveling to India. I give below the dates and times of the course:

Monday Oct. 24, 4.00-6.00 p.m.- Introduction to the course. Introduction to India.

Monday Oct. 31, 4.00-6.00 p.m.- The Religious Landscape of India.

Monday Nov. 7, 4.00-6.00 p.m.- Churches in India: History, Issues and Concerns.

Monday Nov. 14, 4.00-6.00 p.m.- Social, Economic and Political issues.

Monday Nov. 28. 4.00-6.00 p.m.- Introduction to the program in India.

Monday Dec. 5th From 4.00 p.m.- Logistics.

Reading requirements:

The REQUIRED reading: *The Idea of India* by Sunil Khilnani (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999) pbk.

In addition, I would be giving articles and handouts on different aspects of life in India when we meet for our classes.

RECOMMENDED Reading

The Argumentative Indian- Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity by the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen (New York and London: Allen Lane, 2005).

India After Gandhi - The History of the World's Largest Democracy by Ramachandra Guha (New York: Harper and Collins, 2007

These can be ordered from Amazon.com

NOVELS: If you wish to read a couple of good Indian novels in preparation for the trip you should buy:

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, Harper Perennial, 1998.

Life of Pi by Yann Martel, Canongate Books Ltd.

Please get into the websites on India and familiarize yourself with any specific aspect of Indian life you wish to explore more.

The details of the places we would visit and the kinds of programs we would follow in India will be given at our first class meeting.

6 Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story

J. Paul Rajashekar

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Editor's Introduction

"'Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement" is one of six cases studies from *Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue,*[1] Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

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[1] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary

curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism,

emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

*The Philadelphia Story (*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will

help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

Heidi Hadsell is President of Hartford Seminary and Professor of Social Ethics. She is former Director, The Ecumenical Institute of The World Council of Churches Bossey, Switzerland and former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty at McCormick Theological Seminary. She has served as a consultant to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches – Roman Catholic Dialogue; consultant for institutional change towards the globalization of theological education, Pilot Immersion Project for the Globalization of Theological Education, and consultant for curriculum design and organizational structure, Pilot Master's degree program for Public Administrators, Institute for Technical and Economic Planning, Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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6 Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story

J. Paul Rajashekar

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Introduction

The issues and perspectives this essay considers are those of a "mainline" Protestant Seminary, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP). The school was founded in 1864 to uphold the confessional theology of the Lutheran Reformation. Despite its commitment to a confessional theology, LTSP has evolved into an open-minded and theologically liberal institution. As a denominational Seminary affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, it has maintained a progressive view of theology and ministry and a strong commitment to public engagement with critical issues affecting Christian ministry. It is not surprising, therefore, that interfaith engagement takes an urgency within such an ethos and is the specific focus of the essay; first, in regard to its location in the overall curriculum, and then in regard to a more detailed examination of a particular course.

The commentary on LTSP's mission statement written in the 1980s acknowledges explicitly the Seminary's commitment to be a "biblical, confessional, inter-confessional, inclusive and cross-cultural" community. The Seminary has sincerely sought the realization of those goals in its life and curriculum.

LTSP has worked to broaden its appeal both ecumenically and multi-culturally. For a Seminary of a predominantly white denomination, LTSP has been remarkably committed to theological education in urban, ecumenical and multicultural contexts in the

Northeastern United States. This commitment is reflected in the composition of its faculty and student body.

Over the years, the faculty has intentionally sought to ensure equal representation of male, female and persons of color (representing Asian, African-American and Latino backgrounds), although recent faculty changes may have skewed this balance. More than one-third of the faculty come from denominations other than Lutheran. Similarly, more than one-third of the students come from 30-plus denominations, including historically black churches. The Urban Theological Institute of LTSP, established more than 25 years ago, has been a pioneering initiative in training African-American clergy in the metropolitan Philadelphia area.

The Seminary offers MDiv concentrations in Black Church Studies, Urban/Metropolitan Ministry, Latino Ministry and Multicultural Ministry. Recently, the Seminary introduced an Asian Studies program in the form of an annual summer institute for doctoral candidates from various theological institutions in the Northeastern US. The Seminary's curricular commitments in global, interfaith, ecumenical and multicultural issues have promoted these developments during the past two decades.

It must be noted at the outset that the Seminary does not enroll students from religious faiths other than Christianity, except for Jewish students taking occasional courses in Hebrew Scriptures or attending interfaith seminars on campus. We are not an "interfaith Seminary." Nonetheless, our students have many opportunities to interact with people of other faiths in the neighborhood and our curriculum intentionally promotes interfaith understanding. A look at the geographical and institutional context of the Seminary provides a window into LTSP's interfaith engagements.

The Context

It must be noted that Philadelphia, as a historic city, has been a religiously tolerant and non-sectarian. Founded by Quaker William Penn in 1681, the State of Pennsylvania and the aptly named "City of Brotherly Love" has been the site of Penn's "Holy Experiment" in religious toleration. Pennsylvania was one of the few original colonies that would accept Catholics and Jews, Mennonites and Amish. Today, the tradition of religious diversity thrives in the city of Philadelphia

with diverse religious groups that include Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Pagans, among others.

LTSP is located on Germantown Avenue in the Mt. Airy section of the Northwest part of Philadelphia. Mt. Airy is a racially mixed neighborhood with a remarkable level of integration. Germantown Avenue dates back to colonial times and runs eight miles from the Northwestern suburbs toward the Center City of Philadelphia. On this stretch are 82 places of worship, two of which are mosques, one belonging to a black Muslim community and the other an immigrant mosque. The Avenue's Christian churches represent a variety of denominations. If one were to count the adjoining side streets, the number of places of worship would be even greater.

Within a block of LTSP is the Radha Krishna Temple belonging to the Hare Krishna movement. Within a three-mile radius are Jewish synagogues, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, a Vedanta center, a Korean Won Buddhist center, a Unitarian Universalist church, and dozens of high steeple churches, mega-churches and storefront congregations of various denominations. The Seminary has long been part of the Neighborhood Interfaith Movement that cares for homeless people by providing accommodations on campus when needed. The Seminary has self-consciously sought to integrate itself into the community and has financially invested in the betterment of the Mt. Airy community. The surroundings of LTSP therefore provide a rich context and a veritable laboratory for varieties of religious expressions, for Seminary education and for pastoral formation.

The immediate context of the Seminary significantly reflects the larger geographical context of the Northeastern United States, a region that supplies the bulk of LTSP's students. The majority of our graduates return to this regional context to pursue Christian ministry. Awareness of religious diversity and plurality in our society is self-evident to the majority of our students hailing from this region. Students coming from parts of the Midwest, rural Pennsylvania and Southeastern States may find the urban/metropolitan, multicultural/ecumenical and religiously diverse context somewhat overwhelming or threatening initially, though they frequently choose to come to Philadelphia precisely to gain an exposure to these realities. The Seminary offers this experience and exposure without charging extra tuition for it!

The need to lift up interfaith concerns in the curriculum at LTSP was in part based on the geographical context of the Seminary and in part influenced by the make-up and experiences of the student body. A decade or so ago, more than 50 percent of our student body was second career (a situation that has significantly changed in recent years with increasing enrollment of students straight out of college). The second career student normally came with significant experiences, especially having worked or interacted with people of other faiths. They represented a generation that had previously dabbled in religious experimentation (practicing Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Buddhist meditation, etc.) or taken courses in world religions. The theological issues arising out of the context of religious plurality were often at the forefront of their thinking, though those concerns were seldom explicitly addressed in the courses they took. Their questions were sometimes suppressed because of doctrinal or missional emphases of certain courses that were more geared toward preserving denominational integrity and purity or missional expansion than toward the promotion of interfaith dialogue. Though occasional courses on World Religions were offered by visiting faculty (usually missionaries on furlough), theological and pastoral issues relating to interfaith reality received little attention. The pastoral context of our graduates in the Northeast, especially the emerging interfaith realities of the Northeastern US, received less attention in the curriculum.

Addressing interfaith engagement in teaching and learning does require some measure of experience and expertise in the faculty. Though there was no resistance to introducing interfaith themes and issues in the curriculum, no one member of the faculty would readily take on the challenge, save the two Old Testament professors who were deeply interested in contemporary Judaism and the professor steeped in American religious history. For the record, the Seminary had actively participated in the "Seminarians Interacting" program (now defunct) that brought together Christian, Jewish and Muslim theological students for mutual engagement and exchange. Faculty and students visited each other's institutions and places of worship and immersed themselves in dialogue with one another in classes. This experience was valuable to students, but only a few could participate in it. In addition to this program, the Seminary occasionally offered a course on Contemporary Judaism by a faculty member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Some Jewish students also took LTSP courses, providing some interfaith interaction in classes.

The faculty realized the importance of an interfaith focus and sought to strengthen faculty resources in this area. In the process of a faculty search for a systematic theologian, it became apparent that someone with expertise in world religions and inter-religious dialogue in relation to Lutheran theological tradition would be a valuable addition to the faculty. As is well known, Lutheran tradition defines itself primarily in theological terms and therefore an understanding of a Lutheran theology of religions was integral to interfaith engagement. With this point in mind, LTSP invited the author of this essay to join the faculty in 1991 as Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. I was hired because I was trained in Systematic Theology, wrote my doctoral dissertation on Luther, hailed from a non-European racial and cultural background, had studied Islam and Hinduism and had served the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland, as the first Executive Secretary for Church and People of Other Faiths. In that capacity I had worked with churches around the world in promoting interfaith dialogue and initiating studies in theology of religions. My background in the ecumenical movement, interfaith dialogue and World Christianity was thought to be an asset by the faculty.

My joining the faculty also brought to the Seminary interfaith experiences from the Indian context, from where I originally came, and understandings of World Christianity. So beginning in early 1990s, the Seminary began to offer a number of courses on World Religions, Interfaith Dialogue, and Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. Prof. Mohamaud Ayoub of Temple University and I taught the latter course. The Seminary was also used as a neutral site for occasional courses on Jewish-Muslim Dialogue sponsored by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Temple University. A few LTSP students were allowed to take that course. In courses on Introduction to Systematic Theology and Christology, I intentionally introduced the theological and conceptual issues of interfaith encounter as part of the theological subject matter (more about this later). At the graduate level additional courses on Theologies of Religions were also offered.

The faculty's awareness and sensitivity to the Seminary's context, the needs of pastoral ministry, and the concerns of adequately equipping our graduates with skills and understandings for negotiating in a pluralistic society were important factors that contributed to the development of an emphasis on interfaith issues at LTSP. In the past five years, two additional faculty members have been added with expertise in interfaith matters, one of them trained in Islamic Studies.

Also, the professor who teaches courses in American religious history devotes a considerable amount of time to modern religious movements in some of his courses.

Rethinking Curricular Requirements

Christian theological institutions are constantly reviewing and rethinking the nature of theological education. The most recent revision of the curriculum at LTSP began in 2002, and a new/revised curriculum was introduced in 2004. The main guiding theme of the new curriculum is "Public Witness." Among the many new features of this curriculum, two important elements are directly linked to interfaith concerns.

First, a course in interfaith understanding became a *requirement* for the MDiv. In the prior curriculum, students were required to fulfill at least one of three topics: Global, Ecumenical, or Interfaith. In the new curriculum, all three topics became requirements. The curriculum defined this requirement in experiential terms, i.e., some amount of exposure beyond the classroom. For instance, both Global and Interfaith requirements could be fulfilled by travel seminars to India, parts of Asia, Africa or the Middle East. In the case of academic courses, a substantial amount of student work and reflection must be grounded in the practice of interfaith dialogue. I will articulate this further in a later section.

Second, the new curriculum reflected the realization that in most Seminary curricula, if they include any interfaith requirement, it is usually offered during the last year of Seminary education. LTSP faculty realized that by then, much of the theological formation had already occurred in students. The new curriculum wanted to raise interfaith issues at the start of theological education rather than at the end. Accordingly, the new curriculum created a two-week-long "Prolog" session, which is a for-credit course required for all incoming students. The Prolog sessions were designed to deal with introduction to theological studies, introduction to issues in ministry (congregational or otherwise) and introduction to issues in local community and society. During these sessions, the incoming students are introduced to religious leaders of the community (Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist) with presentations and dialogue between them. Students are then taken to places of worship (usually the closest Mosque or the Radha Krishna Temple) to witness worship and engage in informal

conversations. The visits are followed by a lecture on theological issues in interfaith encounter from a Christian perspective. The students are asked to write brief reflections on their exposure to other faiths for small group discussion.

By front-loading the issues of interfaith concerns, the curriculum exposes students to profound theological and pastoral issues before they take their regular courses. These issues raise new questions, insights and perspectives in the courses they will be taking in all theological disciplines. In the process, those faculty members who are narrowly focused on their disciplines or reluctant to address how interfaith issues impinge on their understanding and teaching of the Christian faith (there are those in every faculty!) are in a way forced to respond to questions posed by students exposed to interfaith realities. In a small way, this reality has facilitated interdisciplinary conversations among faculty on interfaith issues.

Theological Assumptions

The two new features of the new curriculum are based on certain assumptions. The overarching guiding principle of the new curriculum, as previously noted, was "Public Witness." The notion of "Public Theology" or "Public Witness" is understood and interpreted by members of the faculty differently and in relation to their respective disciplines. However, in faculty deliberations there was consensus that public witness entailed a view that our graduates are not only pastors, religious functionaries or caretakers of congregations, but are also leaders of the local community, embracing the whole community. Such a commitment invariably leads to involvement with other Christian churches and other religious communities. It requires initiative on the part of pastors/leaders to meet with leaders/clergy of other religious communities in building and strengthening local communities. Seminary education should therefore provide necessary skills and understanding of other faiths and traditions to engage in dialogue with those communities. Public witness involves critical and dialogical engagement with people that invariably involves mutual listening and sharing. Listening and understanding the perspectives of people of other faiths or no faith is an essential prerequisite of Christian witness. Students are to know at least one other religious faith besides their own or a rudimentary understanding of the major faiths as essential preparation for engaging in Christian ministry.

Thus, Public Witness or Public Theology served as the linchpin of LTSP's curricula in all its degree programs (including PhD). The "public" dimension is here understood broadly in terms of public accountability of the faith in dialogical engagement with people and societal issues. The implicit assumption is that all Christian claims, and for that matter all religious claims, in our society are subject to public critique and accountability in the sense that the legitimacy of all such claims has to be articulated in relation to the claims and commitments of other communities that share the public space.

In a religiously pluralistic society, unilateral claims on the part of one religious community are subject to intense interrogation, implicitly or explicitly. Awareness of religious plurality in our midst invariably raises the question, "By what authority do faiths make such and such claims?" All historical claims to the authority (whether grounded in scripture, community, tradition, or history) are therefore subject to critique and challenge. Whether one likes it or not, religious plurality invariably relativizes all exclusive claims, in the sense that a particular claim becomes one among many, and therefore demands intelligible and coherent articulations of faith that makes sense to others. Put differently, the public theology and public witness that Christians profess is fundamentally one of responding to the question, "Why are you a Christian?"

A theologically informed understanding of pastoral ministry must therefore respond to such interrogations as honestly and intelligibly as possible. Public witness of the church is thus a witness chastened and tempered by the reality of counterclaims put forward by other religious communities. Christian theology and ministry can neither wish away nor ignore such counterclaims and live as if we are still in the era of European Christendom, where almost everybody was a Christian, nominally at least! Public theology, then, is a discourse and a reasoned articulation of the Christian faith that is informed and challenged by the diverse realities of our world, and public witness is the practice of being a Christian in relation to, rather than over against, people of other faiths, ideologies and worldviews. The ability to articulate and practice the Christian faith, coherently and intelligibly, in the context of one's ministry is the intent of the new curriculum. To this end, in the senior year the curriculum offers a number of "public theology seminars" as capstone courses on a range of contemporary issues.

The above assumptions emerged in the course of protracted faculty deliberations over a two-year period before the faculty and the

Board of Trustees adopted the new curriculum. While all the faculty members recognized our context of religious pluralism, there were concerns as to how our interfaith requirement would be interpreted in the context of our supporting church constituencies. As a denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, like other Protestant denominations, is experiencing a decline in membership. Predictably, there is some urgency to arrest the decline with a renewed focus on evangelism, outreach and strategies for church growth. Bishops from our supporting synods have often accused seminaries of not producing enough missionaries or "mission developers" or "evangelists." Our supporting constituencies have not always caught up with fundamental changes in the religious landscape of our society. Thus they tend to live under assumptions of a bye-gone era of Christian monopoly and conquest of the world. Emphasis on "mission" or "evangelism" appeals to certain constituencies in the church while "interfaith dialogue and engagement'" appeal to other constituencies. Theological curricula thus reflect some ambiguity in this regard. Though LTSP has always offered courses on evangelism and congregational outreach, the missional or evangelizing dimension of the church's ministry had to be made visible in the curriculum as well. The LTSP faculty's compromise was to add a required course on "Stewardship and Evangelism."

How the interfaith requirement and the evangelism requirement cohere in the context of the new curriculum was not really thought through. It appeared that the focus of the evangelism course was to be more on reaching out to the lapsed Christians of the post-modern generation and reviving oxygen-starved congregations than evangelizing people of other faiths. There was consensus that courses on evangelism and mission be included in the course offerings and listed in the catalog. But a serious discussion on the importance of evangelism vis-à-vis interfaith dialogue in the curriculum did not occur because of the impact of 9/11 on the community. In effect, the 9/11 tragedy provided a far greater impetus and urgency to introduce the interfaith focus into the curriculum. Our supporting constituency began to press the Seminary as to how we deal with Islam and the challenge of religious fundamentalism in our curriculum! There were calls that the Seminary should offer courses on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

The commitment to promote interfaith understanding was facilitated, not least, by the theology of the Lutheran tradition. The

Lutheran theological tradition has always affirmed a positive view of God's creation, despite the fallen character of creation. The Lutheran dialectic of law and gospel, creation and redemption, God hidden and revealed, believers as saint and sinners, etc., allowed for some degree of positive acknowledgement of values, ethics and contributions of those outside the Christian faith. Though not all Lutheran theologians have pursued the logic of this dialectic in their understanding of the Christian faith, the Lutheran perspective does open up positive encounters with people of other faiths. The faculty recognized the potential of the Lutheran tradition to be hospitable to the faith and claims of other religious traditions and to engage in dialogue with them as an essential aspect of contemporary Christian witness. In other words, the Lutheran heritage, theologically speaking, excluded any fundamentalist or exclusivist notions of the Christian faith. The introduction of the interfaith emphasis in the new curriculum received the full and enthusiastic support of the faculty.

Beyond the curriculum, the Seminary has periodically hosted public events that promote interfaith understanding. For example, in spring of 2008 and 2009, the Seminary sponsored an interfaith dialogue series on "Tough Texts," that examine scriptural texts that are deemed problematic today. The series was cosponsored by several organizations in Philadelphia committed to promoting interfaith understanding. The Seminary's ongoing engagement with other religious communities is an important expression of the sort of public theological engagement that the curriculum seeks to advocate.

Personal Convictions

As a member of the faculty teaching in the area of Systematic Theology, it was my conviction that injecting interfaith concern into the theological curriculum is not a matter of introducing a course or two. In other words, it is not an addendum to the theological curriculum -- one more requirement that students must fulfill prior to their graduation. Interfaith issues must somehow permeate the totality of theological reflection if there is to be any value in the context of religious plurality. No doubt theology has been done and can be done in segregated communities, -denominationally, culturally, racially or ethnically, -but claims of universal validity and relevance of such theologies are indeed dubious.

My family origins in India and my ministry led me to conclusions that I had never imagined. Even before I took on theological studies, my first call to ministry was to work as an evangelist among Muslims in rural South India. Later on in life, I served as a pastor and radio preacher in my mother tongue (Kannada). Both these experiences in a way transformed my self-understanding as a Christian from a gung-ho Christian evangelist to a practitioner of interfaith dialogue. As a radio preacher (together with my wife, who is also an ordained minister), I received thousands of letters every week from my audience, the majority of them Hindu, who professed their faith and admiration for Jesus as a Guru, Savior and Healer. But they were unwilling to associate themselves with the established church and questioned the claim of exclusivism that the church proclaimed and the implicit denigration of the Hindu faith it implied. These letters led me then to reflect on the issue of "un-baptized believers" in India. In Asian, cultural allegiance to multiple faiths is far more common than in the West.

My experiences in radio ministry eventually led me to rethink Christian theological claims of the modern missionary era, especially among Protestant communions. Theological articulations that rely solely on the canons of one's own community, sacred texts, traditions, culture, heritage and hermeneutic, though valid, it appears, are limited in their relevance and value beyond that community. Such "self-referential theologies" have become highly problematic in a "globalized world" where religious ideas, beliefs, concepts, practices and values have no boundaries. With the religious and theological "flows" going every which way and influencing our worldviews, claims of religious exclusivism seem untenable and difficult to justify. This is not to deny the exclusive content and contours of religious faiths in their historical specificity; but, the fact is that the exclusive claims originated in a culturally or religiously circumscribed context makes them highly problematic. Acknowledging the reality of religious plurality in our midst, therefore, demands recognition of the limitations of all "self-referential" theological articulations and the accompanying universal claims. Put differently, interfaith realities of our society question the prevailing "self-sufficiency" of religious traditions and warrant mutual engagement.

Christian theology, as my own journey led me to believe, must move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its conviction, method, hermeneutic and articulation. In other words, we

need to articulate Christian theological convictions not in isolation from other religious claims and convictions or against them, but in relation to them. Every theological locus or doctrine in Christian theology must in some way be informed by and engage with concepts, claims and convictions of other religious traditions. This task is not easy given the diversity and profundity of other faiths. The point here is not that anyone will ever succeed in relating to people of other faiths in all their diversity, but rather that Christian engagement with people of other faiths is to be grounded in a dialogical praxis as a prerequisite for theological reflection. In teaching courses in systematic theology, I have endeavored to expose students to diverse religious ideas, beliefs, concepts, models and understandings of theological themes.

To do theology "cross-referentially" is to explore the interface between Christian faith and other faiths as the locus of theological discourse. This is seldom done in Western theological texts and discourses. This suggestion may seem somewhat beyond the scope of theologians and theological institutions committed to an aggressive missional understanding of the church at the expense of other religious claims and communities. Christian theology articulated from the perspective of interfaith dialogue is not concerned with claims of superiority but rather seeks a respectful understanding of other beliefs and values and how it might enrich one's own faith. It is an attempt to grasp the hermeneutics of faith as they are embodied in the lives of people in all their interactions.

The perspective suggested above is different from that of a Christian theology of religions. Christian theologies of religions are attempts at articulating the place and role of other faiths in relation to one's faith. They are theoretical constructs that seek to accommodate the claims of other religious traditions to facilitate mutual engagement. Such attempts may or may not require dialogical engagement in so far as they are attempts to rethink one's theological assumptions to legitimize the truth claims put forward by others without undermining one's own claims and convictions. These approaches are valuable in interfaith contexts in preparing for dialogue. But to do theology cross-referentially is to commit to a dialogical engagement with people, texts and traditions as prerequisite for Christian theological reflection. Dialogue thus becomes both a method and a source of doing theology. (The approach I take in teaching Systematic Theology cross-referentially is somewhat similar to a Comparative Theology approach advocated by some scholars. Comparative theology tends to focus more

on textual resources to deepen Christian appreciation of other faiths and involves a rigorous process of study and reflection. In the context of seminary education, there are serious constraints on time that limit explorations into the deeper dimensions of interfaith encounter. Nevertheless, even in teaching Christian theology, I endeavored to draw the attention of students to insights from other faiths as a way to deepen Christian self-understanding.)

The preceding personal reflections, I hope, provide some of my operating assumptions in teaching courses at the Seminary. Besides the systematic theology courses, I have taught other courses that are focused on interfaith dialogues. For the purposes of this case study, I have focused on one particular course, "Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue." I have taught this course sometimes as a half credit course and at other times as a full credit course.

Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue

The central focus of the course is to introduce seminarians to the questions and challenges of religious pluralism and how those questions impact Christian ministry. The objectives of the course are: 1) Understand and explore the reality of religious pluralism in North American society and identify the issues it raises for the Christian faith; 2) Learn the theory and practice of interreligious dialogue; 3) Examine theological models of encounter in Christian history and theology and 4) Explore practical and pastoral responses to interreligious issues in congregational ministry.

The course attempts to prepare seminarians to engage in actual practice of dialogue with neighbors of other faiths in the context of their future ministry with some understanding of pertinent theological issues arising out of that encounter. The course fulfills a curricular requirement and hence almost all MDiv and MAR students take it during their first year of study at the Seminary. As noted above, in the Prolog sessions at the very outset of theological study students are introduced to representatives of other religious communities and visit a mosque, Hindu temple or a Buddhist Center. I must note here that the initial exposure to places of worship is often a positive experience for most students, though some students have found the exposure a bit unsettling. This is true for those who have never visited a Hindu temple where idols of the deity are prominent. Witnessing a Hindu *puja* (worship) raises some profound questions to those nurtured under

the biblical injunctions against idolatry. In follow-up discussions, the meaning of idols and idol worship in the Hindu or Buddhist traditions is a regular topic of interest. In a different way, the visit to the mosque usually elicits considerable discussion on the role and place of women in the Islamic tradition. On the other hand, students find the meditation practices of Won Buddhism from Korea rather comforting and relaxing.

I mention these experiences to indicate that students, especially Euro-American/white and African-American students, often encounter difficulties in understanding and processing religious practices and beliefs so different from their own. It is one thing to study Hinduism by doing a course in college and it is another thing to witness the emotional worship of the Krishnas in their temple. Students often experience a conceptual disconnect with the religious beliefs and practices of others. The very thought of attending the worship services of Hare Krishans or Muslims is disconcerting to some students of evangelical or fundamentalist leanings. Taking one's shoes off at the Hindu temple or covering one's head at the mosque can be an unsettling experience to some. Their initial experiences in the Prolog sessions have often served to break-down resistance or prejudice toward other faiths prior to taking this course.

In a semester-long course, each session of the class is divided into three parts. The first hour is my lecture followed by a plenary discussion. The second hour is small group discussion focused on reading assignments. The third hour is a plenary discussion on both the lecture, reading materials and issues raised in small group discussion. The course syllabus indicates the texts and topics for each class session. I often hand out the outlines of my lectures that share my own experiences in interfaith dialogue and note some of the key concepts from other religious traditions. I have increasingly utilized internet based resources in lectures. For instance, in introducing religious diversity in the United States, I take students to the web site of the Pluralism Project of Harvard University. Similarly, religious texts, photographs of famous places of worship, outlines of the beliefs and practices of diverse religious traditions are now readily available. The web-based research serves students with no prior knowledge of other faiths as a useful tool in preparing them for actual interreligious conversations. Given the diversity of our student body, the small group discussions have always been lively, with students taking divergent

theological positions and challenging one another to rethink their views.

The course syllabus outlines my lectures covering a range of topics. In my initial introduction to the course I find it important to share my own personal journey in coming to grips with interfaith issues, especially my childhood experiences and my earlier career as an evangelist and radio preacher in India, prior to becoming an advocate for interfaith dialogue. Students tend to resonate with my sharing of personal experiences and struggles, which helps them to understand and respect the theological conclusions I draw from these experiences despite their own personal fears and reservations of interfaith encounter. After my introduction to the context of religious pluralism in North America, I turn my attention to Christian ecumenical responses to interfaith realities. Though I focus mostly on the World Council of Churches, the Vatican II documents and documents from other World Communions, I also draw attention to documents of the Lausanne Movement and other conservative, evangelical or Pentecostal perspectives.

I spend a fair amount of time helping students understand some basic ground rules of interfaith dialogue:

- Dialogue is between people and not between religions
- Dialogue is not a disguised monologue
- Dialogue not as a debate nor winning an argument, but a search for understanding
- Respecting the self-definitions of others
- Textual definitions of beliefs vs. how people embody beliefs
- Recognizing one's prejudice or stereotypical views of others
- Dangers of comparing the best of one's faith with the worst of others
- Use of scripture in a multi-scriptural society
- The goals and limits of dialogue
- The place of witness in dialogue
- The meaning and ethics of proselytism.

Several of my lectures focus attention on historical encounters between Christianity and other faiths by selected examples from the early church (Justin Martyr, Origen), Medieval period (John of Damascus, Spanish encounters with the Muslim Moors), Reformation period (Luther), Modern missionary encounters (mostly drawn from India, including those from the period of the Hindu Renaissance in Bengal and Latin America), and contemporary encounters (the rise of religious fundamentalism, "Clash of Civilization" theories, Islam and the West). Depending on the interests of students, I have offered special topic lectures on "Religion and Religions in the Bible," "Scripture and Scriptures in Pluralistic Societies," "Scriptures and Interreligious Hermeneutics," "Prayer in a Pluralistic Society," "Witness and Dialogue," and "Lutheran Theological Perspectives on Religions." I draw considerably from personal experiences in these lectures, and from a variety of cultural contexts in a way that students have found them helpful.

The most important component of this course is the dialogical requirement. In addition to participation in class discussions and fulfillment of assigned readings, the students are to engage in actual dialogue with a person(s) of another faith. The students are to spend at least 4-6 hours in conversation and write a reflection paper on how they were challenged by the beliefs and practices of a person(s) of another faith. This assignment often turns out to be the most challenging part of the course to students. For some, it is a challenge to find a person of another faith in the surrounding community. They often seek my help. I provide them some leads or direct them to the Yellow Pages (look under the category of "Churches"!). Even more of a challenge to some is their difficulty to initiate a conversation that opens up the religious worldview of their conversation partner. The most difficult part of this dialogical experience for some students is the ability to listen to theological views that are so different or alien to their understanding and that in some way radically challenge or contradict their religious beliefs. Understanding the conceptual differences and nuances between faiths requires attentiveness and willingness to probe without intimidating the other. Occasionally, students also have negative experiences of dialogue. They feel they were not taken seriously or were preached at by others. In some cases, their dialogue partners weren't proficient in their own faith in responding to questions.

My assumption behind this assignment is to let students learn interfaith dialogue by actual practice and personal experiences rather

than by my staging a dialogue in a class setting by inviting a person of another faith. Researching and identifying an appropriate partner for dialogue and thinking through how one must approach the other is part of the learning experience. Personal experience of interreligious encounter is more valuable than reading texts of comparative religion. It is my conviction that *dialogical praxis* is essential for a proper theological and pastoral relationship with people of other faiths. How to meet and greet people of other faiths is also an important part of theological and professional formation of clergy.

The students are required to write a reflection paper based on their dialogues. The expectation is that the paper is not a verbatim report of the conversation but rather a reflection on how the conversation challenged their prior assumptions about their faith or their perception of the faith and practices of the other. In my oral instructions, I make it clear that I am not looking for doctrinally orthodox reflections or theologically correct responses in their written submission. They are free to arrive at whatever theological conclusions are appropriate in light of their encounter, and the assignment is not some kind of doctrinal test! What I am interested in is knowing more about their theological struggles in relation to the faith of the other and how it reinforces or transforms their theological self-understanding. I encourage them to construct their own theological framework appropriate for their ministry. For Lutheran students, I encourage them to look at Lutheran theological resources in formulating their theological framework and for others, their own denominational heritage and resources. Students find this guidance helpful, even liberating, for it often eases their anxiety about the burden of defending their faith in dialogue or writing a doctrinally acceptable reflection paper.

In reading numerous reflection papers, I have noticed that many students observe how vulnerable they felt in their conversations or how inadequate they felt in their knowledge of the faith of their interlocutors. For a majority of students, this dialogical experience is a formative experience in the sense that though they were aware of religious plurality in society, they had seldom ventured to encounter it in a personal way. The assignment helps the student to "experience" religious diversity in a personal way rather than as an academic subject. Again, for a majority of students, *the experience of such encounter was more valued than the content of the dialogue*. Not a few students have indicated to me that the exercise was personally liberating and that they

felt confident to engage with others without fear or theological inhibitions. Students have often recalled their experience at the college level with students of another faith(s) or from another country in influencing their view of the other. For those who had some exposure to beliefs and spiritual practices of another faith in their prior life, the dialogical experience was a deepening of their spiritual journey.

Lest I give the impression that the course is a life-transforming experience for all my students, I must note that I usually find a few "Teflon Students" for whom the assignment is a waste of time! They would prefer to evangelize rather than listen to the other. For these students the very thought of engaging in dialogue with black Muslims or idol worshiping Hindus is highly problematic. African-American students are reticent to deal with the topic of Black Islam or the Nation of Islam. And yet, the assignment forced some African-American students to reconnect with family members who had become Muslims.

In the full-credit version of the course, I require students to write another paper reflecting on pastoral issues in interfaith contexts. The issues are based on real situations that students have encountered, such as the issue of interfaith marriages, funerals, prayer and worship; Holy Communion for the unbaptized person of another faith; Yoga classes or Buddhist meditation in churches; belief in reincarnation and Christian response; membership in different religious traditions; interfaith counseling; issues of evangelism and mission; and witness in relation to dialogue, etc. This assignment involves interviewing pastors, rabbis or imams to identify issues and pastoral practices in handling them. The sharing of these stories and case studies is a valuable learning experience for students.

Learning Outcomes

Having taught this course a number of times at LTSP, it is my experience that courses of this kind and their impact upon students are hard to measure or quantify. Interfaith awareness is not simply a matter of exposure to the sociological reality of religious pluralism in our midst. It is not about learning the essential beliefs of one or more religious faiths. It is fundamentally a matter of developing an attitude of the mind and heart or growing into a posture of relationality in the midst of others. This is a *pastoral disposition* that Seminary education should seek to cultivate among students. This cannot be accomplished in a course or two. Developing a dialogical understanding of ministry

accompanied by a critical theological reflection takes time, and the courses I offer represent a beginning of a journey -- hopefully a life-long journey. Initial steps that students take in engaging in interreligious dialogue are akin to learning to read, equipping oneself with tools that may eventually serve specific purposes in one's future ministry.

What I aim to accomplish is the formation of a dialogical *habitus* in interfaith courses. Though I have not defined the specific dimensions of this *habitus*, in simple terms, it refers to a personal disposition toward the other. I have already alluded to this as an attitude of the mind that is theologically informed and nurtured in relation to people. One of the difficulties that I have observed among students is their inability to be "guests in the midst of others." Perhaps this may be a particularly an American and Christian problem. There is always an unspoken assumption that the United States is a Christian nation or at least governed by Christian values. Thus the insights and values of other faiths, alien in the American soil, may be interesting and illuminating but are regarded as alien intruders who undermine the traditional American values and culture.

This built-in prejudice among a lot of Americans makes it somewhat difficult for some students to enter into the homes or places of worship of people of other faiths. The fact is that a significant number of religions come from outside the United States and introduce religious practices, beliefs and theological or philosophical commitments that are alien to Western religious and intellectual traditions. The fact that people of other faiths by and large also happen to be people of color requires that students possess not simply religious but also multicultural sensitivities as well. Students have to overcome their fear of the other which is culturally constructed. It is also important to recognize that religious prejudice and cultural prejudice are often intertwined and feed each other. Inherited theological convictions or stereotypical understanding of people from other cultures play a significant part in promoting religious prejudice. Sensitivity toward cultural/racial/ethnic differences and dynamics therefore is indispensable for understanding religious values and beliefs of others. Thus attitudinal changes have to be nurtured carefully if the course is to have any long-term outcomes. For this reason, at LTSP, our Prolog sessions include Anti-racism and Multicultural Awareness workshops required for all students.

The difficulty I have described also stems from certain other Christian convictions. "Hospitality" has become a common theme in

churches wanting to project themselves as welcoming communities eager to expand their membership base. In this environment, dialogue with people of other faiths is frequently understood as a way of hosting people of other faiths in the church or community. The belief that Christians are the hosts and all others are guests is so strongly entrenched in the Christian mind that students have a hard time "learning to be guests" in the company of others. In one of my introductory lectures, I emphasize that in a religiously pluralistic society there are no hosts but rather all people are strangers to one another and in that sense interfaith dialogue and exposure is the *practice of learning to be guests in the midst of others*. This is a different *theology of hospitality* that students have to learn to cultivate and does not come about without practice. Not all students who represent the dominant culture fully grasp the concept of hospitality that I have described. The course is an attempt to help students rethink their theology, especially their theology of grace in our context of religious diversity.

Another major learning difficulty that I have frequently encountered among seminarians has to do with religious language and concepts. I have alluded to this difficulty earlier. Interreligious dialogue in the American context takes place by using English as a mediating language into which religious concepts are translated. When certain words are used in conversation, Christian students are linguistically conditioned to interpret them according to their Christian self-understandings. It is not always easy to get into the conceptual and spiritual world of the other, and students understandably have a tendency to misinterpret or misapprehend religious terms and categories. I have tried to encourage students to adopt a principle of "conceptual humility" that no single tradition solely owns a word, a concept, an idea, an image or a story. Meanings of religious concepts are to be probed carefully in religious traditions for distinct nuances and ideational dimensions even though they may appear the same or similar in the mediating language of dialogue. One must pay careful attention to etymology and historical nuances of religious concepts and language as cultural constructs. The point may seem rather basic to human conversation but conceptual humility obliges one to listen intensely, seeking out a genuine experience of the universe of the other.

The reflection papers students submit often describe their theological journeys while doing this course. For some, getting to know a person(s) of another faith and sincerely exploring religious beliefs and

ideas in a dialogical or comparative way is a theological discovery. For others, seeing the perception of the Christian faith through the eyes of another is revealing. There are always a few students who misconstrue the assignment and engage in an intellectual argument and use the opportunity to evangelize the other. For some, the temptation to claim the superiority of their own faith over against the other is hard to resist. In some instances, students never get to the point of engaging in dialogue, either because the dialogue partner was less proficient in his/her faith or because the seminarian was more interested in gathering information about the other. Thus the course elicits a variety of individual outcomes and learnings in relation to the course objectives.

I have not done a formal follow-up survey or research on the outcomes of this course over a period of time. The Seminary's periodic alumni survey has not included questions pertaining to interfaith issues. An assessment survey of our graduates is anticipated. In the meantime, an important clue that the course has fulfilled the stated objectives is the calls or emails I get from students long after they have graduated. Sometimes in alumni gatherings, students come up to me and say, "Now I understand, what you said in class about interfaith dialogue!" or, they inform me how they are pursuing conversations with other religious communities in the context of their ministry. Of course, I do get frequent invitations from students to visit their parishes to preach and do an adult class on interfaith issues, and that indicates the importance of the course in Seminary education. I am convinced that at the very least the course opens windows of understanding for many a student to take up the challenge of interfaith reality in our society. Even those students who have differing theological convictions than mine, or represent certain conservative theological traditions, develop some measure of respect for religious traditions other than their own. The range of personal, theological, multi-cultural, interfaith and international experiences that I bring to teaching this course, I believe, does have a bearing on how it impacts students. Interfaith dialogue, both as a theological concern and a pastoral commitment, must be intentionally included in theological curricula of seminaries if we are to take our context of religious plurality seriously.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

HTH 363: Theory and Practice of Interreligious Dialogue
Prof. J. Paul Rajashekar

The course is intended to provide a broad exposure to pertinent theological issues in Christian relations with people of other living religions and promote the practice of interreligious dialogue in a religiously pluralistic society. The course, however, is not an introduction to religions of the world. It is assumed that students have a rudimentary knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other living faiths. Students are encouraged to read a good introductory book on world's religions.

Objectives:

1. To understand and explore the reality of religious pluralism in North American society and identify the issues it raises for the Christian faith;

2. To learn the theory and practice of interreligious dialogue;

3. To examine theological models of encounter in Christian history and theology; and

4. Explore practical and pastoral responses to issues in congregational settings and ministry.

Required Texts:

Wesley Ariarajah: Not without My Neighbor (Geneva, WCC. 1999)
Diana L. Eck: A New Religious America (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 2001).
Paul F. Knitter: Introducing Theologies of Religions (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 2002).
Raimon Pannikar: Intrareligious Dialogue, Revised edition (NY: Paulist Press, 1999).

Bibliography:

Michael von Bruck, *The Unity of Reality: God, God Experience, Meditation in the Hindu Christian-Dialogue* (NY: Paulist Press, 1991).
David Carpenter, *Revelation, History and the Dialogue of Religions* (NY: Orbis Books, 1995).
Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu God and Christian God: Faith, Reason and Argument in a World of Many Religions* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999).
Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (NY: Orbis Books, 2000).
J. A. DeNoia, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1992).
Dupuis, S.J., Jacques, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (NY: Orbis, 2001).
P. J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (NY: Orbis, 1991).
S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches, A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
-----------------, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (NY: Orbis Books, 1995).
John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (London: SCM Ptress, 1993).
John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (NY: Orbis Books, 1987).
Klause K. Klostermier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (London: SCM Press, 1969)
George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).
Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism : The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004)
David J. Krieger, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (London: SCM Press, 1991).
Theodore M. Ludwig. *The Sacred Paths, Understanding the Religions of the World* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1989).
Mays, Rebecca Kratz, *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grassroots* (Philadelphia, Ecumenical Press, Temple University, 2009)

H. A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmanns, 1991).
Aloysius Pieris, *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism* (NY: Orbis Books, 1988).
Stanley J. Samartha, *One Christ and Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology* (NY: Orbis, 1991).
Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*, John Paul's *Redemptoris Missio*; CDF's *Dominus Jesus,* all downloadable documents.
Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).
WCC, *Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions,* downloadable document.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular class attendance, fulfillment of required readings and participation in class and small group discussions. Grade 20%.

2. A reflection paper (15-20 pages, double-spaced) based on an encounter or dialogue with a person(s) of another living faith. The paper is not intended as a verbatim report of conversations but rather a "reflection" on your encounter with the other person's beliefs, religious practices, social values, including issues affecting his/her religious community. The paper should articulate significant learnings on your part as a result of your conversations. If you have an opportunity to visit or observe the worship service of another religious tradition, write down your personal observations as well. Your reflections should indicate points of contact or conflict between your faith and the faith of the other. You are encouraged to engage in a *dialogue* with others and not in a *debate* about truth claims! Spend at least 3-4 hours in conversation in order to get a feel for the faith of the other, preferably meeting more than once. Grade 50%.
3. Identify an issue (such as interfaith marriage, prayer, funeral, counseling, etc.) and write a brief paper (5-7 pages) on a pastoral response from your perspective. You are encouraged to consult with religious leaders who have encountered practical interfaith issues in their ministry. Grade 30%

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to the course, readings and assignments.
Lecture: Religious Pluralism in America: The Changing Landscape
Small group discussion

Week 2: Religious Pluralism discussion...contd.
Read: Diana Eck, *A New Religious America*
Small group discussion

Week 3: Interreligious Dialogue: Responses from churches
Lecture: Ecumenical Discussions on Interfaith Dialogue
Read appropriate articles: http://www.pluralism.org/index.php
World Council of Churches: "Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions" (read the entire document): http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/glines-e.html#2
Small group discussion

Week 4: Issues in Interreligious Dialogue: Discussion on Ariarajah's book
Lecture: Ecumenical Discussions...contd.
Read: National Council of Churches USA statement on interfaith relations:
http://www.ncccusa.org/interfaith/ifr.html
Vatican II document "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*):
http://www.cin.org/v2non.html
Small group discussion

Week 5: Issues in Interreligious Dialogue... contd.
Read: Raimon Pannikar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*
Lecture: Rules and Goals of Dialogue
Small group discussion

Week 6: Models of Encounter: Replacement and Fulfillment
Read: Knitter, pp. 1-106
Lecture: History of Christian Encounter with other faiths: Early Christian experiences
Small group discussion

Week 7: Models of Encounter: Replacement and Fulfillment...contd.

Lecture: History of Christian Encounter… Medieval and Reformation experiences
Small group discussion

Week 8: Mutuality Model
Read: Knitter, pp. 109-169
Lecture: Modern Missionary Encounters: Experiences from India
Small group discussion

Week 9: Mutuality Model… contd.
Lecture: Contemporary Encounters…Fundamentalism, and Radical Islam
Sample readings from sacred texts (handout).
Small group discussion

Week 10: Acceptance Model
Read: Knitter, pp. 173-246
Lecture: The Problem of Scripture in a Multi-scriptural Society
Browse: "Windows for Understanding" (ELCA):
http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/interreligious/windows.html
Small group discussion

Week 11: Acceptance Model…contd.
Lecture: Lutheran Theological Perspectives
Presentation of selected dialogical encounters by students
Plenary discussion

Week 12: Review of the course…evaluation of objectives
Presentation of selected pastoral issues by students
Plenary discussion

Seminary Policies: Students are to adhere to seminary policies (class attendance, plagiarism, electronic submission of papers, course extensions, etc) as indicated in the *Student Handbook*. The instructor is available for individual consultation by appointment.

7 Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity Into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program

Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell and David Roozen

Editor's Introduction

"Dialogue in a World of Difference" is one of six cases studies from *Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue,*[1] Volume II in the Hartford Seminary Series on Innovation in Theological Education.

The book, as its name and the series name suggests, is about teaching, interfaith dialogue and theological education. The core of the book: six critical case studies of seminary taught, degree courses in interfaith dialogue. The cases give expression to a broad range of dialogical pedagogies and course formats, and they include the courses' syllabi and bibliographies. Each case course includes an experience of dialogue as part of the course. This is definitive of the project, for reasons elaborated below.

By critical case we mean one that describes not only the context, content, methods and related goals and rationale of the course, but also presents an evaluation of the course and discussion of the implications of the evaluation for teaching interfaith dialogue in theological institutions. Our hope for the book: To create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of interfaith dialogue in a seminary curriculum, and on the substantive and structural issues related to it.

The cases are first hand accounts, written by the teachers themselves -- all veteran theological educators. With the support of a

[1] David A. Roozen and Heidi Hadsell, eds. (Hartford Seminary, 2009).

grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion to Hartford Seminary, the group gathered several times between February 2007 and September 2008. The initial times together were spent getting to know each other, discussing our experiences, our approaches to and philosophies about interfaith dialogue and the pedagogical resources that we use in teaching it, and developing a common sense of the kind of critical case the project desired. Beginning in September 2007, each person presented a first draft of their case based on a course they taught during the time of the project. Case presentations extended over several sessions of discussion, critique and deepening reflection on the nature and location of dialogue in theological education. Christy Lohr, whose integrative essay joins the cases in this volume, joined the case writer group during the case review period of the project.

With revised, final drafts in hand, the case writer group convened two meetings to discuss the cases with seminary faculty more broadly. The meetings took place in Berkeley and Chicago. Invitations were extended to all seminary faculty in the respective areas to engage two or three of the project cases, share the work they themselves were doing and engage each other in substantive conversation. The meetings intended and accomplished several purposes. Foremost was to begin to disseminate the results of the project in a way that both advocated a central role for interfaith dialogue within the theological curriculum and laid a foundation for ongoing critical engagement among seminary faculty of the theory, theology and the practice; and to do so in a dialogical way.

Our thanks to the sixty or so faculty who shared in our journey at the regional meetings. Thanks also to the Hartford Seminary faculty who indulged our interim reflections at several of their regular Wednesday Collegial Sharing luncheons along the way; and to Sheryl Wiggins and David Barrett for their general assistance. Most importantly, our deepest felt thanks to the case writers for their willingness to dialogue with us and with each other about a personal passion, and for their willingness to ultimately present their passion in published form to their peers; to the Wabash Center for their continuing support through the several interesting twists in the project's unfolding; to Alexa Lindauer who copy-edited the entire manuscript; and to the many, many students in the case courses. Dialogue is about mutuality. Thank you students for your gift to us.

Why this Book at this Time

September 11, 2001 got America's attention. Tragic – in so many ways. Earth shattering – in so many ways. World changing – in so many ways. Among the latter, as one of us shared at the annual meeting of the Religion News Writers Association less than two weeks later, the shift from an *Ecumenical to Interfaith Consciousness about America's Religious Diversity.*

Critical to the point is that this shift is about awareness and acknowledgement, not a sudden change in presence or numbers. Muslims have been in North America since the beginning of our history with slavery, and adherents of Islam and a variety of Asian religions have been increasing steadily since changes to immigration laws nearly 50 years ago. The relative lack of acknowledgement of the multi-faith reality in the United States prior to September 11 is suggested, for example, by the fact that a major survey of congregations in the U.S. conducted in 2000 found that while 45% of congregations were involvement in ecumenical Christian worship in the year prior to the survey, only 7% indicated involvement in interfaith worship (and much of this was Christian/Jewish).

The multi-faith character of American society would be, of course, no surprise to theological educators. Indeed, in an essay on "Globalization, World Religions and Theological Education" in the "Looking Toward the Future" section of the 1999 volume of *Theological Education* celebrating the conclusion of Association of Theological Education's decade of globalization (Vol 35, No 2, pp 143-153), M. Thangaraj explicitly recognizes that, "Dialogue across religious boundaries has become a daily activity in many people's lives." His conclusion and plead: an increased engagement with world religions is critical for Christian theological education for three reasons. A Christian minister cannot have an adequate theological grounding for his or her faith without a meaningful understanding of how it relates to other faith traditions. A minister cannot adequately address the everyday interfaith experience and practice of his or her laity. Public ministry in today's world is increasingly interfaith.

World and national events since September 2001 have only intensified awareness of Muslims and Islam in particular and multi-faith diversity more broadly in the United States. Public opinion polls suggest both encouraging and discouraging developments. American attitudes toward American Muslims are a bit more positive today than

nine years ago and American congregations' involvement in interfaith worship has more than doubled since the 2000. In contrast, American attitudes toward Islam as a religion are less positive today and the dominant approaches of congregations to interfaith issues appear to remain indifference and avoidance.

Against this background of increasing awareness, increased necessity (assuming tolerance across diversity is a good thing), and increased lay and congregational involvement in interfaith engagement, one might think that a subject like Interfaith Dialogue (as a vehicle for tolerance through enhanced understanding and connection) would be a hot-bed of interest in theological education, or at least a begrudging capitulation to reality. The evidence is, unfortunately, less compelling. For example, one will not find a single article in *Theological Education* about interfaith dialogue between September 2001 and January 2007, when the case authors in this volume first met; indeed, not since the conclusion of the ATS decade of globalization in 1999; and in fact, not since the journal's inception in 1964! Nor have there been any to date (through Vol 44, No 2, 2009). This is all the more ironic given the centrality of "diversity" to ATS priorities and, relatedly, to issues of *Theological Education*. Tellingly, the one article in *Theological Education* that contains "Dialogue" in its title is about black and latino theologies (Vol 38, No 2, 2002, p 87-109).

A survey of seminary deans and an online search of seminary catalogues done in fall, 2006 to help identify possible seminary courses for this book was only a little more dialogically-friendly than *Theological Education*. The good news is that we were able to find several courses that fit our criteria. The bad news was that there were only a few more than the five seminaries represented in the book that offered degree courses taught by regular faculty that included an experience of interfaith dialogue.

This certainly fit our impressions. As we looked out across theological education in the United States we found that although there seemed to be a lot of talk about and enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue, there was a paucity of courses related to interfaith dialogue in even the broadest sense, and very few places in which interfaith dialogue was actually happening. There was, from our vantage point, a curricular and pedagogical vacuum that badly needed to be filled.

More encouraging, at first glance, was our discovery of an entire section of syllabi listed under Interreligious Dialogue on the

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Unfortunately, a quick perusal in June 2007 indicated that an actual conversation or encounter with a person of another faith tradition was not a goal of a single course listed; and that learning about the practice of putting persons from different faith traditions into conversation or dialogue with each other was a goal of, at most, one of the courses. Among other things this means that from among the half dozen or so different types of interreligious dialogue typical of the emerging literature on the subject, the cutting edge of university and seminary courses on dialogue listed on the Wabash site all narrowly focused on a single, and typically the most rudimentary, purpose. In terms of the following list of types of dialogue, for example, the Wabash site syllabi all fall into "Informational," although several move beyond basic comparative religions to also include the history of relations between two or more faith tradition.

1) Informational: Acquiring of knowledge of the faith partner's religious history, founding, basic beliefs, scriptures, etc.
2) Confessional: Allowing the faith partners to speak for and define themselves in terms of what it means to live as an adherent.
3) Experiential: Dialogue with faith partners from within the partner's tradition, worship and ritual - entering into the feelings of one's partner and permitting that person's symbols and stories to guide.
4) Relational: Develop friendships with individual persons beyond the "business" of dialogue.
5) Practical: Collaborate to promote peace and justice. [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/guidelines_interfaith.php#goals]

Such narrow and elementary approaches, we believe, cannot adequately address the three reasons set forth by Thangaraj almost a decade ago for why the increased engagement of interfaith issues is critical for theological education. Rather, we believe, theological education can only meet these challenges for its ministry students and related congregations and denominations by exposing students to the full range of dialogical purposes. Hence, our desire for the book to create a practical literature and related conversation among theological educators on the role of the practice of interfaith dialogue in a seminary

curriculum is driven by the related desire to be a constructive advocate for courses in Interfaith Dialogue using pedagogies that optimize the full range of dialogical purposes and practices. To use ATS outcome language: we want to enhance the capacity of seminaries to equip their students to engage the multi-faith reality of the American (and global) context in ways that advance mutual understanding and appreciative relationships across faith traditions.

The Cases

The desire to maximize the diversity of dialogical pedagogies, course formats, Christian traditions represented within the Association of Theological Schools, and regions of the country in a limited number of case courses at first struck us as rather daunting. One of the few positives of discovering that we really had a very limited number of courses from which to draw was that it made the selection process considerably easier. Eventually we gathered an experienced group of theological educators from three regions of the country that included professors from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and ecumenical schools, as well as from three religious traditions – Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The six case studies, along with a very brief summary of each, are listed below in the order they appear in the book. The cases are preceded in the book by an integrative essay that further comments on each case's distinctiveness and connects the cases to a broader examination of the issues and potential location of interfaith dialogue in North American theological education: *Navigating the New Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education*, Christy Lohr, Intersections Institute, Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries.

'Interreligious Dialogue' at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, James Redington, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia

The *'Interreligious Dialogue'* course at the Jesuit School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, combines a substantive course on the history of and current approaches to dialogue with in-class exercises in meditation and a required experience of dialogue. It includes sections on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism,

emphasizing the latter two in the dialogue requirement. It appears first because it includes a succinct overview of the history of and current approaches to dialogue; it alerts the reader to the importance of spiritual practices for the experiential/relational practice of dialogue (a common thread across the courses), and uses, arguably, the simplest approach for students to be in dialogue – go find your own experience and then run it by the professor.

World Religions and Christianity: A Global Perspective in the Context of the Overall Program of Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Robert Hunt.

The *World Religions and Christianity* case presents what we believe is the most typical current approach among seminaries for dealing with the challenge of interfaith dialogue – specifically grafting dialogue onto an existing course in world religions. Interfaith Dialogue's tension with evangelical Christianity is a visible dynamic in the case. For the course's required experience of dialogue, students are assigned to external Hindu, Jewish and Muslim organizations pre-arranged by the Professor. In addition to the course dynamic the case includes an insightful overview of the interfaith practice of a wide spectrum of religious organization in the Dallas area.

Building Abrahamic Partnerships: A Model Interfaith Program at Hartford Seminary, Yehezkel Landau

The *Building Abrahamic Partnerships* case documents a very different kind of course than either of the first two. It is an eight-day intensive for which an equal number of degree and non-degree Christians, Jews and Muslims from around the US are recruited, with priority to Hartford Seminary students. The eight days are a continual experience of dialogue aimed at developing basic concepts and skills for leadership in building Abrahamic partnerships. The course and case are especially strong in the breadth of dialogical methods used and on the relational skills required of the course leadership.

The Challenge of World Religions to Christian Faith and Practice at Drew University School of Theology, S. Wesley Ariarajah

The Challenge of World Religions case is more broadly about Drew's three course curriculum addressing interfaith issues. The three courses include a heavily experiential world religions course with personal engagements with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism; a relatively straight forward theology of religions course; and an international, cross-cultural immersion focused on interfaith encounter. Although the world religions course is highlighted in the case, the author's reflection on the systemic inter-relationships among and distinctive contributions of each of the three courses is a unique contribution of the case. Another unique contribution is the treatment given to the international immersion course and how this popular course format can be adapted to addressing interfaith issues. Still another distinctive of the case is the extensive attention given to student reflections of their experiences.

Theological Education for Interfaith Engagement: The Philadelphia Story, J. Paul Rajashekar, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

*The Philadelphia Story (*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia), like the Drew case, strongly situates interfaith concerns within the overall curriculum. A distinctive feature of the case is the strong argument the author, who was dean during a recent curriculum revision and who is a systematic theologian, makes for the necessity of Christian theology to move from a "self-referential" to a "cross-referential" posture in its method, hermeneutic and articulation. The case then moves to its focal course concern with the required, Theory and Practice of Interfaith Dialogue. A distinctive strength of the case's treatment of the course is its critical struggle with the pros and cons of having students "find and direct their own" dialogue experience.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program, Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell, and David Roozen.

The *Dialogue in a World of Difference* case is the only one about a course that is not a part of an MDiv curriculum. Rather, the course is an attempt to use a semester long experience of interfaith dialogue taken during a student's first semester to socialize students into the relational and appreciative skills, capacitates and preferences that will

help them maximize learning in the seminary's religiously and culturally diverse MA student body. Three distinctive features of the course/case are the near equal mix of international and US students in the class, the near equal mix of Christian and non-Christian students in the course; and the near equal mix of religious professionals and laity. The case also reports on a less than successful experiment with online dialogue.

About the Editors

Heidi Hadsell is President of Hartford Seminary and Professor of Social Ethics. She is former Director, The Ecumenical Institute of The World Council of Churches Bossey, Switzerland and former Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty at McCormick Theological Seminary. She has served as a consultant to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches – Roman Catholic Dialogue; consultant for institutional change towards the globalization of theological education, Pilot Immersion Project for the Globalization of Theological Education, and consultant for curriculum design and organizational structure, Pilot Master's degree program for Public Administrators, Institute for Technical and Economic Planning, Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

David Roozen is Director of the Hartford Seminary Institute for Religion Research and Professor of Religion and Society. More widely recognized for his work in congregational studies and religious trends, Roozen also has an extensive record of research and publication on theological education, including, for example: *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach*. David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans (Plowshares Institute, 1996); *Interfaith FACT's: An Invitation to Dialogue.* Martin Bailey and David A. Roozen (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Case Studies," guest editor, *Theological Education* (Spring, 1991); and, *The Globalization of Theological Education.* Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and David A. Roozen (eds) (Orbis Books, 1993).

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7 Dialogue in a World of Difference: Turning Necessity Into Opportunity in Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program

Suendam Birinci, Heidi Hadsell and David Roozen

Hartford Seminary As Context for Interfaith Dialogue

Hartford Seminary (HS) is not your typical American theological school. Most immediately: it has not offered an MDiv since the early 1970s. Why then retain the "seminary" identity? Because of the Seminary's continuing, 175 year commitment to the education and shaping of religious leadership and, through its various academic programs and research, to enhancing the vitality of communities of faith. Accordingly, the Seminary offers a number of degree and non-degree tracks related to Christian ministry and religious leadership that are direct outgrowths of its early 1970s transformation, including: a DMin program grounded in congregational studies and practical theology, a Black Ministries Certificate Program, a Hispanic Ministries Certificate Program and a Women's Leadership Certificate Program. Long before HS staked a claim in the study and practice of "dialogue," it was intentionally seeking to become a "safe place" where differences could be engaged – racial/ethnic, sexual preference, and theological. Historically ecumenical Protestant in a predominantly Catholic area, the Seminary currently has a good mix of oldline Protestant and Catholic students, overlaid with racial/ethnic conservative Protestant students and Seeker/Wicca/Quantum spirituality students attracted by the Woman's Leadership programs.

A second HS distinctive is the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim relations. The contemporary Macdonald Center is the result of the evolution over many decades of the Seminary's Kennedy School of Missions, which trained Christians for

the mission field beginning in the latter part of the 19th century. One of its more notable doctoral graduates, Dr. Stanley Samartha, `51, from India, went on to become the founding director of the Interfaith Dialogue program of the World Council of Churches.

The Kennedy School's early interest and expertise in Islamic history and theology, Arabic, and the historical and contemporary relations between Islam and Christianity evolved into the Center for the Study of Islam and for Muslim Christian relations during the Seminary's 1970's makeover. Today, two of the 12 core senior faculty at HS are Muslim (Ingrid Mattson and Yahya Michot) and there are two full time Muslim Faculty Associates. The Islamic Chaplaincy Program and MA concentration in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations are among the Seminary's largest. And, Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations are two of the three concentrations in the Seminary's international Ph.D. program.

The Seminary's Islamic Chaplaincy Program consists of a 48-credit Master of Arts degree with a concentration in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations and a 24-credit Graduate Certificate. Together they meet the accrediting requirements of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for its equivalent of a Master of Divinity degree.

The Macdonald Center is also home to *The Muslim World* journal, sponsored by Hartford Seminary since 1938. The scholarly journal, which reaches subscribers in 65 countries, is dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of scholarly research on Islam and Muslim societies and on historical and current aspects of Christian-Muslim relations.

Related to the Macdonald Center, but also to the Seminary as a whole, is the recently established, International Peacemaking Program. It is a certificate program for young Christian and Muslim leaders from around the world who are involved in peacemaking between Muslims and Christians in the religious communities in their home countries. Participants in the program are placed in local congregations where they learn the life and culture of local Christian and Muslim communities, and where they contribute to congregations through sharing their own experiences and leadership skills. To date, participants in this program have come from Indonesia, Nigeria, Iran, Burma, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Lebanon.

A third distinctive element of HS is the hiring of a Jewish professor in 2002 to create the Building Abrahamic Partners program (the subject of another case study in this volume). The program made the Seminary one of the few in the U.S. with a major commitment to learning and relationships between the three Abrahamic faiths. It also brought into the faculty mix a Jewish specialist in dialogue and the practice of peacemaking, who joined others on the faculty such as Jane Smith (*Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue*, Oxford Press, 2007) and Heidi Hadsell (the Seminary's president and former president, Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, Bossey, Switzerland) as faculty anchors of institutional commitment to dialogue.

Interfaith relations, as hinted at above, are not the only legacy of bridging difference in the Seminary's history. It was the first theological school to admit women into degree programs and as an outgrowth of involvement in the Social Gospel Movement, it was the first seminary to hire a full-time professor in the sociology. The latter provided an American cross cultural and contextual specialization that complemented the more anthropologically oriented contextual studies of the Kennedy School. The Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research continues its now one hundred year commitment to a sociologically informed practical theology. Its largest program, the Faith Communities Today series of national surveys of American congregations, with its cooperative Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Baha'i sponsorship, provides an especially unique and contemporary blend of historical Seminary commitments.

Hartford Seminary is located in the liberal, cosmopolitan and increasingly post-Christian Northeast, in Connecticut. Euro-settled by Congregationalists and religiously established until well into the 1800's, succeeding waves of immigration elevated Catholicism to the region's largest Christian denomination today. Evangelical denominations have never established a strong presence, but as elsewhere in the North America, and indeed throughout the world, New England has a growing Pentecostal population. In the immediate Hartford area there is also a strong Jewish presence (the area's first synagogue founded in 1843), a growing Muslim population with five mosques in the area, and an emerging Hindu population. With the exception of Hindus, each of these religious communities is represented on the Seminary's Board of Trustees. More importantly for present purposes, and again with the exception of Hindus, each of these groups is represented in the

Seminary's student body in general and the Dialogue in a World of Difference course in particular.

Thus the immediate demographic context of the Dialogue in a World of Difference course is critical to the course's design and practice because of the Seminary's distinctive commitment to engage the religious diversity of its region, and the Seminary's increasingly diverse international constituency, in the critical, contextual study of religion and in the practical study of interfaith relations. As historical commitments and constituencies have merged with the more immediate geographic context, dialogue has become a formally recognized and foundational focus of HS explicitly stated in the Seminary's board and faculty adopted mission statement. But more than this, given the diversity of the student body – local and international, dialogue is both a practical necessity (to get along with the incredible diversity of students who will be in one's classes) and a pedagogical opportunity (a capacity that a student can use to learn from the diversity of one's peers). HS is one school whose logo tag line cuts to its core educational experience: *Exploring Differences, Deepening Faith.*

Dialogue in a World of Difference: The Course Structure

The Dialogue in a World of Difference course is required of all Master's level students at the Seminary, regardless of area of concentration. Offered every fall, students are strongly encouraged to take it in their first year. However, while many students are able to fit the course into their programs as suggested, many others cannot and end up taking it later in their course of study. We note this here because, as we will

return to in our evaluation, it can be a significant source of unevenness in students' experience in the class. The course typically has an enrollment of 20-30.

A team of faculty leads the course, usually three faculty though sometimes two faculty and one doctoral student. The ideal is one leader from each of the Abrahamic traditions, but most typically the three course leaders are from the two traditions most represented at the Seminary – Muslims and Christians. Leader faculty always include male and female, and have always included at least two senior professors. The three lead faculty for the 2007 offering, which is the

focus of this case study, included the Seminary's president (female, Protestant, social), the director of the Seminary's Institute for Religion Research (male, Protestant, sociology of religion, author of several pieces on the globalization of theological education) and a Seminary Ph.D. student (female, Muslim..

The course meets once a week for three hours for 10 weeks. Across the semester, the lead faculty are joined by guest presenters for between six and eight of the sessions. The majority of guest presenters are Seminary faculty. Others include visiting faculty and local religious leaders. The mix of guest faculty for the 2007 course is typical (see appendix). In addition to lecture and class discussion, guest appearances also typically include some opportunity for dialogue with one or more of the lead faculty. Every effort is made to include at least one experience in which guests from different faith traditions are specifically invited to dialogue with each other around the topic for the day. In the 2007 course it was for the session on worship.

Student diversity at HS is not only an underlying rational for the course, but also a determinative factor in the course's dynamic. While it will vary some each academic year, the broad strokes of the diversity have remained generally constant since the course's inception in 2001. The 2007 class had 20 students. Half of the students were Muslim, some in the Muslim chaplaincy program and others pursuing other academic tracks. The other half of the students were composed of one or two Catholics, a number of UCC and other oldline Protestants and students from traditionally Black churches, along with several with no firm religious affiliation. No student currently expressed a Jewish religious preference although two were raised in a Jewish context. The majority of the students were North American, but the class included Muslims and Christians from Burma, Syria, Turkey, Indonesia, Singapore, Lebanon and Latin America. Typical of HS Master students, internationals tended to be full-time, while Americans tended to be part-time, commuters. Students included clergy and lay persons, with the 2007 class having a comparatively high number of educators. Student ages ranged from twenties to sixties.

Course descriptions are occasionally vaguely prosaic or provocatively pretentious. The Dialogue course description is, in point of fact, essentially descriptive:

> 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. . .
>
> But, 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 Goals

The course has five goals. One is to introduce new students to academic life at the Seminary. Indeed, it is very intentionally constructed to socialize students into the culture of Hartford Seminary. The substantive centrality of interfaith dialogue to the Seminary's identity and program has already been noted and is reiterated below. Additionally, students get to hear and interact with a majority of Seminary faculty during any given year's course, and thereby come to know something about the disciplines, approaches, and particular interests of the faculty: scripture, sociology of religion, spirituality, ethics and theology, interfaith relations, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. They also begin to know other centers of study: the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, and the Center for Faith and Practice, and understand how each center pursues its own work and both interacts with and contributes to the other centers.

The social and cultural diversity of HS students has already been noted. Equally important -- although the HS student body is comparatively small -- the Seminary does have a comparatively large number of very distinct programs. Students therefore come with an sizable range of interests, academic background and shaping – some more theological, some more social scientific; some more academic, some more practical; some religious practitioners, some community practitioners, some secular professionals, some religious seekers; some with considerable experience in congregational ministry, some in chaplaincy, and so forth. The course tries to draw upon and use all the

different academic gifts and life experiences the students bring with them. Dialogue is not limited to differences in faith.

A primary course goal is, of course, to introduce students to HS's commitment and approach to dialogue. The commitment unites all participants in the institution. Students will find it present in a variety of ways both in the classroom and the less formal encounters of sharing meals and class breaks, hallways, lounges and parking lots. In this context 'dialogue' involves a number of things. First, it means substantive, mutually appreciative, but critically probing conversation across religious lines, particularly across the religious lines of Christianity, Islam and Judaism which make up our faculty and the vast majority of our students. The course teaches some of the basics of interfaith dialogue. Perhaps more importantly, especially from the perspective of being the HS socialization course, it gives students the chance to practice such dialogue and to reflect on one's practice.

Second, the class examines the micro and macro issues of interfaith dialogue. Dialogical encounter takes place at all different levels of society – personal and intimate among friends, in neighborhoods, among clergy or scholars across religious traditions, in formal, official national and international gatherings and in political affairs both local and global. One of the challenges in the course design is how to achieve a workable balance across the range of possible subjects in a 10 session course, and do so while also trying to play to the strengths of faculty guests and still maintain some sense of continuity and integration. Three guiding principles ease the negotiation. Five of the sessions are relatively fixed – the beginning introduction/overview and getting acquainted session; a session on theologies of religion; a session on models of and approaches to dialogue; a session on worship (related to the course's required comparative observation of worship services), and the concluding session's mix of fellowship/celebration, reflection on student's experience and more formal evaluation.

Further structuring the course outline, the course always seeks at least two "practically" focused sessions, one pastoral and a second dealing with an international conflict. For example, considerations of women's rights always provoke an energetic exchange among Christians and Muslims, and there is no shortage of political conflicts around the world in which religion is implicated. Our experience suggests that the pastoral session works well late in the first half of the course as a first opportunity to really get personal in the course's dialogue groups. Our experience also suggests that the conflict session

works best toward the end of the course when students have had a chance to get comfortable confronting deeply felt differences, especially if the conflict chosen is situated in the Middle East.

A final structuring guideline is to include at least one session on theological interpretation and one session on approaches to scripture. Although the practical sessions typically have the most affect on the students – both on their understanding of their own perspectives, feelings and comfort with dialogue, the session on scripture almost always is the most intellectually and theologically revealing, especially for the Christian students.

A key substantive question confronted early in the course's evolution was whether or not to do a session on each of the Abrahamic traditions, or assume that students' representation of their traditions and supplemental readings were sufficient. The former approach was used the first few times the course was offered, but the latter has become the operative model. Although the HS faculty remain somewhat divided on the subject, the dominant view is that since an hour or so attempt to teach a tradition is at best superficial, since a key principle of dialogue is self-representation and response, and since there are other places in the curriculum to obtain a disciplined understanding of a variety of faith traditions, why further constrain an already ambitious course?

Another early debate in the emergence of the course was whether the focus was dialogue across difference broadly understood, or dialogue more specifically across interfaith differences. The reader will recall that the Seminary retains a strong commitment to being a safe place for the engagement of social diversity of all kinds, most particularly racial/ethnic, gender, and theological and sexual preference. The first few times the course was offered it tried the broader focus. But adding in the wonderfully important and critical issue of how and why appreciative engagement across a various kinds of difference were similar and different, and how to best to untangle the inevitably multilayered factors of any encounter with the other proved too much of a stretch given the other goals of the course. So in appreciation for the uniquely multi-faith student body at the Seminary, the focus was shifted to interfaith, clearly recognizing that any such encounter was always conflated with other layers of difference.

As one would expect, especially given the wide diversity of HS students, some students are drawn to one kind of conversation more

than to another. Some most enjoy and consider most worthwhile the intimate theological conversations between peoples of different faiths. Others find the implicit and explicit dialogue between religious communities, or within them, much more compelling. Some prefer the intellectual challenge, while still others prefer the common activities that bring religions together. The course intends to provide a broad overview so that each student acquires a basic exposure to and knowledge of the various levels and kinds of interfaith dialogue, while hopefully finding at least one avenue that stimulates one's appetite for deeper exploration during their course of study.

But beyond engagement across social and particularly religious differences, 'dialogue' at HS means and intends other things as well. For example, it is an approach to pedagogy – teaching and learning, which is dialogical – taking seriously the questions and experience students and faculty bring to the texts and other materials presented in class. By 'dialogue' is meant an approach to academic disciplines that understands each as a distinct form of inquiry, but also and importantly is in dialogue with the others across disciplinary lines. By 'dialogue' is meant conversation about and across methodological lines in research and approaches to academic fields, dialogue between theory and practice, and between religion and culture.

In the course, each student, whether primarily interested in interfaith dialogue or not, discovers the many ways in which the study of another tradition not only builds respect for that tradition, but also enhances and enriches understanding of one's own tradition. One way this discovery is facilitated is the requirement that each student observe two worship/prayer services – the first in the student's own tradition and the second in another tradition. Before the visits the students receive a primer in ethnographic observation. Afterward, students write up their observations. Often, students in the class invite their peers to their own places of worship, which adds another dimension to the exercise.

A third of the course's primary goals is to provide a way for students to get to know each other personally. Most students commute, some long distances from all over New England. In contrast, the international students tend to live together on campus in large houses where they engage in constant and intense dialogue in their daily lives. (Visa requirements dictate international students have to be fulltime.) The Seminary has learned that if students are not brought together intentionally, it becomes difficult for commuting students to find the

time to get to know each other, or to get to know the many international students. In the Dialogue class the combination of lecture, class discussions led by faculty, dialogue groups and experiences outside the classroom students study together and converse with each other in formal and informal ways across all their social and cultural differences. For many, this is the first time they have had the opportunity for sustained encounter with people they identify as "the other."

A fourth course goal is more institutionally than student focused. The Dialogue course gives and is intended to give HS faculty a chance to work and think together, and especially to develop a common language which then facilitates subsequent teaching and learning through the various academic programs and cooperative research. Students are invited to acquire this language, to look at it, pay attention to assumptions that it carries, and also to contribute to its development. During the 2007 course, seven of the Seminary's twelve core faculty participated, and to date every core faculty member has participated in the course at some point. The faculty leaders obviously work most intensely together, but each guest faculty is engaged in at least three ways by the lead faculty. There is the initial negotiation about the guest's contribution and how it fits the course dynamic. Then there is always guest-core leader discussion of the guest presentation. Sometimes this is merely reaction and connection to other themes in the course. Sometimes it is a mini-dialogue. And sometimes the old habits of traditional academic debate issue forth. What is telling about the latter is that the students inevitably notice and comment upon how this seems out of character with the thrust of the course. Finally, there is feedback from the core leaders to the guest's based on student evaluations. Faculty leadership rotates, typically on a staggered two or three-year basis, the staggered rotation intended to blend continuity with new experience.

The course provides a forum for faculty sharing, both about the substance and pedagogy of dialogue. Similarly, students are invited to think about the way learning happens and to pay attention to different ways of learning. This is important because not only do people learn differently, but often what counts as learning is at least partly determined by both culture and religion. Some students arrive assuming that only formal lectures provide real academic learning. For others, learning is best done through active doing, trying out ideas and

playing with them. And there are those for whom learning is more relational, and so forth.

We invite students to think about the ways they have learned academically, what they think counts as learning, and then to experience not only one way but other ways of learning as well, as the semester unfolds. Students find too that different professors have their own assumptions about learning. One assumption in a school committed to dialogue that is common, is that learning is an active enterprise which requires the active participation of each student, and each is asked to bring to the classroom open and questioning minds.

Similarly, in any dialogue, and in every class at Hartford Seminary, students find that their peers have different ways of expressing themselves. One cannot engage in dialogue if one thinks that his or her way is the only valid way to think or to express oneself. Some people are most comfortable expressing themselves theoretically, with abstract ideas that may seem far removed from them as individuals. Others talk more confessionally, directly from within a religious tradition. Still others thrive on the strategic challenges of linking thinking and acting.

Finally, there are rules for the road without which the dialogue would not be dialogue, and which are basic principles for study at HS. Exposure of and to these principles is the fifth major goal of the course. These guidelines are much akin to general guidelines for inter-religious dialogue. They include respect for the other persons in the room, their ideas, their experiences, their religious traditions, and the like, and the expectation that one will receive the same respect; the ability to listen to the other actively and patiently, to let others express themselves and to be willing also to do so. Active learning requires participation. A key principle of dialogue is appreciative listening. But an equally important principle is active sharing of one's own beliefs, awareness and experience. And complicating the appreciative and personal predispositions of dialogue is the further demand to hold them in creative tension and balance with the critical.

Pedagogy

Toward these goals many of the course's pedagogical moves have already been noted or discussed. Each three-hour session in the 2007 course typically was divided into two 1½ hour blocks. The first block was typically devoted to faculty presentation and discussion, the second

block to dialogue groups guided by questions related to the faculty presentation and always concluding with a plenary debriefing of the dialogue group discussion. The latter always included sharing both about key substantive points and about the groups experience with being in dialogue.

The session on worship provides an interesting example of what this mix and flow entailed. The guest presenters were a Christian and Muslim team, the Christian a HS professor in practical theology and experienced pastor, the Muslim a practicing Imam. They had a double assignment, both related to the student's worship observation assignment (the assignment's paper guidelines are appended at the end of the course syllabus). The practical theologian had a strong background in congregational studies, and began with a brief discussion of a handout on general ethnographic guidelines on participant observation at worship events. The team's second task was to highlight things one might want to pay special attention to in Christian or Muslim worship/prayer. Their approach: dialogue with each other about two questions. First: Imagine you are inviting guests from other faith traditions to worship/prayer in your tradition. What would you like them to know, what assurances might/should you give, and what would you tell them is the most special part of the worship to you personally? Second: Tell of a time you attended a religious ritual event outside your faith tradition – special challenges, surprises, reactions, etc? It probably goes without saying that these two questions then became the focus of the student dialogue groups in the second part of the session. In this instance the guest presenters provided the integrating link for the two halves of the session, with the faculty leader's primary role being guiding the debriefing of the dialogue groups. Implicit in the latter was the decision of the faculty leaders not to sit in on the dialogue groups beyond the first session or two. This was an experiment in allowing the groups to claim and struggle with their own capacity to dialogue. It is also why the dialogue group debriefing always pushed for reflection on the process or practice of dialogue as well as substantive insights.

The session on dialogue and conflict presents a contrasting approach to the integration of the two halves of a course session. Egyptian Imam Mustafa Khattab spent the fall of 2007 in Connecticut as a part of The Fulbright Interfaith Community Action Program. He is an articulate and passionate speaker about Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt and, given the continuing cycling of conflict throughout the

history of these relationships, he was an ideal guest for the course session on interfaith conflicts. But in this instance, and largely because he was from outside the immediate HS context, the faculty leaders designed the dialogue group questions and then in their invitation asked him to be attentive to what we were asking the students to talk about in the dialogue groups, particularly the tangling contribution of theology, land, family and power in interfaith, political conflicts. The specific questions to guide the student dialogue groups included:

1. What kinds of conflict having to do with religion do you experience in the town you live in, in your own religious community, in your country of origin?
2. What are the specifically religious elements in the conflict?
3. How might they be addressed? By whom?
4. Are there elements in the conflict which are not religious? How do they feed the conflict? How might they be addressed?
5. What mitigates the religious conflict? What are factors that help resolve it?
6. What responsibility do YOU in particular take for the conflict or its resolution?

One course writing assignment was the reflection paper on a student's worship observation. The second writing assignment was to keep a weekly journal based on the week's reading and class session, not to exceed five typed, single-spaced pages. Each weekly entry was to include:

- Major points about the reading and class
    - That confirmed/reinforced your pre-existing perceptions/perspectives.
    - That challenged/contradicted your pre-existing perceptions/perspectives.
    - Entirely new insights and perspectives.
- Personal reactions: questions, affirmations, *feelings* and connections to one's life.

Brevity was, obviously, a necessity. Bulleted, semi-outline form was encouraged for the "Major points" section; narrative form was encouraged for the "Personal reactions" section.

The journal practice evolved for a variety of reasons. One was to encourage, as well as to provide a check on, the extent to which students were keeping up with reading assignments. In a discussion and dialogue class, this has to be a priority. Second, it afforded the faculty leaders the regular and early opportunity to check on the English proficiency of international students; to check on general level of comprehension of the students, many of whom were returning to graduate study after many years away from the class room; to check on student's capacity to balance appreciative and critical reflection; and to check on the extent to which students were able to balance the intellectual and the personal engagement required by the course. Third, it afforded more introverted students and students not yet fully comfortable with thinking and conversing in English the opportunity to process reactions prior to coming to class. Finally, it afforded students the regular opportunity to provide evaluative feedback to the faculty leaders, one of the most important sensitivities being to if a student was experiencing more confrontation than openness in exchanges with another student.

A new experiment with the journaling assignment for the 2007 class was to post one's weekly journal entry online to one's dialogue group, and then to post responses to the journal entries of those in one's dialogue group. Recall: this was well before twittering and most other forms of social networking were just beginning to be noticed. It was only the second year that MA students at the Seminary were required to have online capacity, most HS courses did not include any electronic component and only a few HS faculty had taught (or taken) an electronic course. Beyond the possible efficacy of submitting one's journal entries electronically, the faculty leaders of the 2007 course were intrigued by the question of whether the level of appreciative, mutual engagement the course strove for could be achieved online.

Dialogue in a World of Difference: Outcomes and Student Evaluations

In addition to the standard forms of evaluation used in the Dialogue course – evaluative dialogue as a part of the final session; and standard HS course evaluation form -- the 2007 students received a special email survey, a sample of students were interviewed personally, and the external evaluator who conducted the survey and interviews

also observed several sessions including the final session.[2] The net results: overall positive, but with two strong caveats. The two primary points of concern included the online weekly journal postings and when in a student's course of study the course is taken. We begin with the concerns.

New Student/Experienced Student Differences

Dialogue in a World of Difference is the only required course for HS Master students; it is intended as an introduction to and socialization into the distinct educational ethos at the Seminary and, accordingly, it is strongly recommended that it be taken in the fall of a student's first year (which would presumably be a student's first semester). As already noted, this does not always happened, nor can it be assumed that HS students begin their course work with the fall semester. For example, many international students begin during the Seminary's June semester of intensive courses. And, it is not unusual for commuter students to take one or two courses as non- matriculated students before formally enrolling in a degree program. For the 2007 offering of the course the pattern was consistent with prior experience, but no less frustrating. Students enrolled in the course in the first semester of their education reported enjoying and benefiting from the course to a much greater extent, and reported a much more consistently positive experience than students who took the course later in their programs. The general concern of the latter group was that they were already familiar with some of the materials and activities of the course. By experiencing the rich interfaith environment Hartford Seminary offers through other classes they had taken and events in which they had participated, these students felt they were already immersed in, comfortable with, and enthusiastic about the diversity of HS students and opportunity for peer learning this afforded. They would have preferred a more advanced experience.

The tension between the positive contributions of the socialization of new students on the one hand, and the logistics and economies of scale of either offering the course every semester or redesigning the course with two, occasionally connecting tracks on the other hand,

[2] Adair Lummis, Research Associate at the Hartford Institute for Religion Research served as external evaluator. This section on outcomes and student evaluations is heavily indebted, with our great appreciation, to her report.

make this a vexing, institutional issue. That being said, it is also true that any relationally intense course, especially ones with the diversity of students typical of the Seminary's Dialogue course, takes on a somewhat unique character. New student/experienced student differences within the Dialogue course are always present, but it was especially strong in the 2007 class. Although the reason(s) for this are not entirely clear, one factor appears to be a comparatively high percentage of students who had previously taken courses at the Seminary and who resided on campus.

Although the majority of HS Masters students are commuters, international students are encouraged to live in the Seminary's on-campus housing. This was the case for roughly a half of the 2007 Dialogue students, must of whom had been at the Seminary since at least the previous June. By the time of the course these students had developed a high level of familiarity with one another, particularly through exchanging information about their backgrounds, families, cultures, and religions. On the positive side and given that this was a multi-faith group, their strong familiarity based on ordinary daily interaction portrayed a well-established interfaith unit and served as an encouragement for the class members who had not met or interacted with people outside of their own traditions and cultures. On the negative side, the existing familiarity among the on-campus students made it more difficult for the off-campus students to find a place in an already well-knit mosaic. Further, it is not surprising that some of the campus residents found the course's dialogue experience a bit elementary. Indeed, a few even questioned its necessity. For them dialogue was "naturally happening" in every corner of the Seminary, through interactions with their roommates or next-door neighbors, and they found structured class activities to be somewhat artificial. Most of the campus students, however, agreed that the course helped them to view their raw experience through an academic perspective, yet they maintained their preference to have been challenged more in the class.

Weekly Journal Postings on Blackboard

The weekly, online journal postings and responses were clearly the least helpful aspect of the class, more frustrating than supportive for both students and professors. The clumsiness of the Blackboard software bore a good bit of the ire. How justified this was is impossible for Luddites to judge, but everyone agreed that the online interaction

just wasn't very conversational. This shortcoming in the online experience was amplified by the students' positive experience of the in-person, in-class dialogue groups. The online interaction just paled in comparison to the students' strong sense of their in-class experience as dynamic and engaging (and likely more familiar and comfortable).

Further complicating the matter, several students ran into technical difficulties accessing the online site, and a few did not initially have regular access to a computer or lacked basic computer skills. In the time it took to solve these issues, affected students missed anywhere from two to five weeks of online participation. Not only did this cause these students to fall behind, but since the online groups were the same as the in-class dialogue groups, missing one or two member's online input affected the entire group.

One final frustration about the online component of the course expressed by some students was the lead faculty's decision not to interact in the online conversation. The intention was to allow the students the freedom and responsibility to construct their own interaction. Faculty did monitor the online exchanges and time was given during class to de-brief and reflect on the students' online dialogue. But it is clear that many students would have preferred regular, posted responses from faculty; indeed, some would have preferred faculty posts to peer posts.

In-Class Dialogue Groups

As just noted, the students' experience of the in-class dialogue groups was overwhelmingly positive. But it was not without one strong point of ambivalence. Students were put into five groups with consideration for diversity of faith, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. Every session except the opening and closing weeks included at least an hour for dialogue group discussion followed by returning to the main group for collective reflection.

In contrast to prior Dialogue class' practice of rotating membership in small groups, the 2007 faculty decided to maintain the group memberships for the duration of the semester. The intent was to move beyond comfortable familiarity to the deeper bonds of openness and trust that only extended interaction could provide. In the course evaluations, whenever students were asked their preference in regard to consistent or changing group membership, they universally expressed

the ambivalence of a trade off. While valuing the growing level of familiarity, trust, and comfort through consistent membership, they felt it came at the cost of better knowing the members of the other groups. Many agreed that consistent membership allowed them to move on and have deeper conversations, and that through changing membership, conversations would have stayed more on the surface. Most importantly, in the course evaluations all students reported that the dialogue groups were the major factor in their 'greater ability to engage in interfaith and multi-cultural conversations.'

In the course evaluations, a few students shared their discomfort with certain individuals in their groups who would either dominate the conversation or make judgmental or disrespectful comments. As part of the students' learning process, it was important to deal with such commonly occurring challenges of dialogue. Instructors maintained their positions as facilitators outside the groups, addressing such challenges faced by the students during plenary reflection periods and providing helpful advice for dealing with the situations. Additionally, faculty did feel compelled to make one or two private interventions to help one or another student better understand the nature and spirit of dialogue and that communication was an interaction between sender and receiver.

Several students suggested that more icebreaking exercises during the early dialogue group discussions would have been helpful. The faculty agree. Indeed, this is standard practice. But for better or worse the normal structure of the first session of the 2007 class was altered significantly to afford students the opportunity to attend a special lecture that day, "Jesus and Muhammad: New Convergences," by Timothy J. Winter, University Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, England.

The main goals of the dialogue group discussions were integration and interaction. They were meant to provide an opportunity for students to practice theories they learned in class and gain experience in dialogically interacting with people from different traditions and cultures. Within the groups, students had occasion to set their ground rules, establish friendships with one another, and test their own limits in intra or interfaith conversations.

The small groups were also intended to help new students' integration into the Seminary community, and from course evaluations it is clear they did. Particularly, international students needing to

express their view in a different language than their native tongue felt more secure to speak up in their small groups rather than to the class as a whole. A student shared the following during a personal interview: "The small group is more comfortable for us to speak up our ideas. In the larger group because of my English, I cannot participate very well although I have some ideas to discuss about." Some groups kept in touch after the end of class, accomplishing one of the aims intended by the formation of the groups.

Giving a voice to every member of the class is crucial for this particular course. Class discussions helped empower voices that may have otherwise gone unheard. As part of the dialogue group guidelines, students were asked to be careful in terms of sharing their time equally; kindly warning those who dominated the conversation and encouraging those who tended to stay silent.

In order to share, and if necessary respond to insights, questions and concerns from the dialogue groups, the last period of each session was a plenary of reports and reflection. Volunteers reported the highlights of their individual group discussion, and anything else a group wanted to bring to the class's attention. While a few students thought that this activity was a "waste of time" and conversations seemed disintegrated, the majority of students reported enjoying hearing the voices of class members other than those in their groups. A student interviewed shared the following:

> (The three instructors) did a terrific job in debriefing the small group dialogue exercise. They made sure it went around and everybody spoke from their groups. You started to develop the sense of what other people were like, who these people were even if you were not in direct face-to-face conversation with them.

Who "everybody" is in the HS experience provides both the necessity and the unique opportunity for the Seminary to require a course like this. Indeed, it is a rare seminary that has such diversity within its student body. But the pervasiveness and extensiveness of diversity is always humbling. Asian religious traditions are generally absent in the HS student body, and consequently the Dialogue course. And as much as we try, we frequently are void a Jewish presence in our classes. But there is another theological dimension that oldline Protestants tend not to notice and that, especially, the Muslim students reminded us is minimal in our degree classes and, relatedly the

Dialogue class. HS faculty and students are predominantly affiliated with Christianity and Islam. The dialogue class is fertile host for exchanges between Christians and Muslims. Indeed, the cross-religious dialogue leads many students to wonder about and taste the potential richness of intra-religious dialogue. While not necessarily identifying themselves as traditional, the majority of our Muslim students, particularly our international students, would be considered traditional. The majority of Christians, in contrast, would considered liberal. What is interesting to note is that both conservative Christians and traditional Muslims in the Dialogue class expressed concern about the under representation of a stronger, conservative Christian representation in the class with whom to be in dialogue.

Lectures from Faculty and Guests

Data collected from the students shows an appreciation for what was gained from the three lead faculty. From the students' perspective, belonging to different traditions and academic disciplines, the instructors helpfully took center-stage as participants of an active dialogue with one another as they team-taught and hosted their colleagues as guest lecturers.

Each of the three lead faculty delivered lectures in the early sessions of the class. They served as conveners for the following sessions, continuing to present key materials and lead class discussions while hosting guest lecturers. Students appreciated that both lead faculty and guest faculty actually represented their different backgrounds and personal expertise in their lectures. Students particularly noted how this helped them gain insight in comprehending different aspects of and perspectives on interfaith dialogue. But students most appreciated the professors' modeling "how to dialogue." Among their favorites: the presentations on "dialoguing effectively" and on scriptural interpretation. Students were especially enthusiastic about the latter and impressed with the presenters ability to be at the same time challenging in his presentation of his own stance, yet open to "be argued with," thus encouraging students to express their agreement or disagreement with his presentation and materials.

The pattern of having three lead faculty and guest lecturers was strongly affirmed by students as central to the design and success of the course. New students also appreciated having a glimpse of prospective professors and their varying teaching styles. Surprisingly for a class

that included a parade of guest presenters, no students expressed concern about a disjointedness or unevenness.

Assigned Reading

Wesley Ariarajah's *Not without My Neighbor*, provided the single textual touchstone across the course's 10 sessions. Students new to interfaith dialogue deeply appreciated the book for its international, experiential and narratively conveyed real life examples, and practitioner insight and analysis. Students coming from a strong interfaith background tended to find the book "less valuable." Concerns included that it was published pre 9/11 and required an update, and its focus on the World Council of Churches was too limited, particularly in its minimum treatment of Christian-Muslim or Abrahamic dialogue.

The rest of the course reading consisted of different chapters and articles assigned by the core and guest faculty, specifics of which are contained in the appended course syllabus. While students found some more engaging than others depending on a student's interests and background, the overwhelming sentiment was that they were both "interesting" and "provocative." Roughly a fourth of the class indicated that their primary interest was in the practical aspect of dialogue and they would have preferred more readings on putting theory into practice and on instruction in initiating dialogue. But on the whole, students found a balance between theory and practice offered through a combination of readings, lectures, discussions, and worship experiences; and there was a consensus among students that reading materials for the course make an important contribution to this.

Worship Observation and Reflection Papers

Students were required to observe two prayer/worship services, first at a place of worship/prayer affiliated with their own tradition and then at a worship/prayer service outside of their own tradition. They were asked to write a comparative and reflective essay based on guidelines given by the instructors, and early in the semester students were provided with instructions on how to observe their own tradition through the lenses of an outsider and how to visit a church, mosque, or a place of worship with which they were unfamiliar.

Students could do their visits alone or in groups, and while students were on their own to organize their visits the lead faculty aided students in finding sites who needed help. Some students went with the members of their dialogue groups and reported that the group experience was positive.

An interesting affirmation of the exercise was that several students criticized the course for only requiring two visits, not more. Some students would have preferred requiring group visits rather than a individual option (which was, in fact, the norm); a few expressed their interest in making the visits as a whole class. The goal of the instructors was to build self-confidence and courage among participants to initiate dialogue and interaction. As evidenced in the students' reflection papers, this seemed to work well at many levels.

Visits provided new insights for students and topics to pursue in their dialogue groups. The worship observation was students' most favorable part of the class experience. Without exception, students valued the experience and found the comparative writing assignment helpful, allowing them to not only gain insight to other traditions in their surrounding communities, but turning back and looking at the ways their tradition would be seen by outsiders. Students went to great length to note that and how the observation experience increased their awareness of themselves and their partners in dialogue.

Concluding Reflections

The student evaluations highlight the positive outcomes of the Dialogue course. Students clearly felt that:

- their experiences, both in and out of class, provided them with a greater understanding of and appreciation for the importance of dialogue;
- they had gained a solid, initial exposure to the intellectual underpinnings of and issues at stake in interfaith dialogue;
- their interfaith conversations had been personally enriching and deepened self-awareness;
- they had increased confidence in their ability to approach someone 'other" via dialogical methods;

- they had made many new friends within the HS student body; and
- they appreciated the opportunity to "preview" a wide spectrum of HS faculty.

Both in regard to "interfaith dialogue" and as socialization into the HS ethos, the course works, and continues as the front door into the Seminary's Master of Arts program. But the course evaluations also identify several areas of challenge that would seemingly make the course work better. The evaluations also point to a few of the experiments' specific to the 2007 course offering that required reconsideration. We turn to these in conclusion.

The course works especially well in introducing new students to HS. That is, of course, its intent, and why it is offered each fall. Unfortunately, HS students are anything but "typical" and that includes their journeys into and through our degree programs. As we've seen, the course works less well for students already well into their degree programs. The size of the Seminary and considerations of optimal class size for the Dialogue course preclude offering it more than once a year. So if the course is to better accommodate the respective needs of new and experienced students, it needs to happen within the current once-a-year offering. An option yet to be tried would be to use the small group component of the course and the multi-faculty leadership of the course as an opportunity for special attention to the diverse needs of not only experienced students, but also other interests or needs – e.g., practitioner track vs academic track; American vs international. Caution would have to be taken to not overly compromise the power of the whole, but this appears imaginable.

How much leadership faculty should provide to small discussion groups is always open to debate, especially when one of the purposes of the group is to help student's learn how to lead groups. For the 2007 course, the lead faculty experimented with one extreme, basically absenting themselves from the groups, but leading the plenary process reflections after the small group sessions. Sounds better in theory than it worked, especially given that substance as well as process is a stake in the small group experiences. Upon the recommendation of the 2007 lead faculty, the next year's class used a three-dialogue group model. One group was led by each lead faculty person, with the faculty person moving more and more from "leader" to "participant" over the first half of the course of the semester, and with the appointment of a student

"leader" on a rotating basis during the second half of the course. This didn't solve the tension between depth-with-one-group vs becoming-familiar-with-everyone experienced by students in the 2007 class; but it did allow professors to provide more instantaneous feedback to students, which was another concern expressed by some students.

The journal assignments have been retained and students continue to have the option of submitting them online. But the requirement of online posting and response within one's dialogue group has been abandoned. Students are now welcome to create a course blog or two, but we're not aware that this has happened to any substantive extent in the ensuing offerings of the course.

Some students in the 2007 class expressed a desire for more readings and discussion about what dialogue looks like in practice. The publication of Jane Smith's book, *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue* helps fill this void. Select chapters from Robert Wuthnow's, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, 2005), also have become a regular part of the course reading list, especially his chapters on how congregations approach (or avoid) interfaith encounters, and why interfaith efforts fail and succeed. Two additional benefits of the Wuthnow reading are they provide interesting portraits of how Evangelical pastors and congregations think about interfaith issues (a concern raised by the 2007 students), and of the typically circuitous route between a pastors' beliefs and their leadership of congregational responses to the multi-faith reality in their immediate social context (always a comforting experience to the non-systematic laypersons among us).

Several years ago HS began surveying new graduates about their educational experience. One series of questions asks graduates to assess how much "knowledge and understanding" they acquired in each of the core areas of the institution's educational outcomes document – interfaith dialogue being one of these. Two of a range of check-off responses include, "More than I expected/hoped" and "More than I Wanted." The final question in the section switches from the particular to the whole and asks graduates how they would "grade" their overall educational experience at the Seminary with "B" being, "More than I expected or hoped" and "A" being, "Met my highest expectations/hopes." Sixty-five percent of graduates taking the survey responded "More than I expected/hoped" to the question on Interfaith Dialogue. We take this as a good thing! More importantly, our students do too. Only one has ever responded that their exposure to interfaith

dialogue at the Seminary turned out to be "More than I Wanted." And, graduates whose exposure to interfaith dialogue was more than they initially expected or hoped were also more likely than other students to say that their overall educational experience at HS turned out to be more than they expected or hoped. We can't document it, but the hard evidence is certainly consistent with our belief, and the rational for the Dialogue in a World Difference course, that early socialization into the Seminary's dialogical preference enhances the opportunity of students to take advantage of the unique interfaith diversity they encounter among their peers.

Fall 2007

Dialogue in a World of Difference (MA-530)

Suendam Birinci Heidi Hadsell
David Roozen

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 Religion

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

Guidelines for Your Worship Reflection Paper

Due at the last class session, at which we will debrief your worship experience.

Date Due – Nov 13; 2,500 Words Maximum; 1 ½ Line Spacing

I. Your tradition (about 2 pages):

- Name, location and date of worship in your own tradition
- Paragraph description of the worship space and people in attendance
- Major points of observation:
  - Your sense of what appeared to be the high points of the service for the participants; the low points.

  - The personal or theological "meanings" attributed to worship events in any conversations you had with participants
  - Things about the worship that you experienced in a new way from your perspective of observer rather than a worshipping participant.
- Personal reactions, feelings, questions:
  - Regarding trying to be an observer rather than a worshipping participant
  - New insights, thoughts, questions about your past or future participation as a worshipper.

II. Tradition other than your own (about 2 pages):

- Name, location and date of worship in a tradition other than your own
- Paragraph description of your preparation for the worship, your arrival at the worship building, and your entrance into the worship space
- Paragraph description of the worship space and people in attendance
- Major points of observation:
  - Your sense of what appeared to be the high points of the service for the participants
  - Aspects of the worship that you anticipated being present and/or seemed familiar.
  - Aspects of the worship that surprised you and/or were unfamiliar to you.
  - The personal or theological "meanings" attributed to worship events in any conversations you had with participants
- Personal reactions, feelings, questions:
  - Regarding being present in a worship of a tradition other than your own

    - Regarding an observer of a worship in a tradition other than your own
    - Other reactions

III. Comparative reflection (about 2 pages)

- New insights and perspectives gained through these visits
- Things that stood out as similar or significantly different
    - Questions you would like to ask someone from that tradition about what you observed or felt during the worship of a tradition other than your own
    - Things that you think someone from another tradition observing the worship service in your tradition would have a hard time understanding unless someone from within your tradition explained it to them.
    - New questions or feelings you now have about your own worship participation
    - Any other reflections, comments, questions or concerns.

IV. Reflect on the benefits of these visits. If you do not find them beneficial elaborate on why.