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**Preliminary Syllabus**

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| Fall Term 2025 | Synchronous Online Mode  |
| Mondays 7:00 – 8:50 PM (Eastern) | plus asynchronous activities |

**Instructor:**Professor Lucinda Mosher, Th.D., Director, Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies Program
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**Office Hours:**
Professor Mosher teaches from her office in northeast Florida. She may be “visited” there via Zoom or phone and is available at some point almost every day. Please use email or text-messaging to request a conversation. Typically, such requests are granted within 24 hours.

**Course Description:**

DI 550 is the gateway to the MA in Interreligious Studies program and is a requirement of the MA in International Peacebuilding curriculum. **Conducted** in synchronous online mode, supplemented by asynchronous activities, it integrates theory and practice in exploring how diverse individuals and groups understand *religion* and how those with differing understandings relate to one another. As students learn about this field’s history, its core principles, and its signature methodologies, they consider such themes as the meaning of *religion*, the discourse of *othering*, theologies of religious difference, comparative theology, interreligious hermeneutics, urban social history methodologies, interreligious dialogue, and faith-based collaboration—all the while improving their religious and interreligious literacy and developing skills necessary for interreligious engagement.

**Outcomes:**

By completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate command of the core principles and methodologies characteristic of the academic discipline of interreligious studies.
2. Demonstrate development or improvement of multireligious fluency—that is, respectful familiarity with beliefs, practices, or literature of religions other than their own (which they are at liberty to describe).

They will make progress toward the MAIRS program goals—hence will provide evidence of…

1. Engagement in critical investigationof relations between people who orient around religion differently that has led to (or improved) deep understanding of at least one worldview different from their own.
2. Provide evidence of multireligious fluency—that is, respectful familiarity with beliefs, practices, or literature of religions other than their own (which they are at liberty to describe).
3. Expression of ideas and perspectives in sustained, coherent arguments or explanations in clear academic English appropriate for research on the Master’s level in the field of Interreligious Studies.

**Required Textbooks [students are expected to have easy access to these five items]**

Gustafson, Hans. *Everyday Wisdom: Interreligious Studies in a Pluralistic World* (Fortress, 2023) 1506486940

Hedges, Paul. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies* (University of California Press, 2021). ISBN 9780520298910

Mosher, Pierce, and Rose, editors. *With the Best of Intentions*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2024. ISBN 9781626985452

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

Mosher, Lucinda, editor. *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies* (Georgetown University Press, 2022). ISBN 9781647121631

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

**Course format and structure:**

***What “synchronous online” means:*** The standard for a semester-long, three-credit course is participation in a weekly two-hour Zoom meeting, complemented by a third hour of asynchronous online (or some other sort of experiential) learning each week. As an enrollee in this course, you are to be in a secure location that has adequate microphone, camera, and sound capabilities each Monday at 7:00 PM (Eastern). You can expect to spend approximately six hours in preparation (through reading and writing) for each Zoom session. You will use Canvas to access the syllabus, reading materials, instructions, assignment descriptions and portals, grades, and discussions. The Canvas website provides the most accurate and up-to-date instructions for all aspects of the course. If you have difficulty accessing or navigating the site, call the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494. If you have questions about course content, contact your professor.

***What to expect*:**This course is a vehicle for learning what “interreligious studies” *is*. *Because* of what interreligious studies is, we shall always be doing several things at once:

* Gaining insight into interreligious studies as an academic field
* Developing (or improving) our multireligious literacy
* Learning experientially

***How we will proceed:*** The course is divided into modules, each of which examines a particular aspect of interreligious studies and addresses religious literacy in some way. Traditional lectures and discussions are supplemented by use of experiential methodologies—such as the “case method,” site-visiting, and dialogue with a study-partner.

Generally, Monday night Zoom sessions will provide an opportunity to process what you have been studying for the previous six days.

Here is a preliminary list of course themes:

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| **Module | Theme** |
|  | Preliminary Matters: Orientation, Definitions, and Procedures |
|  | Identity, Othering, Intersectionality  |
|  | Comparison-making |
|  | Lived Religion |
|  | Religion’s Manyness (focus on inter- and multireligious fluency) |
|  | Religion, Violence, and the Margins |
|  | Dialogue: Theory and Practice |
|  | Ritual and Meaning-Making  |
|  | Arts and Aesthetics  |
|  | Experiential Learning |
| Pause | Review; work on major paper |
|  | Interreligious Friendship, Leadership, Collaboration |
|  | Consolidation  |

**Assignment/Assessment Categories**

**Reading**: Weekly assignments in the required texts.

**Asynchronous lecture-watching**: AV-lectures to be watched independently in preparation for a Monday Zoom class are made available online, often via VoiceThread—a tool that invites responding to the video. Points are earned for watching and commenting. *15% of final grade*

**Zoom Prep:** By noon (Eastern) most Mondays, students are to submit (*very briefly,* through a portal provided in the module for this purpose) topics or questions they wish to see on that evening’s Zoom session “live discussion” agenda. *10% of final grade*

**Discussion Forums**: Some modules include an opportunity for students to participate in an asynchronous discussion by posting a response to a prompt concerning some aspect of the module’s theme and commenting on classmates’ posts. *15% of final grade*

**Reflections:** Some modules request a brief (1–3 pages; 250–750 words) yet formal essay consolidating and interrelating learnings from material within a module or ideas derived from two or more modules. *20% of final grade*

**Experiential Learning:** Interactive assignments, such as case studies, conversations with an assigned partner, or field research (usually, site-visiting and reporting). *10% of final grade*

**Summary essay**: For the final class session, students are to submit a well-crafted essay in which they demonstrate progress toward course goals. *15% of final grade*

**Attendance and Miscellaneous**: Attendance and participation in Zoom sessions, plus activities that fall outside the above categories**.** *15% of the final grade*

**HIU Grading Scale**

A (95‐100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A‐ (90‐94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter and ability to articulate it well; makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds course expectations.

B+ (87‐89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.

B (83‐86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B‐ (80‐82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+ (77‐79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Barely meets expectations for the course.

C (70‐76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections—or is egregiously late in submitting homework. Barely expectations of the course. {minimal connection)

F (below 70) Is unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

**MAIRS Program Outcomes Met by This Course**

1. Facilitation of critical investigation of relations between people who orient around religion differently which has led to deep understanding of at least one worldview different from their own.
2. Allowance for students’ articulation of their own worldview or religious belief system while empathetically and respectfully engaging representatives of worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differing from their own.
3. Expression of ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication—writing a sustained, coherent arguments or explanations in clear academic English, with well-formed sentences and paragraphs; or creating or delivering clear, engaging, and succinct presentations that may utilize visual, written, and spoken elements.
4. Conduct research on the Masters’ level in the field of Interreligious Studies.

**Recommended Reading**

Bidwell, Duane R. *When One Religion Isn’t Enough: The Lives of Spiritually Fluid People.* Beacon Press, 2018.

Frediani, Shannon. *Decolonizing Interreligious Education: Developing Theologies of Accountability.* Lexington Books, 2023.

Goshen-Gottstein, Alon, ed. *Friendship across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship.* Wipf & Stock, 2018.

\_\_\_. *Sharing Wisdom: Benefits and Boundaries of Interreligious Learning.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017.

\_\_\_. *The Religious Other: Hostility, Hospitality, and the Hope of Human Flourishing.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014.

Gustafson, Hans, ed., *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field.* Baylor University Press, 2020.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology.* Wm B. Eerdmans, 2020.

Kripal, Jeffrey J. *Comparing Religions: The Study of Us that Changes Us,* second edition. Wiley Blackwell, 2024.

Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A., *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities.* Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014.

Leirvik, Oddbjørn. *Interreligious Studies: A Relationship Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion.* Bloomsbury, 2014.

Morgan, David. *The Thing About Religion: An Introduction to the Material Study of Religions.* University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

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

Pierce, Elinor J. *Pluralism in Practice: Case Studies of Leadership in a Religiously Diverse America.* Orbis, 2023.

Segal, Robert A. and Nickolas P. Roubekas, eds. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, second edition. Wiley Blackwell, 2021.

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

Voss Roberts, Michelle, ed. *Comparing Faithfully: Insights for Systematic Theological Reflection.* Fordham, 2016.

**HIU Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning**In our courses, we expect that instructors and students alike will strive to:

* Show mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
* Engage in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
* Pay attention to the whole personhood of another—history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
* Demonstrate how to disagree respectfully and well
* Embody mutuality—learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one’s own previous work used in another course.

**Inclusive Language**Hartford International University for Religion and Peace is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another’s understandings of God.

**Accommodations**The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals with disabilities, and prevents discrimination on the basis of a disability. It is HIU policy to provide reasonable accommodations on a case‐by‐case basis, which may mean working with outside social and governmental agencies to provide the necessary range of services for student success. Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students with disabilities are eligible for disability support services when they are enrolled in courses and they have disclosed their disability and requested related accommodations during enrollment and/or before the start of each semester. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the Request for Disability Accommodations form.

**Communication, Technology, Canvas**The instructor will use official HIU student email addresses for all course communications. Students are expected to check their *hartfordinternational.edu* email account regularly and to use it for communication regarding the course. Students will need to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access other course materials. Within Canvas, the *Announcements* feature will be used to convey information “for the good of the order.” The DI-550 Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course. Be sure to explore the site thoroughly. If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the “Help” button (indicated by a question-mark). The “live chat” feature works very well; you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494. If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom call.

**Official Handbooks**For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook and university policies at hartfordinternational.edu. Academic policies are listed on the HIU website.

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