Report Mapping the Current State of Interreligious Education in U.S. Seminaries and Theological Schools

Dr. Judith Berling  - June 6, 2019
Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by a project on the Current State of Theological Education, co-directed by Heidi Hadsell of Hartford Seminary and Judith Berling of the Graduate Theological Union. In addition to commissioning this report, the project gathered twelve leaders in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim interreligious education for four years of conversation, out of which came a volume: Empathy for our Time: Critical Reflections on Interreligious Education, to be published by Brill.

The research report built on the contributions of project participants, supplementing them with review of published literature in the field and interviews with educators from 24 institutions. The report is posted on an accessible Web Page of the GTU Project for Interreligious Teaching and Learning, accessible through the web page of the Graduate Theological Union (www.gtu.edu).

Given the differences among theological institutions, it is not surprising that there is no clear consensus on the best model of interreligious education. Each school’s model must reflect its mission and its student populations; models will also vary across the theological disciplines.

The report discusses a range of models, describing their context, their goals, their approaches, and the factors that shaped the model’s development and refinement. Models cluster under three general categories: exposure models (enrichment activities or courses that do not alter the fundamental structure of the curriculum); text-based models; models based on lived religion and actual engagement with persons and/or practices from other religions. A concluding section discusses trends and issues in interreligious education, and the challenges it faces.

The report contains two grids (maps) which serve as an overview: a one-page grid near the end of “Mapping the Models” (section 2), which makes explicit the structure of dividing the models into three large categories, and a more detailed grid (map) at the end of the document, which adds the major characteristics of each of the models, facilitating quick comparison and contrast. The detailed grid may help the reader determine which model or models he or she wishes to explore more full.
5. Lived Religion Models

Site Visits: Engaging Adherents

Chaplaincies; Co-Curricular Service; Interfaith Living

Service/Experiential Learning

Embodied Wisdom

Cultivating Character

Community Engagement

Community Leadership

Coformation

Spiritual Care Model

Intersectionality

Contextual Model

6. Conclusion and Reflection

1. Grouping Models

2. Issues to Consider
   a. Language and Cultural Context: On whose Ground?
   b. Moving Beyond Christian-dominated Curricular Structures
   c. What about “Religion”?
   d. Goals of Interreligious Education: Student Learning Outcomes

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**Introduction**

In 2015 I was recruited by the director of a Luce Foundation Grant on The Current State of Interreligious Education in the United States to research and write a report mapping the current field. The project participants included Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders in interreligious programs; they reported on their own experiences, critically exploring issues, challenges, and opportunities in interreligious education. The discussions of the project participants became the origin of this report. The programs of the project participants are reported in some detail, given the abundance of information available from the project.

The report is highly selective, a sketchy map (as opposed to a comprehensive study) of current initiatives and practices in interreligious education, with a strong focus on theological schools and seminaries. Also, as I spent thirty years at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, I provide a good number of examples from that institution. I have focused my analysis on the programs I am most familiar with.

The report begins with a “backstory,” a highly selective narrative sketching the evolution of interreligious learning. It discusses the differences of context (Muslim and Jewish initiatives, colleges and universities as opposed to theological schools), and the recent developments that have brought us to this moment. That is followed by a discussion of the methodology of this report, defining concepts and listing sources. It offers a one-page overview of the map or grid, explaining the structure of the sections of the report.

The report then discusses the various models of interreligious teaching and learning under the three main sections of: exposure models; textual models; and lived models. Each of these has a long history and a variety of contemporary incarnations.

In the concluding reflections, I step back and offer critical reflections on issues that require more attention and on possible next steps.

The report concludes with a more detailed grid, identifying the main characteristics of the various models under the three categories, so that the reader can compare and contrast. The reader may move from the grid back into the report to explore one or more of the models in more detail.
1. The Backstory of Interreligious Learning

This “backstory” is not intended to be a history of interreligious learning, but merely – like the programs notes for a theatrical performance – to set the stage for the subsequent mapping and analysis of recent and current developments. It is highly selective, sketching a landscape against which to view and analyze more recent developments and practices.

Let me be clear at the outset about its limitations and biases, which are the product of its purpose and its primary audience. Important studies could and should be written to trace the study of and learning about religious others from multiple geographic, historical, cultural, and religious viewpoints.¹ Such works would demonstrate that the motives and approaches for studying or learning about the religious other vary widely, depending on historical and cultural circumstances, on the dynamics of power. This report focuses on the background and development of interreligious learning in the United States, including its European origins where pertinent. It also focuses primarily on the practices of interreligious learning in Christian theological schools and religious-based colleges and universities and secondarily on Jewish and Muslim programs and institutions in the United States. It is geographically and culturally limited; it says relatively little about important Buddhist and Hindu traditions which have their own trajectories of interreligious learning and engagement. Moreover, since Christian initiatives and biases have shaped the development of the study of religious and interreligious learning in the United States and Europe, that Christian trajectory will also dominate this brief narrative.

Other religions have always been with us

Eric Sharpe has written, “It might perhaps be claimed that the first ‘comparative religionist’ was the first worshipper of a god or gods who asked himself, having first discovered the facts of the case, why his

¹ For an introduction to the intellectual practices of learning about ‘religious others’ during the Islamicate Renaissance, see Rachel Mikva, “The Questions We Ask One Another: A Study of Comparative Religion in the Renaissance of Islam,” Columbia University Colloquium in Comparative Religion, Spring, 2005.
neighbor should be a worshipper of some other god or gods.”

Indeed, the presence of and exposure to multiple religions extends back to the beginnings of human history, and though contemporary developments in migration and globalization have intensified the pervasiveness of contacts between or mixing of religious communities, the challenge and opportunity of religious diversity is not a recent phenomenon. It is just that we human beings have had a habit of telling a simpler story than was actually the case. This was brought home to me in the past year when I read that Capernaum, the site of much of Jesus’ ministry, was on the famous Silk Road. I had been taught that Jesus’ teachings emerged in the mix of movements and sects of Judaism in his time, but the Silk Road, running from China through to the Hellenic world, saw the movement of not only merchants and traders, but monks and teachers of many religions, religious practices, art and books, across a broad geographic expanse, adding to the religious ferment and creativity of the day. We know from historical research that as peoples moved around and engaged with one another, Christians and adherents of all the “great traditions” of the world absorbed and adapted holidays, practices, and images from religions they encountered. Adherents of “local traditions,” competing for patronage and position in the religious marketplace, often coopted practices and even deities from their competitors. In Taiwan, following practices from traditional China, Daoist or Buddhist temples would include “side altars” to popular deities of other temples and religions in order to attract more patrons, to offer, as it were, “one stop” worshipping.

Learning about or engaging other religions, however, became more complicated for the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which required of their adherents exclusive loyalty to their

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4 For instance, in Taipei the 1970s, the largest and most active of the Buddhist temples had many side temples, including one for a Daoist god who was patron for passing examinations. Thus worshippers who came to pay reverence to the Buddha on the 1st and 15th of the month, could also offer prayers for their (or their child’s or grandchild’s) success at school.
religion and their God.\(^5\) This exclusivity could cause problems in certain contexts. For instance, in late traditional Southeast China, citizens of a community were expected to attend the major festivals of temples of all the religions in the community. Members of a particular temple might be the hosts and organizers of a specific festival, but all of their neighbors were expected to attend as guests, even if their primary affiliation was to a temple of a different religion. Failure to attend was tantamount to snubbing or withdrawing from the community. When Christians or Muslims entered those communities, their refusal to honor others’ festivals was seen as insulting.\(^6\)

In the course of history, some Christian and some Muslim governments allowed limited religious freedom for minority groups, and – in some cases – even encouraged intellectual debates among the religions, but they were also careful to maintain the superiority of the “official” religion.\(^7\) The historical circumstances of and motivations for this “tolerance” of minority religions varied widely, as did the forms which this “acceptance” took. Moreover, what scholarship there was on other religions was overwhelmingly polemical in the service of refuting heresies. Those in the religious minorities, e.g. Jews living in the diaspora in either Christian or Muslim states, found it in their interests to understand the dominant religion in order to negotiate the cultural landscape and ingratiate themselves with authorities. Moreover, the rulers of empires studied the religions of peoples they ruled in order to understand and control them. Sometimes, as in the Abassid empire, religions were studied because of an “epistemological drive for clarity and certainty in the cultural marketplace.”\(^8\) Learning about religions is a complex and polemical history, deeply embedded in political structures and tensions, and varying across historical circumstances.

\(^5\) Reuven Firestone has addressed the constraints of monotheism for interreligious learning in his chapter for *Experiments in Empathy for our Time*, “Interreligious Learning as Monotheist Imperative.” See page 48 for more on *Experiments in Empathy for Our Time*.


\(^7\) This broad statement oversimplifies a complex history of historical situations in which conditions allowed for specific degrees of “openness” to adherents of non-dominant religions. This brief report cannot do justice to that complex history. I can offer just a few brief examples to illustrate certain dynamics.

\(^8\) Mikva, *op. cit.*, 5.
Thus, throughout human history people have encountered “the other religions” – whether in neighbors, traders or travelers, brought in by new (conquering) governments, encountered in new lands that they visited either in exile or for opportunity. These religious encounters have fueled the flow and borrowing of images, practices, stories and ideas; they have spurred competition in the marketplace of ideas and patronage; they have been entangled in local and broader systems of power and social status, in tensions within and across communities and clans. While some religious authorities became polemicists who studied (with more or less accuracy or depth) other religions in order to refute them or to demonstrate the superiority of their religion, among Europeans the “study of religion” or “learning other religions” took a significant turn in the era of European empires, when governments, merchants, and missionaries sought to establish their power and authority across the world, and brought knowledge of far-flung places back to Europe and North America.

**European and American “Discovery” of Other Religions**

From the 13th century European powers began to explore and engage the world beyond Europe. They famously “discovered” the Americas, sending traders and settlers, soldiers and missionaries to “populate” the lands and extract their riches. Explorers and missionaries also went to Asia, and ocean-going voyages explored island nations and Africa. I will mention here only the case of China, as it may serve as an example of the early European encounter with other religions. The Italian Marco Polo (1254-1324) visited China in the thirteenth century, bequeathing us an account of his travels, including his observations on temples and religious ceremonies. Such early travelogues are among the first accounts of non-European religions, but, being in the form of travelogues, they are by nature fragmentary (without full context or interpretation) and often misconstrued because viewed through an outsider’s lens. Soon followed Catholic missionaries, Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) as well as Dominicans and Franciscans. The Jesuits and the Dominicans pursued quite different approaches to mission in Chinese culture. Ricci sought to ally himself with the scholarly and cultural elite, through whom he hoped to have maximum cultural impact. He studied Classical Chinese and Chinese classical learning (primarily Confucian, as that was the ruling or-
thodoxy at the time), wore Chinese dress, followed Chinese customs, and befriended men of learning and influence. In turn, he not only shared Christianity, but also Western science --- the latter particularly intriguing to the Chinese cultural and governing elite. The Dominicans, on the other hand, worked in small cities and villages among the sub-elite and common people. They learned to speak the local dialects and observed folk customs, including popular religion; learning the religious habits of the people, they presented Christianity as a more powerful religion, better able to provide for the needs the Chinese sought in their religions.⁹

These divergent approaches (one based on learning classical texts with the elites, and one on living and speaking with ordinary people) led to a clash during the famous Rites Controversy about whether it was permissible for Christian converts to participate in ancestral rites. From the Chinese perspective, this was extremely important, as ancestral rites were a fundamental family obligation; to abandon the rites was to betray a central cultural value and responsibility. Ricci famously argued that ancestral veneration was cultural, not “superstitious”: sons were honoring their ancestors, not viewing them as gods. The Dominicans, on the other hand, argued that it was in fact worship: that people made offerings and prayed to the ancestors to receive boons and prevent disasters. From a historical vantage point, we can see that both were correct. The orthodox Confucian texts decried the superstitious shamanic rites seeking boons and protection from ancestral spirits, while the populous believed that ancestors watched over and blessed their families unless skimpy offerings or neglect of prayers moved them to angry retribution against their own. Both Ricci and the Dominicans had an “understanding” of Chinese religion, but these understandings were based on different sources and different social experiences. This difference between text-based, elite religion and oral, living religion would continue to haunt the development of both the study of religion and interreligious learning.

Study of Religion in Universities: Science of Religion; Evolution of Religion

The writings of Matteo Ricci brought knowledge of the Chinese Confucian tradition to European universities. Scholars in other parts of Asia brought further knowledge of “other religions” to European intellectuals. Eminent among these was the famous Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), whose scholarship on the Indian Classics had enormous impact and established the scientific study of religion (religionwisenschafter). Müller, like Ricci, studied Indian classical languages and texts in order to understand, and transmit to his European colleagues, an understanding of the original teachings of “Hinduism.” The scholarship of Ricci and Müller, while limited by their sources and biases, was nonetheless of high significance because it demonstrated to Europeans that there were sophisticated religious teachings from civilizations beyond Europe; there was much to learn from and about other religions and other cultures. Moreover, Müller studied Sanskrit texts and comparative mythology not just because they were worthy of study in themselves, but in order to understand religion as a general phenomenon better. He famously advocated of religion, “he that knows one, knows none.”

As Tomoko Masuzawa has argued, the discovery of “World Religions,” beyond Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, arose with a reshaped European identity caused in part by the discovery of other long-lived literate cultures. She writes,

most immediately it was facilitated by an influential new science of comparative philology, an enterprise whose significance went far beyond the technical examination of language. With the discovery of language families or language groups…new possibilities opened for

10 “Hinduism” is not an Indian term or concept, but a European umbrella term for a variety of local traditions and the teachings of some ancient texts and their commentaries. See Wendy Doniger, On Hinduism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-4. But Doniger adds, “And yet, if we look carefully, there are shared ideas, practices and rituals that not only cover diverse people generally called ‘Hindus’ today, but also link people who composed and lived by the Vedas in northwest India around 1500 BCE with the Hare Krishna converts dancing in the streets of twenty-first century New York.” The use of the term by Müller, and Müller’s study of the Vedas and Upanishads as the “original” Hinduism, were based on a Protestant assumption prevalent in Protestant Europe that the “original” teachings of a religion, captured in its classical revealed texts, were the pure version of the religion, which then declined over time as it moved away from its original teachings.

11 Sharpe, Comparative Religion, 36.
European scholars to reconstruct their ancestral roots, realigning their present more directly with pre-Christian antiquity.\(^\text{12}\)

This “discovery” of other literate religions was made as Europe was moving into the Enlightenment, with its strong belief in reason and universal laws, and strong impulses to classify knowledge into grand encyclopedic schemes. Darwin was an exemplar of the Enlightenment mentality, and his theory of evolution so captured the imagination of the time that it was applied far beyond the realm of scientific observation of the origin of species, which had been Darwin’s original focus. The origins of anthropology and sociology in the 19th century had strong roots in social Darwinism, or at least in its assumptions. The scholars in these nascent fields were less concerned with the discovery of literate traditions from relatively advanced civilizations, and more concerned with explaining and accounting for the origins of religion in the “primitive” traditions being reported from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), a major figure in the anthropological school in the study of religion, famously built on various reports of “primitive” religions to create a schema of the evolution of religion – along with culture and human society. Tylor was a theoretician, an “armchair” scholar of religions, a synthesizer; he did practice field work, but mined the reports for others for data to illustrate his developmental theory.

Along with his 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century contemporaries, he sought to explain the origin of religion and its evolution. He found the origin of religion in “animism,” i.e., the belief that persons have souls that survive after death, and in spirits of various levels, up to powerful deities.\(^\text{13}\) As societies advance, people develop more mature understanding of natural forces, which they first took to be spirits. Tylor did not profess a rigid supplanting of earlier forms of religions among more advanced peoples, acknowledging that there were “survivals” of earlier forms that persist in behaviors in more developed societies.\(^\text{14}\) Tylor’s ideas had a

\(^{12}\) Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xii.

\(^{13}\) Sharp., 56.

powerful influence on future scholars, but also on others who sought to understand other, more ‘primitive’ religions, namely missionaries.

**Missionaries and Interreligious Learning**

The Catholic church had sent missionaries to China and other cultures as early as the 16th century. As noted above, Matteo Ricci’s missionary approach to China was to immerse himself in the elite learning of the Confucian tradition, to thoroughly understand the key values and the classics of Chinese culture. Other Jesuit missionaries learned from Ricci’s experience. For example, Mexican historian Alfonso Alfaro notes that in 1610, the year of the death of Matteo Ricci, Jesuits were founding missions in the Americas building on these principles:

> Lessons learned from their missionary work in China, such as the need to learn the inner logic and world view of the other, attempting to identify both ethical and religious similarities between the worlds they found and Christianity, and “conserving certain lifestyles, ceremonies and traditions, integrating them into the evangelizing project,” would prove enormously helpful.\(^ {15} \)

Some Jesuits engaged and adapted local arts and architecture to render their Christian teachings more culturally appropriate and advocated for the good and protection of the people they served.\(^ {16} \) Thus, although Catholic missionaries were in many ways bound up with colonial governments and institutions, some seriously engaged and came to understand the local religions and sought to conserve local cultures.

The apogee of the Protestant missionary movement (especially of the Protestant mission boards of Europe and the U.S.) was in the 19th and early 20th centuries, following the movement of merchants and establishment of colonies across Asia, Africa, and Oceania. For the purposes of this backstory, I will focus on the First World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh. As one author has written, this conference

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\(^ {16} \) *Ibid.*, 12 and 15, still referring to the work of Alfaro.
stood at the crest of the nineteenth-century’s foreign mission expansion and thrust. It convened in
the middle of what has been designated the “high imperialist era,” between 1880 and 1920. This
era was bounded on one side by the scramble for African colonies by European powers, which re-
resulted in the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference in 1884; and on the other by the post-
World War I period, which witnessed the resurgence of nationalist movements within the colonial empires of the European powers.17

Edinburgh 1910 was the embodiment of missionary optimism, inspired by the call of “carrying the
gospel to all the non-Christian world.”18 As Friesen notes, “The paternalistic mood, and the structure and
design of Edinburgh 1910 did not encourage dialogue with the younger churches of Asia and Africa in
order to contextualize the gospel.”19 No Africans were invited, and one of the few Asian representatives,
who was actually invited to speak -- V.S. Azariah -- spoke of the patronizing attitudes of Western mis-

Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and
self-denying labour of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You
have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS.20

Paternalistic attitudes evident at Edinburgh 1910 have been bitterly recalled by members of the
younger churches. African theologian Harry Sawyerr, looking back at this conference, decried its attitudes:
“We no longer think of the non-Christian religions as perfect specimens of absolute error and masterful
pieces of hell’s innovations which Christianity was simply called upon to oppose, uproot, and destroy.”21

Yet of particular interest to this report is that the Conference’s Commission IV (The Missionary Message
in Relation to Non-Christian Religions) produced a report on “Animistic Religions,” based on a survey sent
out to missionaries in fields with tribal religions, although – once again – none of the surveys had been

17 J. Stanley Friesen, Missionary Responses to Tribal Religions at Edinburgh, 1910 (New York: Peter Lang,

18 Framptom F. Fox, ed., Edinburgh 1910 Revisited: ‘Give us Friends!’: An India Perspective on One Hun-
dred Years of Mission, (Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), viii.

19 Friesen, Missionary Responses, xiii.

20 Ibid., 26.

submitted by African Christians. The responses to this survey, along with the writings of these missionaries, as studied by J. Stanley Friesen, provide a far different picture of attitudes toward non-Christian religions, indeed of the state of “interreligious learning” in the mission field, at a key moment in the history of Christian missions.

How can both of these impressions be true? T. E. Yates notes that “the ‘aggressive’ language of mission strategy at Edinburgh owed more to the language of world-wide assault in the home-based strategists [of the mission boards] than to the responses sent in by missionaries in the field.” Not all missionaries with extensive field experience were sympathetic to native religions or sought to understand them in their own terms. Hendrik Kraemer, with extensive mission experience in Indonesia, argued that Christianity and other religions were in no way compatible, that they ask different questions and affirm different truths. Yet several of the respondents to Commission IV’s survey on “Animistic Religions” showed far more nuanced attitudes toward native religions, although as missionaries of their time they firmly believed that Christianity in some sense or other fulfilled or restored the original essence of native religions. There were always missionaries willing and eager to learn the beliefs and customs of those whom they served. Indeed, there was a significant divide in attitudes between missionaries who had spent considerable time in the field and developed deep relationships with the locals, and those who reflected mission board biases. Why did these missionaries in the field come to have more positive attitudes toward other religions?

Although he died well before Edinburgh 1910, Henry Callaway (1873-1890) is an exemplar of the attitudes and practices that shaped responses from the mission field to the Commission IV survey. Serving as an Anglican missionary in Natal from 1854 to 1886, he was renowned for his contributions to the understandings of the Zulu religion. He immersed himself in the local language and “collected Zulu folktales

22 Friesen, 9.


and traditions “in the same words as they (Zulus) had heard them around their hut fires.” He later published collections of Zulu folktales and traditions, as well The Religious Systems of the Amazons (1870).\textsuperscript{25} His long tenure in Natal and his vigorous efforts to carefully collect accurate (verbatim) versions of local traditions in the local tongue gave him an extraordinary understanding of the local religion. He noted that in most missionary (and colonial) exchanges, natives were forced to articulate their views through the medium of a second (often colonial) language, which was “wholly insufficient to admit to any close communication of mind with mind, and quite inadequate to meet the requirements of scientific investigation.”\textsuperscript{26} His work was valued not only by missionaries, but also by Max Müller, the eminent pioneer of “the scientific study of religion,” whose work Callaway respected. Callaway thought that scientific knowledge of religion was critical for missionaries, for he believed strongly that God’s saving grace and revelation were at work in all nations.\textsuperscript{27} Callaway inspired a line of missionaries who devoted themselves to learning the local language and contributing ethnological studies whose accurate field data challenged the predominant theories and assumptions of anthropologists, some of whom – like Tylor – did not do their own field work.\textsuperscript{28}

Several of these missionary anthropologists played a role in the “Animist Religions” report at Edinburgh 1910. Among them is Henri Junod (1864-1934), who served 26 years as a Swiss missionary to the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique (an African church) among the Thonga tribes of southern Africa. He taught theology and evangelism, but also wrote on native Ronga grammar and did extensive ethnographic studies, which ultimately resulted in highly esteemed The Life of a South African Tribe (published 1912-13).\textsuperscript{29} He roundly dismissed any notion of the “primitive mind,” arguing that the Bantu mind was every bit as

\textsuperscript{25} Friesen, 36; citing Marian S. Benham, Henry Callaway: First Bishop of Kaffraria, His Life-History and Work (London and New York: Macmillan 1876), 228.

\textsuperscript{26} Henry Callaway, Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus, In their Own Words, With a Translation into English and Notes (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970), orig. published in Springvale, Natal: John A. Blair, 1868. Cited in Friesen, 38.

\textsuperscript{27} Friesen, 31, citing Benham, Henry Callaway, 222.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 44.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 50-52.
logical as those of so-called “civilized” people. He used the evolutionary language of religion, so dominant at the time, but did so with the purpose of a “more historical study of a particular African religion.” He strove for accurate observation, even when the evidence might affront European sensibilities, but he also sought to serve the colonial powers so that they could understand the natives sufficiently to avoid trouble and develop just policies. He was caught up in the colonial project, but also held aspirations for an enlightened colonial government. At Edinburgh he heard and affirmed “a call for both a sympathetic study of indigenous beliefs and customs and for thorough ethnographic field studies, the purpose being ‘that the message of the Gospel may be presented in such a way as will appeal to those aspirations after the truth which reveal themselves in the religion and social rites of the Natives.’” While this statement reflected the assumption that native religions aspired to the original, one Truth, which could be fulfilled in Christianity, it also called for sympathetic study and understanding of native religions.

American Presbyterian missionary Robert Nassau (1835-1921) served for 45 years in Gabon, Equatorial West Africa. A graduate of Princeton Seminary, he was fluent in three West African languages, Benga, Pahouin, and Fang. On his return from the field, he worked at the Presbyterian Board of Missions to write up his research on African beliefs and customs, which resulted in, among other publications, *Fetishism in West Africa* (1904). He was a participant in Edinburgh 1910. Although his work was largely anecdotal and although he subscribed to degeneration theory, “his vast catalogue of detailed information regarding religious issues indicates that he had gained the confidence and trust of his African informants.

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30 Ibid., 54.

31 Ibid., 55.


34 Degeneration theory posits that all religions have descended from one original Religion, but have been corrupted and sullied by human error over history. To find true Religion, one has to go back to the single origin.
and friends.”

He believed that by affirming the “affiliation” of African religions and Christianity and by means of deep personal relationships one could “communicate religious ideas and feelings beyond national, theological formulations.”

Because he held a Schleiermachian understanding of religions as “a feeling of absolute dependence,” communicating religious feelings was at the heart of mission, indeed of the human enterprise. For Nassau, developing deep human relationships and sharing feelings was a source of interreligious understanding.

Nassau was not alone. Temple Gairdner, an Anglican missionary, wrote an interpretive account of Edinburgh 1910 warning that since the world and humanity were becoming ever more interconnected and unified, missionaries must begin to understand that unity of humanity. A biographer wrote of Gairdner’s work in Cairo, “Other teachers taught us how to refute Islam, he taught us how to love Muslims.”

Gairdner’s attitude brings us to the threshold of contemporary interreligious learning.

While they were men and women of their time, and thus did not doubt that Western Christianity could fulfill or restore native traditions, a number of missionaries in the field dedicated themselves to learning the languages, the social structures, and the values of the people among whom they lived. With knowledge came respect and understanding that the so-called “primitive mentality” had its own coherent rationality, a coherent world view. As Friesen notes,

Missionaries in the imperialist era contributed significant new methods of research and understanding of religion in tribal societies. Their methodologies yielded a more sympathetic interpretation of these religions than did the earlier nineteenth-century reports or the evolutionary theories of the development of religion being articulated by such noted anthropologists as E.B. Tylor or James Frazer.

In many ways, they laid the foundation stones and brought to light some of the key issues in interreligious learning.

35 Friesen, 124.

36 Friesen, 140-141.


38 Friesen, 74.
The Development of Interreligious Education in the United States

The 1893 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition of that year, brought representatives of Eastern religions to visible prominence in the United States, and helped stimulate the growth of the study of religions. In the years after the Parliament, the University of Chicago became an influential center of the “history of religions,” a comparative historical approach building from the field of phenomenology of religions. History of Religions has evolved into historical study using history, anthropology, or sociology. The Parliament was itself definitively Christian in design and in intention, its universality expressing “a larger and more expansive Christianity.” The council’s president wrote, “The Christian spirit pervaded the conference from the first day to the last. Christ’s prayer was used daily.” It was, at best, a tentative beginning.

Interreligious education in the United States has strong roots reaching back to World War II and Vatican II (1962-65). After the Second World War, a number of Christian and Jewish theological schools saw the need for enhanced Christian-Jewish understanding as a counter to the deeply embedded history of anti-Semitism that had contributed to the Holocaust. Jewish theological schools sought it as a defense against anti-Jewish attitudes and lingering anti-Semitism. The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, inspired by the ecumenical movement of the 1960s, established a Center for Jewish Studies in the early 1970s, and long offered a course called “Jesus the Jew,” co-taught by a Rabbi and a New Testament professor. Andover-Newton, Hartford Seminary, and Chicago Theological Seminary were also pioneers in educating Christians about Jews.


The Context of Interreligious Learning Makes a Difference

Jewish and Muslim Initiatives

It is worthwhile to take a moment to reflect on the different educational contexts in which interreligious education arose. This report focuses primarily on theological schools and on some programs on interreligious leadership. The vast majority of examples are from explicitly (or historically) Christian institutions. But even a brief look at other contexts of interreligious education will demonstrate how important context is.

After World War II Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) initiated an important program in interreligious education as a defense against conscious or unconscious antisemitism. The graduate program, designed to combat antisemitism in biblical studies and divinity schools, recruited Christian students to a rigorous graduate program in Jewish Studies in a Jewish context with Jewish students and scholars. The institution also required rabbinical students to study New Testament. Over the years, HUC – JIR developed extensive coursework to support multifaith education as well as experiences like joint worship to develop and deepen relations across religious lines. The program has graduated a number of Christian scholars in Jewish Studies, who have gone on to teach in colleges and universities and Christian theological schools. It is likely that their presence has helped developed interfaith sensibilities, courses, and programs in those schools.

While a number of Christian schools asked rabbis to teach or co-teach courses, or started Christian-Jewish programs, HUC - JIR went further by asking Christian students to study an entire program in a Jewish context with Jewish scholars. These students entered an educational world structured by the pedagogical assumptions and values of Jewish education rather than the Christian assumptions which had long dominated Christian seminaries and divinity schools. Rigorous training in Jewish methods and scholarly assumptions pushed the field of Biblical studies into new territory, giving more weight to the Jewish her-

itage as it was understood by Jews. Perhaps the most obvious symbol of that change was the shift to the use of “Hebrew Bible” rather than “Old Testament” in many Christian theological schools and the broader academy, thus leaving behind one mark of supersessionism. The HUC – JIR program, offered in a Jewish context, also put responsibility on Christian students to learn and find their way in a Jewish context, rather than asking one or two Jewish professors to represent their position in and to a predominantly Christian context. The Jewish scholars were the hosts rather than the guests, although Jews are guests in the U.S. context, given the realities of Christian privilege. Host is a position of power and influence, as the education took place on their turf and on their terms.

The strategy of the HUC – JIR program entails a fascinating pedagogical/educational assumption: that training a cadre of Christian scholars and teachers in Jewish studies to enter and gradually transform understandings of Judaism in theological schools and seminaries would have a long-term impact. The “audience” of their interreligious education was neither individual students in colleges nor Christian seminarians, but future scholars and teachers in higher education. The program was built on the assumption that the nature of scholarship matters, and that interfaith education is more than a matter of offering enrichment courses or hosting dialogues. Such faith in the importance of scholarship is, arguably, a distinctively Jewish value; they offered the expertise of their faculty to educate a cadre of interfaith scholars and academic leaders. And, not incidentally, their program for Christian students also added an interfaith dimension to the learning community and experience of their Jewish rabbinical and academic students.

In another Jewish effort to effectively address antisemitism educationally, Henry Enoch Kegan used quantitative research methods to test the effectiveness of interreligious educational methods. He contrasted the “Indirect Group Method,” in which a Jewish representative presents his religion in a manner which stressed commonalities with other religions, and the “Direct Engagement Method,” which “basically provides participants with an opportunity of a direct encounter with core controversies that they have”
with Judaism. He found that the first method failed to change students’ attitudes, while the second had a significant impact. He thus was an early advocate of interreligious encounters that attended to difference.\textsuperscript{43}

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) in Philadelphia is a very different example of a Jewish-based interfaith program. Reconstructionism was the first Jewish denomination established on American soil. Reconstructionists claim “multifaith is in our DNA.”\textsuperscript{44} Thus it is not surprising that the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has a Multifaith Studies and Initiatives Department. Over the years, the specific programs and initiatives have evolved as the issues of Jews in the larger society have evolved.

RRC taught Judaism as a civilization, and taught Jews how to honor their heritage while living alongside non-Jews. In the mid-twentieth century with the memory of the Holocaust still vivid, there was attention to antisemitism; since Jews were a minority religion and historically vilified within Christian teachings, rabbis needed to be armed with survival skills, and to teach them to their congregants. In the later twentieth century, the attention to social justice issues became prominent. RRC partnered with Christian groups and institutions to offer hevruta courses, in which Jewish and Christian student partners closely study one another’s sacred texts using the scholarly and spiritual methods of each tradition, in order to foster individual spiritual growth and mutual understanding.

RRC at one point named course fellows from the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania to engage in hevruta joint textual study with RRC students and to develop educational programs which pairs of Jews and Muslims could present at Jewish institutions. This program was a “non-equivalent” form of partnership: the students from Penn were not being trained in religious leadership, and thus the course experience did not contribute directly to their academic program. Muslim participants joined because of their personal interests and values.

\textsuperscript{43} Joung Chul Lee, personal communication, 7/19/18. For Kegan’s work, see Changing the Attitude of Christian toward Jews: A Psychological Approach through Interreligious Education (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952).

\textsuperscript{44} Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, “Interreligious Education at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College: A View from the Edge,” chapter in Experiments in Empathy for our Time.
An example of a Muslim organization initiating interreligious programming from a Muslim perspective is the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), established in 1981 and based in Herndon, VA. IIIT has a number of programs and has sponsored and published several volumes, including the *Triadology of Abrahamic Faiths* and *Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims*. Its commitment to interfaith education is rooted in its understanding of Islamic faith:

The respect with which Islam regards Judaism and Christianity, their founders and scriptures, is not a courtesy, but acknowledgment of religious truth. Islam sees them in the world not as ‘other views’ which it has to tolerate, but as standing *de jure*, as truly revealed religions from God. Moreover, their legitimate status is neither socio-political, nor cultural, but religious.

IIIT offers a Certificate in Islamic Studies through its educational wing, the Fairfax Institute. This program is appropriate for professionals, Imams, chaplains, community leaders, and college students “seeking a more rigorous approach to Islam.” IIIT also partnered with Hartford Seminary to support a Graduate Certificate Program in Imam and Muslim community leadership, and supports Hartford’s Islamic chaplaincy program. While the Fairfax Institute certificate program is solely designed by IIIT (rigorous Islamic studies), the programs at Hartford seminary are also shaped by Hartford’s board, mission, and understanding of religious leadership education. The programs at Hartford offer Muslim students an education within an interfaith environment. Both Muslim and Christian institutions shape the program, and it is accountable to both communities.

Hartford is approximately 39% Muslim students; having that large a representation significantly shapes the interreligious ethos of this now intentionally interfaith seminary. The Muslim chaplaincy program, designed for formation of Muslim leaders, is nonetheless impacted by the interreligious educational environment. Timur Yuskaev, who teaches in the Muslim chaplaincy program, ex-


48 Sinanovic, 1.
explored that impact by engaging with two graduates of the program, analyzing what difference interreligious education had made in their chaplaincy practice. His major finding was that the graduates approached situations with an ethical pastoral approach rather than with Muslim jurisprudence. This is significant, since Imams tend to respond to questions from Muslims in the masjid with legal interpretations of the Quran.

The graduates reported that their theological and pastoral sensibilities had been honed in “intersectional courses,” which were open to students of all faiths, and in which all students engaged in deep theological wrestling within their tradition and across traditions. The graduates claimed that what they sought from the chaplaincy program were frameworks, terminologies, and skills. They praised all of the academic courses, but “it was the ‘pastoral’ fine-tuning that made all the difference.”

While it may be true that Christian notions of theological education have had a huge impact on interreligious education in theological schools, it is also true that Muslims, Buddhists, and others have benefited from the pastoral training and skills that prepare them for ministry in the U.S. environment. And not just in the U.S.. A GTU doctoral student focusing on articulating models and principles for Muslim chaplaincy around the globe, tells a story of meeting with Muslim spiritual care workers in Saudi Arabia who care for women who have had miscarriages. When he asked them what they told their patients, they said that they cited Quranic verses about understanding that all would be well in the long run. That, he told them, may be true, but it was not what those women needed to hear at that moment. He taught them skills of pastoral listening and support.

A number of Christian or Christian-dominated theological institutions have partnered with existing Muslim institutions to create interreligious programs and courses. Such partnerships honor the distinctiveness and identity of the Muslim institutions, but the initiative for partnership comes from the “Christian”

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49 Timur Yuskaev, “God’s Mercy is Broader than This: Theological Sensibilities and Interreligious Theological Education,” chapter for *Experiments in Empathy for our Time*.


52 Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, personal communication, 10/17/17.
side, and Christian assumptions tend to shape the interreligious programs. I will discuss most of these under models of Christian initiatives.

Here I would discuss the example of the Center for Islamic Studies (CIS) at the GTU, established by the GTU in 2007. GTU created the center rather than partnering with any existing Muslim entity; it was created to be deliberately non-denominational, connected with the broad range of Muslim communities in the Bay Area. When schools have created partnerships with existing Muslim organizations, they are generally dominated by a specific school or form of Islam. The CIS model at the GTU has taken the opposite approach. This has meant that it is not designed to train religious leaders for a specific community, and that the encounter with religious diversity has been as much intra-Islamic as inter-religious. It also means that some students are not so much practicing Muslims as cultural Muslims.

CIS courses tend to have approximately half Muslim and half non-Muslim students. Because of the striking diversity among the Muslim students, the diversities within Islam are voiced and must be pedagogically engaged. There is little to no danger of a monolithic view of Islam in such courses. A key pedagogical challenge is to establish an ethos in which students can disagree respectfully, and be willing to pursue the kinds of questions which can clarify the causes of differences. The non-Muslim students are also from diverse religious backgrounds, so difference and complex hybrid identities are central to these courses: intersectionalities cannot be avoided. International students bring very different perspectives on issues into the classes. Learning outcomes include facility in evaluating issues across lines of differences and analyzing why it is hard to understand aspects of another tradition (what is behind the difficulty). Students are encouraged to ask: why? Where is your argument or analysis coming from? They are asked to learn how to think from another standpoint.

In most CIS courses students are required to attend public events together, and subsequently discuss them. These joint activities create relationships and friendships that often last beyond the course. These classes are interreligious by virtue of who signs up for them: half non-Muslim and a diverse group

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53 The description of CIS courses is based on an interview with Munir Jiwa, 8/24/17.
of Muslims; there is no fixed quota of different groups of students, so the interreligious peer group is established by offering courses of interest to a broad audience. The pedagogy engages intra- and interreligious issues because of the student population. But the content focus is Islam, though Islam as it is situated in the broader (and religiously diverse) world. The interreligious analysis arises from the religiously diverse world in which Islam is situated and from which the students come. Yet the faculty must “also focus on how to unlearn or challenge the Christian lenses through which we attempt to understand the Islamic tradition, for instance….how religious norms are often liberating in many communities, challenging liberal and/or secular fundamentalism, or how not to dismiss feminisms that might base their liberation in the Qu'ran and the Prophetic tradition.”

CIS offers a more intentionally interreligious course in partnership with GTU’s Center for Jewish Studies (CJS). This course, offered annually, is called Madrassa-Midrasha. It is co-taught by a Muslim scholar and a Jewish scholar, and uses the hevruta method of close textual analysis to closely study texts in pairs on the topic of that year’s course. Many students are from the local community, but some are degree students at CJS, CIS, or one of the Christian seminaries at GTU. In its 2017 iteration it enrolled 4 Muslims, 5 Jews, and 5 Christians. The course invites in a number of guest speakers, all practitioners of their traditions, to situate specific texts and facilitate discussions. The course includes site visits and public events as well. The intense engagement with texts in pairs forms deep intellectual and spiritual friendships which often long outlast the seminar.

Jewish and Muslim initiatives in interreligious education are shaped by the need of these minority religions, often under considerable pressure, to find their place in the broader culture, including the broader religious culture. They are therefore invested on how to maintain the traditions and identities of the past, while also adapting to contemporary cultural patterns. And, at least in places like CIS and CJS at GTU,

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55 Similar to the Hevruta method used by RCC, discussed above, focused on the texts, contexts, methods and practices of faith in each tradition. Students explore how they personally engage and struggle with the texts.
which are intentionally non-denominational and not sites expressly for training religious leaders, they are venues for exploring and negotiating the diversities within Judaism and Islam. At the same time, however, they serve students from beyond their own traditions. The double accountability complexifies and nuances their approach to interreligious education.

Interreligious Learning in Colleges and Universities

Representatives of some secular universities were invited to the initial consultation of the project on the Current State of Interreligious Education in the United States. University faculty and student services staff were aware of the need to address religious pluralism in the society, but they did not espouse interreligious education as a concept or model.

Departments of Religious Studies in secular colleges and universities generally teach one or both of the approaches to the “scientific study of religion” or “history of religions,” discussed earlier in this backstory: a) philological and philosophical analysis of classical elite texts, or b) social scientific study of religion in culture, using the tools of history, anthropology, or sociology. Courses offered in these models are not generally interreligious as I have defined it in the last section, though they are sometimes taught in a way that engages interreligious education.

The first model understands “religion” or “tradition” as a set of ideas recorded in texts which have served as the foundations of a learned tradition; they may be studied as the transmission of a tradition through time and space, as windows on a particular culture, or as classics which address basic human questions ---- as part of “world humanities.” Although such courses are generally teaching about the religion (what do/did they believe and do?), some comparative textual courses ask students to reflect critically on how adequately thinkers from two traditions answer a basic human question or address an existential issue. In the secular college or university, this critical reflection is generally framed as “values education” or “criti-
cal thinking,” i.e., as “character education” or as a significant cognitive skill. In the theological context, such reflection would be seen to help the learners articulate or locate their own religious stance.

The second model assumes that religion is embedded in and must be understood through its social and cultural manifestations in particular contexts; it is not something sui generis, but is always a human expression in a social setting. The goal of such courses is to understand how “religion” functions in the world, and its relationship to social forces --- politics, economics, sociology, law, education, and so forth. As Courtney Bender of the Department of Religion of Columbia University responded to an e-mail interview:

We don’t do interreligious education in the Department of Religion. We don’t identify our teaching in that way….We very much believe that we are trying to teach students to think about the many, many ways that “religion” matters in the scope of human history.

In her scholarship, although Bender acknowledges that religious pluralism has been adopted as an ideal by a range of organizations and groups, her primary interest is in digging into the issues arising out of religions engagements that the ideal of pluralism is seeking to ameliorate. That is to say, she studies the specific social issues or conflicts that groups have sought to address by encouraging the ideal of pluralism.

Courses based on this approach can help students understand religious diversity in action: how interreligious encounters or engagements have arisen, and their consequences. Such an approach develops nuanced and articulate analysis of some specific historic or contemporary issues of religious diversity; such knowledge is critical in our increasingly complex interreligious environment. Students in social scientific courses learn about interreligious engagements and encounters, but they do not engage in such engagements or encounters as persons with a particular orientation toward religion. The analysis is social scientif-

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56 See, e.g., essays by Marianne Moyeart and by Devorah Schoenfeld and Jeanine Diller in Teaching Interreligious Encounters, Marc A. Pugliese and Alexander Y. Hwang, eds. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Both essays will be discussed later in this report.

57 E-mail from Courtney Bender, 4/18/2016.

ic, an explanation or understanding of interreligious encounter, not a personal engagement that might nu-
ance one’s personal views.

Roman Catholic colleges and universities occupy a middle space between secular universities and
theological schools, since their educational missions are shaped by the ideals of their Catholic heritage.
That said, it must be acknowledged that Catholic colleges and universities are by no means monolithically
Roman Catholic; they are in fact increasingly religiously diverse. The combination of their strong academic
standards and their unapologetic commitment to engaging religious values has attracted students from
non-Catholic backgrounds who believe that religion and character formation are an important aspect of
whole person education. Recognizing the diversity of their student bodies with the appropriate humility of
post-Vatican II Catholicism, the “religious” requirements of Catholic colleges and universities are no
longer narrowly Catholic or Christian, but allow for engagements with a range of religious traditions and
issues. They also recognize that college or university students are often questioning inherited religious
beliefs; if they are to be required to engage religion, it is best to offer a wide range of options for them to
explore. Unlike courses in secular schools, the religion courses in a Catholic college or university encourage
students to reflect on the impact of learning on their own religious location or identity. Also, since Catholic
universities remain committed to some form of character formation as part of a liberal education, many
turn to experiential or service learning to foster empathy and compassion or justice in their students; such
character-building courses are sometimes taught in the religion department. I will explore this in my discus-

**Recent Developments: How we Got to this Moment**

Vatican II and the world-wide ecumenical movement gave rise to an interest in interfaith dialogue,
and a number of sponsored bi-lateral dialogues took place in last decades of the 20th century. Some of
these were sponsored by religious organizations (e.g., arms of the Catholic Church or World Council of

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59 Mary Hess has reminded me that for some Catholic institutions, the recognition of the impor-
tance of other faiths came well before Vatican II. Georgetown University, for instance, was founded in the
late 1700s with a commitment to students from all faiths. Personal communication, May 21, 2108.
Churches). There was a commitment to provide leadership from the younger churches. For example Indian theologian Stanley Samartha was the first Director of the World Council of Churches’ “Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” in the 1970s. Other dialogues were sponsored by academics or academic institutions, such as the international Confucian-Christian dialogues, conferences of academics held in both Asia and in North America. Such dialogues were formal conversations between experts or formal representatives of various religions. Some schools offered dialogue courses (e.g., Buddhist-Christian Dialogue), often framed as a dialogue between two teachers from different faiths, from which the students learned by observation. A few courses asked students themselves to develop and demonstrate the skills of dialogue.

Along with this commitment to dialogue arose an intense interest in “theologies of religion/s,” as Christian theologians and leaders struggled to reconcile the Christian claims of exclusivism (salvation only through Christ, the Church, faith, the scriptures) with genuine dialogue with other religions. The American Academy of Religion, the most inclusive professional association for scholars of theology and religion/s, sponsored three years of faculty seminars on Theologies of Religious Pluralism and Comparative Theology, a scholarly attempt to create more inclusive models and methodologies for interreligious theological reflection. A field of study had been established, which has led to increasingly sophisticated publications, some of them from theologians in Asia, who saw the theology of religions from very different histories of religious encounter/engagement, including those embedded in colonialism.

Meanwhile, because of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the U.S. was becoming increasingly religiously diverse. Waves of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, and other places in the world brought to the U.S. practitioners of religions from across the globe. In 1955, Will Herberg had published *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*\(^{60}\) positing that these three set the landscape of religions in the U.S. Herberg’s book obscured actual religious diversity in the U.S., for Muslims, Buddhists, Native American religions, and others had long been present. But after the influx of immigrants of other religions in the mid-‘60s, it was

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no longer possible to ignore the religious diversity in U.S. culture. That diversity was vividly described in Diana Eck’s *A New Religious America*. Her book vividly articulated how religious diversity (and pluralism) had become a significant issue in U.S. communities and in the academy.

The events of September 11, 2001 made the understanding of Islam a critical issue in the U.S. and the world. While Muslims had been an increasing, if quiet presence in U.S. culture (Eck reminds us that there were more Muslims than Episcopalians in America in the early 2000s), the violence of a small group of Islamic radicals gave rise to stereotypes and suspicions that many felt had to be addressed through interreligious education. The predominantly positive and irenic assumptions of earlier interfaith dialogue began to give way to belief in the need for interreligious education and engagement in a world haunted by violence and religious tensions.

As Diana Eck noted, professors teaching the world’s religions as courses about the religions in other parts of the globe suddenly found that their classrooms included students from those religions, living and practicing them in the U.S.; those distant, exotic religions were suddenly not only a part of the U.S. cultural fabric; they were in our classrooms. The presence of religious diversity in the classroom inevitably challenged received pedagogical patterns and practices. She writes, “For those of us who teach religion, the multi-religious classroom environment makes vividly clear that there is no presumptive normative viewpoint: the language of the ‘other’ is no longer acceptable, for we are all other to one another.”

Justus Baird has provided an excellent overview of the history of interreligious education in seminaries and theological schools in the early 2000s in the October 2013 issue of *Teaching Theology and Religion*.

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62 Ibid., 2-3.


As he writes, between 2002 and 2012, there was a sea change toward recognition of the importance of this issue, bracketed at one end by the publication of Diana Eck’s *A New Religious America* in 2001 and at the other by the adoption of Association of Theological Schools accreditation standards on multifaith education on Christian hospitality and pastoral practices in 2012. Eck’s book reminded theological scholars that “religious diversity” is a part and parcel of their communal and family lives --- at work, in schools and hospitals. As more members of Christian congregations encountered religious difference and diversity in their lives, theological schools recognized that religious leadership must be able to understand and engage the issues arising from such diversity.

A number of projects and centers developed approaches to interreligious learning, and an increasing number of theological schools and secular colleges and universities developed curricular or co-curricular programs. In 2010 Auburn surveyed forty seminary faculty on their approaches to interreligious learning: the majority reported collaborative group-learning, direct lecture, experiential learning (site visits), equal attention to beliefs and practices, history of religions methodology, subject centered learning. Only a few reported learner-centered learning or problem-based (case-study) methodologies.65

Several of these initiatives received significant support from the Henry Luce Foundation, which had as one of its major foci “leaders for a religiously plural world.”66 The Henry Luce Foundation was by a significant margin the major funder in this arena, along with Arthur Vining Davis and a few others.

The Association of Theological Schools project from 2010-2012, “Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith World,” funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, ensured that interreligious learning would be engaged by and penetrate deeply into the world of theological education. A diverse group of schools, Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical, explored and developed institutionally appropriate ways to address the issue. The project led to inclusion of language about multifaith education in the ATS


accreditation standards, mandating all theological schools to devise plans appropriate to their denomination and mission. While some schools have done this more successfully than others, the standards have spawned a wide variety of approaches to multifaith education from a Christian standpoint.

While there were many worthy initiatives under the umbrella of “interreligious learning,” they were so diverse in their assumptions and approaches that it is impossible to articulate a clear definition of “interreligious learning” (or multifaith education, or interfaith education— even the multiplicity of terms suggests the lack of consensus). The first fifteen years of the 21st century have been exploratory, with a diversity of models, assumptions, and approaches creating new pathways and learning from their obstacles and frustrations. At the present moment in the development of interreligious learning, these variations have not settled into a neat pattern; most programs are still evolving as the institutions learn from their successes and their challenges. As one of my informants remarked, “I feel I am spinning around” try to find the best way to proceed with interreligious learning. The approaches have been, not surprisingly, highly contextual, shaped by the interests and missions of the institutions that have sponsored them.

This report seeks to “map” or at least “sketch” the varieties of models, each “model” featuring a central principle in one approach to interreligious education. Because the research has been qualitative (based on published reports, papers, and interviews) I seek to honor the language and terminology used by the practitioners, although I seek as far as possible to identify their assumptions and goals, their explicit or implicit learning models, what they do well and what they exclude (intentionally or implicitly). The models are by no means mutually exclusive; many of them overlap to a large extent, resulting from my attempt to honor the language and specific self-understanding of practitioners. Some in the field argued that I should use fewer models for the sake of clarity, but I have chosen instead to group them and identify some of the overlaps, to help those engaged in interreligious education understand their own assumptions and practices more granularly in relation to those of other.


68 Interview with Greg Snyder, 7/2/18.
Because of the diversity of the programs and initiatives, I will map them using a variety of frameworks or issues, seeking to avoid imposing one framework as though it were (or could be) an established norm. In the concluding section, I will provide more of my own analysis and critical observations, suggesting principles and issues to track as the field continues to develop.
2. Mapping Models of Interreligious Education

The Elusive Nature of the Task

I noted in “The Backstory” that there is no consensus on the definition of Interreligious Education, that we are still in an exploratory phase. Nonetheless as author of this report, it is my responsibility to be clear about how I am using “interreligious education” in this document: what I include, and what I exclude. My book on interreligious education, Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education (Orbis, 2004), posits a hermeneutical model of learning, leading to a deeper understanding of both another religion and of one’s own religious identity. Based on that model, in my book I critiqued as inadequate a number of approaches that are common in secular departments and in theological schools. In this report, I use a much broader definition of interreligious education, and seek not to impose my own model or any developmental view that would implicitly lift up certain understandings over others. This report is meant, in the first instance, to be descriptive of a range of models and approaches, and then to reflect (by means of comparison against other models or approaches, contemporary or historical) what each approach enables or produces and what it omits or de-emphasizes. That said, the report sets some limits in its use of “interreligious education.”

First, interreligious education is not simply a course about a “different” religion. Such a course would be interreligious only if it included some exploration of actual or possible engagements of the ideas, practices, or adherents of that religion for the student’s own context and thinking. Second, by implication, courses responding to calls for religious literacy, while commendable and well intentioned, are not interreligious if they only introduce information about the religions without exploring actual or potential engagements. Knowing something about religions may be a prerequisite to some forms of interreligious education, but it is not the same thing. Third, polemical learning is also not interreligious education; that is, interreligious education presumes an attempt to accurately know something of another religion, to open the student to its possibilities, not simply to develop strategies or arguments to oppose it. That said, the report will include under the rubric any pedagogical/educational approach to helping learners actually or
potentially engage principles, practices, or persons of “other” religions. This understanding builds in part on the distinction made by Paul Hedges that whereas comparative religion generally seeks an “objective historical or phenomenological account of similarities or points of meeting between religious traditions,” Interreligious Studies [his term] “is more expressly focused on the dynamic encounter between religious persons or traditions.”69 Not all will agree with the distinctions I have drawn here; these terms interreligious education, interreligious engagement, and interreligious studies are all contended as topics of current scholarly conversation. However, I felt I had a responsibility to take my stand in these conversations. That said, I strive for a hermeneutic of generosity toward a broad range of programs in interreligious learning.

If this report attempts a relatively open-ended usage of “interreligious education,” it is also open-ended in its use of “models.” I am not aware of any published fully elaborated models of interreligious education with clearly delineated approaches, resources, and outcomes. What is available is a range of thoughtful practices still largely in exploratory stages, and some published literature describing experiments or courses in specific environments. In describing and analyzing the examples available, the report will seek to articulate the nature and motives of the learners, the outcomes of the courses, the assumptions embedded in the pedagogies, and the goals and aspirations of the learning experiences. These common threads will enable me to juxtapose the examples in such a way as to create a grid based on a variety of variables, and to lift up issues requiring further consideration at this moment in time.

It is important to note that the models used in this report are not mutually exclusive. A number of interreligious programs and initiatives embody several of the models described in this report, and – indeed – the assumptions of some of the models overlap. They are not Platonic types, but rather heuristic devices lifting up distinctive features of or approaches to interreligious education across the field of higher education. They are also by no means static; institutions offering interreligious education are constantly re-evaluating the effectiveness of their programs and the needs of their students. These models will continue to

evolve, morph, and merge because of what is learned in the experience of interreligious education. I have posited this particular set to highlight the variety of approaches in the programs I have researched. They are provided in no particular order; there is no evolutionary subtext. Each model aspires to and achieves certain aims, and each pays less attention to other possible aspects of interreligious education. The reader is invited to consider each in turn using each as a lens for critical reflection, and then make his or her own judgements about their suitability for the context in which s/he works.

Finally, a word must be said about the limits of the “mapping” in this report. It is difficult if not impossible to map moving ground. The practices and initiatives of interreligious education are hardly set on firm ground; they are evolving and changing rapidly in our topsy-turvy world. They are, it is true, grounded in institutions and organizations, which “locates” them in ways that are helpful, but it must also be noted that the institutions that are the primary focus of this report – seminaries and theological schools --- are themselves in flux and under pressure by a range of cultural and economic forces. Most maps seek to capture geopolitical entities (countries, counties, states, cities) which can and do change and evolve over time, but at a glacial pace compared to the degree of flux in interreligious education. Despite, or because of, that flux, it is important to try to “map” the field, if only to get a reasonable “snapshot” of where interreligious education stands as of 2018, and how it has come to this point, as a baseline against which to envision and plot its further development.

Fully cognizant of the shifty and problematic nature of all of the terms, I will nonetheless take up the challenge to map the models of interreligious education in the United States, and particularly in theological education.

The map or grid is divided into three main categories, exemplifying the three primary approaches to interreligious teaching and learning, each of which has a range of incarnations.

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70 See Conclusion (section 14) on sustainability issues.
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At the end of the report, after a discussion of the various models and of the issues and challenges in the development of interreligious education, I will provide a more detailed grid/map, detailing the major characteristics of each model. The detailed grid will provide a fuller overview of the findings of the report in a format to enable comparison and contrast. Readers can explore the grid to determine the model or models that they wish to explore in more detail.

Sources

As noted above, the Henry Luce Foundation has been a major funder and early supporter of interreligious education in theological education. This three-year project on the Current State of Interfaith/Interreligious Education in the U.S. and the report, both initiated by the foundation, allows them and practitioners in the field to reflect more broadly and deeply about the development, achievements, challenges, and opportunities of the endeavor of interreligious education. The current report addresses the interests of the project and of the foundation, and utilizes resources appropriate to that end:

1) Henry Luce Foundation documents, particularly an earlier evaluation of the program, and lists of grants and grantee institutions.

2) published literature in the field of interreligious learning, both in book form and in journal articles, particularly in Theological Education, Teaching Theology and Religion, and Religious Education. These sources are cited and annotated in the course of the report.

3) presentations, drafts, and chapters of participants in the various consultations that were part of the project, leading to the book Experiments in Empathy for our Time: Critical Reflections on Interreligious Learning. Presentations were made, and subsequently revised by 14 participants, at a consultation in September 2015; a slightly different group of 14 presented draft chapters for a critical volume in March 2016, and March 2017, subsequently revising them for publication. This report benefits from all of the drafts and versions of these presentations.

Online, in person, and/or telephone interviews, as well as follow-up correspondence, with 22 individuals engaged in interreligious education from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim programs and institutions. The initial interview questions were as follows:

1. Who are the students you teach? To what extent do they see themselves as part of a “tradition”? Has the “religious” nature of your student population been changing with the recent changes in religious demographics in the US?

2. What are the learning outcomes for the students/participants? Is the emphasis on content (understanding the substance or texts of religions) or skills/competencies? What kinds of understandings or skills/competencies?

3. How important are ‘traditions’ to your interreligious education? Do you see yourself as “tradi-tioning” your students? Do they dialogue or engage “from” their tradition? Do you focus on “lived faith” (persons embedded in complex and sometimes hybrid cultural-religious locations)? Do you find the notion of “tradition” as unhelpful in interreligious education? If so, why, or in what way?

4. Have you developed a conceptual model or framework to understand and shape your approach to interreligious education? Is it unique to your institution or shaped by other institutions with which you are familiar? If you don’t have a formal model, how would you characterize your approach?

5. How does your interreligious education program contribute to the mission of your institution?

6. What are the career paths of students/participants engaging in your interreligious education? Do you have data/evidence on how their participation has enhanced their careers or their lives?

7. Given your experience to date, what is the key principle of effective interreligious education (or of improving its effectiveness)?

Contacts with additional parties for help in clarifying specific models or approaches.

To be clear, there was no attempt to identify and map every program of interreligious learning, even within the relatively confined world of theological education. This report is based on a sampling of initiatives, which were identified initially through programs that had been Luce Foundation or Association of Theological School grantees, of others whom those initial contacts identified, or those described in publications. Although not comprehensive in any way, it is hoped that the sample provides as helpful picture of initiatives in interreligious education.
3. Exposure Models

As noted in the backstory (section 1), early initiatives in interreligious teaching and learning often took the form of exposure: courses or learning opportunities to give students at least some exposure to/knowledge about another tradition. Here we can cite the courses on Christian traditions created by HUC – JIR to enrich the studies of their rabbinical students. Several Christian institutions invited rabbis or Jewish scholars to teach classes, such as the Graduate Theological Union’s course on “Jesus the Jew,” co-taught by a Christian theologian and a rabbi. Chicago Theological Seminary endowed a chair in Jewish studies to enrich its theological program. The very first step toward interreligious learning in many institutions was to institute courses about other religions, often taught by representatives of other religions. Whether required or optional, such courses provided some exposure to and knowledge of another tradition.

In the 1980s a Hebrew Bible scholar instituted a Center for Jewish and Christian Studies at Chicago Theological Seminary, “persuaded that Christians couldn’t understand their faith without understanding the Judaism out of which it grew.” The Center offered a doctoral program and academic conferences, and it established CTS as a leader in the field. Like Hebrew Union College, it strove to train the next generation of teachers interreligious education, but it did so within a Christian context. Mikva comments, “CTS was among the first Christian seminaries to emphasize Jesus as a Jew, to teach Hebrew Bible as the ‘people and faith of Israel,’ to set interreligious understanding into its ‘Vision, Mission, and Commitments,’ to grapple with the polemical and supersessionary nature of Christian scripture, language, and theology.” CTS’s involvement in interreligious education goes far beyond the exposure model, but exposure served as their first step into the field.

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73 Rachel Mikva, “Reflection in the Waves.”

74 Personal communication with Rachel Mikva, May 21, 2108.

75 Mikva, “Reflection in the Waves.”
A number of pioneers in interreligious education among theological institutions created partnerships with Jewish, Muslim, or other institutions. The partnerships created a presence of leaders, educators, and persons of other faiths on the campus, and usually also provided courses, both for the “home communities” of these institutions and also for Christians and students from other traditions eager to learn about these traditions, usually from and with representatives of those traditions.

The Exposure Model Embodied in Program Requirements

One example of the “exposure” model of interreligious education is the Graduate Theological Union’s academic M.A. program, which requires at least one course beyond the student’s home tradition --- in another form of Christianity or in another tradition entirely. One course, especially if the choice of the course is entirely at the student’s discretion, is not guaranteed to establish interfaith engagements, although, depending on the mix of students, such engagements may indeed be formed. Nor must the course be focused on the development of interfaith skills: it is simply exposure to the learning and scholarship of another tradition. But is it that simple? What are the pedagogical assumptions behind such a requirement, behind exposure? The requirement is based on the assumption that taking a course on another tradition challenges the closed or unexamined assumptions of learning or thinking within one’s home tradition -- forces one to engage another way of thinking, a different set of assumptions and questions, a different mode of scholarship. Such engagement, it is argued, stretches and opens the student’s mind to new ideas and new ways of thinking. It creates the foundation for further exploration of new possibilities and ideas, and – perhaps most importantly – exposes the “home” tradition of the student as one option among many others. Exposure to another form of Christianity is ecumenical, but by no means interreligious; it does share, however, the pedagogical intention of challenging learners’ assumptions by exposure to different religious ideas and practices. This exposure falls short of interreligious learning if it is “simply” a requirement, and the student is not asked to engage the other tradition or to try to see it as it sees itself. The

76 Many of the GTU schools also have an interreligious requirement in their M.Div. programs, though the nature of the requirement varies.
GTU M.A. also requires that one member of the thesis committee come from beyond the home tradition, seeking to ensure that the broader set of questions, assumptions, and possibilities are considered and reflected in the M.A. research and writing. It is not clear whether as yet the rubrics for the M.A. thesis in fact measure those interreligious outcomes.

There are a similar set of assumptions in River Forest, Illinois’ Dominican University’s required undergraduate seminar with interreligious texts taught and discussed by professors and students of all disciplines. In the case of Dominican, these seminars begin a broader conversation about human views, issues, and possibilities that cut across all disciplines, creating a foundation for raising larger and intercultural/interreligious questions and conversations in any future course. It is not clear whether later courses are intentionally designed to build on the interreligious learning outcomes of the required seminar.

The exposure model is in some ways a “first step” in interreligious education, but it remains important because of the need for interfaith literacy, for some knowledge of other traditions. It should also be noted that the opportunity for such exposure to courses on other religions is an important aspect of creating an attractive environment for theological education in a religiously diverse world. At the Graduate Theological Union, for instance, even students attending one of the seminaries to be ordained for congregational service in a particular denomination overwhelmingly cite the interreligious environment of the GTU consortium as a major reason that they chose their school. Both faculty and students at the GTU cite the diversity of religious and cultural backgrounds among students in the classes as a significant learning opportunity. The exposure model allows students to choose the means and extent of their engagement in interreligious learning, according to their level of comfort and their multiple obligations. It is also noted that exposure (say, a single course), frequently leads to other engagements on the curricular or extra-curricular level.

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77 On-line consultation with Jeffrey Carlson; for details see pp. 53 ff., below.

78 Reuven Firestone argues that one interreligious course may be effective interreligious education, provided that two additional conditions are met: a) experiential engagement with leaders of the other tradition; and b) a clear expectation that such learning is to be lifelong. See “Interreligious Learning as a Monotheist Imperative.”
Interreligious Dialogue

Some of the early interfaith courses, developed during an era when interfaith learning was thought to be about “dialogue,” relied heavily on students learning from a representative of another tradition, or from the interaction of instructors from two different traditions. The instructors were assumed to “model” the other tradition or – if two – to embody/perform the dialogue of the religions. The pedagogical assumption behind many such courses was “the sage on the stage,” students absorbing knowledge from an authentic representative of the tradition or an experience of dialogue. The “engagement” with the religious other was through the instructor, who “represented” the tradition; this arrangement made it difficult for students to engage the diversity within the tradition they were studying. Though there were a number of “dialogue” courses, there are only a few examples in which the students themselves learned to engage in dialogue.

Interreligious Learning Across the Curriculum

Over time, many institutions rethought simple “exposure” assumptions. Chicago Theological Seminary, for example, decided after some years of experience, that it could not effectively teach other religions on its campus without the presence of students from those traditions, so it established a program for such students.\(^\text{79}\)

Union Theological Seminary and Jewish Theological Seminary created a course that was intentionally equal numbers of Jewish and Christian students, creating a semester-long in-depth conversation between students about interfaith issues.\(^\text{80}\) As we have seen, at GTU the Center for Islamic Studies and Center for Jewish Studies have created an intentionally interreligious course using Hevruta methodology called Madrassa-Midrasha.\(^\text{81}\) In this course the students practice close textual study, based on the scholarly and

\(^{79}\) Rachel Mikva, “Reflections in the Waves.”


\(^{81}\) See section 5, above,
spiritual methodologies of both Muslim and Jewish traditions, to foster both interreligious understanding and personal spiritual growth. While these courses still offer exposure to other traditions, the institutions have built in more experiential learning, interreligious relationships, and honing of interreligious understanding across traditions.

Jeffrey Carlson, Dean of Rosary College of Arts and Sciences of Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, reports that his university now requires interreligious learning across the Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum; that is, students of every program and major, and professors from the full range of disciplines, engage in interreligious learning and reflection. This is accomplished through university-wide general education seminars, one each year for every undergraduate. The common texts for the seminars are chosen by an interdisciplinary faculty group to represent diverse religious and philosophical contents: e.g. for one year, Diana Eck’s *Encountering God*, which explores a Christian’s encounter with Hinduism; Thich Nhat Hanh and Elaine Pagels’ *Living Buddha, Living Christ*; a papal encyclical; Aristotle’s *Ethics*. The common study and discussion of these books by students from all disciplines “influence the way they go back and think about economics, for instance.” This commitment to engaging all students and a broad interdisciplinary group of faculty in discussion of texts from diverse religious viewpoints is a strong commitment to the importance of engaging religious diversity and building a foundation for discussion of diverse religious ideas. According to Carlson, the faculty see this as important: “Not just new content, more about a way of thinking, making connections across ideas, addressing big, enduring questions, bringing to bear what you know on complex questions.” The goal or learning outcome here seems to be, first, to create a common intellectual experience that keep the “big issues” on the horizon, even in more specialized disciplinary courses. Such a goal is squarely in the tradition of classical liberal arts education. The seminars are designed to offer exposure to other religious ideas. The exposure, especially as it is shared across all students and many professors, creates a certain awareness of and preparedness for such an engagement,

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and especially in the course of the student’s own discipline or professional interests. However, because instructors in the seminars are given considerable leeway in structuring the engagement with the common texts, the seminar does not require engagement or wrestling with them in relation to the learner’s own religious identity unless the instructor builds such engagement into the learning experiences.

Dominican University reported that the overwhelming majority of students in the required interfaith seminar visited religious sites as part of their experience, giving them first-hand engagement with the “ground” of the religions studied.\(^{84}\) While this is a common interreligious learning practice, it is sometimes critiqued as falling short of interreligious learning by some experienced schools unless specific interreligious learning outcomes are designed. But such site visits offer rich opportunities for interreligious engagement.

Over time, simple “exposure” to other religions has been enriched and broadened to facilitate deeper engagement with the other tradition.

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\(^{84}\) Jeffrey Carlson, online presentation, March 22, 2017, Consultation on Current State of Interreligious Education.
4. Textual Models

The backstory noted that coming to understand other religions through their texts goes back at least to missionaries such as Jesuit Matteo Ricci, who allied himself with China’s intellectual elite to study its classical traditions, and to Friedrich Max Müller, who founded the philologically and textual-based Science of Religions. The early intellectual history of the study of other religions in Western universities was solidly grounded in textual studies and philology, a belief that the “essence” of a religion was in the texts of the “founders” of those traditions. Textual approaches aligned well with the early university methodologies in Biblical Studies and Theology. As Europeans sent missionaries, scholars, and eventually colonial agents across the globe, they encountered other traditions, and were particularly struck by the literate traditions of the great civilizations in Asia. Thoughtful Christian intellectuals, as we explored in the backstory, were faced with the challenge of understanding their Christian beliefs in relation to these other traditions.

Textual Approaches to Interreligious Learning in Theology

Christian Theology of Religions has developed along a number of different paths, each of which offers a different understanding of the promises and stakes of interreligious learning. Moreover, over time scholars reacting to “traditional” Theology of Religions have proposed new terms: Comparative Theology, Theology of Religious Pluralism or Religious Diversity, and Contextual Theologies. We noted in the backstory that the development of these new approaches was fostered in the American Academy of Religions. For the purposes of this report, I will provide a sketch of some of the most significant developments as they relate to models of interreligious education.85

Pluralist Theology of Religion

John Hick was a pioneer offering a “pluralist” Christian theology of religions, which held that all religions (at least the post-Axial Age great traditions) were variant teachings of the ineffable Real, which

85 Ruben L. F. Habito has provided a brief historical sketch of theological considerations in approaching religious others in his “Spiritual Formation in a Multifaith World,” in Teaching for a Multifaith World, 112-117.
was understood in and through a wide variety of cultural forms. His work was controversial, particularly among more conservative Christians, but it was also unsatisfying on theological terms to many progressives: was not the ineffable Real a disguised form of the Christian God? Did not his claim that all religions had the Real as their end efface the genuine and incommensurable differences among religions?

**Comparative Theology – Clooney**

Comparative Theology has taken several forms. Francis Clooney of Harvard University has championed an intertextual approach to Comparative Theology. Clooney does close readings of Hindu texts alongside Christian texts. He is a Jesuit trained in Sanskrit and Hindu studies, and thus has solid scholarly command of both the Christian and non-Christian texts. As a Western Christian, Clooney has made an intentional commitment to deeply engage another tradition by learning its language and studying its texts and the scholarship of its adherents. His work is solidly in the Jesuit tradition of engaging the elite thinking and texts of other cultures, and it is also in the tradition of the linguistic and text-based study of religion going back to Max Müller. As a committed Christian, he views the purpose of the task as opening and enriching his Western-educated Christian sensibilities and beliefs through deep learning and immersion in the Hindu textual tradition.

Clooney’s approach has been dubbed the New Comparative Theology, surpassing the Old Comparative Theology by the likes of Max Müller in its resistance to Christian supremacy and openly declaring its normative commitments. However, there is some continuity between the old and new forms; they are still Christian comparative theology, and still bring a dominant Christian lens. Pravina Rodrigues believes

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that Clooney does not entirely transcend the limitations of Müller, and “unfortunately replicates problems of Eurocentricity, essentialization, and universalizing tendencies.”\footnote{Pravina Rodrigues, “A Critique of Comparative Theology,” \textit{Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology} 3, 1 (2017): 69.} Comparative theology has struggled to address these limitations in a number of ways. A recently published volume on teaching comparative theology to millennials seeks to create pedagogies to address the hybrid identities and negotiated boundaries of contemporary students, transcending essentializing and universalizing tendencies.\footnote{See Mara Brecht and Reed Locklin, eds., \textit{Comparative Theology in the Millennial Classroom: Hybrid Identities, Negotiated Boundaries} (New York: Routledge, 2016).}

Jennifer Peace has pondered whether comparative theology is in fact interreligious learning as we defined it above, or whether it is better characterized as part of the ways that seminaries are being transformed in light of postcolonial studies and religious pluralism.\footnote{Personal communication, 3/7/18.} Her remarks highlight the reality that theological schools tend to hold to the classic disciplines (theology, Bible), while stretching them to be more inclusive, rather than rethinking categories in a fundamentally new way. I would see these trends of inclusive as the way theological schools are reaching toward or trying to imagine their way into interreligious education.

\textit{Non-Euro-American Comparative Theologians}

Other comparative theologians pursue meticulous comparison and contrast of theological concepts from two different traditions. An example is Heup Young-Kim’s dissertation, “Sanctification and Self-Cultivation: A Study of Karl Barth and Neo-Confucianism (Wang Yang-ming).”\footnote{Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, 1992.} The dissertation was written in the Systematic Theology and Philosophy Area of the GTU, following the methods and protocols of theology, although a specialist in Neo-Confucianism was included in the committee to review the Neo-Confucian material. The dissertation was revised and published as a book, using a dialogical model of
comparative theology, that is, putting into conversation several significant themes of thinkers from two traditions. Kim’s comparative theology is distinct from comparative religious studies/history of religions in two important senses: 1) although he had some basic knowledge of Chinese through Korean, he was not trained or proficient as a sinologist, relying primarily on translations and secondary literature in English or Korean; and 2) after a close description of Wang Yang-ming’s ideas, he engaged the Neo-Confucian material as a resource for Christian theological reflection. His reading of Wang Yang-ming could not be as close and meticulous as Clooney’s of the Hindu texts, since he lacked the linguistic skills for so close an examination. His interest in Yang Wang-ming, moreover, arose not from academic interest or training, but from his identity as a Korean Christian from a family with a distinguished Neo-Confucian credentials. He held himself accountable to the Neo-Confucian tradition as part of his cultural and familial heritage, and he felt drawn to it as a theological resource precisely because of that heritage. He is not drawn to an “other” religious world, but explores his cultural identity, which has hybrid, interreligious dimensions.

**Contextual/Fusion Theologies**

In his mature work, Heup Young Kim argued for a sort of fusion of indigenous religions with Christianity. He writes, “If Christian faith has something to do with the totality of our lives, it should also have something to do with our indigenous traditions that have shaped and deeply permeated our modes of life... These insights are not so much the products of speculative synthesis as the results... of a serious reading of the Bible along with our indigenous scriptures, which have molded our worldviews and preunderstandings of life continuously.” Moreover, he not also argues that the theological insights from Asian traditions are useful for the global church; for instance, that he proposes that a major paradigm shift from

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95 See section 5, below, on the Intersectionality Model.

Logos thinking (theology) or liberation thinking (theopraxis) to a theology of Dao (theodao) which is the embodiment of God’s wisdom, transcending the duality of thought and praxis.  

Both comparative methods and intertextual readings have been used by Christian theologians of Asia, Africa, and indigenous peoples of Oceania and the Americas to create contextual theologies grounded in deep interreligious learning. Some Christians from these contexts view themselves as culturally hybrid, and for many that hybridity has religious aspects. As Preman Niles has written, “Asian Christian theologians find themselves living two stories --- one as an Asian and one as a Christian.” These theologians struggle to find ways to bring these stories together. Some turn to concepts or teachings of religions from their ancestral culture to adapt their Christianity to authentic cultural values. Some turn to intertextual readings of the Bible and Asian religious texts, or “contrapuntal” readings of the Bible using Asian cultural categories and sensibilities. An excellent example of such work by an Asian theologian working in the United States is Garrett Evangelical Seminary’s K.K. Yeo’s Musings with Confucius and Paul: Toward a Chinese Christian Theology. Yeo is a Biblical scholar, originally from Singapore, who develops a nuanced intertextual reading to mutually illumine the teachings of Confucius and Paul. Other non-Euro-American theologians call on stories or images from their native cultures to offer a culturally relevant understanding of Christianity. Of course, not all Asian Christians or theologians embrace the turn to indigenous religions or images in their Christianity. A group of theologians in India met to reflect on the hundredth anniversary

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97 Ibid., esp. 14-33.


100 Preman Niles cites the work of R.S. Sugirtharajah, Kwok Puilan, Pushpa Joseph, and Wesley Ariaraja. Is God Christian?


102 See Nicanor Sarmiento Tupayapanqui, Native Theologies in Latin America (London: SCM Press, 2010).
of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. While some of the speakers argued for a “Sanskritization” of Christianity, others denounced “the Edinburgh error,” “the sidelining of biblical truth and doctrine” which is “still being repeated too often and by too many.”\(^{103}\)

Openness to indigenous cultures and religions as theological resources is not a settled issue by any means. However, now that the majority of the world's Christians reside outside of Europe and North America, Christian seminaries and theological schools are offering more than “Western” theologies; such offerings exert a pull toward some form of interreligious education. Such a pull can raise the specter of appropriating other traditions, but it is also a recognition of the many cultural contexts that shape global Christianities. For example, Jesuit School of Santa Clara University is committed to “culturally contextualized study of theology and ministry.” This has meant addressing the cultural context of all theology in every course, theological immersion trips to cultures dominated by non-Christian religions, and the development of faculty with knowledge and experience of another culture and its traditions.\(^{104}\)

Seminary students sometimes resist interreligious learning, seeing it as a challenge to the received faith they are seeking to clarify or deepen. Mary Hess of Luther Seminary St. Paul, MN has relied on Robert Kegan's work on transformative adult learning to articulate how transformative interreligious learning moves beyond the “contradiction” of the learner’s received faith. Kegan posits that adult learners begin with the confirmation of their own location (received experience) through “contradiction,” when what is learned challenges received assumptions, to “continuity,” when “underlying beliefs can be maintained even as they are critiqued, deepened, and perhaps shifted.”\(^{105}\) Hess argues that using this framework can help seminary students understand the necessity of engaging ideas that challenge their received beliefs.

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104 E-mail from George Griener, S.J., on August 11, 2017.

Pneumatological Theology of Religions

Amos Yong, a Pentecostal teaching at Fuller Seminary, has made the case for a pneumatological theology of religions, which he believes is appropriate even for conservative Christians. Against those who would hold to a rigid “Western” Christianity that does not engage the religions of the two-thirds world, he makes a theological case for a theology of religions that actively engages those religions.

Where are we able to receive divine revelation in its purity apart from all cultural-linguistic “contamination”? The truth of the matter is that theological reflection has to continuously negotiate the dialectic between revelation and enculturation since divine revelation comes always-already inculturated, even as the Word-made flesh was a first-century carpenter who was also male, Jewish, and a Nazarene and the Spirit is poured out, not on all people in the abstract, but on real people in particular places and times.106

Yong’s point is that all Christians have received an inculturated revelation and form of Christianity, shot through and through with particular cultural images and patterns, and so it is incumbent on every Christian to see his/her own understanding of that tradition in the context of many other readings of it from other cultural settings.

Yong’s pneumatological approach seeks to bracket the issues of salvation, and move from a primarily Christological approach to theology of religions to a pneumatological approach, from the cultural particularity of Jesus of Nazareth and of the institutional church, to an approach more attuned to the Spirit of God working in all contexts, cultures, and, yes, religions. He is not arguing for an easy relativism, but for a deep understanding of other religions as far as possible on their own terms – not simply judging them through a Christian lens or categories.107 Such an approach requires active engagement with those of other religions: “The days when one could pontificate about religious others without knowing anything about them or without having interacted with them are over. In short, a Christian theology of religions needs to

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106 Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 190.

107 Ibid., 173.
emerge out of a genuine dialogue with the religions.” All of this requires multiple disciplinary approaches to the external forms of religions, since we must discern the workings of the Spirit through those forms.

For Yong, a Christian theology of religions has a far deeper theological purpose than simply judging their relationship to Christianity. A genuine theology of religions, opening the Christian to the working of God’s Spirit in diverse cultural and religious settings, will not only help Christians to perceive what is good and holy in other religions; it will broaden, enrich and correct one’s own humanly limited understanding of God’s Spirit in their lives.

How would one teach such a theology of religions? Fuller Seminary, where Amos Yong teaches, offers a course on World Religions, taught by faculty with training in both theology and religious studies. The course includes an introduction to Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism (60%), and orientation to Christian theology of religions with theology of religions exercises (40%). The learning outcomes include both accurate understanding of the religions and skills in Christian theological reflection on them. This course is an example of an evangelical school’s engagement with interreligious education in service of having learners develop a Christian theology of religions. Recognizing the fact of religious diversity and of a multifariously inculturated global Christianity, such a course prepares evangelical Christians to be effectively open to and discerning about their place in the world. Let it be noted once again that not all evangelical Christians affirm the need for an interreligious dimension of theology of religions. Yet the Fuller case shows that a discussion is emerging in evangelical circles on soundly evangelical terms.

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108 Ibid., 19.


110 Veli-Matti Karkainen, e-mail in response to interview, June 6, 2016.
Approaches to Interreligious Textual Study

Hevruta Joint Textual Study

In our discussion of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Section 1, above, we noted that their program had incorporated the hevruta model of joint textual study for Jewish and Christian students, who partnered in joint close study of sacred texts, using the scholarly and spiritual methods of each tradition, in order to foster individual spiritual growth and mutual understanding.\(^{111}\) RRC had partnered with Christian theological institutions to create this approach to interreligious understanding. Since both Christian and Jewish students were engaged in theological education, this was, in effect, a form of co-formation, based on close textual study honoring the spiritual textual practices of both traditions. Ruben Habito notes that even for Christians studying texts of other faiths using the Christian Lectio Divina tradition, “It may be helpful as preliminary knowledge to learn how devotees of other traditions regard and relate to their own scripture texts, to appreciate the value of these texts, as religious texts for others.”\(^{112}\)

We have also seen that the Center for Islamic Studies and Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union use the hevruta method for Islamic-Jewish studies in their Madrassa-Midrasha course. This course explores a theme of mutual interest based on close textual study by interreligious partners, paying attention as far as possible to the texts in their original language. In this instance, many of the Jewish and Muslim students are not being trained for religious community leadership (both centers have an academic orientation, and do not train for ordination or for a role as imam), but, as they are situated in a larger theological consortium, the question of religious identity may be and often is brought into the classroom for reflection. In any case, the hevruta method honors traditional spiritual approaches to textual study. The goal in this form of hevruta study is mutual understanding and the development of interreligious relationships, the latter also nurtured by the students’ joint involvement in other activities and events.\(^{113}\)

\(^{111}\) Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, “Interreligious Education at RRC.”


\(^{113}\) Interview with Munir Jiwa, 8/24/17.
This model, however, has also been adapted for use in secular universities, including University of California at Davis and University of Toledo, a state university in Ohio. The model is understood and used somewhat differently in the secular setting. Devorah Schoenfeld sees contemporary hevruta as deriving from the Lithuanian yeshiva world, based on an ancient mode of studying rabbinic texts. In her version, the method is based on the virtues of disagreement as a mode of unpacking a text. The pairs read the text carefully, looking for ambiguities, and then ask questions arising from those ambiguities. They seek to maximize their disagreements about the interpretation and to refute one another, so that they can wrestle more deeply with multiple possible readings of the text.

The method, so understood, has as its learning outcomes developing critical thinking and practicing oral expression. It enables students to value intellectual diversity. It challenges them to engage texts very deeply, and to embrace their ambiguities. And it develops intellectual relations with peers.

Note that these outcomes, though described in secular terms (intellectual relationships), are nonetheless similar to the hevruta method as practiced in the Madrassa-Midrasha: the valuing of diverse views and the establishment of deep relations with those with whom one disagrees. The secular approach does not include the self-reflection on one’s religious identity, views, or orientation (central to theological approaches to study), but it engages with another across religious lines (as students study texts from more than one tradition and from other than their “birth” tradition).

We are left to ponder the impact of the switch to secular language and of the omission of the self-reflexive aspect. Students, of course, may be participating in self-reflection, as the deep engagement and questioning of the method is likely to raise all sorts of questions. But that self-reflection is not explicitly built into the pedagogical model in the secular environment.

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114 Devorah Schoenfeld and Jeanine Diller, “Using Hevruta to Do and Teach Comparative Theology,” in Teaching Interreligious Encounters, 164.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., 164-166.

117 Ibid., 175.
Scriptural Reasoning

Marianne Moyaert, from the faculty of theology at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, uses a slightly different intertextual interreligious pedagogy, that of scriptural reasoning, a method founded by Peter Ochs and two collaborators in 1995.¹¹⁸ Moyaert's version of scriptural reasoning is largely based on the hermeneutical principles of Paul Ricoeur, who has formulated a hermeneutical anthropology that does not place self and other in an antithetical scheme, but shows how selfhood is always interconnected with and constituted by otherness. His reflections on the hermeneutical self open up a dialogical space that enables an authentic and reciprocal encounter of give and take.¹¹⁹

She builds on Ricoeur's principles to design her pedagogy of interreligious scriptural reasoning, which, like hevruta, creates interreligious relationships by reading and studying text together across religious lines. Unlike hevruta, where students work in interreligious pairs, Moyaert's scriptural reasoning occurs in small groups of up to eight or nine, with at least two students from each religion participating, in order to open up the differences among co-religionists. She turns to experts from each of the traditions to identify texts suitable for “cross reading,” and students study them in advance. They meet for four sessions of up two hours, reading good English translations and – when possible – in the original languages. Students are asked to present on the basis of their careful reading (not research on context or traditional theological interpretations). While the students representing the traditions from which they texts come are listened to, it is stressed that they are not the experts on the final meaning – meaning is determined in interreligious en-


counter. Everyone has an equal voice. The goal is not consensus, but a “harmony of opposing voices.” Moyaert has also done work on inter-riting, interreligious participation in rituals.

Note that while the scriptural reasoning approach is in many ways similar to the hevruta method, its assumptions are slightly different. It neither seeks to open up the meanings of the text through disputa-
tion, nor to be a sacred method to further the spiritual maturity of the students.

Scriptural Reasoning (SR) is a tool for inter-faith dialogue whereby people of different faiths come together to read and reflect on their scriptures. Unlike some forms of inter-faith engagement, it is not about seeking agreement but rather exploring the texts and their possible interpretations across faith boundaries, and learning to ‘disagree better’. The result is often a deeper understanding of others’ and one’s own scriptures, as well as the development of strong bonds across faith communities.

The hevruta and Scriptural Reasoning models, insofar as their focus is on texts, harken back to Müller’s “science of religion,” but without the commitment to linguistic mastery and “scientific” analysis. They also resonate in some ways with Clooney’s intertextual comparative theology, but are distinct in two ways: a) not requiring language mastery for close reading, and b) based on dialogical interpretation between persons, rather than of a person encountering or dialoguing with a text. The interreligious interpersonal connection assumes that it is in direct engagement with a religious other by way of a text that interreligious learning happens. In the scriptural reasoning method, moreover, the interpretations put forward by adherents of the text’s tradition, while respected, are not privileged. This assumes that texts are not the “property of” a tradition, but open to interpretation by all. Both Clooney’s approach and the traditional hevruta method, by contrast, defer to the interpretive practices of the text’s tradition.

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121 Jennifer Peace, personal communication, 3/7/18.

5. Lived Religion Models

In the backstory, we saw that the “lived religion” model of interreligious learning goes far back in history. Knowledge of other religions spread through trade and cultural contact of many kinds, through stories and the movement of images and paintings. Religious persons have learned from and borrowed/adapted from other religions (with a broad range of motives) since the beginnings of history. The story of the Euro-American development of “interreligious learning” as we know it today, goes back to missionaries and ethnographers who lived and worked among “ordinary folks”, learning their customs, stories, and folkways. As, as we saw, some of the missionaries in tribal areas, in their efforts to understand the people among whom they worked, became noted philologists and ethnographers, contributing significant scholarship on “the other religions.” We also noted that the methodological divide between textual approaches and focus on “lived religion” is a major and enduring divide in the study of religion, particularly within the academy.

That said, in the recent past, one can identify a trend toward more emphasis on “lived approaches” to interreligious understanding. There is increasing consensus that interreligious understanding requires knowing religious persons and experiencing the sites and practices of another religion, not just “book study.”

Site Visits; Engaging Adherents

Recent developments in pedagogical approaches to the study of religion in secular colleges and universities have nuanced or stretched the divide between the textual and lived approaches. One is the increasing move to include experiential learning or community engagement in courses on religion. Religion is increasingly not studied simply from textbooks or films; students are sent into the community to visit temples or religious sites, to interview practitioners (their grandparents, or representatives of local traditions), or to attend and analyze a ceremony or festival of a particular group. This embodied experience of an actual site, person, or ceremony creates an engagement with “living religion,” an array of responses to a multisensory experience. As Lucinda Mosher notes, if site visits are prepared for and analyzed they may be-
come an interreligious encounter. Thus they come under our understanding of interreligious education. When the class shares questions or reflects on such experiences, they are processing their interreligious engagement. In Mosher’s terms, they are moving toward dialogue, which may be transformative.

Jeffrey Carlson taught an experiential learning course at Loyola University on religious diversity in Chicago. The course introduced traditions first through published materials and then took students to visit sites. He deliberately chose readings which would offer a quite different picture of, say, the African American church or of Islam than they would meet in persons at the site --- this contrast raised questions and encouraged critical reflection on the part of students. The course also included a service learning component, in which students painted a building (actually a former bar), which had been purchased to serve as a mosque. Having studied Islamic values, the students realized that the remnants of the bar’s sign, still visible on the building, were inappropriate and offensive, so they removed them without being asked. This course was designed to help students see and experience diversity within a tradition both in writings and in particular settings, and then to reflect on that experience.

Many instructors invite guest speakers from a religion being studied. If the teacher prepares the students and the speaker for an open and constructive conversation (as opposed to a narrow informational presentation), the students engage in a form of interreligious encounter. Such experiential or community engagement approaches overlap to a considerable degree with approaches in seminaries and theological schools: see for instance the community engagement model discussed in Section 5, below. The issue, in secular institutions, is whether there is space for students to reflect back on how the experience has shaped their own religious engagement or identity; the self-reflexive piece is central to theological education, but less common in secular institutions.

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123 Lucinda Mosher, “Beyond World Religions,” 83.

Chaplancies; Co-Curricular Service; Interfaith Living

While secular colleges and universities do not see their classroom as a place to foster the religious identities of their students, they do recognize that students bring religious identities, questions, struggles, and commitments to campus, and that many are exploring how to navigate the religious diversity of their lives and of society. College chaplaincies are increasingly attentive to the diversity of religious identities among their students; many now have multiple chaplains, or at least a range of religious organizations to accommodate the needs of their students. At New York University and Princeton University, for example, while there is no interreligious education in the curriculum, the university supports and facilitate a number of religiously identified student groups, and encourages them to create joint projects – often service projects -- where they can work side by side on shared issues of concern.\(^{125}\) Within the religiously-based organizations, students find community with those who share their backgrounds, and from there they may choose to engage in interreligious collaboration or activities. While these activities are extracurricular, they engage the participants in developing skills of “friendship, self-reflection listening, humility, and working in a group.”\(^{126}\) These skills are the basis for interreligious cooperation and communication, learning how to find commonality amidst difference, and how to be cognizant of and sensitive to the values and constraints of those from other religious traditions. In that sense, they are a form of interreligious education. They are “forming” persons with skills and experiences in navigating a religiously diverse environment and in creating relationships across lines of different communities. The “learning outcomes” of such activities are relationships and relational skills, not learning about or understanding the traditions of others, but coming to know them as persons with whom one can collaborate. Yet because many of the student groups are based on religious affiliation, they bring that affiliation and identity marker into interreligious activities and col-

\(^{125}\) September, 2015 Consultation of Henry Luce Foundation Project on Interreligious Education, oral comments from Matthew Wiener, Associate Dean of Religious Life, Princeton University, and Imam Khalid Latif, Chaplain and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Administration, New York University.

\(^{126}\) Interview e-mail response from Matt Wiener, April 14, 2016.
laborations. At Princeton, they believe that the key to effective interreligious education is “experimentation, creating environments or frameworks for bottom-up interfaith friendship, and pragmatism.”

Another extracurricular approach to interreligious education is interfaith living communities as part of Residential Life Centers. Many, including Macalaster College, Colgate University, Rollins College, and the University of Southern California, incorporate interfaith activities and dialogues for the sake of their residents. Kristin Stoneking established an interfaith living community in 1993 at the University of California, Davis, a public and secular institution. The interfaith living community was fully under the campus ministry program, offering no courses for credit. It asked that applicants commit: a) to attend weekly house dinners and programs; b) to participate in small interfaith groups organized by staff; c) to participate in cooperative projects to address societal needs and social justice. Stoneking reports that the third commitment was central to the original vision of the program, but that a relatively small portion of the residents actually participated. These projects were envisioned to emerge from the small groups, but since they were student-led, leaders often did not know how to engage and connect their group in a project. Student evaluations reported that the most important and meaningful aspect of the interfaith community had been the relationships they had built.

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128 Rachel Mikva, “Reflections in the Waves,” (March, 2017 presentation), 18, fn. 69. Mikva cites the engagement of the Interfaith Youth Core with this form of interfaith work.

129 Note the contrast here with the Circle Project reported by Jennifer Peace, “Religious Self, Religious Other: Coformation as a Model for Interreligious Education,” chapter for *Experiments in Empathy for our Time*. See section 9, below. The Circle Project required participants to apply as a small interfaith group with a proposed project, while the Davis community hoped that projects would arise from groups they had formed. It is also noteworthy that Circle project participants were graduate students training for lay or ordained leadership, while Davis students were undergraduate and a few graduate students from a broad range of disciplines.

130 Interview with Kristin Stoneking, October 5, 2017.
Service/Experiential Learning

We noted in the backstory that Catholic colleges and universities often turn to experiential learning or service learning to develop qualities of compassion and service in their students. Santa Clara University, a Jesuit school in Santa Clara, California, has a core undergraduate requirement called Experiential Learning and Social Justice. Santa Clara partners with the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Educators, who bring local community organizations’ members and clients as co-educators for community-based learning. “Informed by and in conversation with Catholic social tradition, the Center facilitates community-based learning opportunities that underscore commitments to the common good, universal human dignity, justice as participation, and solidarity with marginalized communities.”

Santa Clara offers community-based learning that is not only experiential, engaging the whole person of the student, but also designed to engage students in social justice issues directly with the marginalized. For example, an introduction to bio-ethics and health care ethics asks students to engage with nursing home or Alzheimer’s unit patients. The Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara uses pedagogical collaboration with local religious leaders to give their students experiential engagement with living religions in the community, including non-Christian religions. Santa Clara’s community-based learning is not extra-curricular, but integrated into their general curriculum and educational goals.

The experiential and community learning models of teaching religion use engagement with living religion (persons, sites, organizations) as well as learning about religions through reading or film. Experiential learning is more than cognitive; it involves all the senses and even the emotions. It raises questions, challenges or develops sensibilities, and creates temporary or ongoing relationships. Students critically reflect on these experiences and what it means to them. This is a form of interreligious education as part of character formation or education of the whole person.


132 Personal correspondence, Professor Margaret McLean, Santa Clara University, August 1, 2017.

Embodied Wisdom

John Thatamanil of Union Theological Seminary proposes an understanding of comparative theology which embraces experiential learning. He builds on Edward Farley's position that theology is not simply normative reflection on a tradition (a specialized professional field), but more properly contemplative wisdom – the discipline of every Christian to embody wisdom in their life and practice. If Amos Yong's pneumatological approach allowed him to bracket soteriological issues and to use pneumatology before Christology to avoid early barriers to engaging other religions, Thatamanil's quest for wisdom moves around prickly doctrinal differences directly to spiritual practice. He argues that while theology uses many lenses to integrate what is seen into a coherent and integrated vision, interreligious wisdom is installed in the body by way of the spirit: it seeks to inculcate dispositions and capacities through intuition and bodily practice. He writes,

The distinguishing feature of interreligious wisdom qua wisdom is interest in aims, not just claims. When a person is committed to the aims of two or more traditions, learning information must necessarily become part of the larger quest for transformation.

He defines interreligious wisdom as the capacity to see the world through more than one set of religious lenses and to combine what has been observed and learned into an integrated vision. And he argues that interreligious wisdom might just enrich the life of the Christian.

I am not suggesting that the wisdom that comes to us from just one religious tradition is impoverished, but that interreligious binocular vision might well offer perspectives on ultimate reality and the world that monocural vision does not. If we try to see as Christians do and to see as Buddhists our attention is drawn to features of experience that are typically not the focus of one or the other of these traditions. It is also possible that deep complementarity and resonance might result.

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134 This section is based on John Thatamanil’s chapter for *Experiments in Empathy for our Time*, “Integrating Vision: Comparative Theology as the Quest for Interreligious Wisdom.”


137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.
It should be noted that some traditions (for instance Native Americans) object to “outsiders” exploring their religious practices; they see it unmerited appropriation. But there are also forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, especially in the United States, that welcome others to their practices, seeing them as a potential gateway for further learning.

How does one teach such interreligious wisdom? Such teaching requires instructors who not only know about the religions they teach, but are also able to teach students to embody the practices and disciplines that can lead to transformation. Although a single course cannot convey a lifetime of committed practice in a tradition, it can be a first step --- can give students a first taste – of the spiritual benefits of such practices. He cites as noteworthy Union’s course on “Liberation Theology and Engaged Buddhism,” co-taught by a liberation theologian Claudio Varvalhaes and Zen master Greg Snyder. This course introduces theological principles and social concepts of Christianity and Engaged Buddhism, engaging students in Christian and Buddhist social justice work in New York, and requiring them to collaborate across religious lines to create rituals that engage the course themes.139 This course is noteworthy in that it did not encourage students to find common ground between Christian and Buddhist approaches, but rather to respectfully understand, analyze, and explore the differences. Snyder notes that, in a memorable moment, at the end of one of the student-created rituals, most of the students progressed forward, while one held back and passionately declared “No!”, honoring the inability of the tradition he claimed to move with the group.140

Comparative theology as a quest for interreligious wisdom to some extent harkens back to Thomas Merton, who, as a Trappist monk, deeply studied Zen Buddhism and entered into dialogue with Eastern teachers, including D.T. Suzuki. Merton was not particularly drawn by Buddhist teachings per se, but to the mystical wisdom that he felt resonated between Buddhism and contemplative Christianity.

139 Course syllabus, Fall 2017, and interview with Greg Snyder, July 2, 2018.

140 Interview with Greg Snyder, July 2, 2018.
Thatamanil’s embodied wisdom approach resonates with “contemplative pedagogy” in the emerging field of Contemplative Studies. Contemplative pedagogy requires self-critical reflections on the contemplative practice the student commits to for the semester. In a course offered by Louis Komjathy at University of San Diego (a Roman Catholic institution), students reflect on their own practice, discuss existential and theological questions, and are required to have one community experience with the tradition from which their method comes. Komjathy resists calls to exclude embodied experience and theological reflections on it from the pedagogical study of religion.

Pravina Rodrigues offers a variation on Thatamanil’s embodied wisdom approach: she argues for moving beyond tolerance to “communion” with another tradition:

I contend that a more authentic understanding of another faith tradition can take place only when we make an effort to see and experience another tradition from the inside. My understanding of such interfaith communion encompasses engagement in the intellectual, charitable, and devotional activities of the religious Other, so that one might experience the Divine through these activities and begin to see what the Other sees…True communion is not flirting with another tradition, but committing oneself deeply to the whole tradition with one’s heart, mind, and body.

Such a complete commitment to the whole of another tradition may not be acceptable to some Christians, but it is noteworthy that Rodrigues is a Roman Catholic from India, where there has been a cultural tradition of borrowing deities and practices from other traditions. Her approach is a logical (radical) extension of Thatamanil’s embodied wisdom.

Note that neither Thatamanil’s nor Rodrigues’s approach necessarily entails an encounter of persons across traditions; such practice could be structured as an interreligious engagement with teachers or practitioners across traditions, but it could simply be a matter of following (even appropriating) a practice. The details matter.


142 Pravina Rodrigues, “Beyond Tolerance to Communion,” Skylight: News and Notes from the GTU (Fall, 2017), 16-17.
Theological educators engaged in pastoral or practical theology are not concerned with how to do theology, but how to pastorally engage congregants and persons in the world. At Luther Seminary in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, a course called Reading the Audience articulates a missional theology for engagement, on the assumption that God is “already present with all we meet. Thus the proper stance is not to ‘bring God’ to others, but to adopt a posture of humility, as Christ would, and expect to listen and to learn how God is already at work in the lives of others.”

Such an approach fosters interreligious engagement as central to pastoral formation.

**Cultivating Character**

The backstory noted that Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC partnered with the Middle East Center of the University of Pennsylvania to offer Muslim students a stipend to participate in community-based learning with Jewish students from RRC, doing joint textual study, visiting *salat* at a Mosque, and jointly executing a teaching session in a Jewish venue. This program established warm relationships among Jews and Muslims, and was key to rabbinical training at RRC. While many Muslim students were happy for the relationship, it was not integral to their academic programs. In recent years, Muslim students have reported ambassador fatigue; for that and other reasons RRC has revised the program.

In addition, RRC began offering retreats for Muslim and Jewish leaders, establishing interfaith networks and relations across the communities. These retreats enabled interfaith conversation on all sorts of issues, even difficult ones like Israel and Palestine. As issues between Muslims and Jews became more fraught, so did the fatigue of past and potential participants in these retreats. They were thus recast to provide spiritual nurture and replenishment in an interfaith learning environment called Cultivating Character, where participants focus on sharing spiritual practices.


144 Kreimer, op. cit.

145 Note that this is an example of the “embodying wisdom” model articulated by John Thatamanil of Union Theological Seminary. See his “Integrating Vision.”
Community Engagement

While some organizations have as their sole purpose the training of community leaders, or see interfaith/interreligious learning as a form of civic education, a number of seminaries and theological schools see interreligious community engagement as a significant element of ministry training/theological education, given that parishes are embedded in a religiously diverse world.

Moreover, many cities have interfaith councils or interfaith social service networks, such as Boston’s Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, established in 1966, bringing non-profits and congregations together to work for social justice.146 Such interfaith initiatives provide a formal venue for a career, or part of a career, in ministry.

A number of seminaries embrace interreligious community engagement as part of their theological curriculum, either in the curriculum, or in the co-curriculum. For instance, at Episcopal Divinity School in Boston, students learn about the work of different religious groups in the community, and work with and minister to people of different faiths in CPE and field education.147 This is, in fact, a very common interreligious dimension of theological education. At Claremont School of Theology students work with people from different religious groups on projects for justice, sustainable development, and peace.148 United Theological Seminary in Minneapolis offers justice immersion courses, both locally and internationally, often with an interfaith component.149

Chicago Theological Seminary, committed to social transformation, believes that education about religious difference that celebrates diversity can help move society toward social justice and compassion. It can challenge oppressive theology and practice. Rachel Mikva writes,

These goals formed the core of our stake in interreligious education: to prepare religious leaders/teachers who better understand their own religious identity, and who build bridges

146 Rodney Petersen, e-mail interview, 6/7/2016.
147 Kwok Pui-lan, e-mail interview, 4/23/2016.
148 Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, e-mail interview, 5/10/2016.
of understanding and cooperation across religious difference to effect positive social transformation.150

Because of these values, CTS puts great emphasis on students being active in the community, working for justice, often collaborating across religious lines.

A fascinating example of a community-engagement model was the program on Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices (CHAPP) developed at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN in partnership with Trinity Lutheran Congregation, situated in a neighborhood with three mosques. The purpose of the project was “demonstrating and exploring what Christian hospitality looks like when practiced as presence in a multifaith world.”151 The seminary funded an intern to work in the neighborhood to develop hospitality events for the seminary’s children, youth, and family degree program, being present not as host, but as guest, practicing intentional deference to the East African cultural sensitivities of the neighborhood.152 Seminary faculty built requirements into several courses that students be involved in the project in the neighborhood, listening to Muslims, studying the demography and needs of the neighborhood, and working with members of the Lutheran congregation.153 Christian hospitality as community engagement cultivated a “spiritual discipline of opening up --- or of what some people might call ‘holding something lightly’ or ‘with open hands.’”154 Faculty, students, and members of Trinity Lutheran found the project transformative.

This project taught the seminary that:

150 Rachel Mikva, “Reflections in the Waves.”


152 Ibid.

153 Shanta Premawardhana cites a World Council of Churches document that argues that “mission is not to those who are poor, or to those who are religious other, as we always thought: rather, mission is from those who are poor and marginalized to the privileged center.” “Public Ministry in a World of Many Faiths,” in Teaching for a Multifaith World, 177. The CHAPP program seems to be guided by similar principles.

We need to get our students out of the classroom and into tangible relationships with people. This kind of learning cannot take place if it is simply “about” other faiths. We need to learn “through engagement with” other faiths.\textsuperscript{155}

This project was based on the assumption that active engagement with people of other faiths in their community and addressing their needs is the most effective form of interreligious learning. Such a learning experience engages theological students during seminary in the sorts of community activities they will need to engage as faith leaders in a multireligious world.

**Community Leadership**

In this report I focus on models of interreligious education in formal degree granting institution, particularly seminaries and theological schools. But there are also examples of centers and organizations whose sole purpose is the development of interfaith or interreligious leaders for the broader, civic community. These models are illuminating, as they have a clear focus on interreligious education, without also having to address other educational goals. There is a vast field of such organizations, but a few examples may suffice to exemplify the characteristics of this model.

Auburn Seminary is a significant example for this report, as it emerged out of the world of theological education. Formerly an M.Div.-granting seminary, some time ago Auburn dropped its M.Div. program and instead worked to improve the quality of theological education, doing studies and offering workshops and consultations for theological faculty and leaders. Shortly after 2000, Auburn established its Center for Multifaith Education.\textsuperscript{156} Auburn now understands itself as a multifaith organization with Protestant roots, training leaders in social justice who work from a faith or value tradition, which may be a religious community or a humanist or “spiritual but not religious” stance. Participants in their leadership training seminars are encouraged to “lean in” to their traditions to root their justice work. While their multifaith trainings were formerly rooted in dialogue or mutual “learning about” other traditions, in the past ten to fifteen years Auburn has instead cultivated interfaith relationships and experiences and honed effective

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{156} Lucinda Mosher, “Beyond World Religions,” 76.
leadership skills.\textsuperscript{157} Justus Baird has offered a colloquial list of leadership traits which are the learning outcomes for its participants: content and credibility (a compelling message); constituency; commitment to the movement; ambitious and coachable; relevant; seeker of resilience; faithful strategist; a little charisma; entrepreneurial.\textsuperscript{158}

The Auburn model, reflecting broader developments in the field, understands and practices interreligious education as primarily experiential learning and relationship development. It uses a range of pedagogical tools: experience and reflection; case study methods; experimental ritual and worship; faith-alike groups; fieldwork; leadership assessments; peer consultation; role-playing and simulation; text study.\textsuperscript{159} Participants may be ordained leaders in religious congregations, but may also be lay or ordained leaders working in a variety of non-profits or community organizations.

A second example is the Interfaith Center of New York. Like Auburn, the Interfaith Center “works to overcome prejudice, violence, and misunderstanding by activating the power of the city’s grassroots religious and civic leaders and their communities.”\textsuperscript{160} They argue for effective interreligious education in the secondary school curriculum, articulating an experiential pedagogy of lived religion to enhance human understanding across religious communities. This, they contend, is far superior to the traditional “world religions” approach to “teaching about” other religions; effective education is about lived relationships, not information.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{157} Justice Baird, e-mail interview, 4/22/16.

\textsuperscript{158} Justus Baird, “Pursuing and Teaching Justice in Multifaith Contexts,” in Fernandez, Teaching for a Multifaith World, 97-98.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 98 – 103.

\textsuperscript{160} www.interfaithcenter.org, accessed 8/14/17.

A number of seminaries and theological schools have established special degrees for leadership in justice work in an interfaith context, and the number of these programs continue to grow.\textsuperscript{162}

Perhaps the most prominent example of the community leadership model of interfaith learning is the work of Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Core. The IFYC was started in 1998 at the United Religions Initiative Global Summit at Stanford University.\textsuperscript{163} It is a non-profit organization committed to “making interfaith cooperation a social norm.”\textsuperscript{164} As Patel became active speaking on campuses and in organizations, he began to realize that “interfaith leader” was an identity category, a role and aspiration.\textsuperscript{165} Indeed, the community leader model of interreligious learning has begun to establish this vocation or career by training both ordained and lay leaders to be social entrepreneurs in this field.

Patel has written about the need for and role of interfaith leaders in civic society, to create stronger communities and prevent violence. He reflects on Ashutosh Varshney’s study of religious violence in India’s cities, asking why violence erupted in some cities, and not others. Varshney claims that the answer lies in civic networks. Patel comments, “Cities that had Rotary clubs, sports leagues, business groups, and other sorts of civic associations that brought people together from different faith groups managed to ride out religious tension without becoming violent…..Cities that did not have such networks were prone to deadly interfaith riots.”\textsuperscript{166} Patel points out, “Networks of engagement do not fall from the sky; people build them.”\textsuperscript{167} Interfaith leaders can be instrumental in building and supporting such networks.

Patel further notes that in U.S. society, religious groups are a significant source of social capital, and thus a significant “glue” for civic society. Religious affiliations, however, can become insular and sources of

\textsuperscript{162} Baird, \textit{op. cit.}, 912, 95.
\textsuperscript{165} Patel, \textit{Interfaith Leadership}, 27.
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Ibid.}
conflict between groups. Robert Putnam distinguishes between “bonded” social capital, inward-focused and creating an identity over-against others, and “bridged” social capital, which reaches out and collaborates over lines of difference. Interfaith leaders draw upon their faith in service of creating “bridged” social capital, forging networks of cooperation and relationship across religious lines. Interfaith leaders build bridges toward achieving Diana Eck’s vision of pluralism. It should be noted that some religious groups have particularist principles that severely constrain or inhibit their ability to reach out across lines of difference.

Patel lays out five civic goods, which might be identified as the long-range learning objectives of IFYC’s training of civic interfaith leaders:

1. Increasing understanding and reducing prejudice.
3. Bridging social capital and addressing social problems.
4. Fostering the continuity of identity communities and reducing isolation.
5. Creating binding narratives for diverse societies.

In order to evaluate or measure progress toward these objectives, Patel proposes to evaluate interfaith leadership programs on three vectors: changes in attitudes; development of relationships, and knowledge of (familiarity with) other traditions. He calls these three the “interfaith triangle.” Of these, relationships are central, as Pew Research has shown that interfaith friendships are key to changing attitudes and tend to lead to familiarity with the other’s tradition.

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169 Ibid., 92.
170 Ibid., 98-99.
171 Ibid., 100-101.
172 Ibid.
IFYC has also worked extensively to promote Interfaith Education in higher education, working with campuses and offering seminars and workshops for teachers. IFYC programs have developed course sequences for interfaith studies in over 17 institutions. These courses rely heavily on case study pedagogies. Some of these sequences offer minors, certificates or concentrations. Workshops have also concentrated on developing student learning outcomes for interfaith studies.

Courses develop “interfaith literacy” (knowledge about the diversity traditions), human skills of relating across lines of difference. The focus of interfaith studies is on “lived faith”, rather than on the traditional “world religions” model of religious studies. IFYC’s work in liberal education seeks to develop in future citizens the skills and sensibilities to live and relate in a religiously diverse society. In a course IFYC staff co-taught at Princeton Theological Seminary, a learning objective was “to help students apply the theories and frameworks we consider to the lives and professions they will have beyond the classroom. For their final assignment, we ask students to write a plan for an interfaith project they might implement in their work beyond college or seminary.”

IFYC’s work in higher education has helped to develop the approaches to lived religion and experiential interreligious education noted in the section above on colleges and universities.

The community leadership model of interfaith/interreligious education lifts up the skills and sensibilities cultivated in interfaith learning and articulates their contributions to the wider society. These skills and civic concerns are present in other models of interreligious learning, but often in combination with a nest of other skills and educational aims embedded in higher education.

A number of theological schools have established centers for the development of interfaith leaders, for example, Chicago Theological Seminary. And, beyond IFYC, there are a host of community organizations cultivating interfaith leadership. This is a vibrant sector of the interreligious education field.

173 Mary Hess prefers the term “religious fluency.” She writes, “Not literacy, but fluency, because we need not only to be comfortable with our neighbors, we also need to be able to communicate across deep divides in the face of multiple global challenges.” Mary Hess, “Designing Curricular Approaches for Interfaith Competency,” Teaching for a Multifaith World, 42.

174 Patel and Meyer, op. cit., 298.
Coformation

Many who offer programs or extracurricular activities in interreligious education have come to see as one of its primary goals – and measures of its success – the establishment of relationships across religious lines. But some institutions take that principle further, seeing interreligious relationships and collaboration among learners as essential to the very process of interreligious education – its very character, not just its goal or outcome. We have seen this in the example of Chicago Theological Seminary, where evaluation of their interreligious program for mostly Christian students was deemed to be inadequate without a significant presence of adherents of other religions.

Beginning in 2014, we admitted as part of our incoming class a multifaith cohort committed to sustained conversation and collective work, exploring the intersections of theological education, interreligious engagement, social justice and sustainability. The three-year project, entitled ECOmmunity, crystallized after faculty addressed two substantive issues in our interreligious efforts. First, the enterprise is too theoretical if there is no significant religious diversity within the institution. Second, although there had frequently been scattered non-Christians studying at CTS, the isolated nature of their experience meant that they had to do all the work of adaptation (of Christian language, culture, curriculum). We needed a student cohort of mutual support, one with enough heft to help transform the institution.  

We subsequently recruited several talented groups of Christian, Muslim, Hindu, secular humanist and transreligious individuals, with differing racial, national, gender, sexual and class identities, and some range along the religiously progressive-conservative spectrum.

The thinking behind this program was to create a suitably diverse and multifaith cohort of students to “help transform the institution,” that is, to make the learning environment itself genuinely interreligious.

Mikva notes that

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175 This is a significant point, as the vast majority of interreligious programs are add-ons or insertions into the already established patterns of the institution.

176 Rachel Mikva, “Reflections in the Waves.”
The ECOmmunity cohort begins as an exercise in coformation, growing from conscious-ness of our intersubjectivity and informed by the teaching philosophy of Paulo Freire: we educate one another, in communion, in the context of living in this world. Coformation unfolds in sharing personal stories as well as grappling together with the challenges and opportunities of seminary education. The process asks students to be vulnerable to one another, to trust that the tensions will yield new insights, that the journey together through the wilderness will enable them to live more fully into their religious/philosophical commitments and their human potential. “The lived experience of on-the-ground, co-inhabited cultural diversity has functioned as a fluid, omnipresent, alternative and global social imaginary always-in-the-making.”

Another example of this assumption that interreligious relationships and collaboration are essential to the process of interreligious education lies in the bevruta learning models of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and the Madrassa-Midrasha Jewish-Muslim course at the Graduate Theological Union. (See the backstory) In these programs, interreligious pairs study religious texts from both traditions together for a semester and also either collaborate on a project or attend and report on public events together. This collaborative learning and joint activity is intended to create significant interreligious relationships and also to enhance the spiritual growth and awareness of all participants. They are sharing spiritual reflections on significant texts, and so are in some ways another example of the sharing of interreligious wisdom, as articulated by John Thatamanil of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Jennifer Peace has provided an insightful analysis of the coformation model of interreligious learning. Her concept of co-formation is based on her development of the Center for Inter-


\[\textit{Ibid.}, 13, citing John Thatamanil, “Integrating Vision.”\]
religious and Communal Leadership Education (CIRCLE) for Andover Newton and Hebrew College. She notes that the project had high aspirations:

Ultimately we were not just interested in adding new classes or opportunities for interfaith engagement to an already full schedule of courses and requirements. Rather, more radically, we were hoping to influence the conversation and ultimately shift the paradigm about what constitutes adequate seminary education.¹⁸¹

Beyond the subjects taught, theological formation is about forming persons, lay or ordained religious leaders. But what did it mean to form Christian persons in an interreligious environment?

Was it actually true that what future Christian leaders needed to know was fully contained with the Christian tradition? How did that prepare them to live and lead in a world wracked by religious violence and negative stereotypes of religious others? She writes,

The theory driving CIRCLE’s work posits the essential role of learning with the “religious other” as we construct a clearer sense of our “religious self.” This contrasts with the dominant world religion paradigms where learning about the religious other is the norm.¹⁸²

She coined the term “coformation” for this new approach.

To add the prefix ‘co’ to ‘formation’ and apply it to seminary education is to assert that students are not formed in isolation but in connection to a dynamic web of relationships. Making formation an intentionally interfaith process reflects the reality that our particular beliefs exist in a larger and complex multireligious (and nonreligious) human community, a community we want to prepare our students to both encounter and engage on multiple levels—theological, ethical, and pastoral—as community organizers, educators, preachers, and citizens.¹⁸³

While this shares with other models a focus on relational skills and civic priorities, it also refers to the “inner work” that is part of forming the whole person.¹⁸⁴

Peace’s notion of coformation puts interreligious education squarely at the heart of theological education, its mission of formation. It is based on the assumption that both Christian students and those from other traditions will deepen in their own faiths through their engagement in


¹⁸² Ibid., 4.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 5.
interreligious learning. But it makes a radical assumption that it is necessary and essential to form spiritual persons through interreligious education and engagement.

The CIRCLE program provided a fellowship and study opportunity to interreligious pairs or small groups (Muslims were soon included in the program), who applied together for the fellowship, submitting a collaborative project of interest to all. It was often a service project, addressing justice or community issues, but it could also be a more academic project.\(^{185}\) The joint application meant that applicants had already achieved some skills in interreligious relationships and collaboration; otherwise they would be unable to find collaborators with whom to apply. But it then enhanced those relationships through academic study, a leadership development program, extracurricular activities, and mentoring. The outcome, or expectation, of the coformation process is transformative learning --- change in the students.\(^{186}\) The impact of the small fellowship group is enhanced by joint events by the sponsoring institutions, creating an interreligious space of the campuses which invites more students into interreligious engagement.

While the fundamental pedagogical assumption of the CIRCLE program is that Christian formation cannot be effectively done in Christian isolation, the CIRCLE program does not accommodate the entire student body. Beyond the fellows, other Andover Newton and Hebrew College Students are engaged in interreligious learning through courses and extracurricular campus activities (fundamentally, the exposure model). But the presence of CIRCLE fellows and activities lifts up the interreligious ethos and values of the institutions and makes a statement about what interreligious education can and should do.

**Spiritual Care Model**

We noted above that minority religious communities in the United States have often turned to Christian theological schools for models of how to educate religious leaders in the arts of spiritual and pas-


toral care. At the Graduate Theological Union, for instance, the highest rates of cross-registration of Buddhist students into Christian courses were in pastoral care. And at Hartford Seminary, the students in the Muslim chaplaincy program cited the pastoral courses as of particular value in their education in the inter-religious environment of Hartford.\footnote{187}

Daniel Schipani has written an article to articulate an “interfaith” (non-tradition-specific) model for spiritual care training as a basis for multifaith education for pastoral and spiritual care.\footnote{188} Schipani is a professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary in Indiana. His approach is committedly and intentionally interdisciplinary, drawing on secular disciplines of psychology and clinical psychology, Christian literature on pastoral care, and literature on interreligious spiritual care. He argues that with “deinstitutionalization” (the decline of religious institutions and denominations) and pluralization (growing diversity), pastoral and spiritual care must of necessity engage multifaith issues. He posits a spiritual anthropology that may be adapted across many traditions, seeing the human being as comprised on body, psyche (soul), and spirit, having family, social, global, and cosmic contexts.\footnote{189} He plays out this anthropological model in multiple dimensions, establishing a vocabulary that can be understood through multiple religious lenses, transculturally. For instance, the human spirit is comprised of dimensions of purpose (vocation), meaning (vision), and communion (virtue). These can be understood in Christian terms as hope, faith, and love, but other religions will have alternate means of “naming” the dimensions.\footnote{190}

Interfaith caregivers must be holistically formed in three domains of competencies: knowing (understanding), doing (companioning), and being (presence).\footnote{191} These requires several pedagogies: of inter-

\footnote{187}{See the backstory.}

\footnote{188}{Daniel S. Schipani, “Pastoral and Spiritual Care in Multifaith Contexts,” in \textit{Teaching for a Multifaith World}, 124-146.}

\footnote{189}{\textit{Ibid.}, 125.}

\footnote{190}{\textit{Ibid.}, 127-28.}

\footnote{191}{\textit{Ibid.}, 137-140.}
preparation (reading situations and persons); contextualization (understanding diverse contexts); formation (personal spiritual formation, and spiritual presence to others); performance (practice and reflection).\textsuperscript{192}

The outcomes for learners are based on competencies published by associations of professional chaplains, such as \textit{Common Standards for Professional Chaplaincy}.\textsuperscript{193} Lucinda Mosher encourages self-evaluation of chaplaincy students, moving from benchmark (basic understanding of a competency), to milestone (evidence of adequate command), to capstone (ready to appear before evaluators).\textsuperscript{194}

These multifaith spiritual care programs are built on the assumption that one can posit a transcultural spiritual anthropology and that spiritual care competencies work for a range of traditions. Since there are documented differences in key psychological constructs across cultures, it is likely that over time and with more experience these common competencies might be nuanced for cultural/religious variations. The practical discipline of pastoral care builds on the ongoing loop of practice, reflection, adaptation, and is thus designed for such experience-based nuance. Given the need for spiritual caregivers in many traditions, this model is likely to flourish.

The current state of interreligious spiritual care is, of course, constrained by the lack of professors in the field from other spiritual traditions, although there are now graduate students studying spiritual care in Islam and Buddhism, for instance. As the field develops, the hegemony of Christian categories and courses will be challenged, and the particular needs of traditions other than Christianity will be addressed.

\textbf{Intersectionality}

It is relatively easy to articulate a clear model of interreligious education if one isolates religious difference, making the sole goal of the program developing skills for interreligious relationships or negotiating interreligious difference. The Community Leadership Model, addressed in this section, comes closest

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Ibid.}, 143-144.

\textsuperscript{193} Cited by Lucinda Mosher as used in her interfaith chaplaincy courses. “Chaplaincy Education Meets Multifaith Literacy Development,” in \textit{Teaching for a Multifaith World}, 152-153.

\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Ibid.}
to such a “purely” interreligious mode of education. However, in our very diverse society, it is not actually possible to isolate religious difference from the many other forms of human and cultural difference that learners bring. Community programs may be focused on interreligious education and skills, but schools struggle to recognize and address the vibrant diversity of their classrooms and of the society into which they will send graduates. The more diverse the school and its community, the more attention they pay to the multiple forms of difference. The concept of intersectionality recognizes the complex identities of persons, and the mutual entanglements of cultural, gender/sexual, ethnic/racial, socio-economic, experiential, and religious difference, and furthermore acknowledges that in a global world transnationality and migration, fluid gender identities, and various physical constraints and conditions affect the relationships among students and their learning experiences.

Eleazar Fernandez reminds us that “The formation of religious identity cannot be isolated from the cultural and political context of a person’s location and community of belonging.” Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook argues that interreligious pedagogy must begin from that intersection: “Without functional understanding of the interlocking relationships between social identities of race, ethnicity, and culture, there is no foundation on which to build greater interreligious understanding.” Mary Hess argues that the complex layers of identities mean that “we all find ourselves embedded in multiple communities even while being one person, so how are the various communities of which we are a part respected in a specific community?”, especially the seminary and the church.

Munir Jiwa reports that the cultural, religious, gender, racial/ethnic diversities of his students at the Center for Islamic Studies, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, and even of students who come from the “same” religion, makes it impossible to ignore the mutual embeddedness of culture, race, gender, and religion. Students learn to disagree respectfully, and to ask critically “where does my perspective come

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195 “Multifaith Context and Competencies,” in *Teaching for a Multifaith World*, 12.


from? What shapes it?” Such issues arise naturally out of a strikingly diverse classroom and provide opportunities for instructors to open up to students the complexities and nuances that shape religious identities and responses to religious difference. He notes that international students bring a very different perspective on and response to attitudes that are taken for granted or have become stereotypical in American culture. The contributions from these cultural perspectives helps all learners realize the cultural and societal forces that shape their attitudes and the way they frame questions and issues.

Intersectional approaches recognize that lived religion and religious identity are inextricably embedded in the multidimensional complexities of life. Rachel Mikva writes,

> Questions of power, privilege, and oppression cannot be excised from our understanding of the ways in which religion impacts people’s lives, and how interactions among religions shape history. They inundate the public square, the campus and the very programs that try to name them. One cohort [at our school] facilitated a workshop, “Power, Privilege and Oppression in an Interreligious Context,” for our major spring conference. A recent retreat prodded students to explore these issues not only “out there,” but also in our own institution and cohort, grappling with the asymmetry of resources and representation, competing priorities, manifold claims of race, class, gender, sexuality and religion, etc. This challenging terrain strengthens the sinews of their lifestance formation.

Programs committed to educating students for social justice see interreligious engagement as one aspect of addressing a diverse complex of human issues. Such programs aspire to prepare students for and engage them in partnerships across religious lines to address issues of justice.

Intersectional approaches also attend centrally to the complex hybrid identities in today’s global world; these hybrid identities and locations are the starting point for learners engaged in interreligious education. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook of Claremont School of Theology reports, “We encourage people to dialogue and/or engage across traditions from the perspectives of one’s own identities and contexts.” This approach consciously resists “simple” delineations of traditions and religious identities. Overly simple “abstract pluralistic discourse can easily become a straitjacket

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198 Munir Jiwa, Interview, 8/24/17.
199 Rachel Mikva, “Reflections in the Waves.” Bracket mine.
200 Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, e-mail interview, 5/10/2016.
for non-dominant ‘others’ by expecting them to fit into the multiple tiny, homogenized boxes that
the dominant groups has conceived for and prescribed to them…. [They] frequently presuppose
and amplify intergroup differences while conflating intragroup ones.” Recognizing, affirming,
and engaging hybrid identities in interreligious education requires the embodiment and modelling
of pluralism.

To the extent that the hybridities are also transnational, they may, as Munir Jiwa noted
above, challenge the basic assumptions either of the course or that many students bring to it. Najeeba Syeed notes, “Transnational theological education must be nimble, agile, and willing to consistently question its own definition of religion or spiritual practices or experience.”

Persons from non-Western cultures, indigenous peoples, transnationals, and persons of color are
often acutely aware of these hybrid identities. We have seen this above in the discussion in of Christian
theologians from Asia, who must reconcile their Asian and Christian identities. Monica Coleman de-
scribes how her graduate courses on theories of religious pluralism were utterly inadequate to deal with the
religious lives of African Americans, many of whom honor African traditions with and alongside their
Christianity. She writes, “Rather than exploring how individuals and communities negotiated religious dif-
ferences, African American religious studies requires discussions about how individuals and communities
live across and within religious differences.” Hsiao-lan Hu writes that the Chinese cultural tradition of
participating in all Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism – understood as porous teach-


203 Preman Niles noted that Asians find themselves living two stories, one Asian and one Christian. Niles, Is God Christian?

ings rather than separate and mutual exclusive traditions) provides her a vantage point from which to embody and model lived religious pluralism for her students.\textsuperscript{205}

Christine Hong, a Korean American, has articulated her approach to interreligious engagement, which she describes as transnational and trans-spiritual. By trans-spiritual she means “religious and spiritual commitments, beliefs, and practices that originate from different experiences, places, histories, and religious and spiritual traditions but are embodied and held together in one individual.”\textsuperscript{206} She insists that these various beliefs and practices are not merged, but exist in tension, and that they are not cherry-picked but rooted in “communal, familial, and personal histories, experiences, and commitments.”\textsuperscript{207} These hybrid or blended identities follow not only large cultural trends (Asian, African), but also idiosyncratic personal hybridities beyond the ‘expected’; intersectionality attends to the particular.\textsuperscript{208} Hong engages transnational and trans-spiritual identities pedagogically through designing her courses around the stories of the lived experiences of the students, having them analyze and engage those stories interreligiously, learning how stories have formed themselves and can form each other. She writes, “The sharing of stories and narratives are part of how identities are formed, shaped, and reshaped.”\textsuperscript{209} She notes that sharing these concrete and complex stories is particularly important in the educational formations of students of color, who often have complex and hybrid identities.\textsuperscript{210} Hong defines interreligious education as “spaces where participants are intentionally learning and negotiating the complexities of interreligious life together with the larger system and societal structures of public and religious life. Part of the process of interreligious education and learning is to remain open to one another’s particular cultures and

\textsuperscript{205} Hsiao-lan Hu, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{206} Christine Hong, “Interreligious Education: Transnational and Trans-spiritual Identity Formation in the Classroom,” chapter in \textit{Experiments in Empathy for our Time}.

\textsuperscript{207} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{208} Personal communication with Rachel Mikva, May 21, 2018.

\textsuperscript{209} Hong, \textit{op. cit.}, 2.

\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.
traditions for the sake of appreciation without the need for proselytization.”

Eleazar Fernandez writes, “People of our multifaith context need to develop a different kind of identity, an identity understood not as over-against or in opposition to but in right connection to or in right relationship with the whole….. What we really need is a sense of belonging in which our distinctive difference is respected and taken seriously as our contribution to the whole, not taken as a threat.”

The teacher must create a classroom environment that is hospitable to the diversity and complexities of the students, and make certain that Christian and hegemonic cultural dominance do not negate or constrain that hospitality. It must be a porous classroom, as our contemporary identities and spiritualities are porous, allowing for shifting identities and spiritualities, the possibility of both mutual acceptance and mutual transformation.

Note that because intersectionality assumes complex and interlocking hybridities, it assumes porous and overlapping boundaries between traditions and cultures. It challenges the assumption that individual can fit into neat categories. It is useful in accommodating the secular humanists, “nones,” and “spiritual but not religious” who eschew traditional labels and often cross boundaries of traditions.

An increasingly diverse society has given rise to increasingly diverse classrooms. This is a universal pedagogical challenge. Those who adopt the intersectionality model resist any efforts to by-step or simplify the complex hybrid identities of their students, and the way that such complexities challenge simple heuristic categories and models. They begin from the diverse identities and contexts of the students, and are willing, along with the students, to stretch or challenge basic assumptions about religion, nationality, identity, and so on. Those who embrace this model celebrate the hybridities of their students as a learning opportunity and adopt pedagogical strategies that can embrace these complexities.

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211 Ibid., 8.


213 Ibid., 13.
Contextual Model

The Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, located in Berkeley, California, uses a model of interreligious learning for its immersion programs based on the principles of contextual theology, “wherein faculty and students learn how to ‘read’ sacred traditions in light of particular circumstances, paying ‘attention to how these circumstances shape’ a person’s or a community’s faith.” The contextual model builds on the principles of interreligious learning articulated by Robert Hunt:

Engaging religion simply cannot take place through a textbook, however careful in its deployment of the latest of religious studies perspectives or colorful, diverse, and animated its presentations of the behavior of the followers of the various religions. Engagement and understanding of living religious traditions cannot take place through encounters with objects, especially human beings presented as objects. It requires first an actual encounter between religious people, and secondly an initial awareness of the social, cultural, and historical situation that influences the self-understandings, motivations, and behaviors of all religious people.

JST developed credit-bearing international immersion courses for interreligious learning during a Lilly Endowment Grant; when the grant ended, it assumed financial responsibility for continuing the program. Their institutional commitment was in response to a 2008 call by a General Congregation of the Jesuits to move “more deeply into that dialogue with religions that may show us how the Holy Spirit is at work all over the world that God loves.” They concluded that the contextual learning method would most effectively achieve their educational and formational goals for their students.

The study programs include preparatory study in Berkeley, during which they learn about the religion of the country they will visit and begin to meet and engage with adherents in the Bay Area. When they travel to the country, they are given extended chances to meet and interact with adherents of the local tradition. The 2014-15 immersion on “Islam and Christianity” was designed with faculty at Sanata Dharma University (an Indonesian Jesuit institution) and Gadjah Mada University (UGM), a public institution with


216 Farina and McChesney, 276.
a doctoral program in interreligious studies.\textsuperscript{217} While JST students were in Indonesia they participated in a mini-course on sacred texts with graduate students from UGM and the Islamic State University of Yogyakarta, using an Islamic resource for interreligious study, “A Common Word.”\textsuperscript{218} Students developed deep relations across religious lines, and were encouraged to continue them on social media; thus, in one sense, this is a “friendship model” of interreligious learning.\textsuperscript{219}

JST’s contextual model of interreligious learning is grounded strongly on learning with, learning in the presence of religious others, and in their context, which is seen as a source of theological truth, a \textit{locus theologicus}.\textsuperscript{220} The travel component of this learning is not simply a form of educational tourism, nor mere exposure to another context. The model is based on the premise that the context shapes the theology and thus is necessary for understanding it; it has a very strong notion of theological truth as grounded in lived religion, in particular contexts.

JST’s program is also a form of collaborative learning, “subject-to-subject” pedagogy.\textsuperscript{221} The pedagogical assumption of collaborative learning is that learners discover and construct knowledge through mutual collaboration. Such learning is both emotional and intellectual, cognitive and relational (mutual understanding). And, as noted above, it creates strong relationships across lines of religion and culture.

JST also has developed a survey tool for assessing their interreligious contextual learning, based on work on cultural intelligence and learning theory by Earley and Ang.\textsuperscript{222} The tool measures three aspects of cultural intelligence: cognition, motivation, and behavior. JST has developed a questionnaire asking participants to report a few months after the immersion experience on the cognitive, motivation, and behavioral

\begin{footnotes}
\item[217] Ibid., 277.
\item[218] Ibid., 283.
\item[219] Ibid., 284.
\item[220] Ibid., 282.
\item[221] Ibid.
\item[222] Ibid., 287; citing Christopher P. Earley and Soon Ang, \textit{Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions across Cultures} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
\end{footnotes}
impact of the course. While this self-reporting doesn’t strictly measure a learning outcome, it does assess the learners’ views on the impact of the program.

The contextual learning model is an example of a thoughtfully designed sustained program of interreligious learning.

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223 Ibid., 287-89.
6. Conclusion and Reflections

As promised in the introduction, this conclusion will first attempt to discuss the models comparatively, and then lift up some of the variables by which one can think about the differences among them. I will then offer some critical reflections on issues that require attention, and on possible next steps.

1. Grouping models

The most basic divide between the models is between textual approaches and engagements with lived religion or persons from other religions. Max Müller’s science of religions was based on understanding religious classics from other traditions in order to understand their original teachings. Many colleges and universities and some seminaries carry on a version of that approach, introducing “other religions” through excerpts from their religious classics. This approach foregrounds doctrines written by religious elites and preserved in texts. It has resonated in the study of religion in North America because of the Protestant view that the Bible is the authoritative source for the teachings of Christianity. It is often chosen by theologians who see themselves as studying doctrines, teachings, of principles of Christianity and any religion, so that many approaches to comparative theology and its variants focus on close reading or comparative readings of religious texts. And this approach has been central to some forms of scholarly religious dialogue, seeking to learn from the texts of other religions. History of religions also privileges textual study when it focuses on intellectual history, on debates or issues raised by later interpreters of religious texts.

At the other end of the spectrum are models based on the study or teach lived religions, analyzing the practice and embodiment of religion in specific persons and historical contexts. Some of the missionaries discussed in the backstory came to understand native religions by paying attention to what ordinary persons said, the stories they told, their practices and folkways. The study of lived religions has been championed by anthropologists studying religions in the field, and by those using ethnographic or case studies methods of engaging other religions. Service learning and community engagement (section 5) also engage religion on the ground in ordinary life. Experiential learning, including site visits and immersions --- if they include learning exercises for student to process of what they experience --- also engage religion on
the ground. The practical theological disciplines focus on lived religion: the human problems of practitioners, the religious formation of persons. Community Leadership programs (section 5) stress lived religions, the ways religion affects lives and can address social issues. Intersectional approaches to interreligious learning (section 5) recognize the complex, hybrid religious lives of people, and stress the complexity of personal stories and the porosity of boundaries of culture, religion, etc. Co-formation programs (section 5) recognize that each person’s religious identity is formed in a complex web of human and social relationships.

Interreligious living centers and some campus chaplaincy programs (section 5) carry this sense of lived religion to a logical conclusion; in these examples interreligious learning is all about establishing relationships with others, learning to live with those who come from different backgrounds.

Some toward the “lived religion” pole of this continuum claim that interreligious learning must involve an actual engagement with religious others. Yet the distinction between these two poles is gradually blurring. As more and more courses on religion include some form of experiential learning or film or video, students are drawn beyond the text to see “religion in the world.”

Several toward the more textual pole are including actual engagement of persons. Herveta and Scriptural Reasoning approaches to textual study (section 4) include learning with and from persons from multiple traditions. Even some theologians (section 3) are making the case for engagement. Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong (section 4) claimed, “The days when one could pontificate about religious others without knowing anything about them or without having interacted with them are over.”224 John Thatamanil’s embodied wisdom approach (section 5) to comparative theology involves the practice (embodiment) of another tradition as a way of learning its wisdom. Courses on religious traditions in colleges and universities increasingly include some form of experiential learning (service learning, or ethnographic study). And a number of approaches on the “lived religions” pole understand the importance of engaging the “teach-

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224 Yong, Beyond the Impasse, 19.
ings” of a religion as preparation for or help in understanding experiential religious engagement. I will discuss the implications of various understandings of “religion” more deeply below.

Another important variable for analyzing models is the extent to which the engagement with multiple religions goes beyond simple exposure. (section 3) As noted above, exposure (one course about another religious tradition or a survey of “world religions”, one reading from another religious tradition in a core course, a site visit without explicit learning outcomes, a class visit from a representative of “another religion”) was among the earliest approaches to learning about religious others. Exposure persists today in some institutions. It resembles early approaches to Women’s Studies -- “add women and stir.” Add-on approaches don’t require reform of traditional curricular models; they limit the strains on faculty who may have little familiarity with religions beyond their specialty. As noted above, there is some merit even in simple exposure: it helps address interreligious literacy (providing knowledge about multiple traditions), and it alerts students to the reality of beliefs, practices, and values other than those they received. However, after almost three decades of interreligious education, it is perhaps time to ask whether these exposures have articulated learning outcomes that will genuinely impact the interreligious understanding of students. When these are viewed simply as add-ons (and not core to the course and curriculum) it is difficult to see what long-term impact they can have. With some intentional pedagogical reflection, these learning experiences can be designed to have real impact, but that means setting clear pedagogical goals for interreligious education. Why, exactly, are we doing this? What is its educational purpose?

Behind that question are several other questions which merit our attention.

2. **Issues to consider**

   a. **Language and Cultural Context: On whose Ground?**

   In the backstory, I noted that missionaries who achieved a sound understanding of and positive attitude toward non-Christian religions were those who made a deep commitment to knowing the languages, culture, and people. Matteo Ricci immersed himself in Chinese language and classics, opening himself and his European colleagues to the wisdom of the East. Missionaries in tribal Africa learned the
languages, the folklore, and the social values and structures, and befriended the people among whom they worked. Their knowledge inspired them to vigorously deny any notion of the “primitive mind” and to write highly respected ethnographic studies that nuanced and corrected then current anthropological theories about the evolution of “religion.”

Given that background, it is striking – and a matter of concern – how many efforts in interreligious learning sponsored by United States institutions happen only in English and on U.S. soil. This is in large part a practical matter – not all students can make a commitment to learn languages or to live for an extended period in another cultural setting -- but it raises serious learning issues. In today’s global world the dominance of English as a *lingua franca* can render invisible or at least pallid the values and world views of diverse cultures. While many adherents of non-Christian religions in the U.S. speak excellent English, there are always ideas, words, symbols, and practices that cannot be adequately described or explained without some knowledge of the original language and the cultural context out of which they arose. This creates a serious barrier to the English speaker’s full appreciation and puts the representative of the non-Christian religion in the awkward position of being unable to adequately convey important matters. Moreover, it replicates yet again the hegemony of English language and of U.S. culture in the world.

We have seen in our above examples several attempts to address this issue: for instance, the HUC-JIR program in Hebrew Bible for Christian students on its own campus, introduced in the backstory section on contexts. Christian students were not only immersed deeply in Hebrew language, but also in the Jewish scholarly and pedagogical approaches to the Jewish text. They were asked to enter and learn to negotiate a Jewish educational environment.

Hartford Seminary was a pioneer in recognizing the importance of language study for the understanding of Islam; it has been offering Arabic courses for some seven decades.\(^{225}\)

Frank Clooney’s approach to intertextual comparative theology, introduced in Section 4, is another example. Clooney was trained in Sanskrit and committed to close and deep reading of Sanskrit texts and

\(^{225}\) Heidi Hadsell, personal communication, August 14, 2018.
commentaries as a way to open, stretch, nuance and enrich his Christian views. Other comparative theologians, introduced in Section 4, build on their own cultural hybridity – knowledge of the culture, its stories and symbols, and its vernacular language --- to find mutual resonances and meeting points between Christianity and traditional cultural religions or stories.

These examples are on the doctoral level, where students may be required to engage in extended language study. It is more challenging to address the dominance of English at the masters level, where so many students engage in interreligious education.

Several of the hevruta approaches to interreligious textual study, especially those introduced in Section 4, seek to bring in the original language as far as possible, either through the facilitator or through the knowledge of one of the partners.

Finally, the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University’s contextual immersion course in Indonesia, introduced in Section 5, took students to another cultural site to “read” that site as a locus theologicus that shapes and informs the views of the local religion, and also engages their students in joint textual study with native students of the local tradition. Although the visit was brief, students were prepared for it by prior study in Berkeley engaging Muslim communities in the Bay Area; the overseas study was designed in full partnership with Indonesian institutions; and the joint textual study was designed by Indonesian professors.

There is, of course, ample religious difference even in the English-speaking context of the United States. I simply highlight here the persistent tendency of Americans to rely on the global hegemony of English without recognizing how that puts non-English speakers at a dramatic disadvantage when they seek to articulate their religious views and practices. It also creates an epistemological challenge for the English-language learners, especially if texts are chosen to be “accessible” and speakers are discouraged from using examples from their own language. Part of the experience of interreligious learning is entering “another world,” encounter the gap of difference which must be overcome.
b. Moving Beyond Christian-dominated Curricular Structures

Acknowledging the efforts just described, I note that the vast majority of models of interreligious learning, particularly in theological schools and seminaries, ask adherents of other traditions to represent their tradition in English and in a Christian setting. It is commendable that so many Christian seminaries have taken the lead in interreligious education, but it is challenging for them to transcend the limits of their Christian setting in designing genuinely mutual interreligious learning experiences. Visits to the American sites of other religions are a form of corrective, particularly if the visitors are asked to learn and observe the appropriate behaviors for respecting the site. Such visits ask students to bodily and attitudinally acknowledge that they have entered the ground of the other religion, if only briefly. Such site visits (Section 5) are even more effective when students are asked to take note of and reflect on the experience of being on unfamiliar ground, of adapting to “another religious world,” metaphorically speaking.

There are other pedagogical methods to acknowledge the linguistic and cultural particularity of the non-Christian religion being engaged: use of film and video can offer rich, three-dimensional depictions of context; music or foods can engage the senses; and spending focused time with unfamiliar texts, terms, or symbols requires wrestling with difference in order to come to understanding. While it is tempting to choose only highly accessible texts and learning experiences, one essential aspect of interreligious learning is to open oneself to difference. To be sure, the challenging texts or experiences or examples must be carefully chosen so as not to reinforce media or cultural stereotypes of the unfamiliar religion. If the class is interreligious in composition, it is important to let adherents of non-dominant traditions have an opportunity to shape the content and issues raised in the course rather than asking them to represent their tradition in response to the terms in which the instructor has framed it.

Interest in interreligious dialogue and interreligious learning has often come from Christians. While well-intentioned, these initiatives ask “others” to participate on Christian grounds and on Christian terms. I learned this lesson on my first visit to Taiwan, when I had the opportunity to meet with a Buddhist abbot. Having studied Buddhism for years, I had a number of questions I was eager to ask a Buddhist monk. But when I sat down, I was served tea, and asked, “What are the Four Noble Truths?” I suddenly realized that
not only was I on Buddhist ground, but that the abbot --- not I – was in control of the conversation, and he was following his Buddhist rules: I was to be examined so that he could assess my readiness for Buddhist teaching. That experience made me sensitive to situations in which I – or other well-intentioned Christians – have unconsciously asked Buddhists, or Muslims, or Jews to accommodate our rules of conversation or engagement. It is natural, and perhaps inevitable, that the “host” of interreligious education programs will set the terms and ethos of the learning experience. But if interreligious learning is to flourish, those who offer it need to become better at designing a genuinely mutual conversation (taking into account the sensibilities and learning approaches of all participants) so that such learning will be both useful, appropriate, and genuinely hospitable to all.

The revised GTU doctoral program, inaugurated in 2016, is one significant experiment in an attempt to make interreligious education more interreligious in conception. In the earlier doctoral program the “other religions” were relegated to a separate Area, Cultural and Historical Studies of Religions. This worked well for students who were specializing in a non-Christian religion, but students doing interreligious studies --- especially those from Asia, South America, or Africa, or from native peoples, often turned to Interdisciplinary Studies to be able to work at the intersection of or on the engagement between religions. The pattern was first broken when the Jewish studies faculty moved in the Church History Area, facilitating research on Jewish-Christian engagements across history. Finally, after several unsuccessful attempts since 1990, the doctoral faculty adopted a new program in which all of the newly designed departments were interreligious. The revised program had four departments: Sacred Texts and their Interpretation; Historical and Cultural Studies of Religion; Theology and Ethics; and Religion and Practice. Each of the departmental required seminars were to be taught inter-religiously, and students were to be encouraged to engage in interreligious research.

I write of the GTU model as an experiment because it is still in its early phase. The faculty and students are still discovering how to embody this new curricular design, which does not mirror traditional “disciplines” or employment categories of theological education and the study of religion. And there are challenges. For instance, the first incarnation of the required seminar for Sacred Texts and their Interpretation...
tion, co-taught by a Hindu scholar and a Biblical scholar, made visible the very different understandings of scholarly training in textual interpretation in these fields. Biblical scholars in particular were concerned that their students would not get the specialized training that would prepare them for their field. It will take several iterations of the seminar and more discussion among the faculty to envision how the new interreligious department can work most effectively. During the next decade or so the faculty, and the students in the program, will be seeking to transcend long-standing Christian-dominated curricular assumptions to develop a new conceptual approach to scholarship in religion in this interreligious world. Other institutions will be able to learn from the successes, challenges, and failures of the experiment. It is noteworthy that, like the early program at Hebrew Union College, the GTU is creating a cadre of scholars who will have the background to create effective programs in the interreligious study of religion.

Another reason for Christian-dominated curricular structures is that a great many interreligious programs are located in Christian-origin theological schools or divinity schools. In the backstory section on Jewish and Muslim approaches to interreligious education, we noted that even well-intentioned programs in Christian-origin schools are sometimes still dominated to a great extent by Christian educational structures. There have long been, to be sure, Jewish seminaries and institutions of learning, and the early program at Hebrew Union College was notable in bringing Christian students into a Jewish-structured learning environment. But there are relatively few Muslim schools in the United States.

An interesting example is Zaytuna College, the first accredited Muslim college in the U.S. Its predecessor Zaytuna Institute had been founded in 1996 in Hayward, California, by Sheikh Hamza Yusuf and a partner. In 2008, Hamza Yusuf, Zaid Shakir, and Hatem Bazian founded Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California. With a commitment to providing a thoroughly Muslim education and formation of community leaders, Zaytuna College

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226 Rita Sherma, personal communication, 2/13/18.

Zaytuna’s vision has been shaped by the principles of Islamic learning, with a strong commitment to Arabic language and knowledge of primary Muslim texts. And yet, it has located itself right in the midst of the Graduate Theological Union, an interreligious consortium in Berkeley. And it is exploring even more extensive academic relationships with the GTU. Zaytuna’s presence stimulates the GTU to think even more deeply about how to ground its interreligious learning in a less Christian-dominated curricular assumptions, to learn from a Muslim understanding of interreligious learning.

As more Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu programs develop, they will provide alternative models of interreligious education.

c. What about “Religion”?

Embedded in the various examples discussed in this report are numerous understandings of what constitutes the “religious” in interreligious learning. These differences reflect not only differing academic approaches to the “study of religion,” but also the shifting meanings of “religion” across different traditions and in contemporary culture.

Even within a particular culture and a particular “tradition” there can be different understandings of “religion,” as in the case of the Jesuits engaging with classical Confucian texts and Dominicans engaging with folk “Confucian” beliefs among the common people: this difference led to their conflict over the ancestral rites in China. (See backstory) An extension of this difference is the view of religions as textual traditions (as in Müller’s science of religions) vs. religion as embedded in the various aspects of culture: in Bender’s words, “the many, many ways that ‘religion’ matters in the scope of human history.”

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228 Zaytuna College website (zaytuna.edu), accessed May 7, 2018.

229 E-mail from Courtney Bender, 4/18/2016.
ence between textual articulations of a tradition and historical/social scientific analysis of religion in specific cultural contexts is dramatic.

Textual approaches tend to view each religion as a tradition articulated and recorded by its intellectual and/or priestly elite. Such “religion” is often taught in courses on “a tradition.” As we noted in the report, requiring courses on “other religions” (the exposure model, section 3) was often the first step interreligious education. It is assumed that an overview of a tradition provides important knowledge to address religious illiteracy. Such overviews provide a wealth of information about beliefs, practices, and values as recorded in texts, but tend to underplay the diversity and conflict, both over time and contemporaneously, within such “traditions.” Some programs, aware of this limitation, use specific types of and approaches to texts as a way to get at the living, breathing tradition.230

In addition to understanding a religion as a tradition articulated in texts, some approaches see texts as an important window on “religion.” Again, there are multiple understandings of in what way texts serve as a window. The bevruta tradition of textual study, as practiced by Rabbinical Reconstructionist College or the Graduate Theological Union’s Madrassa-Midrasha course (section 4) see the spiritual traditions of textual interpretation as a vehicle of personal spiritual growth, and thus have interreligious pairs study their spiritual texts together. The Scriptural Reasoning approach (section 4) sees sacred texts as functioning in an intertextual world, not necessarily tied to as tradition; thus the interpretations of adherents of the texts’ original tradition are not given any preference over the interpretations of outsiders. The “interreligious” requirement of the Graduate Theological Union’s Master of Arts (section 3) that every student take a course outside their own tradition sees texts as embodying a way of thinking that represents the religion.

Some extend the GTU’s view to see religious texts in their original languages as embodying the scholarly or intellectual practice that, for them, are the heart of the religion. Examples include Francis Clooney’s deep reading approach to comparative theology (section 4), HUC – JIR’s graduate program in

230 Personal communication, Rachel Mikva, May 21, 2018.
Hebrew Bible for Christian Students (see backstory), IIIT's program in Islamic Studies at their Fairfax Institute (see backstory), and doctoral programs that include extended language study.

Others understand religion as spiritual or pastoral practices, means of engaging practitioners with the divine. Such understandings are reflected in John Thatamanil’s understanding of theology as “embodied wisdom,” and thus his proposition to have interreligious learners engage the spiritual practices of another religion (section 5), or RRC’s program on Cultivating Character by sharing Muslim and Jewish spiritual practices for spiritual renewal among community leaders (section 5).

In theological education, religious studies, and co-curricular activities at colleges and universities, there is increasing emphasis on lived religion --- seeing religion as infused in the lives of an individual or community. Jeffrey Carlson’s experiential course on religious diversity in Chicago (section 5) studied “living religion.” The University of Santa Clara’s service learning courses have students engage living religion in community organizations and leaders (section 5). The University of Santa Clara’s Jesuit School of Theology’s contextual immersion experience (section 5) engages individuals and contexts of lived religion both in the U.S. and in Asia. In addition, site visits, interviews with adherents of religions, and case studies are increasingly common assignments in both secular colleges and theological schools. Luther Seminary’s community engagement program on Christian presence (section 5) was structured around the lived religion of both Christians and Muslims in a Twin Cities neighborhood. It should perhaps be noted that this move toward emphasis on “lived religion” was cited as the reason that the Interfaith Youth Core insists on interfaith, rather than interreligious. Eboo Patel writes,

> I prefer “faith” to “religious” because interfaith leaders are not primarily concerned with abstract religious systems (for example, Hinduism or Judaism) interacting; we are concerned with real-world people who relate to these religious traditions coming into contact with one another.\(^{231}\)

Theological schools understand religion as a commitment to a way of life. Indeed, outside of the secular college setting, it is often assumed in our culture that one’s life decisions are “at stake” when one engages or thinks about religion.

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Religion is often understood as an identity marker that carries a set of values and justice commitments. The Interfaith Youth Core (section 5) sees religion as carrying social capital, and thus positioning religious persons for leadership in civil society. And there is increasing recognition that religion as an identity marker is complex in today’s global and transnational world: Asian Christians often experience a dual identity, living two stories – as Asian and as Christian -- (section 4); hybrid religious identities are common among migrants, transnationals, and persons of color (section 5). Moreover, given the flow of persons, or practices and symbols, of texts and art, the fastest rising demographic of “religious identity” in the U.S. is “none,” or “spiritual but not religious”; yet many who so identify are strongly interested in or engaged with a variety of religious practices. Religion as an identity marker is increasingly understood as porous, fluid, and complex – not necessarily tied to a community or a “tradition.”

Religion is a construct or category that can be viewed from many angles; each perspective reveals some aspects of “religion” and neglects or obscures others. All of the angles are valid (as in the parable, they are all parts of “the elephant”), but practitioners of interreligious education need to be aware of this vast range. Does the learner’s “angle” on religion match that of the person or experience s/he is engaging? Do the learning experiences we design (curricular or co-curricular) engage “religion” as it is important to the learners? And do our Student Learning Outcomes (goals and intentions for learners) match the assumptions about “religion” that learners bring to a course or that are embedded in the learning experiences we design?

d. Goals of Interreligious Education: Student Learning Outcomes

In the diversity of approaches examined in this report, we also discern very different educational experiences with very different outcomes. These can be broadly grouped into four categories. They are not inherently mutually exclusive; a number of interreligious initiatives include goals in more than one of these categories. Yet the primary learning outcomes will shape the learning experiences and the pedagogical assumptions of interreligious education.
A number of interreligious initiatives are committed to combating religious or interreligious illiteracy by educating students in knowledge (information) about religions or religious diversity. While such knowledge is important in combating media or cultural stereotypes, such courses are not interreligious in the sense that students actually engage an unfamiliar religion. They are background or groundwork for such engagement, but fall short of our definition of interreligious learning. Mary Hess helpfully substitutes religious fluency for religious literacy because “we also need to be able to communicate across deep divides and in the face of multiple global challenges.” Religious fluency moves beyond “mere information” to developing the foundation for engagement and communication across religious lines.

Many interreligious learning initiatives, especially but not exclusively those in colleges and universities, have cognitive learning outcomes, in line with the educational goals of their institutions. These include

- understanding of texts, ideas, cultures, traditions or of “big ideas” about the meaning and issues of human life
- explanation of the role of religion in culture and particular contexts (how religion matters)
- analysis/engagement with religious sites or practices on the ground
- solving problems, as in analyzing cases of religious diversity
- mastering interpretive practices of traditions
- interpretive skills in reading texts/contexts.

Other approaches are aimed at skill development, including the following:

- finding commonality amidst diversity
- navigating religious diversity (esp. in co/extracurricular initiatives)
- establishing relationships across difference
- collaboration for justice or service
- adapting pastoral practices across religious lines

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• evaluating issues of differences What are the obstacles to understanding across difference?
• Leadership
• Reducing conflict, creating bridges
• Creating binding narratives
• Critical thinking, including mutually respectful disagreement
• Oral expression
• Listening with humility

Many interreligious education initiatives aim to establish relationships across difference, whether intellectual friendships based on interfaith textual study, collaborative alliances to work for justice or social good, enduring personal relationships developed through conversation and sharing, or practicing being present with and hospitable to others. Research has shown that having a relationship with someone of another faith undercuts stereotypes and negative images. While we do not normally see the establishment of relationships as a “learning outcome,” the positive implications of such relationships for understanding invites us to re-examine this assumption.

Finally, and particularly in theological education, interreligious education aims at personal and spiritual growth and maturity — formation. These learning outcomes include openness to diverse persons and ideas, humility about one’s own stance, sensibilities to the values and constraints of others, empathy, compassion, changing attitudes or ways of thinking, openness to enriching one’s own beliefs, enriching spiritual practice, understanding and challenging oppressive practices of one’s own tradition or culture, becoming present and hospitable to others, ability to appreciate difference.

A number of institutions have seen interreligious relationships not as a goal or outcome of theological education, but as its very context and nature: students are “formed with” and in relationship with those different from themselves. Human beings are formed in interrelationship, and in this diverse world, cul-

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tures, traditions, and identities are porous, fluid, and complex, we cannot be fully formed except in relationship within a richly diverse environment.

Student learning outcomes define the immediate goals for student learning within the course or workshop, but what are the long-term (vocational or life) goals of interreligious learners? What are they to become? How are they to use this learning in their lives? Eleazar Fernandez offers one description of these in the form of questions:

How shall we educate our faith communities so that they can practice hospitality in the world of many faiths? How are we to prepare religious leaders who are capable of leading congregations and communities in the practice of hospitality in a multifaith complex? How are we to equip religious leaders in the practice of ministry in multifaith settings?

And he goes further to articulate what he sees at stake in interreligious education. In a dangerous world filled with tensions, threats, violence, and mutual antagonism, he claims,

We must think, dwell, and act differently, if we are to avoid the clash of fundamentalisms and barbarisms. This project is an attempt to bear witness to my struggle to hope amidst the sea of hopelessness, and to my belief that we still can make a difference and that another world is possible. We have to believe it: another world is possible.

For many seminaries and theological schools, the vocational goal of interreligious learning is to provide religious leaders with the skills and sensibilities to negotiate a religiously diverse world. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (backstory), for instance, wants its rabbinical graduates to “get it right” about Muslims, and to help Jews understand and engage their Muslim neighbors. Christian seminaries acknowledge that their graduates will minister within religiously diverse communities, and that their congregations will need guidance in negotiating religiously diverse families, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Indeed, the Association of Theological Schools’ standards for addressing multifaith issues (backstory) assert that Christian leaders of all denominational and theological stripes need to engage religious diversity as part of their theological education. Auburn Seminary (section 5) trains religious leaders (lay and ordained) with the skills and sensibilities for social action in a religiously diverse world. Episcopal Divinity School (section 5)

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5) recognizes that its graduates will be called to participate in interreligious councils and initiatives in their local communities.

Colleges and universities (backstory) and centers like the Center for Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union (backstory) engage in interreligious education to prepare students to be effective citizens in a religiously diverse world --- able to both understand the dynamics of religious diversity in our society, as through the case study method (backstory), and to open themselves to and engage with religious persons, ideas, and practices that are quite different from their own backgrounds. Because the world is increasingly religiously diverse and because stereotypes and misinformation can create serious tension and social issues, the educated person needs some interreligious literacy. The college-wide program at Rosary College of Dominican University (backstory) is built on the presumption that in a global world, persons in every profession and line of work will encounter religious difference in the workplace --- that interreligious education is necessary for those preparing for all sorts of careers.

Eboo Patel would strongly endorse the need for a citizenry educated for interreligious literacy, but he also sees “interfaith leader” as an identity category, a role, a vocation. When a woman told him that he had inspired her to be an interfaith leader, he writes, “that woman’s comment made me realize that ‘interfaith leader’ could be an identity category like ‘social entrepreneur.’” He sees that interfaith leaders, working in civil society, can help to build bridges of understanding and friendship between those of different faiths. Interreligious education can give them the sensibilities and skills to be effective in such leadership.

Thus while there is not a distinct career category for interreligious leaders, except for leadership of institutions and non-profits working on interreligious issues, there is a sense among many educators that interreligious skills and sensibilities are needed for success in a range of professions.

3. Next Steps: The Path Ahead

a. Metrics/Assessing Interreligious Learning

Neither the published literature nor interviews yielded much specific information about the

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236 Eboo Patel, Interfaith Leadership, 27.
metrics for assessing interreligious learning, either assessing the learning outcomes or assessing the long-term impact. Many institutions are attending closely to what works and does not work in their interreligious education, but their evaluation is largely based on general student feedback rather than strict assessment of learning outcomes. For instance, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (backstory) has several times rethought and redesigned its approach based on changing societal circumstances and the feedback not only of their own students, but of their Muslim partners. Chicago Theological Seminary (section 5) created an interfaith cohort of students based on thoughtful critique of their core curriculum by the faculty. There is serious evaluative reflection about interreligious education, but less attention to metrics per se.

Perhaps one reason is that in educational institutions interreligious learning is so embedded in and with broader educational objectives. The general cognitive learning outcomes, discussed above, are general cognitive skills, common to many other courses: understanding, explanation, analysis, problem solving, interpretation. While these may be measured through assessment tools, there is nothing inherently “interreligious” about them, except that they are being used for understanding across lines of religious difference. The same can be said for some of the general skill outcomes listed above, especially critical thinking and oral expression. Note that these were cited as outcomes primarily in secular institutions. The other skill outcomes could be seen as more centrally relevant to “interreligious learning.” Some of these were “outcomes” primarily in extra- and co-curricular programs – particularly collaboration, leadership, navigating religious diversity, creating bridges. Others, such as reducing conflict, are more of a desired long-term impact of interreligious learning; this could only be measured by following and measuring the effectiveness of graduates of programs in their future activities. There is as yet scant literature on what specific course learning outcomes (and what learning activities) can lead toward the longer-term goals.

There are, however, three examples from the published literature that suggest what sort of metrics can be developed for assessment. The Interfaith Youth Core, as noted above in Section 5, has offered workshops on interfaith pedagogy and assessment for teachers of colleges and universities. In an announcement calling for grant proposals, they write:
Assessment is particularly important for this project in order to demonstrate the value of courses that infuse Interfaith Studies in professional education. IFYC will leverage its specialized team of assessment experts to run workshops exclusively for grantee faculty on designing learning outcomes and developing corresponding assessment tools. Assessment will also be a major theme of the mid-project workshop.\footnote{Interfaith Youth Core, “*Interfaith and Pre-Professional Curricular Grants: Request for Proposals,”* 5; sent by Noah Silverstein in response to e-mail interview 4/13/2016.}

Eboo Patel also seeks to assess the effectiveness of IFYC’s community leadership programs, measuring the three vectors that “social scientists use to measure America’s religious diversity”: attitudes, relationships, and knowledge. Patel calls this the “interfaith triangle.”\footnote{Patel, *Interfaith Leadership*, 101.} He notes that the three are interrelated, particularly attitudes and relationships, citing Pew research.\footnote{Ibid., 101-2.} These vectors would presumably be measured by surveys of participants. I have not seen published data on the survey instruments designed by IFYC, but it is much harder to “measure” attitudes and relationships than knowledge.

Yehzkel Landau has delineated twenty attributes of effective interfaith leadership that serve as outcomes in a central course in the interreligious program at Hartford Seminary: five areas of knowledge or awareness; eight skills; and seven personal qualities.\footnote{Yeheskel Landau, “Interfaith Leadership Training at Hartford Seminary: The Impact of the Advanced ‘Building Abrahamic Partnerships’ Course,” DMin thesis, Hartford Seminary, 2013; cited and summarized in Lucinda Mosher, “Beyond World Religions,” 84-85.} These specified areas of knowledge, skills, and personal qualities are the foundation for a sound assessment program.

The Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University has developed a survey assessment tool for its contextual learning model (Section 5). They do an assessment of student learning both at the conclusion of the trip and then five to eight weeks later, using both a Likert scale for “before/during/and after”, and a “free response” section for students to express themselves in their own words. The tools’ three key questions are drawn from work on “cultural intelligence” (CQ)
and learning theory.\textsuperscript{241} Earley and Ang’s cultural intelligence has three aspects: cognition, motivation, and behavior.\textsuperscript{242} Farina and McChesney have expanded the concept of cultural intelligence to measure interreligious intelligence. They noted that the factors of cognition, motivation, and behavior were central to several models used to measure sustained features of practical learning.\textsuperscript{243} Thus they adapted them as key questions on the Leikert scale statements on their assessment survey.

Statement 22: “As a result of this immersion, my ability to accurately understand religious differences and commonalities has significantly improved.”

Statement 23: “As a result of this immersion, I feel more motivated to interact with people from religions other than my own.”
Statement 24: “As a result of this immersion, I can better express myself and according to diverse religious settings and norms.”\textsuperscript{244}

These measures also resonate with the general pastoral skills and learning outcomes of JST’s educational program.

While self-reported surveys have some limitations as assessment tools (they do not measure actual skills and behavior, but self-reported ones), and although five to eight weeks out is a fairly limited time frame to measure long-term outcomes, JST’s report of this assessment tool is a thoughtful example of assessment based squarely on established educational literature.

In the practical disciplines, such as interfaith chaplaincies, the professional organizations have established standards for the skills and competencies required, and so have a solid basis for assessment. The assumption is that the skills and competencies are pertinent to practitioners of all religions; that assumption may be nuanced over time and with more experience.

\textsuperscript{241} Marianne Farina, CSC, and Thomas McChesney, SJ, “A Contextual Model for Interreligious Learning,” 287, citing Earley and Ang, \textit{Cultural Intelligence}.

\textsuperscript{242} Earley and Ang, \textit{Cultural Intelligence}, 4.

\textsuperscript{243} Farina and McChesney, 288.

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 289.
As interreligious education continues to be practiced across a range of models, it is important to attend to the development of assessment tools. It would be helpful for schools to share their experiences and concepts about effective measures for interreligious learning.

b. What about the Arts?

One aspect of interreligious learning barely mentioned in our above examples is the role the arts can play in interreligious education. This omission is particularly striking because of the central role that the arts have played in our society as a means of addressing religious diversity and interreligious understanding. Indeed, the arts have long been an avenue through which humans have engaged images, tales, practices, and ideas from religions other than their own. The flow of images, symbols, stories, and ideas from many religions along the Silk Road is a vivid example of this phenomenon.

Since September 11, 2001, there has been a flourishing of plays engaging Islam, but also about Afro-Carribean religious traditions, various forms of Christianity and Judaism, Mormonism, and others. There have been scores of museum exhibits on Islamic Art, both contemporary and tradition, but also on a broad range of religious traditions, as well as on periods in which there was rich encounter among religions.

William Dyrness has written that,

Until recently the study of religion in Western theological schools and departments of religion has focused mainly on written texts --- students’ education has consisted largely of reading religious texts and writing their own commentaries in the form of additional texts. Meanwhile the exposure of most people to religions other than their own is more likely to be via aesthetic or ritual objects and practices. Many people have seen Buddhist sculptures in a museum, or have heard a Muslim call to prayer while traveling; very few have any exposure to the Quran, to say nothing of ancient Pali texts.245

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Dyrness has written books on the aesthetics, the religious imaginations, of Buddhist and Muslim communities, using ethnographic studies to understand what images, spaces, and practices do for the religious lives of people, how they make their religion come alive.\textsuperscript{246}

Many institutions assign visits to religious sites, where students will encounter the art and aesthetics of the tradition, but it is unclear how often the pedagogical assignments intentionally take advantage of the art at those sites as a learning tool, as opposed to an enrichment experience (simple exposure). Some courses also take students to local museums or galleries. But there is again scant attention in the literature or interviews of the role that art can play in opening up and developing interreligious learning. Dyrness’s approach to interfaith aesthetics offers rich suggestions for using the aesthetic dimensions of site visits to foster interreligious learning.

The Center for Arts and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union is an example of an educational institution intentionally using arts for interreligious education. For instance, its 2017 exhibition “Reverberating Echoes: Contemporary Art Inspired by Islamic Art” featured both Muslim and non-Muslim artists engaging Muslim techniques and principles to create contemporary art. This on-campus exhibit was visited by a number of GTU classes as one of their assignments.

Yale University has an interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures, which produces a journal, collections of essays, seminars and archives of images. This is a rich resource for teaching about arts in relation to religion.\textsuperscript{247}

In an article on the museum as spiritual or secular space, John Reeve describes an intriguing example.

Indian educator Shobita Punja explains how she created a course for Hindu sixth formers in Delhi, introducing other faiths including Islam at a time of major political tension over faith and identity. Central to the development of this initiative was meeting with represent-

\textsuperscript{246} \textit{Ibid.}, 8, 101-2, and elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{247} See \url{www.movac.yale.edu}, accessed 4/24/18.
tatives of other faiths and accessing resources of [multiple] museums and places of worship.\textsuperscript{248}

Punja’s course was designed in conversation with leaders from various religious communities, and used both museum artifacts and visits to religious sites as experiential learning experiences.

There is a welcome article by Cindi Beth Johnson of United Seminary of the Twin Cities, who proposes that “the arts are also a fitting partner for interfaith dialogue; that they too help us as we reconstruct new ways of thinking and dwelling amid our diversity… and that their ability to do this comes from their power to tap into our ways of knowing – and unknowing – in a deep and often mysterious way.”\textsuperscript{249} Johnson admits that while there is much happening in the arts to address interfaith issues, we have not developed many methods and models for using arts effectively in the enterprise of interreligious education. Yet she strongly asserts the power of the arts to lead us to discover new ways of knowing, being, and learning, moving us “to transcend and see one another.”\textsuperscript{250} She cites several qualities of the arts that make them effective in leading us into new ways of knowing, being, and thinking. First, the arts live in mystery, in the tension between “cognition and inexpressible experience.”\textsuperscript{251} They invite us to move beyond that for which we already have categories, to enter into a new space with a sense of wonder and openness. Second, the arts are by nature polyvalent. She notes that Doug Adams, a distinguished leader in the field of religion and the arts, often assigned groups of students to record their individual reactions to a work of art, and then share them, experiencing how richly diverse the reactions of other individuals were.\textsuperscript{252} If this were done in interreligious groups of students, or by students with a representative of the tradition which the art represented, it could become a mode of interreligious engagement. Finally, she claims that engagement


\textsuperscript{249} Cindi Beth Johnson, with Jann Catherine Weaver, “Letting the Arts Lead: The Role of Arts in Interfaith Dialogue,” in Teaching for a Multifaith World, 179.

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 180.

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 181.

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 183 – 84.
in and with the arts can transform and change us: we react and then respond within ourselves to our reac-
tion to the art.

While she does not provide a model for an interreligious course per se, she advocates that courses use local museums as learning experiences, and that we invite artists and performers into the learning envi-
ronment. At the Graduate Theological Union, a one-woman performance of a range of Muslim women in different situations opened a powerful conversation, both after the performance and then in classes across the campus, about Muslim lives and realities.

Renowned educational theorist Elliot Eisner has written about the educational potential of the arts. He writes, among other things, “The arts liberate us from the literal; they enable us to step into the shows of others and to experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly.”253 This point speaks directly to the potential of the arts for interreligious learning, since understanding or engaging another religion requires students to “experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly.”

Justin Tanis has developed syllabi for three different institutions which use the arts to explore an issue interreligiously. He taught an undergraduate course at the University of Arizona entitled “The Art of Holy Places,” which used actual or virtual “visits” to sites from a broad range of religions, presented and analyzed by the students, to help students understand religious differences and to ask them to express their “thoughts and beliefs about the connection between our faith and our physical environment.”254 At Iliff School of Theology, he taught a course on “Queer Spirituality in the Visual Arts,” which included Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Goddess/Pagan, and “spiritual but not religious” art. He asked students to select one art work each week for personal reflection, prayer, or meditation,” having them personally en-
gege the spiritual arts of all the traditions studied. He taught a course on “Sexuality in Sacred Art” at the Pacific School of Religion, which included, Goddess/pagan, Hindu, Buddhist, African, and Christian art, asking students to describe the roles that modern religious communities and individuals might play in the


254 Justin Tanis, personal communication 5/2/18.
creative process, especially as it relates to conversations about human sexuality and gender.\footnote{Justin Tanis, private communication, 5/2/18.} Justin’s work represents a frontier in the development of using arts in interreligious education.

Tanis’s syllabi demonstrate the importance of the arts in expressing the identities, the sensibilities, and the central struggles of distinct identity groups, particularly those on the margins. The arts, including popular culture, are ways in which LBGTQ folk and other marginalized groups create themselves, give voice to their lives, in a larger culture that often seeks to render them silent or invisible. This aspects of arts and popular culture is powerfully explored in \textit{Creating Ourselves}, a collaborative volume of African American and Hispanic American scholars on the relation of arts and popular culture to the religious life (the lived theologies) of these communities.\footnote{Anthony Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, eds., \textit{Creating Ourselves: African Americans and Hispanic Americans on Popular Culture and Religious Expression} (Durham and London: Duke University Pressl 2009).}

Tanis’s syllabi also suggest the potential of the arts to address issues of justice as well as interreligious difference. Arts are a powerful resource for exploring justice issues because the arts develop the imagination, the ability to envision new possibilities. Maxine Greene has written:

\begin{quote}
It may be the recovery of imagination that lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane. I am reaching toward an idea of imagination that brings an ethical concern to the fore, a concern that . . . has something to do with the community that ought to be in the making and the values that give it color and significance.\footnote{Maxine Greene, “Imagination, Community, and the School,” in \textit{Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 35; cited in Eisner, \textit{op. cit.}, 83.}
\end{quote}

Art and artists can make a powerful impact. Because arts are more than just cognitive (beliefs and opinions), they invite engagement on many levels; learners encounter mystery and many meanings, and they are often changed (broadened, impacted, moved). The arts can help us to offer far more impactful interreligious education.
c. Location and the Use of Technology

The issue of the arts is also related to the issue of location as a factor shaping both the need for and range of opportunities for interreligious education. Urban areas offer a rich range of diverse religious communities and sites, of museums and theaters. It is no surprise that many of the most vibrant examples of interreligious education are found in urban centers where both the insistent fact of diversity and the rich interreligious resources support development of interreligious learning.

Rural areas often lack the complex religious diversity of their urban counterparts, although areas with large agribusiness factories have drawn religiously diverse workers from around the globe. In less urban areas interreligious learning may be shaped by the presence of a single non-dominant religious group in the region, and may also arise in response to specific anti-Muslim public events. Colleges and seminars in small towns may attempt to address the larger social and cultural issues without the ready availability of sites, guest speakers, museums, or cultural centers. Film and internet can offer resources for interreligious education, but the educational models will differ significantly from programs in places with ready access to first-hand interreligious engagement. It should be noted that online educational programs have been developing models of deep engagement; the limits of location are being transcended in such approaches. This is another area in which schools could benefit from sharing information about resources and effective approaches.

d. Sustainability

One of the greatest challenges to interreligious education is the issue of its sustainability. There are at least three levels of threat to the sustainability of interreligious initiatives.

One is the fragility of institutions, especially theological schools and seminaries. On the one hand, the fragility of institutions has been a driver of interest in interreligious learning: theological schools have

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259 I am indebted to Mary Hess for reminding me of the second point. Personal communication, May 22, 2018.
seen this approach as a way to attract a broader range of students beyond those preparing for religious leadership in Christian churches – community leaders, “nones,” and even adherents of non-Christian religions. Many seminaries face serious financial difficulties. In the two years that I have been researching this report three of the 22 institutions whose representatives I interviewed by e-mail have succumbed to financial pressures, moving and disbanding much of their faculty and academic programs. Andover Newton has moved from Boston and merged into Yale Divinity School, ending its CIRCLE program (section 5) with its fascinating model of co-formation as an essential form of seminary formation. Episcopal Divinity School (section 5) has ended its M. Div. program, left Boston, disbanded its faculty, and merged in different form into Union Seminary, New York. And Claremont School of Theology (section 5) is moving from the Los Angeles area to a site in Eastern Oregon. Claremont has offered a strong interreligious program based on alliances with L.A. area Muslim and Jewish groups; it is unclear whether or how they will be able to continue their program in their new, less diverse location.

The financial stresses on schools can also threaten interreligious initiatives even if the institution itself survives. The very intriguing program based on Christian presence in a diverse neighborhood at Luther Seminary in the Twin Cities (section 5) was discontinued after its original grant, despite the very positive reviews by faculty and participants, because, given financial pressures, it was not deemed central to the mission of the school. In times of scarcity, such an experimental program can become a luxury the school can no longer afford.

The third threat to the stability of the programs is that they are often designed and driven by one highly committed faculty member. If that person retires or leaves, there may be no colleagues to carry on the program. The fragility of committed faculty resources is exacerbated by the fact that so few faculty have been trained in interreligious issues. Jennifer Peace, at Andover Newton, was an exception, with a doctoral dissertation that was itself interreligious. Faculty of color often bring interests in interreligious issues because of their cultural hybridity. But there are only a few doctoral programs training scholars, especially theological faculty, with interreligious skills. There is a need for a reliable pipeline for such scholars, and encouragement of doctoral programs to offer and maintain such programs.
This is in turn related to whether interreligious studies is a distinctive field. As noted above, there are now professional organizations, journals, and a section at the American Academy of Religion that can encourage critical discussion, research, and publication. At this point in history, however, interreligious interests are too often an “add on” to training in theology, biblical studies, or other established discipline. The Society of Jesuits actively encourage its theological scholars to engage a non-Western culture and its religious traditions, but if interreligious education is to become truly robust, there will be a need for a solid cadre of theological faculty prepared to engage interreligious education. Seeing interreligious studies as a distinctive field as opposed to a pervasive, cross-cutting aspect of religious and theological studies, harkens back to early debates among Feminist scholars about whether “women’s studies” was a separate field, or something that cross-cut all disciplines. Whatever the final conclusion of that debate, the need for faculty trained in interreligious studies is urgent and should not be on the shoulders of “minority” faculty who have many other pressures as well.

e. The “Nones”

Another challenge to theological schools and seminaries is the growth of the “nones” (no religious affiliation) or “spiritual but not religious.” Theological schools and seminaries were originally designed to educate students in their own traditions and denominations, but an increasing number of even their students resist such clear affiliations. This cultural change requires curricular and pedagogical adjustments for theological schools. Mary Hess writes,

> Where theological curricula used to be structure to transferable accounts of religious knowing, and thus were primarily concerned with clarifying specific kinds of content, now curricula, to be effective, have to be much more focused on igniting basic interest in religious knowing, and developing critical engagement skills for students who must learn tacitly in the midst of fluid and rapidly changing accounts of religious experience.²⁶⁰

This can be a particular challenge in designing interreligious education, since seminaries and theological schools have a deeply ingrained habit of understanding “interreligious” as engagement of persons repre-

senting stable and distinct traditions. The changing demographics of seminaries and theological schools are forcing attention to this issue, with new approaches and ideas emerging on the learning curve of theological educators. Contemporary realities are more fluid and challenging, inspiring some fundamental rethinking of how to frame “interreligious” learning.

We are still in the midst of developing approaches to interreligious learning, and it will take some years – perhaps decades – for the approach to find its place in higher learning. It is hard to imagine that place from the present moment, as the disciplines are in flux, as institutional pressures will no doubt change the landscape of higher education, as traditions and cultures and identities become more porous and hybrid, and as the place of Christianity and Judaism (once the dominant) in the complex religious mosaic of U.S. culture is evolving. During this period of growth, and shifting ground, it is imperative that we learn from and with one another, both as institutions and as individuals.
## Appendix

### The Detailed Grid: Comparing Models of Interreligious Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>SLOs</th>
<th>Pedagogical Assumptions</th>
<th>Delivery Mode</th>
<th>Goals/Aspirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required in curriculum structure</td>
<td>Undergraduates; professional students</td>
<td>Engage texts; Engage “big issues”; Make interdisciplinary connections</td>
<td>Workers in all fields will engage religious diversity; Opening a conversation will enrich many courses</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary seminars discussing common texts; Tailored Interfaith curriculum</td>
<td>Enrich university wide courses; think in new ways; broaden sense of vocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreligious dialogue</td>
<td>Representatives, adherents</td>
<td>Mutual understanding; relationships</td>
<td>Individual conversations among the faithful lead to mutual understanding</td>
<td>Conferences, formal groups, courses</td>
<td>Openness, friendship, common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreligious Learning Across the Curriculum</td>
<td>College students or seminarians</td>
<td>Knowledge about a tradition; understanding of a tradition</td>
<td>“Knowledge about” is first step toward understanding; tolerance; relationships</td>
<td>Courses: usually a single course</td>
<td>Open minds; prepare for further IR engagement</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pluralist theology of religion</td>
<td>Progressive Protestants</td>
<td>Understand unity of religious Truth</td>
<td>Only one Truth; differences must be reconciled</td>
<td>Books, courses</td>
<td>Unity of religions (with a largely Christian lens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative theology- Clooney</td>
<td>Seminarians; university students</td>
<td>Engage original language; deep understanding of texts and traditions</td>
<td>“religion” embodied in sacred texts; deep engagement with “other” texts enriches one’s Christian understanding</td>
<td>Close reading; Books; courses</td>
<td>Enrich and nuance one’s faith; spiritual openness and maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Euro-American Comparative Theologians</td>
<td>Culturally hybrid Christians (Asian, etc.); seminarians</td>
<td>Engage cultural/religious hybridity; contextualize Christianity</td>
<td>Christianities are culturally embedded; Christian understandings are local/contextualized</td>
<td>Books; courses on “local” Christianities</td>
<td>Enrich Christianity; recognize cultural hybridities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual/Fusion Theology</td>
<td>seminarian students</td>
<td>Address the cultural context of all theology</td>
<td>Openness to indigenous cultures and religions as theological resources</td>
<td>Intertextual reading</td>
<td>Understand the necessity of engaging ideas that challenge their received beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumatological Theology of Religion</td>
<td>(Largely) Evangelical students</td>
<td>See God’s spirit in other religions; transcend one’s parochial view of Christianity</td>
<td>God’s spirit beyond institutional church and historical Jesus; all religions already enculturated</td>
<td>Books, world Christianity courses</td>
<td>Christianity that actively engages other religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hevruta Joint Textual Study</td>
<td>Seminarians; graduate students; college students</td>
<td>Mutual understanding; ability to dialogue and debate; textual analysis; IR relationships; critical thinking; oral expression</td>
<td>Texts embody wisdom of spiritual traditions; honor spiritual practices of interpretation; learn through relationship and dialogue</td>
<td>Pair study of texts; facilitated and structured interpretive conversations</td>
<td>Spiritual growth; dialogical skills; deep and lasting relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scriptural Reasoning</td>
<td>University theological students</td>
<td>Open up multiple textual interpretations; interpretive skills</td>
<td>Self constructed in hermeneutical encounter; texts not tied to “a tradition”; learning from textual engagement</td>
<td>Small IR groups (at least 2/traditions); students present their interpretations and discuss them</td>
<td>Harmony of opposing views; mutual construction of selves; relationships</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Site visits; engage adherents</td>
<td>Colleague students; seminarians</td>
<td>Observe difference; analyze an encounter; broaden imagination</td>
<td>Knowing comes from multisensory/embodied experience/entering another world</td>
<td>Site visits (preparation and follow-up); interviews</td>
<td>Openness; Question one’s given experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincies; co-curricular service; interfaith living</td>
<td>College students; seminarians</td>
<td>Collaboration; relationships; negotiate difference; social skills</td>
<td>Engage “religion” in relationship/collaboration with an individual</td>
<td>Service projects; CPE; events; festivals; social occasions</td>
<td>Friendship; openness; maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service/experiential learning</td>
<td>College students; seminarians</td>
<td>Collaboration; maturity; understanding a new context</td>
<td>Learn by doing; learn through relationship</td>
<td>Well-designed projects with learning components</td>
<td>Character formation; empathy; compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied Wisdom</td>
<td>Seminarians; college students</td>
<td>Reflectively follow practice of another religion; reflect on its Benefits for your spiritual life</td>
<td>Religion is embodied practice that leads to Wisdom; spiritual practices can enrich across boundaries of traditions</td>
<td>Practice and reflection in structured course setting</td>
<td>Spiritual growth; Openness to broader wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating character</td>
<td>Muslim and Jewish religious leaders</td>
<td>Learn a different spiritual practice; reflect on learning</td>
<td>Can forge spiritually deep relationships across IR boundaries</td>
<td>Retreats with time for practice and conversation</td>
<td>Spiritual renewal; spiritual growth; deep relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Seminarians</td>
<td>Engage a new context; analyze needs; establish relationships; design program</td>
<td>Presence (being with) a community leads to active engagement for common good</td>
<td>CPE; social justice work; experiential learning; interviews; service</td>
<td>Create compassionate workers for justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leadership</td>
<td>Leaders and activities, ordained or lay</td>
<td>Leadership skills; negotiate religious difference; collaborate; find common cause; build relationships</td>
<td>Leaders bring religious identity to “lean in” to collaborative work; civil society leadership can build bridges</td>
<td>Seminars; workshops; courses; plans for action; experiential learning</td>
<td>Build bridges; Reduce conflict; create interfaith leaders; reduce prejudice; binding narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-formation</td>
<td>Seminarians</td>
<td>Collaboration; leadership skills; establish relationships</td>
<td>We form religious selves in relationship and collaboration</td>
<td>Leadership seminar; collaborative project; mentoring</td>
<td>Shift paradigm of theological education; spiritual maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Care Model</td>
<td>Aspiring chaplains and spiritual caregivers</td>
<td>Knowledge areas; competencies; spiritual attitudes</td>
<td>Spiritual care competencies and needs cross traditions and cultures</td>
<td>Practice/re-reflections; Self- and peer assessment; supervised practice</td>
<td>Provide spiritual caregivers to all traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td>Seminarians</td>
<td>Negotiate IR and life differences; openness to other contexts and traditions</td>
<td>Complex hybrid identities are starting point for learning; identities and traditions are porous and fluid</td>
<td>Dialogue; Share personal stories</td>
<td>Mutual appreciations; owning of one’s own complex hybridity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual leadership</td>
<td>Seminarians</td>
<td>Read context as theological source; analyze encounter; relationships</td>
<td>Socio-cultural context shapes theology; IR learning leads to friendship</td>
<td>Prep before travel, encountering US adherents; Travel to analyze it; engage in IR textual study using Muslim Common Word method, designed by Islamic faculty</td>
<td>Openness to IR relationships; friendship; establishing continuing IR engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>