

BRIDGE Interfaith Literacy

What is Interfaith Literacy?

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

Preparation

- Send introductory email to participants (sample text available online) to help them prepare for the session, at least one week prior to your scheduled time together is recommended although more time is usually appreciated
- Complete Module 1, [Introduction/Space Setting](#) (approximately 20 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated)
- Download and print one copy of the [Interfaith Literacy Quiz](#) for each participant
- Cue video, [Introduction to Interfaith Leadership, Module 1. 2](#) What is Interfaith?
- Prepare notes, articles, or texts highlighting the individual(s) from your own worldview that embody the values of interfaith cooperation.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the concept of interfaith literacy
- Identify individuals from participants' worldview who embody the values of interfaith cooperation and the common good
- Identify ways to further develop one's interfaith literacy

Introduction (5 Minutes)

Tell participants: Today we will be discussing interfaith literacy. Interfaith literacy is the type of knowledge that contributes to building positive attitudes and relationships across difference, both of which ultimately contribute to a civic social good (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

Within this idea, there are four main categories for exploration:

1. Theologies or ethics of "interfaith cooperation," that is, theological or ethical articulations of the priority of interfaith cooperation
2. Appreciative knowledge of diverse religious traditions

3. Shared values between diverse religious traditions

4. The history of interfaith cooperation

Today we will be discussing the second area, appreciative knowledge, but may touch on other areas as well. Our time together will not be a crash course of the major world religions, but rather a time where we will lift up our own religious traditions, interfaith leaders within them, and common threads amongst all of the traditions present in this group.

Activity: Interfaith Literacy Quiz (5 Minutes)

Tell participants: Since we are on this journey together, let's take a few minutes to see where we are starting from. Please take 5 minutes to complete the interfaith literacy quiz and take a guess on answers where you are not sure. Please remember that none of us are experts here! If you are struggling to choose an answer, that's perfectly normal and why we are here. After working on the quiz independently for 5 minutes we will come together and work through the quiz as a group.

Distribute a copy of the Interfaith Literacy Quiz to each participant. Each participant will fill it out individually.

After everyone has completed the quiz, re-convene the full group for a discussion of the experience.

Interfaith Literacy Quiz Discussion & Debrief (15 Minutes)

One question at a time, walk through each question and solicit responses and explanations from the group.

This should be a learning experience for everyone and all should contribute to the space. Please remember your community agreements and create a space that is welcoming and engaging - we are all learning together!

Once participants have shared their answers and thoughts on each question, please share the correct responses and explanations with the group. Turn to a reflective conversation once you have finished discussing each question.

Ask participants:

- How did we do as individuals and as a group?
- What surprised you about this exercise?
- Did you learn something new about yourself or a worldview?

- How can learning about other worldviews be personally and professionally beneficial for you?

Tell participants: Thank you for sharing and contributing to our group's learning. We just helped increase all of our interfaith literacy!

Tell participants: It's important to understand that our time together will focus on interfaith literacy, not religious literacy. Religious literacy is a basic understanding of the history, central texts (where applicable), beliefs, practices and contemporary manifestations of several of the world's religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical, and cultural contexts (D. Moore, 2018).

Both are important in this work, but for our time together, our primary goal will be on building knowledge that strengthens relationships, or interfaith literacy. Therefore, our activity today will include highlighting the various religious, spiritual, and secular worldviews that are in the room and the leaders from those traditions who have focused on engaging and building relationships between individuals of different worldviews. Certainly, we will discuss other aspects of these worldviews, gaining some religious literacy, but our focus will be on the positive attitudes and relationships that ultimately contribute to a civic social good from the various worldviews present in the room (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

Let's go a little deeper into this concept, further defining "interfaith" by watching this video: [What is Interfaith? \(5 minutes\)](#)

Debrief Video

Ask participants: From what you have heard and seen, how do you understand the differences between interfaith literacy and religious literacy?

Tell participants: As you have noted, interfaith literacy is primarily concerned with the way individuals who orient around religion differently express and live out their worldview. To deepen our understanding of various worldviews, let's form groups (3 to 5) and discuss the religious, spiritual, and secular traditions present and the individuals within those traditions that embody interfaith cooperation.

Small group conversations (Groups of 3 to 5)

Per the email you received prior to this session, each person will have 3-5 minutes to share about one individual from their worldview who embodies interfaith cooperation, either by living out shared values across religious traditions or through a commitment to

the common good. When you are sharing, you will be increasing the interfaith literacy of the other group members; when others are sharing, you are actively increasing your own. While one person is sharing, please listen, take notes, and write down questions. Please pay attention to your non-verbal communication and convey to the person speaking you are actively listening and curious about their worldview. Allow each person to fill the entire 3-5 minutes with their story. After they finish sharing, the next person should begin. Once everyone in the group has shared please feel free to ask clarifying questions of one another until time is called.

As you begin to share about your own worldview, please consider answering these questions:

- What is your worldview?
- Who is one leader from your worldview who embodies interfaith cooperation, either by living out shared values across religious/worldview traditions OR who lives out a commitment to the common good?
- What value or commitment does that person embody? How does that value connect to your religious or worldview tradition?
- What is inspirational to you about this person? How do their values connect to your own?

Tell participants: Please move into your small groups. I will monitor our time so that everyone gets a turn.

Manage time: Keep an eye on the clock and instruct the group to keep moving through individuals so each person has a chance to speak. When the activity is complete, reconvene the full group.

Large group discussion (5 minutes)

Ask participants:

- Tell me about something you learned, something you found inspiring, surprising, or challenging.
- Is this kind of sharing something that you've done before? Why or why not?
- How do you think this kind of knowledge sharing will help you build bridges across lines of religious, spiritual, and secular differences in the future?

Wrapping Up

It's important to help participants think about how they can continue to build their interfaith literacy in intentional ways. No one is ever fully "interfaith literate," rather, we must commit to continually expanding our knowledgebase and be aware of the gaps in our knowledge.

Ask participants: Building interfaith literacy is a lifelong endeavor. What other ways can you commit to building this important knowledgebase in your life?

Tell participants: Thank you for leaning into today's session and sharing your stories. My hope is that you continue to do so in the various spaces you are in. This practice will help you increase your level of comfort in sharing your worldview as well as your colleagues and students.

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey, so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, and thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources that will help support your continued engagement with worldview. Please don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!