

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!

BRIDGE Interfaith Literacy Ethics and Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation

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

Preparation

- To help participants prepare for the session send an introductory email (sample text available online) at least one week prior to your scheduled time together
- Provide one blank sheet of paper for each participant
- Complete [Module 1, Introduction/Space Setting](#) (approximately 20 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated)
- If this the first BRIDGE module you are facilitating for this group, please take time to review the [Glossary of Terms](#) specifically highlighting and discussing interfaith cooperation and worldview after the Space Setting activity (approximately 10 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated)
- Cue video, Introduction to Interfaith Leadership, [Module 6. 2 Ethics and Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation From the Field](#) (approximately 13 minutes)

Learning Outcomes

- Define and understand the concept of ethics and theologies of interfaith cooperation
- Identify and articulate one's ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation
- Identify ways to further develop one's interfaith literacy

Introduction (3-5 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.

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

1. Theologies or ethics 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 first area, theologies and/or ethics of interfaith cooperation. Our time together will not be a crash course of the major world religions, but rather a time where we will reflect and begin crafting our own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation to share with the group as well as a time to learn about the ethics and theologies of interfaith cooperation from the traditions present in this group.

Theology is the study of the nature of God or religious belief and many religious traditions over centuries have expounded upon that question—what is the nature of God and belief—again and again. We talk about a theology or ethic because this exercise is important for people of all worldviews. We do not engage diversity despite our religious, spiritual or secular identities but often because of them. This exercise anchors our commitment to respecting religious and non-religious identity, building relationships and working for the common good in our core values. What from your worldview inspires you to build relationships across difference? This question is both deeply personal and strategic—connecting to the heart of why people do what they do is important in building respect, relationships and partnerships.

Activity: Individual Work (10 minutes)

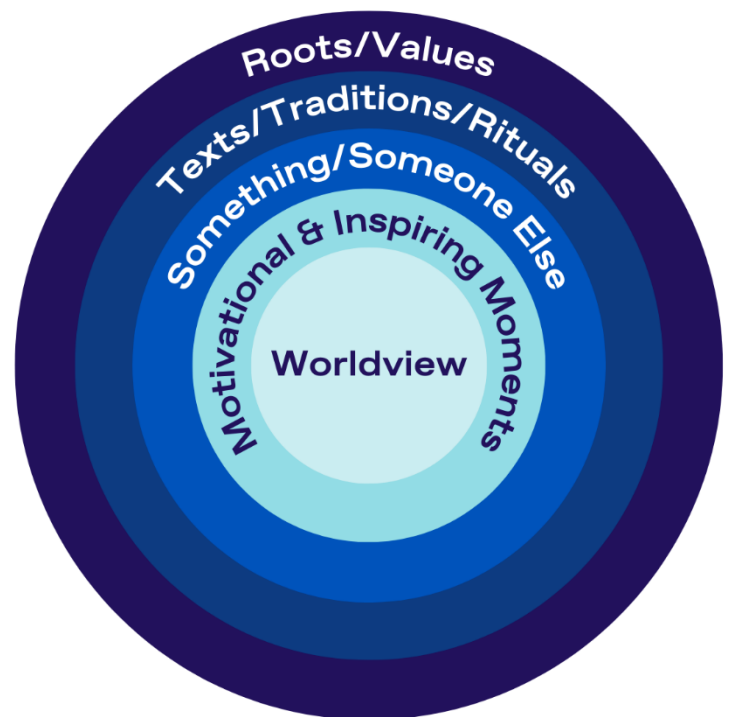
Pass out one blank sheet of paper to each participant, and display the diagram below in the training room.

Tell participants: To help us begin thinking about our own theology and/or ethic of interfaith cooperation, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Depending on how you learn best feel free to write out your responses or fill in the circle as seen on the handout. Either way this is a silent activity. Please give each other the necessary time and

space to answer these questions individually. As you hear these questions, rest assured that they are not intended to define or limit you. What you develop today will be different than the way your theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation will come together next week, and next year, and a decade from now. The value of a theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation is both to enhance your own learning and to connect with and educate others. The story you weave articulates what in your worldview drives you to be in relationships with people who are different from you; that story becomes an invitation for others to share, learn, and connect.

As the facilitator this will be the ideal time to share your own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation. Role modeling and sharing your own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation will encourage participants to do the same and help them think through the following questions. This is something you must be prepared to do, and not something you can simply craft together on the day of the workshop. Please take the time to reflect on your own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation and share it with the group. Thank you in advance for being vulnerable and for sharing your story with participants.

- What are the central texts/experiences from my tradition that highlight this philosophy? [Worldview & Texts/Traditions/Rituals & Roots/Values]
- Who are the historical or present figure(s) from my tradition that espouse this philosophy? [Motivational & Inspiring Moments & Something/Someone Else & Roots/Values]
- Are there current or historical moments where your tradition prioritized interfaith cooperation? [Motivational & Inspiring Moments & Texts/Traditions/Rituals & Roots/Values]
- Is there art (i.e. paintings, sculptures, or poems) that inspires you to pursue interfaith cooperation? [Motivational & Inspiring Moments, Something/Someone Else & Texts/Traditions/Rituals]



This reflection time is the perfect opportunity to play some light music and allow participants to be introspective.

Tell participants: Thank you for taking the time to reflect upon and work through some questions that might not be commonly raised in this setting. I hope you've enjoyed the time to mull over these questions and dive deeper into your own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation. Please begin wrapping up your responses and let's move back into the larger group.

[Cue video: Introduction to Interfaith Leadership, Module 6. 2 Ethics and Theologies of Interfaith Cooperation From the Field \(approximately 13 minutes\).](#)

Tell participants: Sometimes beginning to craft our ethic or theology for interfaith cooperation can be difficult as it is the first time that many of us are embarking on this work. For this reason, I hope you have enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on your own theology or ethic of interfaith cooperation. As we work on articulating our own ethic or theology, it would be beneficial to hear from others who have already written and shared their ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation with the world. I'd like to share a video from Interfaith Youth Core's blended learning curriculum which highlights a few individuals sharing their own personal ethic and/or theology of interfaith cooperation.

Introduction to Interfaith Leadership (15 Minutes)

Tell participants: Now that we had an opportunity to reflect, write, and listen to various theologies and ethics of interfaith cooperation, it's time to articulate our own out loud and for one another. Let's form groups (3 to 5 people) and discuss our own worldview, motivational and inspiring moments, individuals and figures, texts, traditions, rituals as well as roots and values that make up our ethic/theology of interfaith cooperation. Remember, these are individuals' stories. These are not theologies or ethics as you would hear them in the classroom or in religious education. These are individuals' stories told for the sake of coming to know one another and, in the midst of that, learning about the varied expressions of religious, spiritual, and secular identities in the world.

Small group conversations (Groups of 3 to 5)

Tell participants: Each person will have 3-5 minutes to share about their ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation. During your time please make sure to share and lift up examples up about your own worldview, motivational and inspiring moments, individuals and figures, texts, traditions, rituals as well as roots and values that make up your ethic/theology of interfaith cooperation.

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 speaker that you are actively listening and curious about their ethic and theology of interfaith cooperation.

Allow each person to fill the entire 3-5 minutes with their thoughts. 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.

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 (3-5 minutes)

Ask participants:

- What is something you learned, something you found inspiring, surprising, or challenging?
- What is something you had in common with another participant's ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation?
- 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 (5 Minutes)

It's important to help participants think about how they can continue to build their interfaith literacy in intentional ways.

Tell Participants: No one is ever fully "interfaith literate," rather, we must commit to continually expanding our knowledgebase and be aware of the gaps in our understanding. Remember, I mentioned there are multiple components to interfaith literacy—today we addressed the first, developing an ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation. The others are: 2) Learning appreciative knowledge of diverse religious traditions, 3) Understanding the shared values between diverse religious traditions, and 4) Knowing the history of interfaith cooperation.

Through sharing and listening today I hope you learned something appreciative about a worldview other than your own, you found connection between diverse religious

traditions and even learned part of the history how people who orient around religion differently have interacted and partnered in the past. If you are interested in digging into those other components further, you'll find videos and additional references for similar to what we viewed today, linked in the [follow-up e-mail](#).

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 ethic and theology of interfaith cooperation. My hope is that you continue to do so in the various spaces you inhabit. This practice will help you increase your level of comfort in sharing your ethic or theology of interfaith cooperation 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!

What is Interfaith Literacy? Pre-Module Email Template

Send at least one week prior to your scheduled session.

Thank you for joining us for the *What is Interfaith Literacy?* conversation on _____ at _____.

During our session, we will need everyone to actively participate in the group's learning by coming prepared to share their worldview. For this reason, please find time this week to reflect on your own worldview and the individuals within your tradition who embody interfaith cooperation, either by living out shared values or through a commitment to the common good. Feel free to bring in an article, text, poem, picture, or another item that represents your worldview and the individual you will be discussing with you to the session. We look forward to learning from you and hope you are as excited as we are about deepening our interfaith literacy together.

If you are unsure of where to start and need a little inspiration or guidance consider watching [Interfaith Cooperation in the United States](#) from our blended and online learning curriculum to help you get started. The video will highlight various historical interfaith leaders that might assist you in preparing for this session. Thank you in advance for your contributions. We look forward to learning from you.

Sincerely,
[Your name(s)]