

BECOMING RESPONSIBLY ENGAGED IN THE WORLD (B.R.E.W.) ASSIGNMENT

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ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT

The following assignment was developed by Dr. Jacqueline Bussie for use in her “[Faith in Dialogue: Interfaith Leadership](#)” course at Concordia College (Moorhead, MN) to help students engage with interfaith themes. Religious literacy, exploring personal theologies or philosophies of interfaith cooperation, and developing the skills and knowledge necessary for interfaith leadership are central components of this course. This particular activity is meant to accompany one of the core texts used in the course, *My Neighbor’s Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation* (Peace, Rose, and Mobley, eds., Orbis: 2012).

In 2014, Dr. Bussie participated in a Teaching Interfaith Understanding faculty development seminar, run in partnership between the Council of Independent Colleges and Interfaith Youth Core, and generously funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. For information on future seminars, and to access more resources created by seminar alumni, visit www.ifyc.org/content/ifyc-cic-resources.

Becoming Responsibly Engaged in the World (B.R.E.W.): My Neighbor’s Faith Assignment

For this assignment, instead of just reading books about people from different religions, we are going to get out and get to know our interfaith neighbors and put all our ‘faith-in-dialogue’ skills into practice!

First, you will need to find a faculty, staff, peer, or member of the Fargo-Moorhead community who practices a different religious or non-religious tradition than you do. For example, this means if you are a Lutheran Christian, you may not just interview a Catholic Christian or a Christian of another different denomination; likewise if you are a Reform Jew, you may not just interview an Orthodox Jew. Please challenge yourself—find someone about whose tradition you know very little or do not relate to very well—and remember that in our community we have a wonderful diversity of traditions including Buddhism, Native American traditions, Unitarian Universalism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, atheists, and Baha’i. Do not pick a close friend of yours unless it’s actually the case that you have never really talked to them about their religious tradition. Invite the person you choose to coffee or lunch, and tell them you would love to interview them for our interfaith class. Consider emailing the Native American Center of Fargo, Red River Free Thinkers, The Center for Interfaith Projects, the Project F-M, the Unitarian Universalist

Church of Fargo, or the Mormon Church of Latter-Day Saints (Fargo) to get set up with someone. Be of good courage and branch out!

Second, you will need to design 5-6 respectful and thoughtful interview questions. We can brainstorm these in class. One of my favorites is: “What is something about your religious tradition you really wish everyone outside of your religious tradition would better understand?” List the interview questions on your BREW assignment. See the book *Getting to the Heart of Interfaith* for great ideas for interview questions.

Third, write a reflection paper describing what you learned by allowing your faith to be in dialogue with your neighbor’s faith during this conversation. [Note: Do not mention their real name in your assignment unless you have asked and received their permission to do so.] Be sure to answer the following questions: What did you learn about your neighbor’s tradition? What most surprised/challenged/interested you about your neighbor’s tradition? What assumptions did you bring into the interview that were changed/challenged/nuanced by the dialogue? Did you discover any shared values or practices, and if so, what were they? What was an area of disagreement or discomfort, and how did you handle it?