

INTERFAITH HOPE-MEDITATION AND (IN)JUSTICE-WATCH ASSIGNMENT

Dr. Jacqueline Bussie, Concordia College (Moorhead, MN)
jbussie@cord.edu

Used with Permission

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT

The following assignment was developed by Dr. Jacqueline Bussie; she has used variations of this assignment for the last decade as a part of many different courses she teaches. The version below is the one she developed for 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.

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. At the seminar, she shared this assignment as one of her most effective longstanding teaching tools for regularly facilitating peer-learning and engaging students in class discussion. For information on future seminars, and to access more resources created by seminar alumni, visit www.ifyc.org/content/ifyc-cic-resources.

Interfaith Hope-Meditation and (In)Justice-Watch

Every class session, one student will be in charge of sharing with the class 5-10 minutes of an Interfaith Hope-Meditation and an (In)Justice-Watch. You may bring this to class or e-mail via Moodle prior to class if you wish. Please keep it short and sweet (but awesome!) as we will have many other topics to explore in class as well.

For the Interfaith Hope-Meditation, please share with the class something that you saw/heard/read/experienced within a religious tradition (preferably, from one that is not your own) and which you found hope-inspiring. This meditation can take any form: a quote from a tradition’s sacred text or well-known thinker, a poem, a story, an act of interfaith kindness you witnessed, a breakthrough moment experienced during your community service, a prayer, a picture, anything that you believe will inspire us in the face of the world’s religious prejudice, stereotypes, and misassumptions. One of my favorite sites for finding inspiring global interfaith cooperation stories is Council for a Parliament of World Religions at www.

parliamentofreligions.org. The Christian website Sojourners is also great for finding stories of hope for religious issues. Sign up for their email updates! And of course there is the excellent Interfaith Youth Core's site: www.ifyc.org.

For Interfaith Justice-Watch, take the opportunity to share with classmates a religious conflict/prejudice/injustice (global or local) which you saw/heard/read about/witnessed/ experienced recently and that has been on your heart and mind. Good sources for global concerns are Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org and the BBC website www.bbc.com; good sources for local concerns are the news, conversations with friends and family, and even Facebook and other social media (where unfortunately, many hide behind technology to voice their prejudice). Enlighten us briefly about the issue, so that our awareness is heightened about an interfaith conflict or concern of which we may not be aware.

Why these exercises? They remind us that religious prejudice or conflict is not an abstraction, but a reality that wounds people's lived lives. In my experience, the fight for interfaith cooperation must be fought on 2 fronts: 1) awareness (often we are blind to religious prejudices which do not directly hurt us, and in which we are often unintentionally complicit) and 2) resistance to despair (stories of interfaith hope don't usually make the news, and so we must tell this hope-news to one another, or risk never hearing it). I highly recommend that our class form a closed facebook group, where we can post anytime stories of hope and justice for one another, and in that way keep a record of all that we have shared in class.