

Educator Guide: Notes for Instructors

This guide offers suggestions for educators as they use the activities in the Christian Leadership for a Multifaith World Curriculum with their students. The curriculum is designed to be easily modified and adapted to a variety of curricular and co-curricular settings and there is not a 'right way' to use it. The authors of the curriculum hope that the tips below for each activity are useful to educators as they incorporate the materials into their unique settings.

1.1 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building

Activity 1– Introduction to Interfaith Cooperation

Notes for Instructors

- This activity is fundamental to understanding what “interfaith” is and isn’t. Often there are misperceptions that “interfaith” requires participants to water-down their faith commitment and/or accept the truth claims of other religions, but that is not the model that Interfaith America uses. We encourage you to take all the time you need to with this activity to ensure that students have a good grasp of what interfaith cooperation is all about. We will build on this foundation throughout the curriculum.
- Because there are several videos and text excerpts included in this activity, you might choose to stretch out the material over several class periods.

1.2 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building

Activity 2 – Virtues for Engaging Religious Diversity as a Christian

Notes for Instructors

- In this activity, students will be introduced to specific virtues for engaging religious diversity. The virtues are used throughout the curriculum. Depending upon the number of activities used, by completion of the curriculum, students should be able to articulate the virtues and be able to generate ideas/examples of application.
- The response exercise above which calls for students to practice the three virtues by putting on their lenses to approach content is easily adaptable to other sources.
- On the hyperlink for the case study there is a place to email the Pluralism Project for a full copy of the case and permission to use it at your institution.
- The case study reflection exercise is a modified version of Peter Elbow’s “Believing Game.” For more information on Elbow’s exercise, see: Peter Elbow, *The Believing Game or Methodological Believing* *JAEPL* 14 (Winter 2008-9).

1.3 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building

Activity 3 – A Fresh Look at 1 Corinthians 13

Notes for Instructors

- 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most recognizable passages in the Christian canon. While it contains powerful words about the relationship between love, truth, faith, and hope, it also addresses what *doesn't* constitute love. This analytical activity requires humility and self-reflection - both are key components of the virtue *reflective commitment*.
- It may be helpful to bring in news or social media examples of times when Christian communities or leaders showed love to others and also when they failed to show love.
- Anticipate that students may struggle with the concept of “honoring” another religious tradition. It can be helpful to have them parse out the difference between honor as a form of showing respect and appreciation for the religion, as opposed to honor as an affirmation of the truth of the religion.
- This is a great place to help students explore the tension between the Great Commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” and the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Some students might say that they show love to their neighbor by evangelizing to them. You might ask how love might look differently in the context of ongoing relationships with persons who orient around religion differently rather than a one-time encounter.

1.4 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building

Activity 4 – A 21st Century Good Samaritan

Notes for Instructors

- This activity revisits the Parable of the Good Samaritan through the lens of Interfaith engagement. Students will consider the religious and cultural systems that determined who was an “insider” vs. an “outsider” and explore their conception of just who gets to be included in Jesus’ definition of “neighbor.”
- The activity lends itself well to personal reflection followed by sharing the ‘updated’ versions of the story with classmates.
- Students may tend to generalize or speak about large groups of people. Encourage them to use “I” statements and personalize their reflection.

1.5 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge-Building

Activity 5 – Exploring a Biblical Foundation for Interfaith Engagement

Notes for Instructors

- These activities ask participants to consider what love of a religious neighbor looks like and seeks to build a portrait of that love by examining the role of hospitality in both the Old and New Testament. The activity will explore what it means to be a good host and a

good listener, and how both work together to foster and learning and allow for a relationship to be developed between religious others.

- Even if you're not having students engage with Modules 1.1 and 1.2, you still might find it helpful to look at those yourself. We describe some of the virtues needed for constructive interfaith engagement, and we also address questions that students might be concerned about--such as a fear that such engagement might weaken their faith.
- For all of the activities described in this module, it could be productive to help students think very specifically about connections between the biblical principles around hospitality/love of neighbor and codes of ethics in various professions.

1.6 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge Building

Activity 6 "But What About...?": Big Questions That Arise When Christians Engage in Interfaith Activities

Notes for Instructors

- The goal of this activity is to address students' potential fears and concerns head-on so that they feel more confident and equipped as they continue to engage religious diversity.
- As you begin, it may be helpful to have a brief conversation with your students and ask them to list the 'big questions' they have about interfaith cooperation before you begin this activity to make sure you aren't missing anything.
- The [Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey \(IDEALS\)](#) explored questions about students' religious practice and interfaith experiences on 122 college campuses across the country. You may find interesting data points from the reports to include in your classroom conversation, including the finding that students who took part in activities that intentionally engaged religious diversity simultaneously deepened their commitment to their own religious identity.

1.7 Christian Foundations for Interfaith Bridge Building

Activity 7 – Stories of Interfaith Engagement, Part 1

Notes for Instructors

- In this activity, students will have a chance to learn more about the value of stories, hear stories about how people from different religious traditions connect their faith and vocation, and begin to articulate how your own story of faith provides motivation for interfaith engagement.
- Please note that the content of this module also pairs with activity 2.5 *Stories of Interfaith Engagement, Part 2*. Much of the content is the same, but the response activities are different.
- If you have time, consider allowing students to tell their own stories of self, us, or now in class. Keep them short (3-5 minutes). The purpose of these types of stories is to think about who one wants to be in the world, and why.

2.1 Religious Literacy

Activity 1– Introduction to Religious Literacy

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity students will be introduced to the concept of religious literacy and why it is essential to develop an understanding of other religious beliefs and practices. Students will also come to understand that religious literacy doesn't necessarily mean mastering content, but rather learning to ask the right questions and find good answers.
- Your students will likely think that religious literacy means learning a lot of facts about different religions. While this might be somewhat helpful, it can also be overwhelming. Encourage your students to think about religious literacy as knowing the right questions to ask and good ways to get answers. They don't have to become experts in world religions! Rather, they are going to learn how to navigate real relationships with real people who orient around religion differently.
- Many Christian students approach religious literacy with the idea that they need to find out what is wrong with another religious tradition. This may be because they are afraid of losing their faith and/or because they see religious literacy as a tool for evangelistic encounters. It is important to remind them: (1) that learning about other traditions helps them grow in Christian belief and practice, (2) that while evangelism is a part of Christianity, there are many times in our daily Christian lives where evangelism is not possible or appropriate, and (3) simply studying another religion only to find its flaws is not consistent with the biblical and theological explorations we've done in module 1.

2.2 Religious Literacy

Activity 2– Seeing the Religious Diversity Around You

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity, students will broaden their view of religious diversity in the US and begin thinking about important questions to ask when developing religious literacy.
- This activity works well assigned as homework, with students sharing their findings the next day in small groups of 4-5.
- When discussing the research in class, begin by asking, "What did you learn that surprised you?" This is a great way to begin thinking about questions that need asking to begin to build religious literacy.

2.3 Religious Literacy

Activity 3- Walking in Another's Shoes

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity, students will choose from two or more selected films to expand their knowledge of religious experience and practices in the US and begin to engage in empathetic thinking towards religious identities outside of their own.
- As noted above, films offer a way to meaningfully bring in the voices of the religious others not present in the classroom. Preparing students in advance to watch a film by

setting expectations and offering instructions for how to approach their viewing can help students become more actively engaged as opposed to passive viewers.

- If time permits, assigning two or more films that all center on the same religion can lead to rich discussions about the diversity of expressions *within* a tradition. One concern with using only one film is the danger of presenting one viewpoint or experience as monolithic.
- If students are thoughtfully prepared, viewing films that explore issues or conflict for religious individuals can lead to meaningful discussions that lend easily to self-reflection or as defined in this curriculum, *reflective commitment* regarding Christian identity. This works best with upper-division courses as it requires a maturity and vulnerability that may not be as developed in younger students.

2.4 Religious Literacy

Activity 4 – Observing Religion through Practice

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity, students will explore practices and expressions of belief from varying religious traditions. All great religious traditions combine individual practice and collective experience. By examining religious practices, students will be able to learn about what motivates and inspires others who are committed to a religious belief.
- Consider using sources like music, social media, art exhibitions, and even food, travel or fashion blogs to show students how religious others express their beliefs and practices through creative mediums.
- Students may be concerned that finding commonality with religious others is a slippery slope towards relativism or that their own practices may matter less. Prioritizing making space for intentional discussions around one's own motivation for practice can help alleviate concerns and allow students to receive encouragement.
- Another helpful approach can be to focus on letting students research and explore available resources geared towards teaching children about a particular religion.

2.5 Religious Literacy

Activity 5 – Stories of Interfaith Engagement, Part 2

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity students will encounter different stories of how people from various faith traditions connect their faith and vocation and continue the work of learning to listen and value individual stories.
- Please note that the content of this module also pairs with module 2.6: Stories of Interfaith Engagement, Part I. Much of the content is the same, but the response activities are different.
- Additionally, there is some overlap in the content of modules 2.4 and 2.5. If you are using both of these, you may consider assigning the content once, and then engage the students in different ways of processing that content.

2.6 Religious Literacy

Activity 6 – Sacred Spaces

Notes for Instructors:

- In this activity students will take virtual visits to sacred spaces of their choosing. Visiting sacred spaces provides us with another tangible means to acquire *appreciative knowledge*, but it also allows us to engage our *narrative imaginations*; thoughtfully observing and considering why sacred spaces have value for the believer who calls it home but also respectfully receiving the opportunity to be “invited in.”
- Several of the films listed in Module 2.3 could also be used to help students gain exposure to sacred spaces and even see how religious adherents interact with their houses of worship or on pilgrimage.
- Students may be reluctant to “seek the admirable” in other’s spaces as it may feel threatening. Here again, it is useful to have students discuss or reflect on what it means to be a good neighbor. Revisiting the lessons and insights from module 1.7 could be useful here in helping students to approach the content in this module with confident humility.

NOTES ON KEY TERMINOLOGY

Throughout the learning modules you may encounter terms that are unfamiliar to you and/or your students. We have been very intentional about the vocabulary terms we’ve used when designing the modules, basing our decisions on current standards and best practices in the field of Interfaith Studies. Specifically, we hope the following comments will help you understand how to use these terms in a Christian context.

- **Appreciative Knowledge, Narrative Imagination, and Reflective Commitment:** While it may initially seem simpler to use virtues like humility and empathy, definitions of each are simultaneously vast and limited. We have chosen these three specific names for the virtues essential to interfaith engagement in order to capture a specific set of meanings and to provide an anchor for students.
 - *Appreciative Knowledge:* This virtue seeks to recognize the contributions of other traditions, have sympathetic understanding of the distinctive history and commitments of other traditions, and develop ways of working with and serving other communities. The objective of *appreciative knowledge* is to move beyond mere tolerance to a place of appreciation for faith difference.
 - *Narrative Imagination:* This virtue requires us to move beyond sympathy to the higher skill of empathy. In essence, while we should start from considering what we can learn from you (*appreciative knowledge*) we can use our *Narrative Imagination* to develop a more nuanced position of being ready to, “imagine what life is like for you.”
 - *Reflective Commitment:* This virtue involves owning what one believes, recognizing the limitations of those beliefs, and being able to clearly articulate

why one holds these beliefs. Practicing reflective commitment requires both intellectual humility and intellectual honesty.

- **Evangelical:** Increasingly this is a contested term. At the same time, however, many CCCU institutions still use the word to describe their religious identity and many students attending these institutions also identify as evangelical. We use the term generally to describe Christians who hold beliefs such as: the importance of “born again,” the inerrancy of the Bible, and a strong relationship between morality and piety. We do *not* believe there are any political commitments necessarily connected to the term.
- **Pluralism:** This word can be problematic in Christian circles, especially if it is misunderstood as an endorsement of epistemological and/or ethical relativism. First, it is important to help students understand the difference between “Theological Pluralism” and “Civic Pluralism.” Theological pluralism can include ideas like “all paths lead to God,” “all religions are equally true,” or “all religions are fundamentally the same.” Civic pluralism, on the other hand, focuses on living well together *despite* significant theological differences. Interfaith work requires civic pluralism, not theological pluralism. (In fact, good interfaith work does not attempt all religious perspectives to their lowest common denominator). We utilize the work of Eboo Patel and Diana Eck when talking about pluralism with our students and colleagues, emphasizing that “Diversity is a fact. Pluralism is a hard-won achievement.” According to Patel, there are 3 important facets to Civic Pluralism: (1) respect for people’s religious identity, (2) positive relationships between persons of different religious backgrounds, and (3) common action for common good. For additional reading on this topic, please see Patel, Eboo, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer* (Beacon Press, 2016).
- **Religious Commitment:** This terminology is used to frame the whole and holistic experience of what it means to be a person committed to a faith system over time. Increasingly, students reject specific labels and descriptions they view as limiting, or are negatively associated with stereotypes, historical marginalization, or divisive political or social views. In addition, belief and values (and their expressions in an individual’s life) shift over time but their commitment may remain.