

# ***SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT***

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## **ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT**

The following assignment was developed by Dr. Rahuldeep Singh Gill as a part of his [“Introduction to Christianity”](#) course at California Lutheran University (Thousand Oaks, CA). Themes of interfaith engagement, Christian theologies of interfaith cooperation, and exploring and analyzing case studies of religious diversity are a central component to how Dr. Gill teaches this course, which is required for all students at California Lutheran.

As a part of the course, Dr. Gill has students read Eboo Patel's memoir, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Beacon Press, 2007). This spiritual autobiography assignment serves as an accompaniment to that text, encouraging students to trace their own religious or non-religious stories as a part of a larger conversation in the course about religious diversity and identity.

In 2014, Dr. Gill 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](http://www.ifyc.org/content/ifyc-cic-resources).

## **Spiritual Autobiography Moments: First Draft (5 points maximum)**

Write a reflective paper of your own spiritual or moral/ethical development. Please include examples, like Patel did, of specific experiences, people, and texts that influenced you. What have you learned about their own faith or non-faith (moral/ethical) background from people of religious and secular traditions?

For example, we may want to know:

- ▶ How has a Jewish student, been influenced by a Christian friend or a Hindu text?
- ▶ What values do they hold important as Jew and why are those values important to them?
- ▶ Has their own faith ever motivated them to act on a social issue?

## **Optional**

Please let me know if your faith journey will be available for sharing, in a safe space, with others in our classroom. For those who would like to share these stories with one another, we will set up a safe space in which to do so. The classroom members will set up own guidelines as a group, like active listening, respectful dialogue, and not sharing personal information outside of class.

## **Assessment**

The first draft will be assessed simply on page numbers. You will earn 1 point per double-spaced page (5 points maximum). Each page that earns a point will show your willingness to thoughtfully discuss personal religious and spiritual experiences while also contextualizing them with pertinent examples of how other people and experiences have influenced your faith or non-faith.

## **Spiritual Autobiography Moment: Second Draft (15 points maximum)**

The second draft is a cleaned up version of one of the selected stories from your first draft.

## **Assessment**

The second draft will be assessed on quality. It should be a creative and improved version of one of the story selections from the first draft. Some criteria:

- ▶ Coherent narrative?
- ▶ Demonstrates that the author is grappling with a challenge?
- ▶ Writes with attention to clarity, style, and voice?
- ▶ Sophistication?
- ▶ Does the piece use all the words effectively and efficiently? Concise?