

INTERFAITH SERVICE LEARNING ASSIGNMENT

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ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT

The following assignment was developed by Dr. Hans Gustafson as a part of his [“Jesus Christ and Interreligious Dialogue”](#) course at the University of Saint Thomas (Saint Paul, MN), where students are given the opportunity to complete and reflect upon 15 hours of interfaith-based service learning with a community partner.

In 2015, Dr. Gustafson 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.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Learning Goals

- ▶ Provide students with the opportunity to develop interreligious relationships in the context of service and examine their experience in light of course material, and
- ▶ Apply factual and conceptual course content to their own experiences.

Assignment Requirements

- ▶ 15 hours of service (includes transportation to/from service site and 5 hours of designated service-learning reflection sessions in class); less than 15 hours will result in a 0 grade for the service and final reflection paper.
- ▶ Completion of final reflection paper
 - Due two weeks before the end of the semester: first rough draft due (bring four hardcopies to class; single or double spaced).
 - Due at the end of the semester: final draft (please email to me at hsgustafson@stthomas.edu).

The essential nature of this paper “is the exploration of the connections between course material and a person’s individual life or psyche” and is assigned “to elicit students’ responses to complex, difficult, or troubling readings and invite the writer to ‘speak back’ to the reading in amusing, questioning, and probing way.”¹ Simply put, in light of your service experience, please “speak back” to the content of our course. In particular, please devote significant sections of your paper to the following two texts we read early in the semester:

1. Catherine Cornille, “Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue,” *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, pp 20-33.
2. Eboo Patel, “Interfaith Service-Learning,” 2003, pp 1-6.

Please structure your paper as follows:

- ▶ *Introduction*: A strong paper will have a clear introductory paragraph that indicates the aims of the paper, what the reader can expect to encounter in the paper, and in what order.
- ▶ *Brief description of interfaith service*: Include one paragraph describing your service work, the nature of the work, what you did, where, and any other details you deem relevant.
- ▶ *Reflection vis-à-vis Eboo Patel’s article above*: offer a brief explanation (one to two paragraphs) on how your experience with “interfaith service-learning” squared with his proposal. Does it match up? Are there problems or challenges that arise in his proposal and/or your reflection on your service?
- ▶ *Reflection vis-à-vis Catherine Cornille’s “Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue” article*: Cornille proposes five conditions that she believes need to be present in order for one to learn from the religious other. They are humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, and hospitality. Review these as she describes them. Choose one or two that you’d like to discuss further in light of her description and your service. What is her description of them? Does her description of them match yours? Given your service, do you agree/disagree with her that these conditions need to be present in order for you to learn from the religious other? Are there conditions that Cornille does not mention that you think are more important? Why? Please draw on your service experience and be specific by providing anecdotes of personal narrative from your service. This section can form the bulk of your paper.
- ▶ *Conclusions*: Given your a) service experience, b) reflection on the two texts above, c) two service reflection papers, d) all other class content and discussion, offer your personal findings and conclusions about the nature of interreligious dialogue in today’s world. You may revise and incorporate your two mid-semester reflection papers into this final section.

*** After our peer-review class, revise your paper in light of your peers’ comments. You may submit a draft to me up to one week prior to the final due date. I will return it to you with constructive comments. ***

¹ John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, 2nd ed., The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 117.

Format Requirements

2800-3800 words; have a title, number your pages, cite your sources using Chicago, Turabian, MLA, or APA citation style; put your name on it; 12 point font; double-spaced; 1" margins all around

Grading Criteria

Does this paper have a clear introduction which tells the reader the aim of the paper and what to expect, why, and in what order? Does this paper offer an informative description of the writer's service work (place, people, nature of work, tasks, issues, challenges, etc.)? Does this paper attempt to engage Eboo Patel's understanding of "interfaith service-learning" in light of the writer's experience? Does this paper engage one or two of Cornille's conditions for learning from the religious other and critique them in light of the writer's experience? Does the writer understand her definition of these conditions? Does the writer draw on his/her own service experience by offering anecdotes of personal narrative from his/her service? Does the paper conclude by offering personal findings and conclusions about the nature of interreligious dialogue in today's world in light of the semesters' class content and service experience? Does the paper meet all of the format requirements? Does the paper minimize spelling, grammar, and/or syntax errors to the point of the reader not being distracted by them?