



Introduction to Interfaith Leadership

Interfaith Youth Core and Dominican University are delighted to share this curriculum for the course entitled *Introduction to Interfaith Leadership*. This complete curriculum is available for faculty to use in their classrooms, either through a blended learning cross-institutional course site on Canvas, or through these downloadable resources. There is no fee to use these materials, though we may contact you to learn more about how you are using them, and to measure their strengths and weaknesses. This project was made possible by generous funding from the Henry Luce Foundation.

This curriculum was designed to be adaptable to meet the needs of faculty in diverse disciplines and settings. Each lesson consists of 3-5 modules, each of which includes videos, discussion questions, classroom activities, and readings. We believe that this curriculum functions best when these various components are used together, and therefore strongly encourage you to integrate both video content and associated activities in your classes where appropriate. You are invited to use this curriculum even if you are only using select modules, rather than the curriculum in its entirety. In order to showcase what we believe is the optimal version of this course, we have indicated which activities and readings are required in the Canvas version of the course administered by Dominican University. We have also included a variety of additional suggested and recommended activities and readings throughout the curriculum.

If you have any questions about content or how to use this curriculum in an upcoming course, please email Carr@ifyc.org.

Lesson 4: Cultivating Appreciative Knowledge

Module 4.1: Becoming Aware of Religious Diversity

In this module, students are introduced to the three primary areas of knowledge necessary for interfaith leadership, and are given a chance to hone their awareness of the religious diversity all around them.

[Video \(5 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Describe the importance and relevance of being able to identify religious diversity
- Identify 2-4 ways that you can increase your awareness of religious diversity
- Describe the different types of knowledge that contribute to the Interfaith Leadership knowledge base

Activities required for Canvas version of the course (choose one):

- The Pluralism Project has mapped the religious demographics of major cities. Study their method on their site and then using a tool such as Google Maps, do something similar on your own community. For example, type in something like **synagogues in [your city], [state]** to have markers placed on the map. Summarize what your map revealed about one or more aspects of religious diversity in your community. How has this exercise increased your understanding of religious diversity?
- Consult the data on religious diversity on your own campus (the offices of institutional research or admissions might be good places to look) and “map” religious diversity on your campus through a pie chart or similar chart. Summarize what your map revealed about one or more aspects of religious diversity in your community. How has this exercise increased your understanding of religious diversity?

Additional suggested activities:

- Cross the Line exercise with prompts focused on religious experience and practice
- Photo Elicitation: Take 5 photos representing religious diversity in your community. Include at least one example that you were unaware of before this exercise, and one example of intra-faith diversity.
- What is the awareness-involvement quotient of your local religious community? Your family? Examine a church bulletin; interview a community leader; ask about the activities of your committees; is there a Peace & Justice group or its equivalent? Does your community partner with a community of another religion or faith? Does your minister “share pulpits” with others?

Reading required for Canvas version of the course:

- Pew Research Center, “[America's Changing Religious Landscape](#)”:
- “[Pluralism – A Home For All Of Us](#)” by Paul Chaffee, *The Interfaith Observer*
- “[Rivers of Faith](#)”, Harvard University Pluralism Project

Module 4.2: What is Appreciative Knowledge?

We define appreciative knowledge of other religious traditions as substantive knowledge and positive inclinations. In this lesson we distinguish between appreciative knowledge and religious literacy, and provide ways for students to develop their appreciative knowledge about other religious and ethical traditions.

[Video \(5 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Gain Appreciative Knowledge of 2-3 religious traditions, including (if appropriate) one's own
- Identify three ways to develop appreciative knowledge
- Address the limitations of developing appreciative knowledge as a strategy for interfaith leadership
- Contrast appreciative knowledge and religious literacy

Discussion Questions:

- Return to your reflections about respecting identities: Has your opinion on this changed since looking at it in a concrete example? How so?
- Why is appreciative knowledge important? How is it distinct from religious literacy?

Activities required for Canvas version of the course:

- Go to the Pluralism Project's [website](#) and read selections about 2-3 traditions, including (if appropriate) one's own. Try to select traditions that you have identified as being in proximity to yourself. For each tradition, name 2-3 things (e.g., beliefs, practices, and/or exemplary figures) you have come to newly appreciate about each of these traditions.
- In one or two sentences, explain the difference between appreciative knowledge and religious literacy. Give an example that illustrates the difference.

Additional suggested activities:

- Share stories and/or pictures of family members or friends who are in interfaith marriages. What appreciative knowledge have they developed during their years together? How do they support one another? Did other members of the family oppose the marriage?
- For the traditions you worked with in the first activity, identify what might be the potential challenges to working with these communities as an Interfaith Leader; how might you address them in an appreciative and respectful way?

Readings required for Canvas version of the course:

- "[Rivers of Faith](#)", Harvard University Pluralism Project

Additional recommended reading:

- "Chapter 2: Living in a Plurality of Faiths" from *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* by HH Dalai Lama
- Selections/Introduction to *God is Not One* by Stephen Prothero
- Selections from *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* by Paul Knitter
- *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*
- "[Appreciative Inquiry and URI](#)", United Religions Initiative
- "[Appreciative Inquiry Model Questions](#)" by Steve Fitzgerald, United Religions Initiative

Module 4.3: Appreciative Knowledge in the Field

Through a series of short interviews, students will hear from young professionals in different fields about how they were able to build their own appreciative knowledge of other religious and ethical traditions, and how that knowledge has aided them in their life and work.

[Video \(11 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Identify one concrete strategy for acquiring Appreciative Knowledge
- Name something about one's religious or ethical tradition that you wish others more often knew or understood that would be considered appreciative knowledge

Discussion Questions:

- What is something about your religious or ethical tradition that you wish others more often knew or understood that would be considered appreciative knowledge? Respond to at least one other student's post.

Additional recommended reading:

- ["Let's review the Golden Rule"](#), TEDtalk by Karen Armstrong

Module 4.4: The Interfaith Triangle

In this module, students learn about the ways that our attitudes about other religious and ethical traditions, our knowledge of those traditions, and our relationships with others of those traditions interact and influence one another. This three-way influence is known as the Interfaith Triangle and is exemplified in the principle known as My Friend AI.

[Video \(5 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Explain the three parts of the interfaith triangle and how they relate to the others
- Explain the My Friend AI principle

Discussion Questions:

- Do you have a “Friend AI” experience? Your experience does not need to focus on *religious* difference. Please describe your own experience in a few sentences, and then share how this experience influences your sense of yourself as an interfaith leader.

Activities required for Canvas version of the course:

- Explain the three parts of the interfaith triangle and how each relates to the other two parts.

Additional suggested activities:

- In small groups, draw the Interfaith Triangle and identify and illustrate three of the arrows moving around the triangle (i.e. Knowledge leading to Relationships, Attitudes leading to knowledge) with examples from campus or the surrounding community.

Reading required for Canvas version of the course:

- “American Grace: How a Tolerant Nation Bridges its Religious Divides” by Putnam & Campbell

Additional recommended reading:

- “Habits of the Heart: Implications for Religion” by Robert Bellah
- The Economist “One nation, with Aunt Susan”

Module 4.5: Appreciative Knowledge Summary

Following a brief summary of the important concepts covered in this lesson, Eboo Patel offers his own reflections on appreciative knowledge and the interfaith triangle, and invites students to consider how these ideas will relate to the remaining two areas of the interfaith leadership knowledgebase covered in the next two lessons.

[Video \(1 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives (cumulative for lesson 4):

- Explain why appreciative knowledge is an important part of interfaith leadership

Discussion Questions:

- Share some of the appreciative knowledge insights you have developed from your classmates during this course so far.
- What aspect of appreciative knowledge is the muddiest or most confusing to you? What area of the interfaith triangle is the most confusing?