

Interfaith Action in the World

Summer 2008

Dr. Eboo Patel

Executive Director
Interfaith Youth Core

Cassie Meyer, MA

Director, Outreach Education & Training
Interfaith Youth Core
312.573.8835/cassie@ifyc.org

Course Overview:

In American classrooms, offices in Mumbai and public buses in Berlin, people of different faith traditions are interacting with increasing intensity. What forces influence the shape of these interactions? How do the narratives of our own faith traditions, the media and our culture affect our expectations of and interactions with people of other religions? As faith leaders, the importance of shaping a positive response and forming our communities for interfaith interaction is crucial. If conflict is the common paradigm, what alternatives can we offer?

This course will give students the opportunity to explore different theories and narratives of the role of religion in a globalized America, with an emphasis on practical paths for interaction across religious difference.

Goals:

Students will:

- Develop a working knowledge and analysis of pervasive cultural narratives on religion and interfaith interactions through discussion of current media and academic theory.
- Explore the interaction of personal and community identity with cultural narratives and the resulting impact on multiple forms of ministry.
- Explore primary avenues for interfaith action in ministry (sociological/theological, congregational, civic and social sector).

Requirements:

- *Attendance at the two weekend intensives (June 13-14 and August 1-2), Chicago Theological Seminary Room 133.*
- *Weekly participation in online chat sessions (Tuesday evenings 7-9 pm CST)*
- *Weekly personal reflection*

Each week, students will post a 300-500 word reflection connecting their personal narrative with the weekly guiding question and readings. In addition, students must post an article, video, editorial, or other media example which illustrates or responds to the guiding question posed by the professors for 5 of the 7 weeks. Students should plan to post articles and reflections at least twenty-four hours prior to the beginning of the discussion so that others may review the article before the discussion. All students will also be expected to review and comment upon posted items. The goal of both the personal reflections and the media postings are to help students connect the weekly reading with their personal work/vocation and to prepare for the online dialogue.

- *Final paper and presentation (application of a paradigm for interfaith action)*

These papers and corresponding presentations will challenge students to design their own constructive and concrete approach to interfaith action in the world. Students will research a particular thinker, theory, approach or organization through extensive reading or observational experience (visits, interviews, etc) and integrate this methodology into a compelling project (program, curricula, proposal or theological paper) appropriate for the student's context. **Students must submit a project proposal to Cassie via email (cassie@ifyc.org) no later than Friday, June 27 for review.**

Students will present the project during the second intensive weekend meeting; students should be prepared to lead a discussion and question and answer session. Students should prepare a 10-15 page paper which details the methodology studied, context and plan of action, and reflection upon the relevant cultural, political and theological narratives. **Final papers will be due 1 week after the closing retreat, Friday, August 8**, to allow students time to reflect and incorporate feedback from their presentations. Please submit papers via email to Cassie (cassie@ifyc.org).

Schedule and Readings

A Note on Books and Articles:

Students should plan to purchase the following books for class (they will not be available at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore):

Ed Husain, *The Islamist* (London: Penguin Global, 2008).

Zachary Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You: Fourteen Centuries of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Conflict and Cooperation* (New York: Vintage, 2008).

Martin E. Marty, *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Joshua Cohen and Ian Lague, eds., *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2002).

Jonathan Sachs, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003).

Eboo Patel & Patrice Brodeur, *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action* (Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield, 2006).

Chaim Potok, *The Chosen* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1968). Other editions acceptable.

Optional: Darrell J Fasching & Dell Dechant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2001).

A copy of *Acts of Faith* will be available for free from the Interfaith Youth Core. Please email amber@ifyc.org to let us know the address you would like the book sent to, or stop by the IFYC (1111 N Wells, Ste. 501) and ask for your copy at the front desk.

All remaining readings not available online will be provided to students electronically in PDF format.

Section 1: Narratives: Personal and Cultural

JUNE 13-14 REQUIRED PRE-CLASS READINGS: THE STORY OF INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER

Ed Husain, *The Islamist* (London: Penguin Global, 2008).

Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

Samuel P Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, 72/3. Available online at: <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/ramadan/cartoons/clash.pdf>.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: The New American Library, 1962), pp. 1-22; 103-128.

Eboo Patel, "Affirming Identity, Achieving Pluralism," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action*, Patel & Brodeur, eds. (Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 15-24.

Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 3-52.

JUNE 17: RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY, AGGRESSIVE ATHEISM: SOME POPULAR NARRATIVES OF RELIGION

Peter Berger, "Secularization Falsified." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life*, February 2008. Available online at: http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=6135.

God's Warriors: Watch online w/ CNN's Christine Amnapour,

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2007/gods.warriors/> (click on: "Behind-the-Scenes" and "God's Warriors Show Trailer").

Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp. 11-49.

Dennis Prager, "America, Not Keith Ellison, Decides What Book a Congressman Takes His Oath On," TownHall.com. Available online at:

http://townhall.com/columnists/DennisPrager/2006/11/28/america_not_keith_ellison_decides_what_book_a_congressman_takes_his_oath_on.

JUNE 24: NARRATIVE AS A TOOL FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS COOPERATION

Darrell J Fasching & Dell Dechant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2001), pp. 3-41.

H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Story of Our Life," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, Hauerwas and Jones, eds. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), pp. 21-44.

Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, The Unity of a Human Life, and the Concept of a Tradition," in *Why Narrative*, pp. 89-110.

Zachary Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You: Fourteen Centuries of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Conflict and Cooperation* (New York: Vintage, 2008), pp. 3-157.

Section 2: Theories of Pluralism

JULY 1: America: The Possibility for Pluralism

Martin E. Marty, *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001), pp. 1-79.

Eboo Patel, "Building the Beloved Community: Values of Religious Pluralism." *Frank: The Magazine of the Clinton School of Public Service* (Winter, 2007), pp. 56-61. Available online at: <http://www.frankmagazine.org/Patel.asp>.

Students should spend time exploring the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's online Survey of the US Religious Landscape: www.pewforum.org (click on "U.S. Religious Landscapes Survey" in the upper right hand corner).

JULY 8: PLURALISM IN ACTION: THE LEGACY OF INTERFAITH COOPERATION

Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You*, 158-291.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island," available online at <http://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~alan/chaplain/Heschel.html>.

Martin Luther King, Jr., "The World House" *A Testament to Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* James M. Washington, ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), pp. 617-633.

Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament to Hope*, pp. 16-20.

Eknath Easwaran and Timothy Flinders, "The Good Fight," in *Nonviolent Soldiers of Islam: Badshah Khan: A Man to Match His Mountains* (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 2002), pp. 193-199.

Suggested: students who are interested in a broader look at the legacy of interfaith cooperation should consider browsing the remainder of Fasching & Dechant's, *Comparative Religious Ethics*.

Section 3: Practical Paths for Interfaith Action

JULY 15: THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO INTERFAITH WORK

Joshua Cohen and Ian Lague, eds., *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2002), pp. tbd.

Jonathan Sachs, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), pp. tbd.

JULY 22: CONGREGATIONAL APPROACHES TO INTERFAITH WORK

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2005), pp. 230-258.

Jack L. Seymour, "Constructive, Critical, and Mutual Interfaith Religious Education for Public Living: A Christian View" (lecture presented at *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship*, February 11, 2007). Available online at <http://jewedu.haifa.ac.il/images/seymour.pdf>.

Paul Rauschenbusch, "Ask Pastor Paul," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*, pp. 245-256.

In addition to the following resources, students should come to the discussion having done online research on their own denomination/churches understanding of interfaith work. Students should plan to post relevant links at least 24 hours prior to online discussion.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Resources

"Interfaith Relations and the Churches: A Policy Statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A." – <http://www.nccusa.org/interfaith/ifr.html>

The World Council of Churches Program on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation – <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=2940>

Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism – <http://interreligious.rj.org/index.shtml>

American Jewish Committee: Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Center for American Pluralism – <http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijlTI2PHKoG/b.823789/k.8DA8/InterreligiousInterethnic.htm>

Islamic Society of North America Office of Interfaith Affairs – <http://www.isna.net/interfaith/default.aspx>

JULY 29: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INTERFAITH WORK: THE INTERFAITH YOUTH CORE APPROACH

Selections from Patel and Brodeur, eds., *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*: "Introduction," pp. 1-15.

“Seminarrians Interacting,” pp. 101-108.

“Articulating What Is at Stake in Interreligious Work,” pp. 131-138.

“Section V: Community Based Projects,” pp. 169-207.

“The Chicago Interfaith Service House” and “Face to Face/Faith to Faith,” pp. 225-244.

“Conclusion,” pp. 257-263.

Robert Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century. The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture.*” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol 30, No. 2, pp. 137-173. Available online at: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/action/showPdf?submitPDF=Full+Text+PDF+%28819+KB%29&doi=10.1111%2Fj.1467-9477.2007.00176.x&cookieSet=1>

“Religion and Social Capital,” in *Better Together: The Report of the Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America* (Reprint of 2000 Report, with new introduction, 2007). Available online at: <http://www.bettertogether.org/pdfs/Religion.pdf>.

Michael Jonas, “The Downside of Diversity.” *International Herald Tribune*, August 5, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/08/05/news/diversity.php?page=1>.

AUGUST 1-2: SOCIAL SECTOR APPROACHES TO INTERFAITH WORK AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Patrice Brodeur, “From the Margins to the Centers of Power: The Increasing Relevance of the Global Interfaith Movement,” *Cross Currents*, 55: 1 (Spring 2005). Available online: <http://www.crosscurrents.org/BrodeurSpring05.org>.

Websites to Examine:

United States Institute of Peace – www.usip.org

Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions – www.cpwr.org

World Conference of Religious for Peace – www.wcrp.org,

Religions for Peace USA – www.rfpusa.org

North American Interfaith Network – www.nain.org

United Religious Initiative – www.uri.org

Interfaith Worker Justice – www.iwj.org

Faith in Place – www.faithinplace.org

Chaim Potok, *The Chosen* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1968). Other editions acceptable.