

**Hartford Seminary, Summer 2021**

**Interfaith and Civic Engagement (RS-634)**

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Course modality: **intensive 6-week synchronous online seminar**

Class sessions: **Tuesday, May 25 through June 29, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm EST**

Office hours: via zoom or phone with prior notice on Mondays between 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm and by appointment (to schedule an appointment, email [yuskaev@hartsem.edu](mailto:yuskaev@hartsem.edu)).

**Description**

Interfaith, as an art of association, is a practice that transforms individuals, communities and public life. In all such senses, it can be deeply political. *Interfaith and Civic Engagement* examines the often-overlooked political dynamics of interreligious work. Focusing on case studies – gleaned from students’ experiences, class discussions and assigned readings – this intensive seminar facilitates an academic and practical reflections on interfaith engagement as a civic and personal practice.

**Texts**

- 1) William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Duke University Press, 2005) [e-book available via DTL/HartSem Library website]
- 2) Matthew Weiner, *Interfaith in the City: Religious Pluralism and Civil Society in New York City*, PhD Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 2008 [posed in CANVAS]
- 3) Sarah Sayeed, “Moving from Walls to Bridges: Finding Common Ground for Community Transformation,” keynote address delivered at the 31st Annual Mayor’s Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, Lincoln, NE, April 30, 2015 [transcript available at <http://interfaithcenter.org/archives/9053> and, as a PDF, in CANVAS]
- 4) Andrea Smith, “Native Studies at the Horizon of Death: Theorizing Ethnographic Entrapment and Settler Self-Reflexivity,” from Andrea Smith and Audra Simpson, eds., *Theorizing Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 207-234 [e-book available via DTL/Hartford Seminary Library website; PDF copy of Smith’s chapter posted in CANVAS]
- 5) Timur Yuskaev, “A Contrapuntal Discipline: Through the Landscape of ‘Inter’ and ‘Religious’,” in *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies*, ed. Lucinda Mosher (Georgetown University Press, forthcoming). [posted in CANVAS]

Please email [yuskaev@hartsem.edu](mailto:yuskaev@hartsem.edu) if you are having any difficulty accessing the texts.

## Coursework and Assessment

- Each student will be required to read William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* and Matthew Weiner, *Interfaith in the City* **before the first day** of the course.
- By the end of the day on **Sunday, May 23**, each student will submit the following **three documents** (extensions possible with approval):
  - 1) **Reading notes** on Matt Weiner’s dissertation, *Interfaith in the City*. The notes should be three to four pages long (please try not to make them longer).
  - 2) **A two-page reflection** on William E. Connolly’s *Pluralism*.

Please focus on one or, at most, two of Connolly’s insights. Reflect on how this might be pertinent to your work or to how you approach and think about interfaith.

Note that Connolly’s book is not an easy read. It helps to focus on the stories he tells. Read closely his “Prelude,” “Interlude,” Chapter 4, and “Postlude.” If you are running out of time, you may *skim* some chapters. But remember that “skim” does not mean “skip.”

- 3) **A free-style reflection** that answers the question “Why interfaith?”

This assignment is a warm-up before our intensive 6-week seminar; it is an exercise in honing your practical and analytical skills.

The question “Why interfaith?” is purposefully general. However, your answer must not be generic.

Try to make this exercise relevant to what you already do – or plan to do or, perhaps, study. One way to make your answer focused is to build up on “why interfaith” and ask, “Why does interfaith matters in my work?” Or, in case you are unsure if your work is “interfaith,” you might want to direct the question of “why interfaith” to a case study or a dilemma highlighted in one of our readings. (For example, why – or, perhaps, how – does interfaith matter in the work of the Buddhist monk or any other character in Weiner’s dissertation? Or you can select another focus, another question that retains the free-flowing, yet practical – including analytically practical – spirit of this assignment.

The length and format and genre of this reflection do not matter. But please don’t make it too long. Anything between one to five pages should work.

**Please email the three documents (reading notes and two reflections) as attachments to [yuskaev@hartsem.edu](mailto:yuskaev@hartsem.edu).**

- **Attendance and active participation in each class are required.** Because this is an intensive course, we will have a zero-tolerance policy towards absenteeism.

- **Starting with the second session** on June 1, each student is expected to post a **one-page reflection** on the current readings that incorporates some insights from previous weeks. Please feel free to be flexible with these reflections. But please make sure to finish them with a question that focuses on any text we are reading and discussing in the course.
- For the **final assignment**, due on July 15, 2021, each student will have a choice of submitting either a **final paper**, 10-12 pages in length, or a **comparable final project** that demonstrates a practical engagement with the course material. Logistics to be discussed in class.
- **Grading criteria for the course:**
  - Preliminary submissions (book notes and two reflections): 30%
  - Reflections: 20%
  - Class participation: 20%
  - Final essay or project: 30% – due on **July 15, 2021**.

The course meets **the program requirements** of MAIRS (Religious Pluralism and Arts of Ministry) and MAC.

### Learning Outcomes

- To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views (MARS #2)
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity (MARS #4)
- To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion's communities exist (MARS #5)
- Develop an appreciation of living in a pluralistic world and dialogical skills needed to work in multi-faith and diverse settings (ICP #2)
- To demonstrate knowledge of the larger social and cultural dynamics affecting religious life and organizations in the 21st century and their implications for ministry setting (DMin #1)
- To share the transformed consciousness of one's own spirituality in ways beneficial to the wider world (MATLS #3)
- To acquire a comprehensive knowledge in Islamic Studies, Christian-Muslim Relations, and Interreligious Engagement/Interfaith Dialogue (PhD #1)
- To develop the competence to produce original research and written works to advance the scholarship on Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations for the benefit of religious communities, academy, and society (PhD #2)

**Plagiarism policy**, see: <https://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>

### Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching

- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another – history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality – Learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

## Schedule

### Preliminary submissions due on Tuesday, May 25

#### Tuesday, May 25 – synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm

- William Connolly, *Pluralism*

We will utilize Connolly’s text throughout the course. The first session’s focus on *Pluralism* will serve to open up the discussion centered on the experiences of the seminar participants.

Each week in the course will include reflections interweaving your stories and experiences with our readings and collectively generated insights. Such reflections will be carried out in a variety of formats, such as class discussions, brief essays, and spoken presentations.

On May 27, be ready to discuss your two preliminary written submissions, the reflection on *Pluralism* and “Why Interfaith?”

#### Tuesday, June 1 - synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm

- Andrea Smith, “Native Studies at the Horizon of Death: Theorizing Ethnographic Entrapment and Settler Self-Reflexivity,” from Andrea Smith and Audra Simpson, eds., *Theorizing Native Studies* (Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 207-234
- “Introduction: Interfaith Habits,” Chapter 1, “A Buddhist and Muslim Case Study,” and Chapter 2, “Toward Public Interfaith,” from Weiner, *Interfaith in the City*, pp. 2-160

#### Tuesday, June 8 - synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm

- Chapter 3, “A Jewish and Buddhist Case Study,” and Chapter 3, “Interfaith, Citizenship, and Interfaith as Improvisation,” from Weiner, *Interfaith in the City*, pp. 161-237

**Tuesday, June 15 - synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm**

- Sarah Sayeed, “Moving From Walls to Bridges: Finding Common Ground for Community Transformation,” keynote address delivered at the 31st Annual Mayor’s Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, Lincoln, NE, April 30, 2015, <http://interfaithcenter.org/archives/9053>
- Chapter 5, “A Buddhist and Christian Case Study,” and Chapter 6, “Interfaith as Association and Social Capital,” from Weiner, *Interfaith in the City*, pp. 238-333
- Revisit Chapter 4, “Pluralism and Time” from Connolly, *Pluralism*, pp. 97-131

**Tuesday, June 22 - synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm**

- “Conclusion: Interfaith Changes Civil Society,” from Weiner, *Interfaith in the City*, pp. 334-366
- Timur Yuskaev, “A Contrapuntal Discipline: Through the Landscape of ‘Inter’ and ‘Religious’,” in *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies*, ed. Lucinda Mosher (Georgetown University Press, forthcoming). [posted in CANVAS]

**Tuesday, June 29 – synchronous, 6 pm to 8 pm**

- Prepare and present final paper/project proposals

**Final paper/project due on July 15, 2021.**