Concerning this course

What role does religion play in social justice? How do different religious traditions understand current ethical controversies that call for justice? How can you make a difference?

This hands-on course will explore concepts of social justice within faith traditions, exploring liberation theology, justice ministry, and faith in action. Students will have the opportunity to meet both local and national social justice leaders and work on a project of their own choosing, either on campus or with a local organization.

Course Requirements

The class format will include discussions of the readings, visits by outsider presenters, and a social justice faith-based project to be chosen by the student. Students will choose a topic, prepare a one page proposal, work with the organization or group on the topic, prepare a short project results and reflection paper, and present on the project at the end of the semester.

The class is designed to be very hands on in a seminar style format. Participation and attendance is key due to the heavy discussion and dialogue component of the class. Every effort should be made to attend each session but should a situation develop that will impact your performance or attendance, please inform me immediately. Participation includes posting three discussion questions based on that week's materials in the Canvas discussion forum by noon on Wednesday.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites, but an open, respectful mind with a certain passion for justice is assumed. What is important is how we engage with one another in the class and how we represent ourselves in the community. Social justice issues and the related work can be challenging, particularly within an interfaith context, and I think the crucial point to remember is to be respectful of others at all times, perhaps most importantly when we disagree.
Changes

The instructor reserves the right to alter readings, assignments or the schedule below as dictated by the needs and interest of the class. Any changes will be mentioned in class and announced on Canvas.

Course Readings

The texts are engaging, fast reads and the amount of reading is balanced so that everyone can keep up. We may need to be somewhat flexible as we accommodate the schedules of our outside guests, but, when possible, each guest will be matched to the reading for that particular week. There is also some flexibility built into the schedule to accommodate related current events that may arise during the semester.

Publisher: Fortress Press

Heidt, Mari Rapela. *Moral Traditions: an introduction to world religious ethics.*  (Moral Traditions below)
Publisher: Anselm Academic

Publisher: WestBow Press

There may be additional articles of interest included in the readings and you should feel free to contact me with any articles or items of interest that you would like to share with the class.

Grading

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Schedule

January 9, Week One
Introduction, Syllabus Review, Expectations

January 16, Week Two
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapters 1 & 2 & appendix – pages 1-23, 160-162
Spiritual Activist, Preface & Introduction – pages ix-xxvi, 229
Moral Traditions, Chapter 1, pages 6-9

January 23, Week Three
Topic due
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 3, pages 25-47
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 1 – pages xxvii-9
Moral Traditions, Chapter 5, pages 59-73

January 30, Week Four
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 4, pages 48-62
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 2, pages 10-34 [remind me of the disclaimer before you read this chapter]
Moral Traditions, Chapter 4, pages 46-58

February 6, Week Five
Proposal due with confirmed project location
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 5, pages 63-87
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 3, pages 35-44
Moral Traditions, Chapter 6, pages 74-89

February 13, Week Six
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 6, pages 88-102
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 4, pages 45-72
Moral Traditions, Chapter 2, pages 17-31

February 20, Week Seven
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 7, pages 103-120
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 5, pages 73-106
Moral Traditions, Chapter 3, pages 32-45

February 27, Week Eight
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 8, pages 121-135
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 6, pages 105-131
Moral Traditions, Chapter 7, pages 90-105

March 6, Week Nine
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 9 & Epilogue, pages 136-158
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 7, pages 132-158
Moral Traditions, Chapter 8, pages 106-116

March 13, Spring Break
March 20, Week Ten
Reading due: Spiritual Activist, Chapters 8 & 9, pages 159-195

March 27, Week Eleven
Reading due: Spiritual Activist, Chapter 10 & Conclusion, pages 196-227

April 3, Week Twelve
Project papers due

April 10, Week Thirteen
Presentations

April 17, Week Fourteen
Presentations

Exam Week – only if necessary for presentations

Course follow-up: If anyone is particularly engaged with his or her topic and would like the opportunity to continuing working on an extended project after the semester is over, we can work on setting up an internship for credit for the following semester. Please let me know as soon as possible if you might like to pursue this option.

Outside activities of interest: As events come up, folks should feel to share them with the class. I certainly plan to do so!