



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 2: Key Concepts of Interfaith Leadership

Module 2.1: Interfaith in American Democracy

This module takes a closer look at the particular opportunities and challenges of interfaith leadership in a religiously diverse democracy such as the United States.

[Video \(4 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Explain the significance of the USA being a religiously diverse democracy for interfaith leadership
- Describe the different ways in which religious identity can be brought into public and civic life

Discussion Questions:

- Do you agree with Eck's notion of pluralism as a response to diversity? Explain why or why not.

Activities required for Canvas version of the course:

- Share a link to a recent news article that addresses the role of religion in American public life (Good suggestions can be found at Pluralism Project pluralism.org/news). In one or two sentences, summarize how this article addresses the role of religion in American public life.

Additional suggested activities:

- Look up where various countries fall on the [international religious freedom index](#); what are the criteria on which this index is built?
- Identify some organizations that are working to make their particular religious convictions public.

Reading required for Canvas version of the course:

- Harvard University Pluralism Project, "[From Diversity to Pluralism](#)"

Additional recommended reading:

- *The New Religious Intolerance* by Martha Nussbaum, "Chapter 3: First Principles: Equal Respect for Conscience"
- "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century" by Robert Putnam
- *Journal of College and Character*, Volume 12, No. 1, February 2011; "[The Civic Relevance of Interfaith Cooperation for Colleges and Universities](#)" by Eboo Patel and Cassie Meyer
- "[A Rawlsian Idea of Deliberative Democracy](#)" by Angela Dawn White
- John F. Kennedy's [Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association](#)

Module 2.2: Models of Religious Diversity

This module lays the groundwork for understanding the potential influence of interfaith leadership in today's world. We clarify the difference between diversity and pluralism, and discuss common responses to increasing diversity, including positive, negative, and apathetic. We also share a three-step process for transforming diversity into pluralism – the ultimate goal of interfaith leadership.

[Video \(10 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Explain some of the different ways people respond to increasing diversity
- Define both diversity and pluralism and explain their differences
- Define relativism and distinguish between pluralism and relativism
- Name the three necessary elements for building pluralism from diversity

Discussion Questions:

- Have you seen these different responses to diversity in your own life?
- In your experience, have you found that cooperation with people of other religious traditions has changed you? If so, how?

Activities required for Canvas version of the course:

- Return to the article you identified in the previous module. Which response to diversity (bunkers of isolation, barriers to difference, religious extremism, indifference, bridge-building) do you see here?

Additional suggested activities:

- Return to the identity-wheel you completed in Lesson 1. What are some actions that stem from these identities?
- Reflective Essay: We heard that the first part of being a bridge-builder is to respect identities. Are there identities that don't deserve respect? Are there identities or communities that fall outside the circle of pluralism? Where do you draw the line?

Reading required for Canvas version of the course:

- *Interfaith Encounters in America* by Kate McCarthy, Chapter 1: Theories of Religious Difference: The "Experts" Map Interfaith Relations

Additional recommended reading:

- Harvard University Pluralism Project, "[From Diversity to Pluralism](#)"
- "[The relationship between pluralism and diversity](#)" by Dr. Victoria S. Harrison
- Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, "[The diversity of meanings of the term 'religious pluralism'](#)"

Module 2.3: Exploring Social Capital

Students will learn about the important theory of social capital, and how our relationships and networks can be leveraged to increase pluralism and work towards the common good. We distinguish between bridged and bonded social capital, and offer real-world examples of bridged social capital averting violence between religious groups.

[Video \(4 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives:

- Explain the idea of Social Capital
- Distinguish between bonded and bridged social capital

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the social networks of which you are a part, both present and historical? Are there any ways in which they have benefitted you?

Activities required for Canvas version of the course:

- Return to the interfaith organization you identified in lesson 1: what is the bonded capital on which it is drawing (in the present and historically)? What is the bridged capital it is hoping to create?
- After learning about the lives of King, Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, and Dorothy Day through the course readings, choose one figure to research independently. How did this person leverage bonded capital to create bridged capital?

Additional suggested activities:

- Interview a friend or relative who came as an immigrant to this country. What difficulties did he or she encounter? What support did he or she receive from a “pocket group?”
- How have you seen social capital benefit you?
 - Did you get a job because you knew someone who worked there?
 - Did you know someone at your college/university before you applied/enrolled?
 - Have you used crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, or share economy services?
 - What has enabled you to get where you are today?
- Look at your social network: what forms of diversity are represented?
- What is the superordinate goal that drives people to create bridged social capital?
- Can you identify examples from your own experience where people have created bridged social capital with each other over a common concern? What motivated them to do that?

Reading required for Canvas version of the course:

- “E Pluribus Unum” by Robert Putnam

Additional recommended reading:

- “[Imagined Communities](#)” by Benedict Anderson
- *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, “Chapter 4: Religious Participation” by Robert Putnam
- *The American Interest*, “[Bowling with Robert Putnam: A conversation with the author of *Bowling Alone*](#)”
- *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, “Chapter 1: Introduction” by Ashutosh Varshney

Module 2.4: Key Concepts Summary

Eboo Patel will summarize the big ideas of this lesson and invite students to consider how they fit into the larger course.

[Video \(2 min\)](#)

Student Learning Objectives (cumulative for Lesson 2):

- Describe the relationship between interfaith leadership and the social landscape
- Evaluate interfaith leadership as a civic endeavor

Discussion Questions:

- Now that you have completed lesson 2, respond to one of more of the questions at the end of the video, and comment on the responses of at least 2 other students:
 - What motivates someone to be an interfaith leader?
 - Where does this leadership begin?
 - How can I motivate someone to join me?
- Does interfaith depend on altruism? Or does it serve distinct communities or individuals' self-interest?