

DRAFT v1
Subject to change. Full
syllabus available in Canvas
Wednesday, August 13th.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Ministry across Religions

RELM-C302-YA1
Fall 2026

Important: Please check your Loyola email account for an email from the instructor alerting you the course is open, then reply to that email confirming you are ready to begin the course.

Course Description

This course explores the intersection of ministry and major faith traditions with a focus on interfaith understanding, dialogue, and collaborative action.

Key Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to

- understand major world religions at a basic level.
- grow in openness to the wisdom of other faith traditions.
- convey appropriately the wisdom of your faith tradition to adherents of other faith traditions.
- demonstrate pastoral sensitivity across traditions.
- navigate tension between conviction and respect.
- feel prepared for real-world ministry contexts.

Required Texts

All readings for this class are available either online through Loyola's Library or Canvas, or elsewhere on the internet. If you wish, you may purchase the texts below for this class from the bookstore of your choice or from the Loyola Bookstore.

Matlins, Stuart M., and Arthur J. Magida. *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*. 6th edition. SkyLight Paths Publications, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1-59473-593-6. **Note:** Selections from this text are available in Canvas.

Ondich, Jody L. *World Religions: The Spirit Searching*. PressBooks, 2021. [Online](#).

What You Should Bring to This Course

Please come to our coursework in with the habits of mind and spirit that will help you do these

things:

- Be willing to reflect deeply on your ministry, your role in it, and how God may be calling you to grow in that ministry and your life.
- Be able to study and grow within our intentional learning community, participating in its ongoing disciplined conversations.
- Organize your time so that you can be present online both early and often, surveying each week’s work and completing tasks throughout the week instead of at the end (if everyone writes Canvas posts on the last day, then there’s no “conversation” at all, let alone “disciplined conversation”).
- Share your authentic ideas, insights, and questions to all our interactions.
- Arrive online prepared, ready to listen (or read!) carefully, and able to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

Evaluation and Course Requirements

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

| Week | Topic | Assignments |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Week 1: 8/17 – 8/23 | Foundations and Practices of Interfaith Ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Introduction • Assigned readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Journal: Becoming a Lay Minister in Interfaith Contexts |
| Week 2: 8/24 – 8/30 | Judaism: Beliefs, Practices, and Pastoral Sensitivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Optional Whole-class Webinar |
| Week 3 8/31-9/6 | Islam: Beliefs, Practices, and Pastoral Sensitivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 |
| Week 4: 9/7 – 9/13 | Hinduism: Worldviews and Care Practices (Sept. 7, Labor Day Holiday) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Small Group Meeting |
| Week 5: 9/14 – 9/20 | Buddhism: Worldviews and Care Practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Interfaith Encounter Project due |
| Week 6: 9/21 – 9/27 | Indigenous Traditions: Worldviews and Care Practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Week 7: 9/28 – 10/4 | Meaning, Spirituality, and Care Beyond Organized Religion or Indigenous Lifeways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned readings Videos Discussion Questions 1 and 2 Optional whole-class webinar |
| Week 8: 10/5 – 10/11 | Pastoral Skills in Interfaith Contexts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned readings Video Discussion Questions 1 and 2 Journal: Spiritual Reflection |
| Final Project 10/12 – 10/18 | (Oct. 12-13, Fall Holiday) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Project due 10/14 |

Sept. 16: Due date for posting Mid-term Grades 11:59 pm CT

Oct. 20: Due date for posting Final Grades 11:59 pm CT

Select Week One Assignments

- Complete the “Becoming a Lay Minister in Interfaith Contexts” journal
- Read overview, view video, read assigned texts
 - Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership*, excerpt from chapter 1, chapter 2 (PDF in Canvas)
 - Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, “Postcolonial Interreligious Learning: A Reflection from a North American Christian Perspective.” *Postcolonial Practice of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy, and Interfaith Engagement*, Lexington Books, 2016, pp. 153-66. Available as an [ebook](#) through Loyola’s Monroe Library.
 - Leah Bueckert, “Stepping into the Borderlands: Prayer with People of Different Faiths.” *Interfaith Spiritual Care*, edited by Daniel S. Schipani and Leah Dawn Bueckert, Pandora Press, 2009, pp. 29-56. (PDF in Canvas)
- Participate in Discussions on Canvas:
 - Introduce yourself and greet your fellow students
 - Respond to Discussion Questions 1 and 2

Assessment

Each student’s final grade will include the following parts:

| | | Percentage of Grade |
|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings | 50% |
| 2 | Spiritual Reflection Journals | 10% |
| 3 | Interfaith Encounter Project | 15% |
| 4 | Interfaith Ministry in Practice | 25% |

1) Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings (50%)

As in all RELM courses, the strength of our program is the intentional learning community and

its ongoing invitation to disciplined conversation. Through the online courses you will be part of an intentional learning community that will carry on extended and disciplined conversation by way of the internet.

A discussion is an “asynchronous” or time-independent application. This means that generally you will have no set times or schedules when you must be in class on any particular day. It is up to you to determine when to log in and post during the course of a week, within the parameters of the given weekly deadlines. You are expected to log in to this class several times a week to read the comments of your instructor and fellow students and to post your required comments. Except for the last week, each weekly session runs from 12:01 a.m. US Central Monday until 11:59 p.m. Central the following Sunday. The final session ends at 11:59 p.m. Central on Saturday October 17. Late posts are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Please consult with your professor about any foreseen or unforeseen absence from the course.

Each week several Discussion Leaders will help initiate the flow of the conversation. The task of the Discussion Leader is simply to post first. S/he will essentially begin the conversation around the given question(s) for the week by posting her response to the session question; everyone else assigned to that group will respond on that same thread. In at least one of your responses, you will also offer your own reflections on the question (perhaps in addition to your response to the discussion question). Each week you will be able to earn four points for each question, for your weekly participation; this includes your response to the assigned question(s), as well as the thoughtful replies you are asked to make to your colleagues’ posts.

All students are expected to contribute at least three substantive responses for each question. Lead students post their initial reflections by Wednesday; everyone who is not a lead student should post at least once by Friday.

Posting

Contributions to Discussions should be the fruit of, and therefore demonstrate, a critical engagement with the course assignments. To achieve this, you are asked to note comments, questions, observations, reflections, insights that surface as the natural result of thoughtful reading. Your weekly postings should be substantive and respect the word limit posted for each week’s questions. A substantive response will include your own reflections on the question and some interaction with course materials, with your own experience, and with your fellow students’ reflections.

Your interaction with your own experience and your fellow students’ reflections should be concrete and specific. When citing assigned course material, please include a parenthetical reference with at least the name of the material or the author and, if possible a page number (e.g., Groome 15; Hahnenberg video). Please also alert your readers when you refer to other outside sources, such as other books or websites.

Your replies to your colleagues should also be substantive: “I agree” or “I like what you

posted” or something similar is not a substantive comment. Please articulate what about their posting is compelling to you, the connections you make with the assigned material for the week, and why you consider their comment relevant, challenging, important, etc. Ideally, each discussion thread will become a conversation. (If you have a comment that you would like to make to a colleague that is not related to the discussion, you may either post it in the “Student Lounge” Discussion (accessible from the course homepage) or send an email to the student via the People section of the course.)

Asking Questions

One of the most effective tools of a good online discussion is the question. Communication in the online medium can be easily misinterpreted. It can be challenging to effectively convey tone and nuance in an online discussion. This can sometimes lead to misunderstanding, conflict and frustration in the learning group. But this does not have to be the case! When in doubt about the meaning of a posting, please ask questions before making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Even if the meaning seems straightforward, it is good practice to ask follow-up questions and/or questions for clarification. Questions will also help to discussions deepening our conversations and reflections.

In sum, what should your Discussion posts look like?

- Your posts should always be substantive, meaning focused, succinct, and worth reading. Keep in mind that we all have to read these posts!
- Your posts should bring your own experience into conversation with our course materials and with what the other members of the learning community are saying, and they should always directly address the question at hand.
- Your responses should also be critical, meaning that the conversation should also generate questions, requests for clarification, and other methods of deepening the discussion. As you can see, remarks like “I loved your post” or “I agree wholeheartedly” are NOT substantive posts!
- In addition to being substantive, our online conversations should also be authentic—that is, anything that you say online should be something that you would say if we were all sitting around a table in a physical room.

2) Spiritual Reflection (10%)

A central dimension of this course is ongoing spiritual reflection. Because effective lay ministry involves not only acquiring knowledge but also developing self-awareness, empathy, and spiritual maturity, you will engage in weekly reflective journaling throughout the course.

In Week 1, you will reflect on your own experiences in order to consider what it might mean for you to grow into the identity of a lay minister who engages thoughtfully and responsibly in interfaith contexts. This journal invites you to examine key moments in your life that have shaped how you encounter people and ideas from religious traditions other than your own.

Each week thereafter, after completing the assigned readings and media, you will practice a modified Ignatian Examen using prompts included in Canvas. The weekly journals are intended as personal spiritual exercises and will not be submitted to the instructor. Instead, they serve as a foundation for deeper integration of course learning over time.

In the final week of the course, you will review your weekly journals and write a 400-word reflection that synthesizes your learning across the semester.

3) Interfaith Encounter Project: Interview and Theological Reflection (15%)

The purpose of this assignment is to help you engage meaningfully with a person from a religious tradition different from your own. Through conversation, listening, and reflection, you will develop skills essential for ministry in a religiously diverse world: empathy, curiosity, theological humility, and respectful dialogue. Complete directions are available in the Canvas course. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0.

4) Interfaith Ministry in Practice: Identity or Community Engagement Project (25%)

The final assignment invites you to synthesize your learning from the course and your earlier journal reflection into a deeper exploration of interfaith ministry. You will either reflect on your emerging identity as a lay minister in interfaith contexts or analyze the lived religious diversity of a specific community. Complete directions are available in the Canvas course. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0.

Grading Scale

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| A | 93-100 | B- | 80-82.9 | D+ | 67-69.9 |
| A- | 90-92.9 | C+ | 77-79.9 | D | 63-66.9 |
| B+ | 87-89.9 | C | 73-76.9 | F | 0-62.99 |
| B | 83-86.9 | C- | 70-72.9 | | |

Course Policies

Incomplete Grade Policy

Students are subject to the university policy regarding incomplete grades with the following additions to university policy. Grades of Incomplete are given at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources » Policies, Forms, & Services section of their Canvas course. Students should first inquire of their instructor whether or not they are eligible for an incomplete; this must occur with sufficient time to complete the process explained here. To be eligible, students may not have received an Incomplete in the previous semester, must have completed at least 75% of the course work to date, and must have at least a C or above in the course. After the instructor makes an initial

assessment of eligibility, including checking with the LIM Office to ensure there was no Incomplete in the previous semester and finds the student eligible, by the due date of the course's final assignment, a student must complete and obtain all signatures for LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources section of their Canvas course and submit it to their instructor, who will forward a copy to the LIM Director. LIM graduate students may not receive Incompletes in LIM courses in consecutive semesters.

Attendance & Participation

Students are subject to the university policy regarding attendance found online in the *Bulletin*. Students in online courses communicate their presence by active participation in weekly discussions. Each course's instructor sets requirements for how many times students must post on the Discussion Board in Canvas. Failing to post during the first week of class may result in removal from the course. If you foresee that you will be unable to post in a given week, please contact the instructor ahead of time. Extensions for posting are given at the instructor's discretion and for a valid reason may be granted if arranged ahead of time. In extraordinary circumstances, students may arrange with their instructor to post up to two weeks after a deadline, though this may entail a grade reduction. Posts and other assignments submitted more than two weeks late may be subject to a grade of zero. If students do not post in a given week, they are considered absent. Absence for more than one week without contacting the instructor may result in removal from and failure of the course.

Tentatively, there will be two **optional video conferences** during the course. To participate, students will need access to a computer with a web camera and microphone, and earphones or earbuds. More information will be included in the Canvas course.

University Policies

Please read Part 2 of the syllabus (located in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, AI, accessible education, and more.