CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Request for Proposals from Interfaith Youth Core

For the third year in a row, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is pleased to offer grants of up to $1,000 to fund the development of undergraduate courses that engage interfaith themes. IFYC’s intention is to support and work directly with scholars across a variety of disciplines who seek to engage the emerging field of interfaith studies.

Grants will be awarded for curricular development and/or revision work to be conducted during the summer of 2018. Applications are due on March 30th, 2018, and grant implementation will take place from May 1st, 2018 – September 14th, 2018.

Questions about the grants or application process are welcome and may be addressed to Kristi Del Vecchio, Academic Initiatives Manager, at kristi@ifyc.org or 312.573.8829.

Interfaith Studies Courses

IFYC offers the following working definition of “interfaith studies”¹:

Interfaith studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the multiple dimensions of how individuals and groups who orient around religion differently interact with one another, and the implications of these interactions for communities, civil society, and global politics.²

Educators across the country have already established hundreds of courses and dozens of academic programs that focus on interfaith studies. Scholars in religious studies and theology have often spearheaded these efforts, but faculty across the humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences – as well as pre-professional programs such as business, pre-health, social work, and education – are increasingly building interfaith studies curricula.

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¹ We have found that some higher education institutions prefer to use the term “interfaith,” while others prefer “interreligious.” While it could be argued that these terms carry distinct connotations, Dr. Oddbjørn Leirvik notes that these terms are often used interchangeably (see his 2014 text Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion). IFYC tends to use “interfaith studies” as a shorthand phrase.

From observing the development of these courses and programs, IFYC has identified the following themes and learning outcomes as central to interfaith studies:

- **Experiential Learning**: Providing an opportunity for hands-on learning, interfaith studies syllabi often stress the value of learning *alongside* and *among* individuals who orient around religion differently, rather than *about* them exclusively in a classroom setting. This concretely manifests as site visits to houses of worship, service learning requirements, or presentations in class from leaders and members of religious communities.

- **Interdisciplinarity**: The interaction of people who orient around religion differently implicates a range of academic disciplines; indeed, scholars of psychology, sociology, political science, business, nursing, accounting, religion, and even biology have already contributed to this area of inquiry. In this way, interfaith studies courses often draw upon a variety of disciplinary methodologies, pedagogies, and research findings.

- **Intersectionality**: Although religious and philosophical identity is especially salient to interfaith studies courses, it is also important to consider religious identity in the context of interconnected and sometimes inseparable social categorizations, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic identity, age, class status, education level, and the like. Because of this, interfaith studies courses are particularly attentive to the manifestations of religious/worldview identity in specific and varying contexts.

- **Religious Literacy**: Interfaith studies courses often equip students with information about historical and contemporary religious or philosophical practices, beliefs, and communities. A baseline understanding of religious traditions (e.g. the five pillars of Islam; the differences between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism; or historical occurrences in the Hebrew Bible), and the practical implications of this literacy (e.g. the ways in which Muslims express charity; the importance of a vegetarian diet for many Buddhists; or the practices that Jews may observe during Shabbat) are considered important competencies for interfaith engagement. The range of topics covered is guided by the goals of each specific course.

- **Personal Reflection**: Students are often given the space to reflect upon their own values and worldviews in interfaith studies courses. These opportunities often manifest as journal assignments, reflection papers, or spiritual autobiography essays. Through these exercises, students consider their capacity for interfaith leadership by reflecting upon their identity in relation to – and in community with – people whose religious and philosophical commitments differ from their own.

- **Professional Relevance**: Some interfaith studies courses consider how religious and philosophical diversity is present in or relevant to professional and civic spaces. Through internships, interview assignments, or other community-based projects, students gain concrete competencies and skills needed to engage religious and philosophical diversity in a workplace or civic setting.
Before You Apply: Project Overview and Eligibility

Overview: IFYC is offering grants of up to $1,000 to be used to revise an existing course or create a new course that integrates interfaith themes.

Application Requirements: Applicants should submit the following materials by March 30th, 2018, to be considered for this grant:

I. Online Application: All applicants must complete an online form located here (http://bit.ly/2018_CDG_App). This online application contains the following narrative questions, each of which should be answered in no more than 300 words:
   - Please provide the provisional title of your course, as well as a 3-5 sentence description.
   - What are the proposed learning outcomes for your new or revised course?
   - What resources, methods, and materials do you find key to teaching interfaith topics?
   - In which department is your course housed? In what ways does an interfaith lens inform or change the focus of your course?
   - What questions, concerns, or reservations do you have about teaching interfaith topics?
   - What personal goals or objectives do you have for teaching this course? In addition, if you have previous experience teaching interfaith topics in the classroom, please describe it here.

II. Requirement for Revised Syllabi: Applicants seeking to revise a syllabus must also submit the syllabus as it currently exists, and give a detailed explanation of the changes they plan to make. Applicants should upload their current syllabus when completing the online application form.

III. Letter of Recommendation: In addition to completing the online form, applicants are required to supply a recommendation letter from their Department Chair, Provost, or Academic Dean. In this letter, the recommender should demonstrate their support for the proposed course, and offer a provisional timeline as to when the course would be added to the institution's catalogue. Applicants should upload their recommendation letter when completing the online application form, or email the letter to kristi@ifyc.org upon completion.
Relevant Dates: Deadlines for grant application and administration are as follows:

- Application materials due: March 30th, 2018
- Award notifications announced: May 1st, 2018
- Final syllabus and feedback survey due to IFYC: September 14th, 2018

Use of Grant Funds: Grant awards are meant to support grantees for the time and energy it takes to create or revise a syllabus; grantees should view this funding as reportable income. Please note that this grant is not to be used to fund the following activities:

- Routine course revision
- Travel (domestic or international)
- Conference attendance or registration
- Other research, writing, or publishing costs

Eligibility: Faculty members, including adjunct faculty, from accredited universities or colleges in the U.S. are eligible to apply.

Grant Terms and Requirements

Disbursement of Grant Funds: IFYC will disperse grant funds in two equal installments:

- The first installment (half the total award) will be sent after the grantee signs and returns the Memorandum of Agreement, submits their personal W9 to IFYC, and attends a required orientation session.
- The second installment (the remaining half of the total award) will be sent after IFYC receives the final syllabus from the grantee, and after the grantee completes a brief feedback survey at the end of the administration period.

Grantee Orientation Session: All grantees are required to participate in one of the following conference call orientation sessions (60 minutes):

- Option 1: Tuesday, May 22nd, 2018 from 1:00-2:00pm Central
- Option 2: Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018 from 2:00-3:00pm Central
- Option 3: Thursday, May 24th, 2018 from 10:30am-11:30am Central

The goal of this session is to introduce/reacquaint grantees to the work of IFYC, familiarize grantees with resources available for curriculum revision, and to provide the opportunity for grantees to meet one another remotely.

Mid-Summer Conference Call and Educational Session - Interfaith Pedagogies: Grantees are encouraged to participate in one additional conference call in July or August (dates and times TBD) that will explore findings from a research project run in partnership by IFYC and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. Conducted by Cassie Meyer (IFYC) and
Trina Janiec Jones (Wofford College), the scope of this project was to observe professors, conduct student focus groups, and review syllabi to better discern what pedagogical practices are emerging in interfaith studies courses. Grantees interested in participating will be expected to read the initial findings of this project and come prepared to discuss the ideas presented.

**Syllabus Requirements:** At the end of the grant period, grantees will submit their new or revised syllabus in lieu of a final report. Final syllabi are due on September 14th, 2018, and must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document. Syllabi must include the following sections:

- Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes
- Required Texts and Materials
- Course Assignments and Assignment Descriptions
- Tentative Course Calendar

**Publishing Grantee Syllabi:** IFYC may wish to post grantee syllabi in its online resource library, but will always seek permission before doing so. The author will be given full credit.

**Course Offerings:** IFYC anticipates that new or revised courses would be taught during the 2018-2019 or 2019-2020 academic year. While there is no formal requirement to teach the course within this timeframe, if you plan to teach your course after the 2019-2020 academic year, please describe your circumstances relating to this delay in the online application.

**Curricular Resources for the Development of Interfaith Studies Courses**

IFYC has partnered with other higher education institutions and networks to create resources that support the development of interfaith studies curriculum. The following resources offer concrete examples of interfaith studies courses that already exist, or provide materials that educators can use directly in their syllabi:

**Teaching Interfaith Understanding Resource Library**

In partnership with the Council of Independent Colleges, IFYC has created this online resource library, which contains dozens of sample syllabi, teaching tactics, and assignment descriptions created by undergraduate faculty across the country. While representative of a diverse range of disciplinary perspectives, each resource focuses on interfaith learning. Visit [https://www.ifyc.org/faculty/library](https://www.ifyc.org/faculty/library) for more information.
Introduction to Interfaith Leadership Online Curriculum

In partnership with Dominican University and with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, IFYC has created a suite of dynamic short videos, readings, assignments, and assessment tools, comprising an eight-lesson curriculum in Interfaith Leadership for blended and online learning. This curriculum includes lessons on the purpose and value of interfaith leadership, the history of interfaith cooperation in the United States, core skills of interfaith leadership, a series of interviews with young interfaith leaders across multiple professions, and more. Visit https://www.ifyc.org/interfaithleadership for more information.

Questions

IFYC staff are available for consultation and feedback during the development of your application. Please contact Kristi Del Vecchio, Academic Initiatives Manager, at kristi@ifyc.org or 312.573.8829.