For the second year in a row, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is pleased to offer grants of up to $1,000 for faculty at U.S. colleges and universities to support the development of undergraduate courses that engage the academic field of Interfaith and Interreligious Studies. IFYC’s intention is to support and work directly with a community of scholars across a variety of disciplines and institutional settings who seek to explore and develop this emerging area of inquiry.

Grants will be awarded for curricular revision work to be conducted during the summer of 2017. Applications are due on March 31st, 2017, and grant implementation will take place from May 1st – September 29th, 2017.

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.

The Emerging Field of Interfaith and Interreligious Studies

As religious diversity increases in the United States and religion continues to play a prominent role in public affairs, many institutions of higher education are looking for holistic ways to foster interfaith cooperation and pluralism on campus. One of the emerging discussions within this work is how interfaith engagement can be addressed within the college or university classroom in an academically rigorous fashion. Many scholars invested in these discussions are claiming a new interdisciplinary field called Interfaith and/or Interreligious Studies.¹ As this growing field takes shape, important questions arise: what are the learning outcomes of Interfaith and Interreligious Studies, and what might it look like to develop courses that help students achieve those learning outcomes? How might faculty from disparate fields share theoretical insights and effective pedagogical practices?

For the purpose of these grants, IFYC offers the following working definition of “Interfaith Studies”:

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

As the definition and contours of the field of Interfaith Studies continues to evolve, we expect grantee syllabi to both build and expand upon these ideas. IFYC anticipates that the execution of those courses will bring grantees and IFYC into a mutually enriching conversation that further establishes the direction of this developing field.

¹ “Interreligious and Interfaith Studies” is the title that a recognized group within the American Academy of Religion has adopted. 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.

Interfaith and Interreligious Studies Courses

Over the past few years, faculty at dozens of institutions have begun to establish Interfaith Studies courses and programs. From observing the development of these courses, and in some cases partnering with faculty to develop them, IFYC has seen several common themes and learning outcomes emerge as foundational to Interfaith Studies syllabi:

- **Experiential Learning**: Providing an opportunity for hands-on learning, a number of Interfaith Studies syllabi 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 diverse visitors.

- **Interdisciplinarity**: The interaction of people who orient around religion differently has implications for more than one academic discipline; scholars of Business, Psychology, Sociology, and the Health Sciences, for example, are as equally invested in questions of productive interreligious engagement as scholars of religion. Thus, Interfaith Studies syllabi often include perspectives and learnings from a diverse range of disciplines and fields.

- **Intersectionality**: Although religious and philosophical identity is 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.

- **Religious Literacy**: Interfaith Studies draws heavily on the academic study of religion, which includes the examination of both historical and contemporary religious or philosophical practices, beliefs, and communities. Having a baseline understanding of religious traditions (e.g. the five pillars of Islam, the difference between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, or historical occurrences in the Hebrew Bible) is often important for interfaith engagement.

- **Personal Reflection**: Alongside the desire to learn about and among individuals who orient around religion differently, students are often given the space to reflect upon their own worldview in Interfaith Studies courses. In this regard, students are able to 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**: A number of Interfaith Studies syllabi directly consider the ways in which religious and philosophical diversity is present in professional and civic spaces. Through internships or other community-based projects, students gain concrete competencies and skill sets needed to engage religious and philosophical diversity in a constructive way.

**Additional Resources for Interfaith and Interreligious Studies Courses**

IFYC has partnered with the Council of Independent Colleges to curate the *Teaching Interfaith Understanding 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 teaching interfaith understanding.
Before You Apply: Project Overview and Application Requirements

IFYC is offering grants of up to $1,000 to be used to create a new course – or revise an existing course – that focuses on Interfaith and/or Interreligious Studies.

Eligibility: Faculty members, including adjunct faculty, from accredited universities or colleges in the US are eligible to apply for these grants.

Application Requirements: Applicants should submit the following materials by March 31st, 2017, to be considered for this grant:

1. **Online Application:** All applicants must complete an online form located here [http://bit.ly/IFYCgrant2017](http://bit.ly/IFYCgrant2017). The online form contains the following narrative questions. Each question 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 Studies?
   - A common feature of Interfaith Studies involves opportunities for students to encounter religious or philosophical difference. How would you strive to instill this in your new or revised course?
   - What questions, concerns, or reservations do you have about teaching in this area?
   - What personal goals or objectives do you have for teaching this course? In addition, if you have previous experience teaching interfaith understanding in the classroom, please describe it here.

2. **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.

3. **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. 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 31st, 2017
- Award notifications announced: May 1st, 2017
- Final syllabus due to IFYC: September 29th, 2017

Use of Grant Funds: Grant awards are meant to help 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 grants are not to be used to fund the following activities:

- Routine course revision
- Travel (either domestic or international)
- Conference attendance or registration
- Other research, writing, or publishing costs
$250 of Supplementary Funding Available: Utilizing the Introduction to Interfaith Leadership Curriculum

In partnership with Dominican University and with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, IFYC has created a suite of free resources comprising a complete curriculum that explores interfaith leadership. The curriculum consists of eight lessons divided into 32 short modules consisting of video content, suggested readings, discussion prompts, and recommended classroom activities and assignments. This dynamic content was designed to be adaptable to various courses and classroom needs.

To help IFYC and Dominican assess both the content and user experience of these resources, we are inviting faculty to consider integrating them into their new/revised Interfaith Studies courses. Grantees who use content from at least three lessons of the Introduction to Interfaith Leadership curriculum are eligible to receive up to $250 of supplementary funding. To secure these additional funds, the new or revised course must be taught during the 2017-2018 academic year, and faculty must agree to participate in follow-up assessment with IFYC regarding their experience with these resources.

For more information and to gain access to these resources, please indicate your interest when completing the online application form, where you’ll see a specific question about this opportunity. From there, Esther Boyd, Manager of Curriculum Development at IFYC, will reach out to you with more information.

Grant Terms and Requirements

Allocation of Grant Funds: IFYC will allocate grant funds in two installments of $500 each:

- The first $500 installment will be sent after the grantee signs and returns a Memorandum of Understanding and submits their personal (not institutional) W2 to IFYC.
- The second $500 installment 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.
- If grantees choose to utilize three or more lessons from the “Introduction to Interfaith Leadership Curriculum,” the additional $250 of funding will be allocated after the course is taught and after all follow-up assessment is complete.

Grantee Conference Call: Grantees are encouraged, but not required, to participate in one of the following conference call orientation sessions:

- Option 1: Tuesday, May 9th from 12:00-1:30pm Central
- Option 2: Wednesday, May 10th from 1:00-2:30pm Central
- Option 3: Thursday, May 11th from 10:30am-12:00pm Central

The goal of these sessions is to remotely “meet” some of the other grantees and explore questions and ideas together as a group. In the past, grantees have benefited from the resources and ideas that their peers had to offer during these calls.
**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 29th, 2017, 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, and the author will be given full credit.

**Course Offerings:** IFYC anticipates that new or revised courses would be taught during the 2017-2018 or 2018-2019 academic year. There is no formal requirement, however, to teach the course within a specific timeframe.

**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.