IPI 5/717 (3) Religion and Thoughtful Activism

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan-Kaplan
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Office hours: by appointment via zoom

Purpose: This course offers an opportunity to prepare for, attend, and reflect on VST’s online Inter-Religious Conference on the theme “Religion and Thoughtful Activism.” At the conference, which will be a real-time, online event, accessed through Zoom and Canvas, presenters will explore the following theme:

The world is changing. Our politics, economics, climate, and health are under stress. Old social divisions are intensifying. New coalitions are forming. We’re examining the justice of relationships in and between community institutions. People of faith, along with others, feel called to take action. But what are best practices for activism, resistance, and change? How can our traditions and philosophies guide us? How should we critique and strengthen them?

Conference Page Link: https://vst.edu/inter-religious-studies-program/conference/

Competence Objectives:

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

- Summarize theologies of activism arising from at least two faith traditions
- Articulate a personal theology of activism
- Identify issues of public concern in Canada that call for thoughtful activism
- Identify appropriate sites for spiritually-based social action (e.g. hospital, shelter, classroom, legislature) and methods appropriate for each
- Reflect on your social location and the role you can play in Reconciliation and antiracism
- Offer objective summary and critical assessment of scholarly papers

Format: Summer term 2021, 30 hours total.

- Attendance at Inter-religious Studies Conference (all via Zoom):
  o May 25 (4:00-5:00, 7:00-8:30 pm)
  o May 26 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm; 7:00-8:30 pm)
  o May 27 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm)

- Pre- and Post- conference class sessions (all via Zoom):
  o Fri May 14 (10am – 3 pm)
  o Fri June 4 (10am – 3 pm)

Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken: Certificate, Basic (Diploma/MA/M.Div.) or Advanced (GDTS, Th.M).

Required reading/listening:
READ ALL, due May 14: *Theologies of Activism: Available on Canvas (after April 15)*:
- Jacobs, Jill. *There Shall Be No Needy*. Woodstock VT: Jewish Lights, 2010 (one chapter excerpt)

*You will incorporate these into your opening reflection paper.*

READ ONE, due May 14: *Canadian Issues Researched by Angus Reid Institute: (available online)*.

- Canada’s other epidemic: As overdose deaths escalate, majority favour decriminalization of drugs [https://angusreid.org/opioid-crisis-covid/](https://angusreid.org/opioid-crisis-covid/)
- Truths of reconciliation: Canadians are deeply divided on how best to address Indigenous issues [https://angusreid.org/indigenous-canada/](https://angusreid.org/indigenous-canada/)

*We will work together with these on the first day of the pre-conference course.*

LISTEN, due May 25 (Available online in early April):
- Sanders, Lauren. “Dismantling Supremacies.” Podcast episode, to be available early April.

*This will help you prepare for one of the plenary workshops.*

READ, due May 25 (Available online):

*This will help you prepare for one of the plenary sessions.*

READ, due June 4 (Available online after May 1):
- Selected conference papers

*You will be asked to write a formal response to one of these, and refer to several of them in your final paper.*

Assignments:
*For all students (Continuing Education Certificate; Basic Degree incl. Diplomas, M.Div, MA; Advanced Degree incl. Th.M, GDTS).*

1. Full attendance at all events, as described above in “format.” Attendance should be in accordance with VST policies; thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion, course activities, and conference.
2. Completion of assigned readings.
(3) A written 750 word essay: Draw on the chapters by Henderson-Espinoza, Kaur, and Jacobs to begin to articulate your theology of activism, noting some of the questions you are asking yourself. You’ll be asked to introduce yourself with some of the ideas you prepare here! Due in class on May 14.

(4) A 750-1000 word written response to a selected conference paper presentation. After class on May 14, a sign up sheet for the available papers will be posted on Canvas. Post your response on the conference discussion board by June 4. (I am happy to read a draft between May 31 and June 4.)

In this paper response, please address the following points:

- What is the main idea of the paper?
- How does the author present or develop it?
- What relevant background knowledge of the topic do you bring to it?
- What new idea, insight, or information do you receive from it?
- Explain one thing you agree with, or feel positively about in the paper, and why.
- Explain one thing you disagree with, feel negatively about, or would like to criticize in the paper, and why?
- What further research questions into the topic would you like to see the author pursue?

For all Basic Degree students, incl. Diplomas, M.Div, MA.
A 2000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 3 conference papers, due no later than August 31, via email to LDKaplan@vst.edu.

For all Advanced Degree students, incl. Th.M, GDTS.
A 3000-word paper, exploring interests related to the conference theme, referencing at least 4 conference papers, due no later than September 30, via email to LDKaplan@vst.edu.

Prerequisites: None.

Reference Bibliography: Attached.
Selected Bibliography


**Online Resources**


