



UNION

Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Faith-Based Service in Silicon Valley

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Abstract

This service-learning project engages high school seniors in a World Religions course at a Catholic college preparatory school with faith-based community service projects in diverse religious communities. Students will acquaint themselves with religious communities and agencies from various faith traditions, strive to discover how their belief systems prompt members to participate in acts of kindness and compassion and then gain a lived religious perspective by serving with the congregants.

Learning and Service Goals

Service-Learning is an education methodology that actively combines academic curriculum with community service that benefits others in the larger community. This project seeks to connect the academic learning of senior students in the semester long World Religions elective course at Bellarmine College Preparatory with service engagement of congregants, parishioners, or members from various faith traditions in San Jose and the surrounding Silicon Valley. Beyond simply learning the complex beliefs and rituals within the religions studied in the course, it is hoped that lived religious experiences, though service, will give students a more intimate understanding of the various religious traditions.

Most religious traditions see themselves as members of the human family and as such call their followers to live compassionate lives of service (see Appendix 1). They are called to use their gifts and talents to make the world a more just and loving place. Service to others is necessary for mutual human flourishing. Bellarmine College Preparatory requires students at all grade levels to engage in community service. Each senior student completes a minimum of 30 community service hours. At least 20 of these service hours must be completed with a single non-profit agency with the hopes of establishing rapport with fellow servers and recipients of the service.

Implementation

The service-learning director will work with the World Religions teacher and identify local contact persons within houses of worship and community service agencies which represent various faith traditions in the greater San Jose area (see Appendix 2 - Bellarmine already has established relationships with most of these houses of worship and service agencies). Students will not be limited to the houses of worship or service agencies identified by the service-learning director and teacher.

Students in the World Religions class will be divided into groups of three. Over the first ten weeks of the semesters, each student group (with the help of the service-learning director) will engage with **three** different faith traditions. At least one must be completed before September 30th, a second before October 15th and the third before October 30th. The variety of the faith traditions will be approved by the World Religions teacher. The time and place of all engagements will be posted on a common google drive site. In this way, all students will have the optional opportunity to visit religious engagements beyond their group's visits.

The initial engagements will take place via one or more of the following formats:

- Interview with a religious leader(s) or service leader(s) within the religious tradition.
- Engage in a guided tour of the religious / service facility.
- Attend a worship or prayer service.
- Attend a community service opportunity sponsored by the religious group or service facility.

During the engagements, the student groups will have prepared questions to minimally learn the following:

- What are key tenets followed by members of the faith tradition?
- What religious text or belief system(s) call you to engage in community service.
- What service do you do? Who do you assist? When do you do it (frequency)? Where do you do it?
- Does this service benefit people within your faith tradition, outside of your faith tradition or both?
- What fulfillment is gained by members from this service?

Following the three engagements, the students will participate in service as follows:

- Each member of each World Religions group will complete a minimum of six hours of community service through at least one of the faith traditions or community service facilities prior to our Thanksgiving break.
- Students can certainly complete more than the six hours (18 hours per group).

- Ideally, the students will complete the 18 hours of service together with the hope of establishing rapport with the congregants/parishioners/members and with the community members being service.
- The service hours must be verified and signed off by a supervisor at the faith / service facility.

The student groups will make PowerPoint presentations to the class following our Thanksgiving break. These will answer the following:

- What three religious traditions did you encounter and how did you initially engage with them.
- What initial impressions did you have about the religious traditions? In what ways were you surprised?
- Were there ways in which the lived religious experience differed from what did you learn about the religious tradition in class? Explain.
- What service project(s) did you do?
- In what ways did the service performed align with the belief system?
- In what ways was the service experience a fulfilling project?
- What do you want your classmates to know about the faith traditions that they did not learn in class?
- What questions do you still have about the faith traditions?

***For information about the Religious Worlds of New York
summer institute for teachers, and more resources to enrich your teaching
on religious diversity, see: www.religiousworldsnyc.org.***

Appendix I – Scriptural Teachings about Service

African Faith Traditions – Guardianship is not to give an order but to give one's self. *Nyika Proverb*
It is not always physical bravery that counts. One must have the courage to face life as it is, to go through sorrows and always sacrifice oneself for the sake of others. *Kipsigis Saying*

Buddhist Faith Tradition – I should be a hostel for all sentient beings, to let them escape from all painful things. I should be a protector for all sentient beings, to let them be liberated from all afflictions. I should be a refuge for all sentient beings, to free them from all fears... *Garland Sutra 23*

“The essence of Buddhism is if you can, help others, if not, then at least refrain from hurting others.” *Dalai Lama*

Confucian Faith Tradition – The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others, wishing to enlarge himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. *Analects 6.28.2*

“Here certainly is the golden maxim: Do not do to others that which we do not want them to do to us.” *Confucius*

Christian Faith Tradition – ...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. *Micah 6:8*

Do to others as you would have them do to you. *Luke 6:31*

Hindu Faith Tradition – What sort of religion can it be without compassion? You need to show compassion to all living things. Compassion is the root of all religious faiths – *Basavanna, Vacana 247*

“...Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest... and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him... will he gain anything ...will it restore him...? *Mahatma Gandhi*

Islamic Faith Tradition – Be kind to parents, and the near kinsman and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is of kin, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the companion at your side, and to the traveler... *Qur'an 4.36*

Those who act kindly in this world will have kindness. *Qur'an 39.10*

A man once asked the Prophet what was the best thing in Islam, and the latter replied, “It is to feed the hungry and to give the greeting of peace both to those one knows and to those one does not know.” *Hadith of Bukhari*

Jain Faith Tradition – Have benevolence toward all living beings, joy at the sight of the virtuous, compassion and sympathy for the afflicted, and tolerance towards the indolent and ill-behaved. *Tattvarthasutra 7.11*

Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings. *Tattvarthasutra 5.21*

Charity—to be moved at the sight of the thirsty, the hungry, and the miserable and to offer relief to them out of pity—is the spring of virtue. *Kundakunda Pancastikaya 137*

Jewish Faith Tradition – All men are responsible for one another. *Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b*

A man should share in the distress of the community, for we find that Moses, our teacher, shared in the distress of the community. *Talmud, Taanit 11a*

Sikh Faith Tradition – Without selfless service are not objectives fulfilled; in service lies the purest action. *Adi Granth, Maru, M1, p. 992*

Taoist Faith Tradition – The sage does not accumulate for himself. The more he uses for others, the more he has himself. The more he gives to others, the more he possesses of his own. The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to injure. The Way of the sage is to act but not to compete. *Tao Te Ching 81*

Appendix II – San Jose Faith Communities and Organizations

Buddhist

- San Jose Buddhist Church - Betsuin (Japanese) – Yu Ai Kai Services for Senior Citizens, Scouting
- Pao Hua Buddhist Temple (Chinese/Vietnamese) – Food Distribution

Christian

- Protestant
 - Antioch Baptist Church – Food distribution / Jail Ministry
 - City Team – Community Service Agency w/ Drug rehabilitation, food distribution & social services
 - Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM – Pentecostal) – Community activism / Distribution of food & blanket to homeless communities.
 - Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Evergreen) – TBD
 - 1st Congregational Church – Safe Parking facility for Homeless families who reside in their cars
 - Maranatha Christian Center – Tutoring Prog., Food & Clothing Distribution, Jail / Prison Ministry
- Catholic
 - Casa de Clara Catholic Worker House – Shelter, Feeding Program, Homeless Showering Program
 - Catholic Charities of Silicon Valley – ESL, Refugee Services, Feeding & clothes distribution
 - St. Joseph Cathedral – Food & Bus Pass Distribution & Social Services

Hindu

- Shri Krishna Vrundavana Temple – TBD

Islamic

- Islamic Networks Group – Community Activism & Interfaith Dialogue Activity
- Muslim Community Association – TBD

Jewish

- Temple Beth El Jewish Synagogue (Reform) – Shelter for homeless women in December
- Congregation Beth David (Conservative) – TBD

Sikh

- Sikh Gurdwara – Food Distribution