

## **SESP 351-0-20 Topics in SESP: Faith and Service**

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00 am until 12:20 pm  
Annenberg G02

**Instructor:** Timothy Stevens, university chaplain  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3 – 5 pm

**Course Description:** This course will explore the relationship between religious faith and service. Religious communities have a long-standing practice of providing for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, those with disabilities and so on. There are faith-based efforts to build peace, seek social justice, defend human rights and serve the common good. Religious institutions have created and supported hospitals, schools and facilities to care for children and the elderly. Whether undertaken by individuals or groups, all these efforts seem to spring from religious commitments and they endeavor to make a difference in the public sphere. Religion motivates many people to do good, even when doing good requires personal sacrifice.

In this course we shall examine a variety of religious traditions that make up the religious landscape of America, we shall ask critical questions about the intersection of faith and service. For example:

- What are the resources in various religious traditions (scripture, doctrine, liturgy) that motivate people to engage in service to others?
- What are religious individuals and communities actually doing in the realm of community building and service?
- What do faith-based efforts intend to achieve? Is there a distinction between charity and capacity building?
- In a pluralistic society, do religious practitioners establish effective partnerships with other faith traditions?
- Are religious communities successful in building sustained efforts and even institutions that gather resources to serve the common good?
- Is it possible to assess the effectiveness of faith-based efforts?

We shall explore these issues through lectures, guest presentations from religious practitioners in the Chicago area, readings and discussion.

**Primary text:** *Hearing the Call across Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service*, edited by Adam Davis (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2009).

Supplemental readings will be distributed in class.

Students are expected to read weekly assignments and be prepared to discuss them in class. Participation in class discussions is expected. Pop-quizzes over the reading may be given.

**Writing assignments:** several short reflection papers, a final paper.

1. Personal reflection paper: 600 to 900 words  
Prompt: write about your own experience with faith and service, or what you expect to discover about faith and service in this class.
2. Visit to a religious community (other than your own): 600 to 900 words  
Prompt: visit a worship service of a religious community other than your own; write about the experience; try to tie your observations to themes of this course.
3. Interview with a practitioner: 900 to 1200 words  
Prompt: interview someone who engages in service from perspective; write about the insights have you gained from the conversation.
4. Final Paper: 2500 to 3000 words (about 8 to 10 pages)  
Prompt: write about a significant issue raised in this course; this could be a comparison of differing points of view; you are encouraged to do outside reading or research so that you can pursue an issue in greater depth.

Class attendance is mandatory. Class participation will contribute to (or detract from) the final grade.

Final grade will be based on written assignments and class participation.

## Tentative Schedule of Classes and Assignments

### Week 1

<p>Tuesday, Jan. 5 Introduction: Timothy Stevens Writing assignment: First personal reflection essay, due Thursday, Jan. 14.</p> <p>Thursday, Jan. 7 Asset Based Community Development: Professor John Kretzman</p>	<p>Reading Assignment: Queen, "The Meaning of Faith-Based Human Services" (handout) — "Religion and the Emerging Context of Service Delivery" (handout) Kretzmann, "Congregations and Communities Working Together" (handout)</p>
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### Week 2

<p>Tuesday, Jan. 12 Guest presenter: Eugene Lowe, professor, Religion Department (Historical perspectives on faith and service)</p> <p>Thursday, Jan. 14 Discussion</p> <p>First writing assignment due.</p>	<p>Reading Assignment: Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct" (<i>Hearing the Call across Traditions</i>) Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements" (<i>HTCAT</i>) Dorothy Day, "The Faces of Poverty"</p>
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### Week 3

<p>Tuesday, Jan. 19 Guest presenter: Rabbi Brant Rosen, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation (Jewish perspectives)</p> <p>Thursday, Jan. 21 Discussion</p>	<p>Reading Assignment: Heschel, "Solidarity, Reciprocity, and Sanctity" Isaiah 58:2-12 Schulweis, "Between" Peretz, "If Not Higher" Ruth 1-4:22 Aleichem, "Reb Yozifl and the Contractor" Maimonides, "Levels of Giving" Helprin, "North Light—A Recollection in the Present Tense"</p>
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### Week 4

<p>Tuesday, Jan. 26 Guest presenter: Reverend Bud Ogle, Good News North of Howard (Christian perspectives)</p> <p>Thursday, Jan 28</p>	<p>Reading Assignment: Luke 58:2-12 Flannery O'Connor, "The River" Chavez, "The Mexican-American and the Church" Martin, "A Rich Young Man on the Road" Hopkins, "God's Grandeur" Trevor, "Sitting with the Dead" Payne, "The Pure in Heart"</p>
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### Week 5

<p>Tuesday, Feb. 2 Guest presenter: Rami Nashashibi,</p>	<p>Reading Assignment: Salih, "A Handful of dates"</p>
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<p>Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) (Muslim perspectives)</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 4 Discussion</p> <p>Second writing assignment due.</p>	<p>Yusuf, "Miserliness" Surahs 93 and 107 Hafiz, "The Difference Between" Rumi, "Say Yes Quickly" Haimy, "His Grace" Abd-Allah, "Mercy: The Stamp of Creation" Rumi, "Come Out and Give Something"</p>
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**Week 6**

<p>Tuesday, Feb. 9 Guest presenter: Buddhism?</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 11 Discussion</p>	<p>Reading Assignment:</p>
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**Week 7**

<p>Tuesday, Feb. 16 Guest presenter: Arise Chicago (formerly Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues) (Interfaith perspectives)</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 18 Discussion</p>	<p>Reading Assignment:</p>
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**Week 8**

<p>Tuesday, Feb. 23 Guest presenter: Kenneth Vaux, professor Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Interfaith/Ethical perspectives)</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 25 Discussion</p>	<p>Reading Assignment:</p>
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**Week 9**

<p>Tuesday, Mar. 2</p> <p>Thursday, Mar. 4 Discussion</p> <p>Third writing assignment due.</p>	<p>Reading Assignment:</p>
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**Week 10**

<p>Tuesday, Mar. 9 Conclusions: Timothy Stevens</p> <p>Thursday, Mar. 11</p>	<p>Reading Assignment:</p>
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Discussion	
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**Final Paper Due:** Tuesday, March 16, at 5:00 p.m.