

Common Challenges in the Classroom at Hampshire

Idealization/Demonization

Students idealize some religions and demonize others. Neither position reflects an actual understanding of these religions or history revealing a lack of education and effecting individuals within the classroom who may hold these views or come from these religious backgrounds.

Creating an atmosphere Conducive to Education

Disrespectful conversation shuts down learning. Some students do not feel comfortable expressing their religious or political identities and viewpoints, so one cannot assume that just because no one is identifying themselves as such that they are not in the room.

Islamophobia

Students are educated about the racism demonstrated towards Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 while not being educated about Islam as a religion. Thus ignorance and dismissal of Islam is unconsciously perpetuated.

Anti-Semitism

Assumptions about political and religious beliefs and lack of structured respectful conversation can lead to unintended and even unconscious perpetuation of Anti-Semitic stereotypes.

Closeted Faith in Faculty

Some faculty with religious or spiritual practices or backgrounds do not feel comfortable engaging with other faculty because of the atmosphere on campus in regards to religion. Assumptions are made about the identities and beliefs of the faculty as a whole and religion is left out of wider academic and institutional conversations with obvious connections to religion, for example diversity, social change, ethics, and sustainability.

Respecting Religious and Cultural Diversity at Hampshire College

Religion and Equal Opportunity Policy

Hampshire College reaffirms publicly its ethical and legal commitment to a policy of equal opportunity in education and employment.

Hampshire College does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, national origin, religion, sex (including sex stereotyping), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, genetic information, or military service in the admission of

students; administration of its educational policies, scholarships, and loan programs; and athletic and other College-administered programs.

The following information may assist in creating an environment that is considerate and respectful of the religious and cultural traditions of students, staff, and faculty.

Spiritual Life

The mission of Spiritual Life is to engage in the exploration of meaning and purpose and how we live in the world, to support balance and wellness of mind, body, and spirit, and to create community across differences of all kinds challenging ourselves and the campus as a whole to make Hampshire College a place where we can become fully ourselves even as we lift up and celebrate our diverse community.

Spiritual Life serves students, staff, and faculty.

For further information contact Director of Spiritual Life and Faculty/Staff Associate, Liza M. Neal, at lmnSA@hampshire.edu

Religious Observance

Where it is reasonable and practical to do so, flexible work and study arrangements can be made to do so, flexible work and study arrangements can be made to accommodate the religious obligations of faculty, staff, and students. Examples include:

- Negotiated flexible work/study arrangements between deans/heads of departments/supervisors and faculty, staff, and students whose religions require them to pray at certain times of the day or to attend other religious ceremonies at particular times of the year.
- Consideration of the religious festivals when determining examination dates, assessment dates, and field trips.
- Consideration given to student requests for extensions to accommodate religious observance.

Resources

The following articles provide some thoughtful information about religion in the University classroom. For more resources, contact Liza at lmnSA@hampshire.edu

Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives is based on a landmark UCLA study about this generations' understanding of spirituality and the relationship between intellectual inquiry, academic values, and the formation of the inner life (as well as being authored by parents of a Hampshire alum.)