

Common Challenges Related to Faith and Religion 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.

The office of Spiritual Life has many resources to help faculty and students facilitate conversations on spirituality. Contact Liza Neal at lmnSA@hampshire.edu for more information.