

Fact Sheet:

Religion and Diversity in the Classroom and Beyond

Nancy Nason-Clark

Innovation Funding Project, 2013-2014

Project Description and Goals:

In this innovative project, Nancy Nason-Clark and Cathy Holtmann introduce resources they have used in teaching and learning about religious diversity in the university classroom. The goal of using these resources is to present another dimension alongside teaching material that integrates the use of online resources in education about religious diversity. This project also encourages professors to include assignments that require student to access and evaluate online resources that deal with religion.

Methodology:

- a) Use of videos in the context of a classroom, in order to introduce a new theme, provide an example or start a discussion

Student Involvement:

- Cathy Holtmann, University of New Brunswick
- Leo Van Arragon, University of Ottawa
- Giomny Ruiz, Université de Montréal
- Gloria Nickerson, University of New Brunswick
- Jolyne Roy, University of New Brunswick
- Srijita Sarkar, University of Saskatchewan
- Jennifer Ganong, University of New Brunswick

Dissemination:

Picturing Diversity

- A series of photo essays portraying different aspects of religious diversity have been created. General instructions on how to use the photo essays along with some questions introduce this set of resources on the RDP website. Cathy provided a description of how she has used a photo essay in undergraduate teaching. Each photo essay features 4 or 5 photographs accompanied by links to: a general synopsis of the story behind the pictures; a journalistic interview with people connected to the photo essay; specific questions about this photo essay for undergraduate students to consider; and a list of academic texts for further study produced by members of the Religion and Diversity Project team.
- Video clips from two different religious leaders' panels are available on the RDP website. One was hosted at UNB and the clips feature leaders from Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist groups commenting on the documentary "I Believe You: Faith's Response to Domestic Violence." The other took place during the workshop on the study of religion in Atlantic Canada. The clips feature four religious leaders (Christian, Muslim and Buddhist) speaking about the implications of the growth in religious diversity in Atlantic Canada as well as their perspectives on the changing nature of religious participation.
- A "how to" guide for organizing a religious leaders forum was created along with a list of reasons why this is an effective teaching and learning activity.

- The photo essays were featured in a Visual Sociology exhibit at the annual meeting of the Canadian Sociological Association during Congress 2015 at the University of Ottawa.
- Gloria Nickerson and Jolyne Roy presented their paper, “Visualizing diversity: lessons from exploring photo-essays of lived religion,” based on the photo essays they helped to create at the Canadian Sociological Association during Congress 2015 at the University of Ottawa.
- A paper based on a photo essay, “There but Not There: Picturing Religion and Family Violence,” was presented (by Cathy and Nancy) at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in October 2015.

Teaching Diversity

- A bibliography in French and English on Islam and Domestic Violence was added to the “Tools” section of the RDP website.
- A video features doctoral candidate Jolyne Roy from the Sociology Department at UNB speaks about her experiences in creating the bibliography and how that led to changes in her undergraduate teaching.
- Jolyne presented a paper based on her work at the workshop on the study of religion in Atlantic Canada in 2014.
- Videos and a “guide for teachers” were developed by **Leo Van Arragon** featuring scholars from the Living with Religious Diversity conference held in Delhi, India in 2013. The topics include: liberal secularism and the basis for democracy and human rights; religion as a basis for both hegemonic power and for language of resistance; and plurality and pluralism.
- **Giomny H. Ruiz Fernandez** has shared some of the resources he has used in teaching about Islamophobia in undergraduate courses, including an exercise which uses an advertisement to focus student thinking about the ban on minarets in Switzerland; and a video clip from a film that raises awareness about stereotypes concerning Muslims.
- Religious Mapping is an undergraduate student project developed by **Kim Knott** at the University of Leeds. The program is now under the direction of Melanie Prideaux and there is a link on the RDP website to a video introducing the activity and links to the project requirements. Dr. Prideaux has indicated her willingness to pair up with a Canadian university and mentor/advise someone interested in carrying out this activity. The Religious Mapping teaching resource includes a list of **Kim Knott**’s publications that refer to religious mapping and the community religions project as well as links to websites that she produced based on research on immigrants and religion in the UK.
- Ken Derry from the University of Toronto shared resources from a course he developed with colleagues on teaching about method and theory in religion.
- **Cathy** and Tess Campeau facilitated a workshop on using the online teaching resources from the website at the RDP team meeting in Ottawa in May 2015.

Linking Classrooms

- A “How to” Guide for Organising a Linking Classrooms Seminar was developed for the RDP website as well as document providing reasons why this is a useful learning activity.
- A report and pictures from the joint seminar that took place between **Nancy Nason-Clark**’s graduate class in the Sociology Department at the University of New Brunswick and **Solange**

Lefebvre's graduate class in the Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions at the Université de Montréal in January 2012 is on the website.

- A report and pictures of the joint seminar that took place between **Sam Reimer**'s undergraduate students at Crandall University and **Cathy Holtmann**'s undergraduate students at University of Saskatchewan in February 2015 is on the RDP website.

Like many projects, there was so much enthusiasm about certain aspects of this work that the team's deliverables will extend well beyond the expiration of the monies from the RDP. A visual resources is being developed based on **Nancy**'s book *Men Who Batter* (authored with Barbara Fisher-Townsend; Oxford, New York, 2015). A competition in a local college has resulted in a new stained glass window which will be featured as an online resource for assisting religious groups and students better understand perpetrators of abuse.