

SM 300-3C Big Question Course
Won't You Be My Neighbor?
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Fall 2023 | Thursday 3:30 – 5:30 pm

Instructor: Tyler Mayfield
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Virtual Office Hours: gladly by appointment
email me with possible times

Course Description:

The course title – taken from a song written by Fred Rogers for his TV show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* – points toward the overarching course theme: *What does it mean to be a neighbor today in our religiously diverse world?*

This Big Question course combines 1) the insights from theologies of religious diversity and interreligious studies, 2) reflections on the biblical and theological category of “neighbor” with special attention to the ministry of Fred Rogers and the biblical texts of Leviticus 19:18 & Luke 10:25-37, and 3) visits to local religious communities including temples, synagogues, and mosques. Through readings, site visits (embodied pedagogy), *Mister Roger's Neighborhood* episodes, and self-reflection, we seek to understand religious diversity in Louisville, Kentucky and America and accept the call to love our neighbors as ourselves through interreligious engagement.

This course requires multiple field trips involving religious services, mostly on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. This experiential component is integral to the course and required.

“Articulating one’s own faith anew in a world of many faiths is a task for people of every religious tradition today, and in every tradition there are thinkers and movements taking up this task. We cannot live in a world in which our economies and markets are global, our political awareness is global, our business relationships take us to every continent, and the Internet connects us with colleagues half a world away and yet live on Friday, or Saturday, or Sunday with ideas of God that are essentially provincial, imagining that somehow the one we call God has been primarily concerned with us and our tribe.” Diana Eck, *A New Religious America*, 24.

“The more I think about it, the more I wonder if God and neighbor are somehow One. 'Loving God, Loving neighbor' — the same thing? For me, coming to recognize that God loves every neighbor is the ultimate appreciation.” Mister Rogers

Course Objectives, Dreams, Student Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate their own theological perspective, mindful of the global, multicultural, multi-religious context of contemporary ministry.
2. Demonstrate a capacity for interreligious relations.
3. Empathize with, and recognize difference among, religious communities.
4. Formulate the strengths and limitations of a Christian theology of neighbor.

These course objectives relate closely to the following LPTS degree program SLOs:

MDIV SLO #1: Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts.

MDIV SLO #6: Students can articulate own theological perspective, mindful of the global, multicultural, multi-religious context of contemporary ministry.

MAR SLO #1: Be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively.

MAR SLO #3: Demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary.

MAMFT SLO #5: Graduating students will be able to use a clinically appropriate theological/spiritual framework in the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Assignments & Evaluation:

1. Participation. (35% of final grade) (SLOs #1, 2, 3, 4)

Students should come **eagerly ready** to discuss the assigned readings. Active participation includes, but is not limited to, listening carefully to others' presentations and thoughts, taking notes, asking relevant questions, responding to others' comments, and inviting others into the conversation. It does not include dominating a group or class discussion by constant talking. Monitor and vary your forms of participation; introverts will likely need to speak more than they think necessary; extroverts will likely need to speak less than they think necessary.

While reading and preparing for class, students will be expected to take notes (jot down questions, write up summaries, etc.), so they will have resources to refer to during class discussion.

Beyond academic preparation and in-class discussion, participation also includes off-campus visits to religious communities. Students are required to attend at least four visits (ideally more!) as an essential component of the course.

2. Reflections on Site Visits. (40% of final grade) (SLOs 1, 2, 3)

Students will visit at least four religious communities during the semester. After each visit, students will write a 3-page reflection integrating the themes of the course with observations and reflections on the visit. Students will want to include a description of the physical setting and people; observations on the "service" including practices, patterns, rituals, social behavior, and your reactions as an outsider; first impressions about the ideas and values demonstrated in the service or space; any information you would like to know to understand better. In addition, students will connect these observations with course readings and themes to reflect theologically. If a student visits more than four communities, then they can choose which four visits to reflect on.

A grading rubric will be posted on Canvas alongside this assignment. Reflections are due the Friday after the visit.

3. Theology of Neighbor Paper. (25% of final grade) (SLOs 1, 4)

Students will prepare a summative paper (8 pages) on their theological understanding of neighbor in light of class readings, biblical passages, class discussions, and site visits. The paper encourages students to develop a critical, appreciative theology of neighbor.

A grading rubric will be posted on Canvas alongside this assignment. Paper is due December 15.

Site Visits

Sites visits – a form of embodied pedagogy – are a vital and irreplaceable component of this course. Our learning is enriched by a physical visit to a sacred space and community. During these visits, we will seek to evoke empathy and recognize difference.

There will likely be opportunities to visit the following communities:

1. The Temple – Congregation Adath Israel Brith Sholom (5101 US-42, 40241) is Kentucky's oldest and largest Jewish synagogue. Chartered in 1843, The Temple was the sixth Reform congregation established in America. Torah Study begins at 9:00am on Saturday and Shabbat Services are held at 10:30 am.
2. Keneseth Israel is a Conservative synagogue (2531 Taylorsville Rd, 40205). The congregation's original synagogue building was constructed in 1928 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On Saturdays, services start at 9:30 a.m.
3. The Louisville Islamic Center of Compassion aka River Road Mosque (4007 River Road, 40207) was constructed in 1980, facing the Ohio River with utilitarian architecture painted in white representing simplicity and purity. The Center is one of over 12 different mosques in our city. Services are Fridays at 2:00 PM for the Jummah Prayer and sermon.
4. Muslim Community Center of Louisville (8215 Old Westport Road, 40222) is the largest mosque in the city and was completed in 2015. Fridays at 2:00 PM for the Jummah Prayer and sermon.
5. Buddha Blessed Temple (7748 Third Street Road, 40214) has been established since 2006 in the Quy Nguong Zen Buddhist tradition.
OR Drepung Gomang Center for Engaging Compassion (411 N Hubbards Ln, 40207) is a Tibetan Buddhist Temple. They offer a Saturday Dharma talk.
6. Hindu Temple of Kentucky (4213 Accomack Drive, 40241) was inaugurated in 1999 as one of the first Shiva-Vishnu temples in North America. Designed by the legendary temple architect V. Ganapathi Sthapathi, this innovative design incorporates both North and South Indian temple architecture and represents the fusion of diverse worship styles from all over India.
OR Shree Swaminarayan Temple Louisville (4032 Bardstown Road, 40218)

Grading Scale

95-100	A	73-76	C
90-94	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

Course Books: <https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/courseReserves/course/id/19823322>

1. Choose one of three recent books about Fred Rogers:

Maxwell King, *The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers* (Abrams Press, 2018).
<https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1102059725>

Michael G. Long, *Peaceful Neighbor: Discovering the Countercultural Mister Rogers* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2015).
<https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/oclc/890799078>

Shea Tuttle, *Exactly As You Are: The Life and Faith of Mister Rogers* (Eerdmans, 2019).
<https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1089267071>

If you need some religious literacy in world religious traditions, then I recommend:

Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World* (HarperOne, 2010).
OR

Stephen Prothero, *Religion Matters: An Introduction to the World's Religions* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2020).

Other required and recommended readings will be posted on Canvas.

Course Policies:

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

-- American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

-- Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

-- The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

Attendance Policy:

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

Policy on late work: All written assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late will be penalized in the grading by one grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Course Schedule:

Sept 7: Introduction to the Course

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Introduction to Course, Students, and Syllabus
Schedule and Discussion of Site Visits

Reading Required Prior to Session 1:

Course Syllabus
Eboo Patel, *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity & the American Promise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018): 3-32. [Canvas]

Recommended Readings:

Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2007).

Sept 14: Religious Pluralism in America

We will likely need to delay the start of class on this day because of the unfortunate timing of President Alton Pollard's celebration

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Religious Diversity or Pluralism?
“Pretend Pluralism” – Prothero
Religious Diversity in America and in Louisville, Kentucky
Religious Pluralism as the Context for Biblical (And Theological) Reflection

Required Readings:

Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001): 1-25. [Canvas]

Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World* (HarperOne, 2010), Introduction, 1-16. [Canvas]

Tyler D. Mayfield, *Father Abraham's Many Children: The Bible in a World of Religious Difference* (Eerdmans, 2022), 7-21. [Canvas]

Recommended Readings:

Rita Gross, “Excuse Me, but What's the Question? Isn't Religious Diversity Normal?” In *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration*, (Paul F. Knitter ed., 2005), pages 75 – 88.

Useful Resources:

The Pluralism Project <http://pluralism.org/religions/>
Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

September 21: Loving Neighbor

Topics:

Love of Neighbor
Debriefing Visits to Religious Communities

Required Readings:

Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 21st Century," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 30-39. [Canvas]

Eric Gregory. "The Double Love Command and the Ethics of Religious Pluralism." In *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, edited by Frederick V. Simmons and Brian C. Sorrells, 332–46. Georgetown University Press, 2016. [Canvas]

Watch the documentary *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* directed by Morgan Neville

September 28: Introduction to Theology of Religions

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Theology of Religions as a Concept
Inclusivism, Exclusivism and Pluralism

Required Readings:

Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, 2003): 166-199. [Canvas]

Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002): 173-191. [Canvas]

S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-Pilgrims? The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue on Christian Faith and Practice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017): 33-42. [Canvas]

Recommended Readings:

Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002): 192-203.

Paul Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005): 178-200.

John Hick, "The Pluralistic Hypothesis," in *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 11-30.

S. Mark Heim, "Salvations: A More Pluralistic Hypothesis," in *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995).

October 5: A Theology of Religious Diversity

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Limits of Exclusivism and Inclusivism
Theology of Religious Diversity
Debriefing Visits to Religious Communities

Required Readings:

John Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* (Fordham University Press, 2020), 21-69. [Canvas]

October 12: Leviticus 19:18 & Loving Neighbor in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Leviticus 19
Neighbor in the Hebrew Bible

Required Readings:

R.E. Clements, *Loving One's Neighbour: Old Testament Ethics in Context* (University of London, 1992). [Canvas]

Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N Jacobson. "The Old Testament and the Neighbor." *Word & World* 37, no. 1 (Wint 2017): 16–26. [ATLA Database]

Recommended Readings:

Neudecker, Reinhard. "'And You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself. I Am the Lord' (Lev 19:18) in Jewish Interpretation." *Biblica* 73, no. 4 (1992): 496-517. [ATLA Database]

Kengo Akiyama, *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism. The Reception of Leviticus 19:18 in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament*. AGJU 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

Joel S. Kaminsky, "Loving One's (Israelite) Neighbor: Election and Commandment in Leviticus 19." *Interpretation* 62, no. 2 (April 2008): 123–32. [ATLA Database]

October 19 – Research and Study Week – NO CLASS

**October 26: Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) & The Double Love Command
(Mark 12: 28-34; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28)**

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Double Love Command
Parable of Good Samaritan
Neighbor in the New Testament

Required Readings:

Michael Fagenblat, "The Concept of Neighbor in Jewish and Christian Ethics," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament NRSV* (eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford University Press, 2011): 540-543. [Canvas]

Marcus Mescher, *The Ethics of Encounter: Christian Neighbor Love as a Practice of Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis, 2020), 35-64. [Canvas]

PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1982): 10-26. [Canvas]

Augustine Mensah, "The 'Neighbour' in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)." *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology* 9.2 (2019): 49–58. [ATLA Database]

Hultgren, Arland J. 2017. "Enlarging the Neighborhood: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)." *Word & World* 37 (1): 71–78. [ATLA Database]

Recommended Readings:

Thomas W. Ogletree. "Interpreting the Love Commands in Social Context." In *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, edited by Frederick V. Simmons and Brian C. Sorrells, 19-35. Georgetown University Press, 2016.

Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972): 34-45.

November 2: The Life and Ministry of Fred Rogers

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Ministry of Fred Rogers

Required Readings:

Choose 1 of 3 recent books about Fred Rogers:

Maxwell King, *The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers* (Abrams Press, 2018).

Michael G. Long, *Peaceful Neighbor: Discovering the Countercultural Mister Rogers* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2015).

Shea Tuttle, *Exactly As You Are: The Life and Faith of Mister Rogers* (Eerdmans, 2019).

November 9: Neighborology of Kosuke Koyama

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Neighborology of Kosuke Koyama
Debriefing Visits to Religious Communities

Required Readings:

Dale T. Irvin, "The Ritual of the Limping Dance: Kosuke Koyama's Positive Assessment of Pluralism for Christian Theology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48:3 (Summer 2013): 359-368. [Canvas]

Kosuke Koyama, "Neighborology" in *Water Buffalo Theology* (Orbis, 1999), 64-67. [Canvas]

Victoria Lee Erickson, "Neighborology: A Feminist Ethno-Missiological Celebration of Kosuke Koyama," in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (Orbis, 1996), 151-172. [Canvas]

November 16 – SBL Conference – NO CLASS

November 23 – Thanksgiving – NO CLASS

November 30: Kierkegaard and The Duty To Love

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Kierkegaard and The Duty To Love

Required Readings:

Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong; Kierkegaard's Writings, 16; Princeton University Press, 1995), 17-60. [Canvas]

December 7: Conclusion and Debriefing Visits to Religious Communities

Topics:

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode
Concluding Reflections
Debriefing Visits to Religious Communities