

Fellowship Projects 2013-2014

Violence Against Women: Exploring and Interrogating Our Sacred Sources

Julie Ingersoll and Salem Pearce

This peer group interrogates sacred sources of authority within the Jewish and Christian communities for violence – broadly conceived – against women. These sources of authority include Jewish and Christian scripture, tradition and practice. We invite Hebrew College (HC) and Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) students of any faith tradition to engage in respectful and thoughtful dialog about our experiences with texts, traditions and practices that are not, or have not been interpreted, as life-affirming for women. Although our primary focus is the Jewish and Christian traditions, HC or ANTS students who wish to engage with Unitarian Universalist, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist or other faith or philosophical traditions, are encouraged to participate. Our engagement with religious and philosophical traditions is purposefully broad and may include exegetical, hermeneutical, experiential, or other approaches. Our CIRCLE peer group will meet monthly with a shared meal. We are committed to hearing and being present to women's and men's experiences of theologically justified violence against women, and to the painful and challenging work of examining and reinterpreting or rejecting sacred sources of authority that silence, oppress and condone violence against women. It is our goal that this peer group will affirm women's and men's lives, experiences, and spirituality, increase interfaith leadership, and encourage commitment to respectful and honest engagement with students of other faith traditions in meaningful and productive ways.

Models of Training Muslim and Christian Leaders: Ella Collins Institute, ANTS and the Episcopal Diocese

Nancy Khalil and Jane Hale

Nancy Khalil and Jane Hale have partnered as CIRCLE Fellows interested in exploring the evolution of religious leadership training in current times. Jane Hale is conducting a year of field work at St. John's Episcopal Church in Vernon, CT through ANTS' Field Education program, in conjunction with the Episcopal Diocese of CT. Nancy will be conducting her year of doctoral fieldwork at the Ella Collins Institute in Boston, MA, as her primary field site, as well as visiting a few other Muslim seminary initiatives in the U.S. Both Jane and Nancy are working with and learning from one another as a part of the CIRCLE Fellowship, exploring, with input of practitioners in the field, the challenges and successes faced by religious organizations as they explore new ways to respond adequately to the needs of worship communities, and to prepare candidates for religious leadership.

Voices of Our Sister Scholars: Singing, Speaking and Spoken Word

Vera Broekhuysen and Maryam Sharieff

We explore, in a multimedia format, the presence and power of female and non male voices in Judaism and Islam with particular focus on the recitation of our sacred texts. To explore a move from silence to self advocacy we will host a showing of "Arranged," directed by Diane Crespo and Stefan C. Schaefer, which tracks the development of friendship and mutual support and awakenings as a Jewish and Muslim teacher challenge gender and cultural stereotypes in their work place and personal lives. In the spring, a panel of professional Jewish and Muslim scholars and clerics will speak about the role and scope of the non male voice in Jewish and Muslim sacred text and religious life. This discussion will include, but not be limited to, their experiences of the permissibility and impermissibility of non-male voices in prayer and religious life; functioning as educators in their faith communities; and

their work as cantors and prayer leaders in sacred space, all within religious traditions where the male voice has historically been given more privilege and authority.

Spirit of the Earth

Elisha Herb and Robert Hyde

This peer group “Cultivating Spiritual Leaders for the Environmental Movement” strives to create a faith-based toolkit of resources for engagement in environmental justice, develop skills in pastoral care and spiritual leadership on issues concerning the environmental crisis, building relationships around a community fire, provide an outdoor laboratory for environmental integrity, spiritual development, ritual practice, and rediscovering the Spirit of the Earth. We also strive to complete sustainability projects on and off our campuses by getting our hands dirty in the interfaith community garden and conducting various efforts aimed at reducing our carbon footprint, like recycling, composting, and advocating for solar panels on campus, among other creative ideas.

Voices of Islam: Curriculum Development

Salma Kazmi and Barbara Sahli

This group will work with two CIRCLE projects that are developing materials to increase understanding of Islam and Muslims in America through the use of personal narratives. Using the “Voices of Islam” (oral histories of Boston-area adult Muslims) and “Muslim Youth Voices” (first person narratives of Muslim youth) projects as a starting point, group participants will learn about the basic beliefs and practices of Muslims directly from local area Muslims. The group will also provide feedback for the development of curriculum materials based on “Voices of Islam” and “Muslim Youth Voices,” which aim to humanize the other and counter prevailing assumptions about Muslims. In addition, we will explore how

the tools developed through this peer group may be used as a model for religious leaders to elevate the voices of other marginalized groups, to fight intolerance and to encourage acceptance of diversity within their own communities.

Interreligious Text Study: Prophetic Figures in the Bible and Qur'an

Celene Lizzio and Leora Abelson

This peer group is focused on Jewish-Christian-Muslim textual study of biblical and Qur'anic stories of prophets and other notable figures, including Adam, Eve, Moses, Joseph, Abraham, John, Mary, Jesus and others. Our project includes a peer group with several tangible goals, including: our own academic and spiritual enrichment through engaging in multi-faith text study and deepening our understand of the prophets as figures and our traditions' conceptions of them and a course text packet, including primary source selections as well as the best and most current secondary readings available on the most prominent of the prophetic figures, with a focus on those figures that appear in both the Bible and the Qur'an.