“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Never mistake law for justice. Justice is an ideal, and law is a tool.”
-L.E. Modesitt Jr.

**FAITH AND COMMUNITY**
REL 4063

**Concerning this course**

What role does religion play in your community and in issues of social concern? How do different religious traditions understand current ethical controversies that call for justice? How can you make a difference?

This hands-on course will explore concepts of social justice within faith traditions, exploring liberation theology, justice ministry, and faith in action. Students will have the opportunity to meet both local and national leaders and work on a project of their own choosing, either on campus or with a local organization.

**Course Requirements**

The class format will include discussions of the readings, visits by outsider presenters, and a community, faith-based project to be chosen by the student. Students will choose a topic, prepare a one-page proposal, work with the organization or group on the topic, prepare a short project results and reflection paper, and present on the project at the end of the semester.

The class is designed to be very hands on in a seminar style format with frequent guests. Participation and attendance is key due to the heavy discussion and dialogue component of the class. Every effort should be made to attend each session but should a situation develop that will impact your performance or attendance, please inform me immediately. Participation includes posting three discussion questions based on that week’s materials in the Canvas discussion forum by noon on Wednesday. This portion of the class will serve as an assessment of your Global Awareness, Perspective, and Engagement.

**Course Objectives**

Students will have the opportunity to learn about local, national, and global issues of importance to communities. Students, after choosing an issue of importance to them as individuals, will design a community-based project that they will work on over the course of the semester before sharing their project results with the class.

**What you’ll do**

- Feel inspired
- Pick a topic
- Prepare a proposal
- Make some contacts
- Work on your project
- Create change
- Reflect on your experience
- Present on your project
- Inspire others

**Contact**

Prof. Jeanette Smith  
Religious Studies  
Email: jesmith@fiu.edu  
Phone:  
Office: DM  
Office hours: by appointment

Do not copy without the instructor's express written consent.
This project will also serve as an assessment of your Global Awareness, Perspective, and Engagement.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have gained a greater knowledge of the interconnected nature of many of the issues that arise within communities. They will be able to conduct a multi-perspective analysis of various local, global, and intercultural problems, and demonstrate willingness to engage in problem solving.

**Global Learning Course Outcomes**

This is a Discipline-Specific Global Learning course that counts toward your FIU Global Learning Graduation Requirement. Class attendance and participation is important for success in the course as you will have the opportunity to engage not only with your peers but with guests who will join us either in person or virtually throughout the semester. Both our in-class discussions and the community-based project mentioned above under course requirements will be an opportunity for you to demonstrate each of the below outcomes.

- **Global Awareness**: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the interrelatedness of beliefs and religious traditions as they relate to community-based issues of global and social concern.
- **Global Perspective**: Students will construct a multi-perspective analysis not only of global problems but also of a targeted issue of concern to a student.
- **Global Engagement**: Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in ongoing dialogue and critique of local, global, international, and intercultural problems facing communities.

**Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites, but an open, respectful mind with a certain passion for justice is assumed. What is important is how we engage with one another in the class and how we represent ourselves in the community. Social justice issues and the related work can be challenging, particularly within an interfaith context, and I think the crucial point to remember is to be respectful of others and of issues, perhaps most importantly when we disagree.

**Changes**

The instructor reserves the right to alter readings, assignments or the schedule below as dictated by the needs and interest of the class. Any changes will be mentioned in class and announced on Canvas.

**Course Readings**

The texts are engaging, fast reads and the amount of reading is balanced so that everyone can keep up. We may need to be somewhat flexible as we accommodate the schedules of our outside guests, but, when possible, each guest will be matched to the reading for that particular week. There is also
some flexibility built into the schedule to accommodate related current events that may arise during the semester.

Publisher: Fortress Press

Heidt, Mari Rapela. *Moral Traditions: an introduction to world religious ethics.* (Moral Traditions below)
Publisher: Anselm Academic

Publisher: WestBow Press

There may be additional articles of interest included in the readings and you should feel free to contact me with any articles or items of interest that you would like to share with the class.

**Grading**

| Attendance & Participation | 40% |
| Proposal for Project       | 5%  |
| Project                   | 25% |
| Project Paper & Reflection| 20% |
| Project Presentation      | 10% |

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**Schedule**

Week One
*Introduction, Syllabus Review, Expectations*

Week Two
*Spiritual Activist*, Preface & Introduction – pages ix-xxvi, 229
*Moral Traditions*, Chapter 1, pages 6-9

Week Three

Topic due
Reading due: *Living Faith*, Chapter 3, pages 25-47
*Spiritual Activist*, Chapter 1 – pages xxvii-9
*Moral Traditions*, Chapter 5, pages 59-73
Week Four
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 4, pages 48-62
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 2, pages 10-34 [remind me of the disclaimer before you read this chapter]
Moral Traditions, Chapter 4, pages 46-58

Week Five
Proposal due with confirmed project location
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 5, pages 63-87
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 3, pages 35-44
Moral Traditions, Chapter 6, pages 74-89

Week Six
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 6, pages 88-102
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 4, pages 45-72
Moral Traditions, Chapter 2, pages 17-41

Week Seven
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 7, pages 103-120
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 5, pages 73-90
Moral Traditions, Chapter 3, pages 32-45

Week Eight
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 8, pages 121-135
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 6, pages 105-131
Moral Traditions, Chapter 7, pages 90-105

Week Nine
Reading due: Living Faith, Chapter 9 & Epilogue, pages 136-158
Spiritual Activist, Chapter 7, pages 132-158
Moral Traditions, Chapter 8, pages 106-116

Week Ten
Reading due: Spiritual Activist, Chapters 8 & 9, pages 159-195

Week Eleven
Reading due: Spiritual Activist, Chapter 10 & Conclusion, pages 196-227

Week Twelve
Project papers due

Week Thirteen
Presentations

Week Fourteen
Presentations
Exam Week – only if necessary for presentations

**Course follow-up:** If anyone is particularly engaged with his or her topic and would like the opportunity to continuing working on an extended project after the semester is over, we can work on setting up an internshp for credit for the following semester. Please let me know as soon as possible if you might like to pursue this option.

**Outside activities of interest:** As events come up, folks should feel to share them with the class. I certainly plan to do so!