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Mission, Religion, Religious Studies? Student Perspectives on Courses in Buddhism and Islam at a Jesuit University

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Abstract

In the Fall Semester of 2013, at Loyola University Chicago (LUC), a total of 140 students enrolled in select sections of either Theo 295: Introduction to Islam or Theo 297: Introduction to Buddhism. These students, seeking to fulfill core theology requirements through religious studies courses, were surveyed before and after the semester in an attempt to measure attitudes, and potential changes in attitude, about religion and the study of religion – and how these may connect to the context of Jesuit education. This paper attempts to uncover the relationship between the Jesuit theological underpinnings referenced in the mission statement and the revealed student perspectives of those that enroll in religious studies courses. The instructor under study and author of this work is the same person.

Introduction

Jesuit education has earned a reputation for rigorous yet humanistic approaches to the acquisition and application of knowledge. Religion, as an area of inquiry, holds a special place on Jesuit campuses for it, perhaps, has more direct connections to the mission of what it means to be a Jesuit University. At Loyola University of Chicago (LUC), the Department of Theology offers a robust set of courses in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, under the rubric of “religious studies.” These are in contrast to Christian and Catholic studies which are found under its expected and traditional title of “theology.” At first glance, for reasons of insider mission and nourishment of Catholic identity, it may appear somewhat counterintuitive to be offering courses in religious traditions other than that of Christianity. Upon closer analysis of the University’s mission, and supported by student perspectives, this paper argues that religious studies courses play a critical role in helping Jesuit institutions such as LUC to realize their aim in the “search for truth,” providing a “home for all faiths,” and promoting ethical behavior and social responsibility amidst global challenges and opportunities.¹

The purpose of this study was twofold. One, to better understand the role of courses such as Introduction to Buddhism and Introduction of Islam in the mind of the student and how he or she may understand these courses in light of their own educational prerogatives. The second purpose was to see how these student self-reports may, or may not, line up with LUC’s Jesuit identity as described on its public access website. While faculty and administrators may point to their own justifications as to the roles and legitimacy of these courses, little, if any, research has been conducted to uncover student perspectives. To know if students are seeing their curriculum as both socially relevant and intellectually enriching seems critically important for institutional aims of student morale, justification for high cost of university, and ultimately, for current students serving as future supporters and benefactors of the institution. It is also fair to place this study in the larger national and global conversation, as to the value of broad-based liberal arts curriculum within higher education. In a day and age where science and technology seem to dominate in funding and prestige, studies that attempt to articulate the individual and social values sought and

achieved by the liberal arts and humanities are needed.

Research Questions

The driving focus of this research is to better understand the relationship between religious studies courses and Jesuit mission and identity. The student surveys are designed to reveal the perspectives (and their potential shifts) of students that, largely, self-select into the courses Theo 295: Introduction to Islam and Theo 297: Introduction to Buddhism. The survey also recognizes the importance of “non-mission” questions in developing the overall impact of courses before coming to conclusions. Therefore, in addition to open-ended questions about the nature of Jesuit education and why religious studies courses may or may not be important at their university, this research attempts to uncover the impact of these courses on student religiosity, their propensity for social justice, the more general educational importance of studying religion(s), and comfort with religious diversity.

Literature Review

Many have argued theoretically for the importance of religious studies as part of a comprehensive foundation for liberal arts education such as Foard,² Prothero,³ Eck,⁴ Woodward,⁵ and Nussbaum.⁶ Their reasoning include the cultivation of humanistic qualities, i.e., reflective thinking, empathy, appreciation of diversity, ability to take on multiple perspectives and civic virtues including an ability to interact with those different than ourselves – a need especially urgent in the age of globalization and, in the case of religious identity politics, as a means to address and undermine social tensions arising out of religious difference. Fewer have attempted to test these values and virtues empirically - Lester and Roberts,⁷ Walvoord,⁸ and Lewis.⁹ This study attempts to provide such needed empirical data on the perspective of the student rather than that of the theoretician. Furthermore, realizing that the study of religion shifts based on locale, this study attempts to build on research that has a special awareness of the distinct nature of Jesuit education. Along those lines, this study

follows the model set forth by scholars attempting to understand Jesuit values and mission in light of particular curricula. These include Oakes¹⁰ and the analysis of adult education, DelleBovi,¹¹ and the focus on training future teachers, and Lynch, et al.¹² and their search to uncover which values proved most resilient or salient to Jesuit college graduates.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that students see these courses as critical and relevant to their experience as undergraduates at a Jesuit University. Based on my previous experience in attempting to measure changes in student attitudes on religion within a one semester time frame, the starting point will likely be the best predictor of the ending point, i.e., any shifts will be subtle in nature. This points to the challenges (and limitations) with empirical research in its ability to tease out slight yet potentially significant markers in student maturation. Nevertheless, small impacts can still be important and, coupled with qualitative questions, this study hypothesizes that students are well aware of the important role of religious studies in providing a place to learn one’s own or another’s religion in the pursuit of knowledge and global connectedness. My goal in the design and delivery of these courses was to enhance student capacity to appreciate the complexity of religion, i.e., as expressions of particular times and places, thereby bringing important perspective to understanding broader global challenges while highlighting the importance of cross-cultural conversations in the mining of potential solidarity. I see these goals as consistent with the Jesuit mission.

Method

Setting

Fieldwork was conducted at LUC in the fall of 2013. The university traces its history back to 1870 and according to the school’s website “is one of the nation’s largest Jesuit, Catholic Universities and the only one located in Chicago.”¹³ The website also proclaims its national stature as it notes that “*U.S. News and World Report* have ranked Loyola consistently

among the 'top national universities' in its annual publications."¹⁴ The school's total enrollment, including graduate students, is just under 16,000 and over 80 undergraduate majors are offered.¹⁵

The university has four separate campuses – three of the classes surveyed here were at the Lake Shore Campus and the fourth was administered at the Water Tower, or downtown, campus. The downtown campus tailors more towards business school students as they take many of their courses at that campus while the liberal arts tends to dominate at the Lake Shore Campus. My own sense is that the student demographics are quite similar across these two campuses – at least when it comes to the need to fulfill theology requirements. And the general popularity of these courses often override logistical considerations such as distance to the many student dormitories which are located on the Lake Shore Campus.

Courses Selected

Students from the following courses participated: Introduction to Buddhism (2) and Introduction to Islam (2). Each class met on-ground (versus online) and with a frequency of once a week from 4:15-6:45p.m. I was the instructor of record for each of the sections under review.¹⁶

It should also be mentioned that at LUC both theology and religious studies courses and faculty are housed under the Department of Theology and each share the THEO course prefix. While the theology courses tend to focus on Catholic theology, religious studies offers courses in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and other comparative or thematic subjects. In order for students to fulfill their "tier one" theology requirement, they have the choice of taking THEO100: Introduction to Christian Theology or THEO107: Introduction to Religious Studies. The course under study here, Introduction to Islam and Introduction to Buddhism, help students fulfill their "tier two" requirement – and this is regardless if they had taken the 100 or 107 as their tier one. Majors and minors in theology and religious studies can also use

these courses to fulfill their broader department and program requirements.

REL295: Introduction to Islam

The class structure included relatively short introductory lectures for a given topic followed by small (usually four student) group work. This was normally repeated twice each class period, with a short break in between, constituting the two and half hour class meeting. In small groups students were asked to argue points, reconcile readings, or evaluate responses to questions provided by the instructor and then report to the larger class their thinking. While supplemented with many sources, the semester course primarily focused on the pairing of two texts: one, an insider/theological approach, using Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Islam: Religion History, and Civilization*¹⁷ and the other a more outsider/religious studies approach using Carl Ernst's *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*.¹⁸ In class, the intent was to put the texts in conversation with one another in order to develop appreciation for multiple perspectives while also evaluating strengths and weaknesses of each approach. A third text, Edward Curtis' *Muslims in America: A Short History*,¹⁹ was used to inform the late semester modules that approached Islam in the American context.

The course description read as follows:

This course aims to cover the foundations of the Islamic tradition including its history, beliefs, and practices. Topics will include but are not limited to Islamic law, theology, philosophy, mysticism, as well as modern and postmodern developments. The scope of the course is global but towards the second half of the course will pay special attention to the American context. In addition, themes such as colonialism, secularism, gender, and race will play prominent roles in developing an appreciation for the varied and complex nature of Islam. This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the tradition by using resources from, among others, anthropology, sociology, history, and political science.

REL297: Introduction to Buddhism

The Introduction to Buddhism class was decidedly more lecture-based than the Introduction to Islam class. My sense was that a wider cross section of students came to this course with far more limited backgrounds of Buddhist history and its conceptual underpinnings than their counterparts in the Introduction to Islam classes. This is confirmed in the demographics section of this report noting the significant number of Muslim students in the Introduction to Islam courses. In the Buddhism course, key concepts tend to build on themselves through the semester (i.e., the four noble truths, no-self, dependent origination, etc.) and through focused lectures. The intent was to build a clear foundation and, from there, to be able to navigate and access the various forms of Buddhism in their relevant historical and regional contexts. John Strong's *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*²⁰ was the course text that was supplemented with a variety of interdisciplinary materials.

The course description read as follows:

This course aims to introduce major doctrines, practices, and historical developments of Buddhism. Acknowledging this highly diverse tradition, any course claiming to offer an introduction to "Buddhism" might be also seen as an introduction to "Buddhisms." Roughly equal time will be devoted to major developments of Buddhism, normally referred to as Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana looking at the past and present of these three traditions. We will be covering cultures as diverse as India, China, Tibet, Thailand, Japan, and the United States. This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the tradition by using resources from anthropology, sociology, history, political science, theology and philosophy. We will discuss Buddhist ideas such as, but not limited to, cosmology, personhood, gender, ethics, the environment, and varieties of religious practices.

Both the Introduction to Islam and Introduction to Buddhism courses shared similar goals and objectives and are noted in the respective syllabi. These included a desire to 1) appreciate the complex nature of religion and how the forces of time and place help shape each tradition's internal multiplicities, 2) become comfortable with notions of constructed religion by way of varying author viewpoints, and 3) in the spirit of traditional humanities curriculum to ask, how the study of Islam (or Buddhism for the other course) may impact our own views and ideas of what it means to be human and where meaning and significance of life might therein be found. The syllabi then go onto to note the course focus on the development of intellectual virtues such as narrative imagination, appreciation of human interconnectedness, and the ability to analyze and evaluate argument. It is these goals that, in many respects, that help guide the choice of survey questions.

Participants

A total of 133 students took part in the pre-course survey and in the post-course survey. It is not assumed that the identical 133 took part in the pre- and post-survey although it is imagined that the great majority, upwards of 90%, were present for both settings. Any difference in numbers reflects natural factors such as class additions, attrition, or absences on one of the surveys. However, considering the total class enrollment for each class was 35, and the total maximum population size was 140, the 133 students signals a 95% collection rate.

Female students outnumbered male students (Figure A) in both class groups. Roughly 60%

Figure A: Demographics – Gender

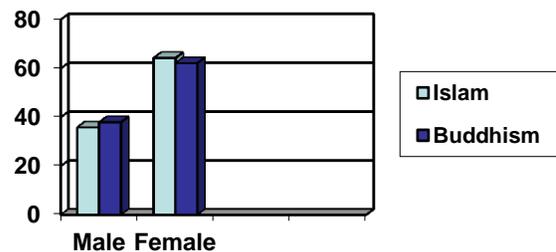
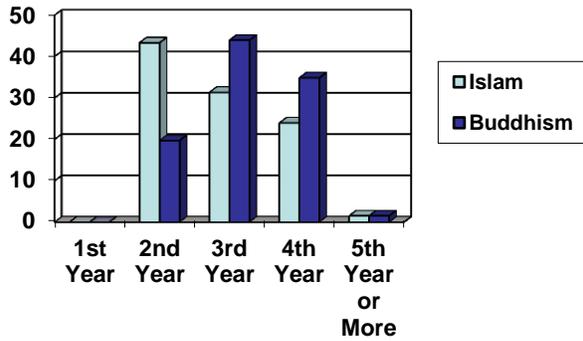


Figure B: Year in College

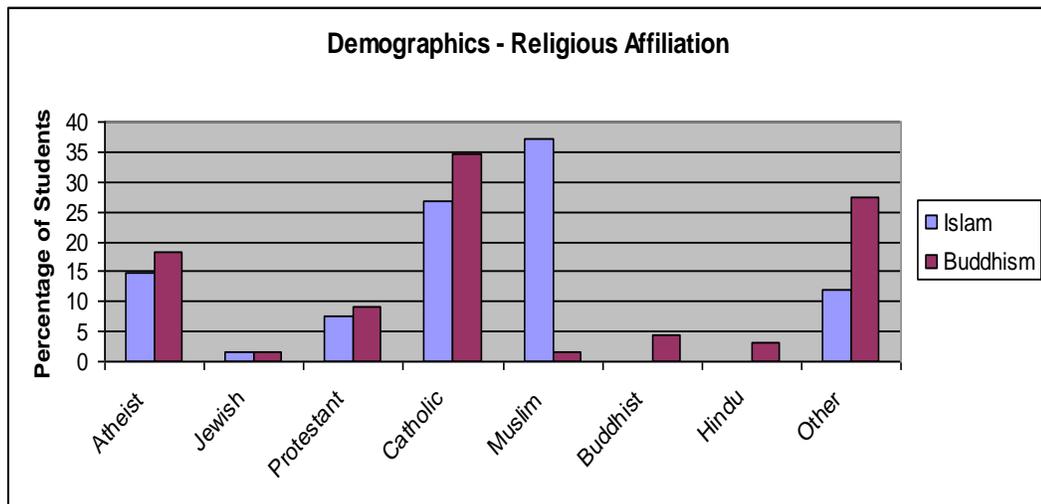


of students in the sample were female. This figure is somewhat in line with the overall student body demographic at LUC. It has been argued that the lack of an engineering and/or football program contributes to the tilt. As a “tier two” theology course, students needed to have completed their 100 level foundational course as a prerequisite. It was, therefore, reasonable to assume that no freshman would be included in the survey – especially likely as a result of the fall semester timing of the data collection. That was true. The students were distributed somewhat evenly between second and fourth year students, with a handful that identified themselves having been in college for five or more years. Figure B does, however, seem to suggest that the Introduction to Buddhism students were, in general, older than the

Introduction to Islam students. Perhaps this is an indication of the Buddhism course’s popularity and the related need to have a higher student ranking or priority position when registering for classes.

In terms of how students self-identified their religious affiliation, the averages for many categories were consistent across the two courses. These included: Catholics (30.8%), Atheists (16.5%), Protestant (8.3%), Jewish (1.5%), and Hindu (1.5%) students. The Introduction to Islam and the Introduction to Buddhism course groups differ significantly, however when considering that the Introduction to Islam courses had 37.1% Muslim students versus only 1.5% Muslim students in the Introduction to Buddhism courses. Thus, an obvious situation of self-selection arises as Muslim students chose to study their own tradition. Conversely, although in much smaller percentages, the Introduction to Buddhism courses reported 4.5% Buddhist and 3% Hindu students compared with zero percent for the same categories in the Introduction to Islam courses. Lastly, in the Introduction to Buddhism courses, a greater percentage categorized themselves as “other” at 27.1% versus only 11.9% in the Introduction to Islam courses. See Figure C for a graphic representation of religious affiliation.

Figure C: Religious Affiliation



Both the Introduction to Islam and the Introduction to Buddhism groups had similar demographics in terms of the amount of time the students had lived in the United States. Approximately 80% had “lived their whole life” in the United States with the balance having spent, by default, less amount of time in the United States. The last demographic question also revealed strong similarities in terms of how much prior exposure to theology and religious studies the students have had in the past. As a result, differences in class results between the Introduction to Buddhism and the Introduction to Islam students are not attributable to the amount of previous exposure to college-level courses in religion.

Design

This study used a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) longitudinal survey design. The survey consisted of twenty-two questions. The first five asked basic demographic questions. Questions six through twenty were the quantitative attempts to measure student attitudes on a variety of topics – all using a Likert scale. Questions twenty and twenty-one constituted the qualitative component as they were “open-response” in nature. Reasons for selecting a mixed-method approach were straightforward. The quantitative questions were geared to measure “how much” the students felt or changed on a particular issue and the qualitative questions were designed to help answer, in the students’ own words “why” students experienced or interpreted the class in the ways that they did. For exploratory studies such as this, when degree of impact and theories on perspective are underdeveloped, the mixed method approach provides a starting point for both analysis and areas for further development.

Measures

The instrument used in this project emerged from a compilation of questions from multiple sources including some original questions. In order, the six measures and their origins are as follows. For the *Student Religiosity* measure, the Duke Religious Index (DRI)²¹ was included in the survey. Used primarily in psychological research to measure the impact

of religion on health and wellness, the instrument served to assess the attitudes and commitments of LUC students. It is also important to note that this survey did not include the “organization” question: “How often do you attend religious services or gatherings?” This was because the question was perceived to not only have a Christian bias (the idea of going to church once a week), but within the Muslim context it has a gender bias (it is commonly understood that men and women congregate at mosques at different rates). The remaining four questions, however, serve as a first step for ascertaining impact on student religious dispositions. The *Social Justice* section drew its items from the Lester and Roberts²² survey. The *Educational Importance of Studying Religion(s)* was original whereas the *Comfort with Religious Diversity* was based on the Student Thinking and Interacting Survey or “STIS” that was adapted by Engberg and Mayhew,²³ and revised for the category of religion in Lewis.²⁴ The *Pedagogical Purposes of Theology and Religious Studies* and the *Jesuit Identity and as Applied in Theology and Religious Studies* measures were original to this study.

Procedure

Participants were selected based on their enrollment and attendance in the course outlined above. Students were provided the identical survey on the first day of class in the semester and then again on the last day of the semester (excluding the day of the final). (See Appendix 1 for actual survey instrument.) Students were informed that their anonymity would be honored (no names or identification numbers were collected) and that their participation was completely optional. No students opted out of the survey. Class time was devoted to students completing and not feeling rushed in the survey. Approximate completion time was fifteen minutes thus avoiding issues of student survey fatigue.

Once the data was collected, it was aggregated and organized by question. Data was split between two groups – one combining the sections of Introduction to Islam and the other including sections of Introduction to Buddhism for the final sample groups. Likert

response averages were then calculated for each question, and again organized by group. In terms of the social justice scale, the three relevant questions were compiled for its final measure. The Likert averages were then compared between time one and time two, i.e., the pre- and post-course surveys. From here, the charts and figures and ultimately the analyses were drawn.

For the non-Likert questions, or open-ended and qualitative questions, the post-survey responses were analyzed instead of the pre-survey responses. This was designed with the intent to capture “a more informed” student perception, or at least a student with greater exposure to religious studies in particular and the Jesuit university milieu in general. After taking a course and spending another semester as an undergraduate at LUC, the student would likely be better equipped to reflect on Jesuit values and the purposes of religious studies courses. Furthermore, and in summary, the desire to include these questions was to capture any student sentiments or perspectives missing or not addressed with adequate sophistication with the Likert-style questions.

Results

Student Religiosity

Questions 6 through 9 were administered to test any before- and after-effects of the courses on a student’s individual religiosity. In terms of attendance at religious services, gatherings, or meetings (Figure D/Q6), and time spent in private religious activities such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading (Figure E/Q7). Effectively no change from pre- and post-course surveys was measured. The starting point was the best indication of the ending point. These two questions were based on a six point Likert scale with one representing “rarely or never” and six being “more than once a week.” The students in the Introduction to Islam course on average exhibited higher levels of religiosity in the “3” range (“a few times a year”) versus students in the Introduction to Buddhism course in the “2” range (“once a year”).

The other two “religiosity” questions, “my religious beliefs are what lie behind my approach to life” (figure F/Q8) and “I try hard to carry over my religion over into all aspects of my life” (Figure G/Q9) were measured on a five point Likert scale with one representing “definitely not true” and

Figure D: Religiosity – Attendance

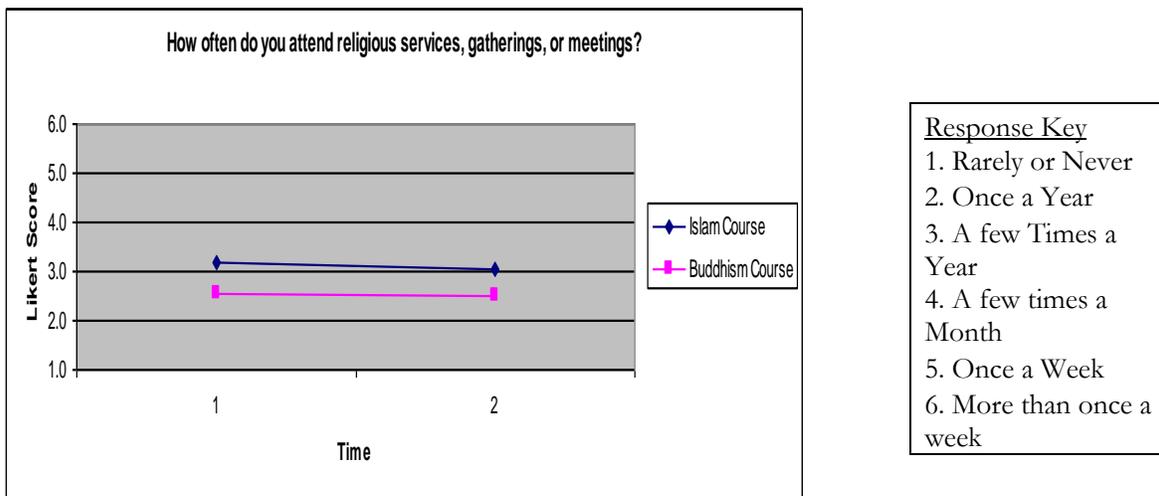
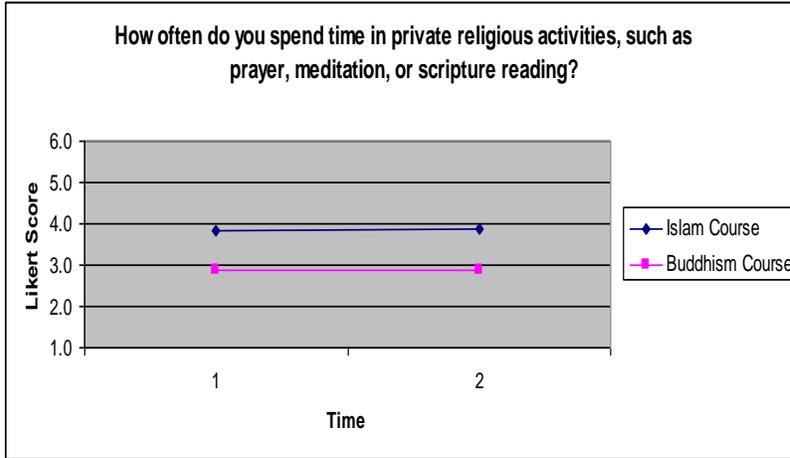


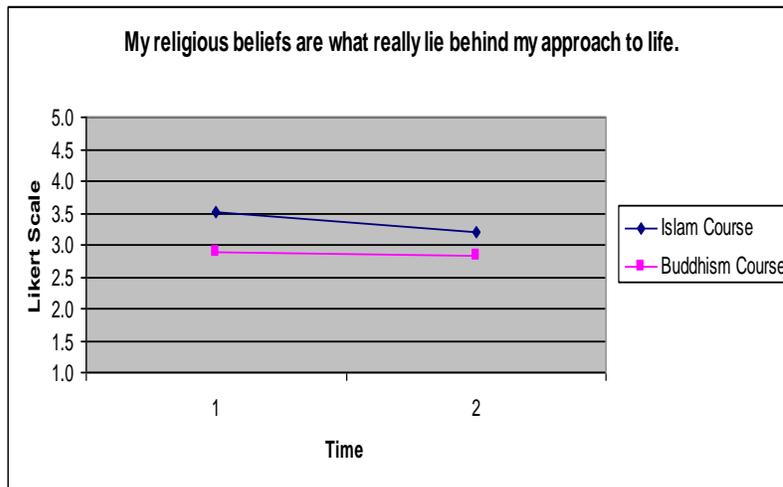
Figure E: Religiosity - Activities



Response Key

1. Rarely or Never
2. Once a Year
3. A few Times a Year
4. A few times a Month
5. Once a Week
6. More than once a week

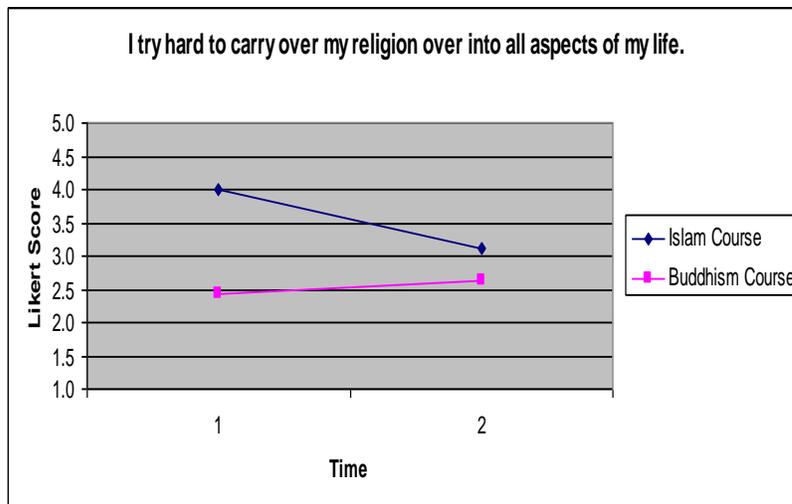
Figure F: Religiosity – Beliefs lie behind my approach to life



Response Key

1. Definitely not true
2. Not So Much
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat True
5. Definitely True

Figure G: Religiosity – Carrying religion into all aspects of life



Response Key

1. Definitely not true
2. Not So Much
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat True
5. Definitely True

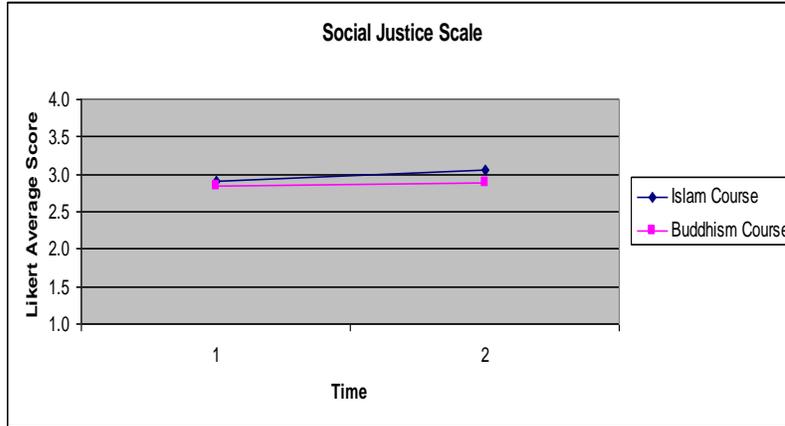
Figure H: Social Justice (Combined Avg.)

Imagine that you lived in a place where most people disrespect members of a small religious group. How likely would you be to take the following actions?

Question 10 = Defend the small religious group when talking to friends.

Question 11 = Sign a petition supporting the small religious group.

Question 12 = Post on a social networking website defending the small religious group.



Response Key	
1.	Definitely would not
2.	Probably would not
3.	Probably would
4.	Definitely would

five being “definitely true.” Again, in the Islam course, students altogether displayed a higher level of religiosity for both questions but also showed a rather substantial shift on the “I try hard to carry over my religion into all aspects of my life” question from 4.00 or “somewhat true” to 3.11 or “neutral” on the post-survey.

Social Justice

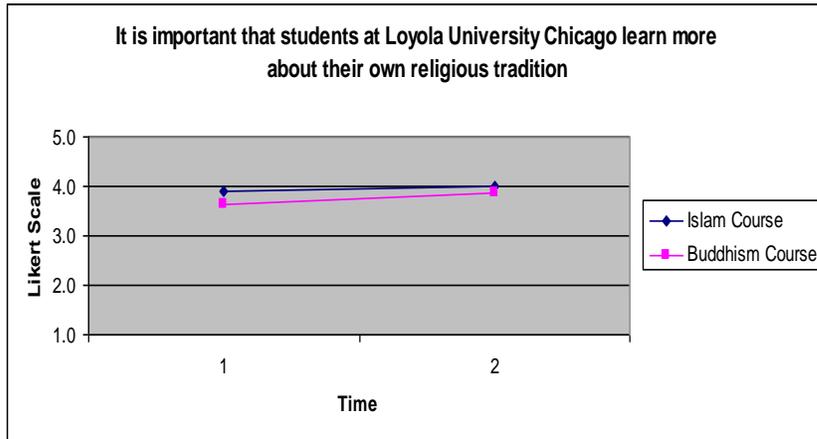
In questions 10 through 12, students were asked to “imagine living in a place where most people disrespected members of a small religious group” and whether they would “defend the group while talking to friends” (Q10), “sign a petition” in support of the group” (Q11), or “post on a social networking website” in defense of the minority group

(Q12). Responses were based on a four point Likert scale with one being “definitely would not” and four being “definitely would.” Figure H shows that when the three questions are averaged into a single measure there is a very slight increase for both groups. Islam increases from 2.91 to 3.06 and Buddhism from 2.85 to 2.88. If 2.5 can be considered “neutral,” students are self-reporting at least a slight propensity for social activism. It is also interesting to note, on an individual question level, that moving from talking with friends and signing petitions to social media, by all four measures (pre, post, Buddhism, and Islam) students move from squarely and in sync from the “probably would” to “probably would not” category for the last question. See Table 1 for individual item scores.

Table 1: Likert Scale Averages (Questions 6-20)

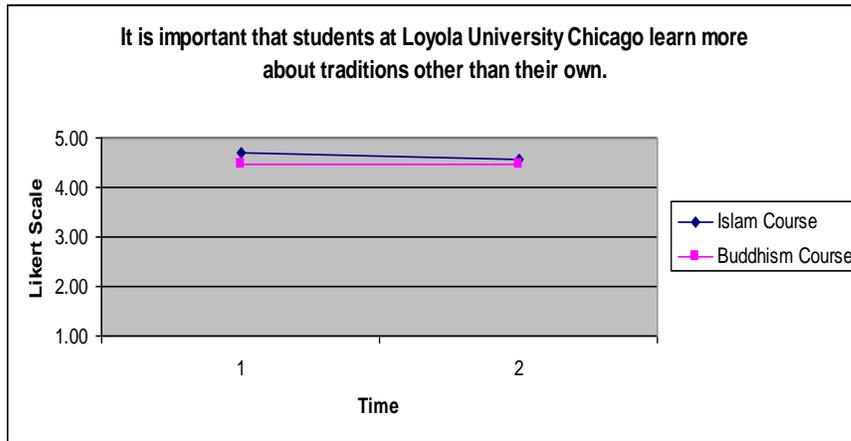
Question #	Pre Islam	Pre N	Post Islam	Post N	Difference	Pre Buddhism	Pre N	Post Buddhism	Post N	Difference
6	3.19	67.00	3.05	58.00	-0.14	2.54	67.00	2.49	68	-0.05
7	3.82	67.00	3.86	59.00	0.04	2.88	66.00	2.89	66	0.02
8	3.52	67.00	3.21	62.00	-0.31	2.88	66.00	2.82	68	-0.06
9	4.00	67.00	3.11	64.00	-0.89	2.44	66.00	2.62	68	0.18
10	3.24	67.00	3.44	62.00	0.20	3.28	64.00	3.22	68	-0.06
11	3.13	67.00	3.22	63.00	0.09	3.09	64.00	3.12	68	0.02
12	2.34	67.00	2.52	63.00	0.18	2.17	64.00	2.31	68	0.14
13	3.90	67.00	4.00	62.00	0.10	3.64	66.00	3.85	67	0.21
14	4.69	67.00	4.56	62.00	-0.12	4.45	66.00	4.45	66	0.00
15	3.49	67.00	3.63	63.00	0.14	3.26	66.00	3.55	67	0.29
16	3.46	67.00	3.69	62.00	0.23	3.18	66.00	3.60	67	0.42
17	2.78	67.00	2.84	62.00	0.06	2.24	66.00	2.79	67	0.55
18	3.49	67.00	4.24	62.00	0.75	3.89	66.00	3.97	67	0.08
19	2.95	66.00	3.02	62.00	0.06	2.85	66.00	3.03	67	0.18
20	3.31	67.00	3.45	62.00	0.14	3.42	65.00	3.45	67	0.03

Figure I: Question 13



Response Key	
1.	Definitely not true
2.	Not So Much
3.	Neutral
4.	Somewhat True
5.	Definitely True

Figure J: Question 14



Response Key	
1.	Definitely not true
2.	Not So Much
3.	Neutral
4.	Somewhat True
5.	Definitely True

Educational Importance of Studying Religion(s)

Question 13 asked students whether it was important for students at LUC to learn more about *their own* religious tradition and question 14 asked whether it is important that students learn more about traditions *other than their own*. Responses were based on a five point Likert scale with one being “strongly disagree” and five being “strongly agree.” In all measures, students were firmly in the “somewhat agree” and bordering on the “strongly agree” categories. Levels stayed consistent from pre- to post-survey with students in the Islam courses having a slightly stronger sense for the importance of studying their own religion over the Buddhism class counterpart. Both groups do, however, see stronger reason to

study religion *other than their own* rather than their own. See figures I and J for the graphs and Table 1 for the individual item statistics.

Comfort with Religious Diversity

Question 15 asked whether students “often engage in interesting discussion around religious diversity issues” and 16 asked whether students felt if they had “a basic understanding of a number of the world’s religions.” Responses were based on a five point Likert scale with one being “strongly disagree” and five being “strongly agree.” Students answered similarly across groups and with an uptick towards greater comfort for both questions. In particular, the Buddhism course showed an increase from 3.18 to 3.60 in their sense of a basic understanding of the

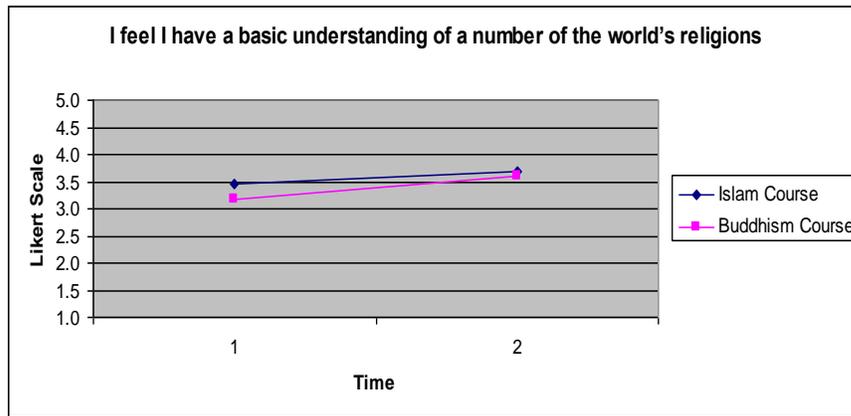
world’s religious traditions. See figures K and L for the graphs and Table 1 for the individual item statistics.

Pedagogical Purposes of Theology and Religious Studies

Question 17 asked whether students thought “a primary purpose of university-level classes in theology or religious studies is to encourage or nourish religious faith or practice in its students” and 18 asked whether students thought a primary purpose of university-level classes in theology or religious studies is to challenge them to critically evaluate religion. Responses were based on a five point Likert scale with one being “strongly disagree” and five being “strongly agree.” Students answered similarly across groups and with an uptick for both questions over the course of the

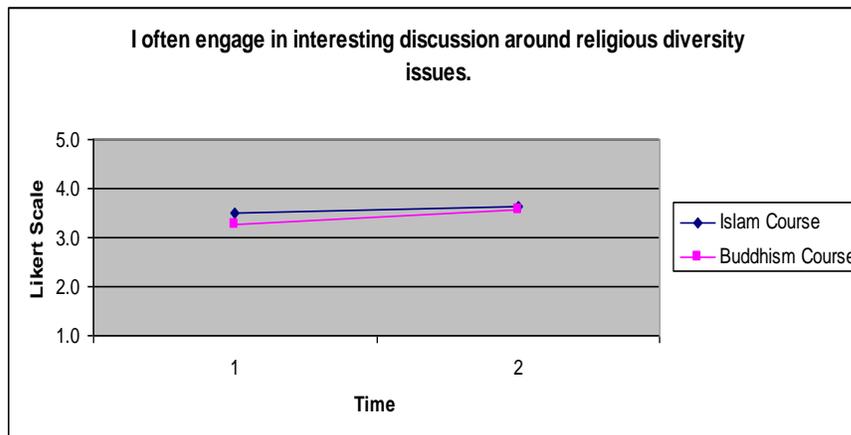
semester. In particular, the Buddhism course showed an increase from 2.24 to 2.79 as to theology and religious studies’ primary purpose in encouraging or nourishing religious faith. But for this question, it should be kept in mind that the average for all classes was less than 3 or “neutral,” suggesting that students do not agree that theology and religious studies should encourage or nourish faith and practice. This sentiment is confirmed with the “flip” question, number 18, which demonstrates that students on average think that courses *should* challenge and critically evaluate religion. This was particularly evident in Islam courses where students shifted the average from the pre-Islam survey course average of 3.49 in the “neutral” range to 4.24 which is squarely in the “somewhat” to “strongly agree” range.

Figure K: Question 15



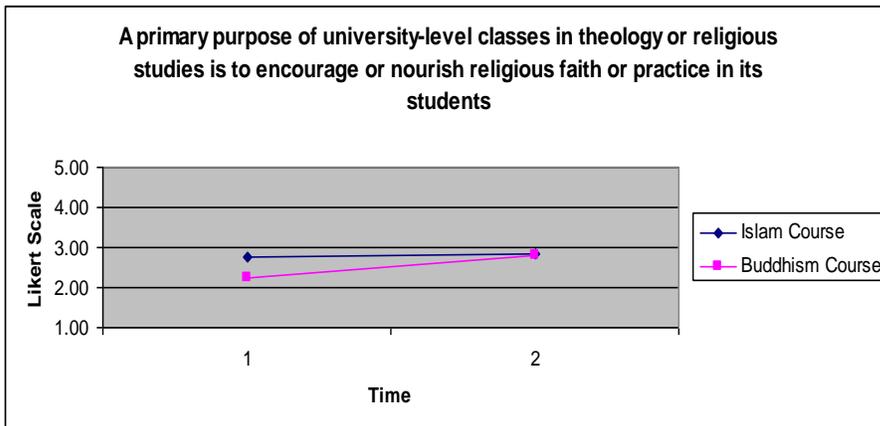
- Response Key
1. Definitely not true
 2. Not So Much
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat True
 5. Definitely True

Figure L: Question 16



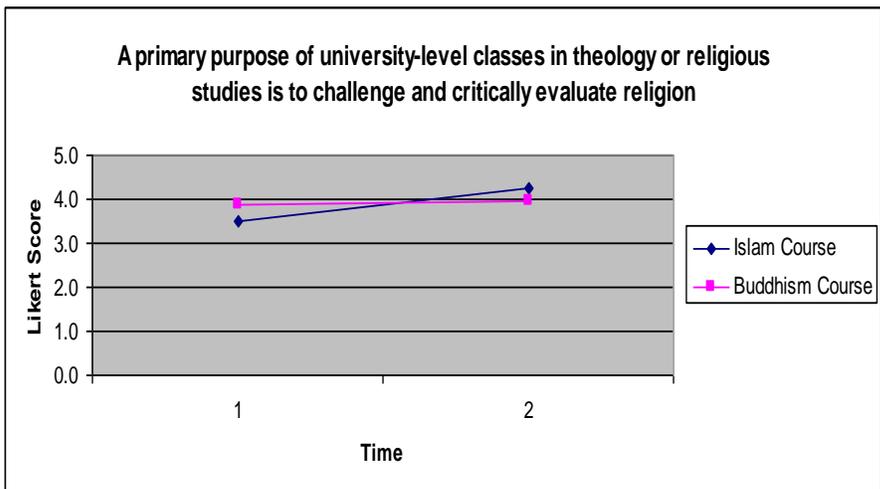
- Response Key
1. Definitely not true
 2. Not So Much
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat True
 5. Definitely True

Figure M



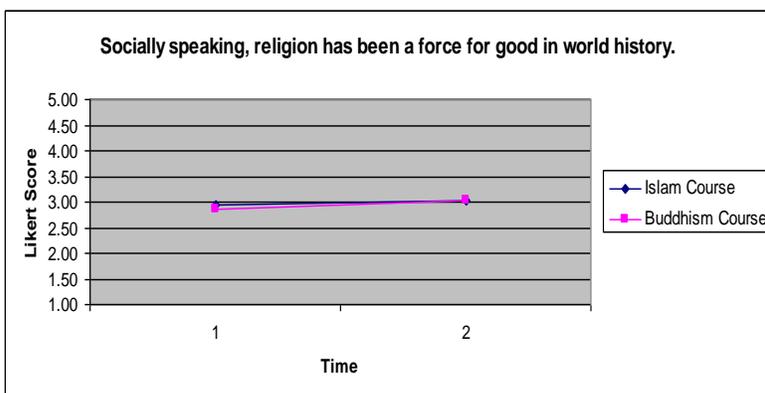
- Response Key
1. Definitely not true
 2. Not So Much
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat True
 5. Definitely True

Figure N



- Response Key
1. Definitely not true
 2. Not So Much
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat True
 5. Definitely True

Figure O



- Response Key
1. Definitely not true
 2. Not So Much
 3. Neutral
 4. Somewhat True
 5. Definitely True

Lastly, question 19 shows that students seemed to keep personal sentiments of religion separate for the pedagogical aims of socio-historical approaches to religion with only a slight uptick but remaining firmly in the “neutral category” when evaluating whether “socially speaking, religion has been a force for good in world history.” See figures M, N, and O for the graphs and Table 1 for the individual item statistics.

Jesuit Identity and Connections Found Theology and Religious Studies Courses

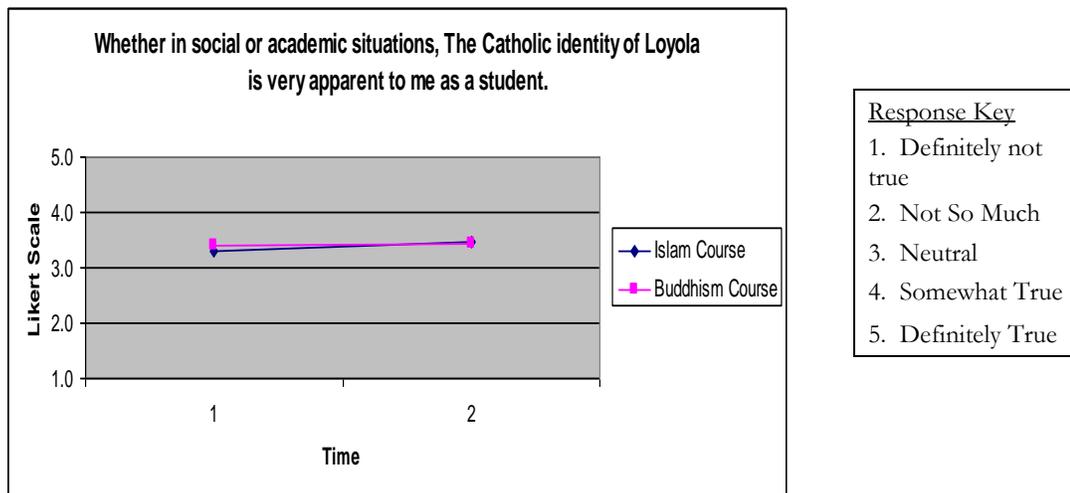
Question 20 asked whether students agree that, “Whether in social or academic situations, the Catholic identity of Loyola is very apparent to me as a student.” Responses were based on a five point Likert scale with one being “strongly disagree” and five being “strongly agree.” Students answered similarly across groups and with an uptick towards greater acknowledgment for LUC’s Catholic identity – perhaps still in the “neutral” range but trending toward “agree.” See figure P for the graphs and Table 2 for the individual item statistics.

Questions 21 and 22 were open response and thereby qualitative in nature. Both were an attempt to understand the student perspective when it comes to both defining a Jesuit university and then their understanding of the

relationship of LUC’s Jesuit identity with the teaching of Islam and Buddhism.

Beginning with question 21 which asks, “What does it mean to be at a Jesuit University for you?,” the responses seemed to revolve around many key virtues. These included notions of personal growth as it “make me a better and more socially engaged person” and as a place welcoming of diversity such that “it means that I can study in a place that is open to and not hostile to a variety of religions” or, simply, “it makes me feel comfortable.” The ethical was referenced as a student wrote “it means that I attend a university with a moral code. I also learned that Jesuits are quite tolerant, something I strive to be.” Others inferred it is a place of reflective thinking, i.e. “it is a university that encourages students to not only learn about their faith but other faiths as well” and is communal “that we all look out for one another.” Theological underpinnings also surface as one student understood the Jesuit mission “to see God in all things around me” while another referenced these courses in light of “being open to all faiths while still holding true to Catholic roots.” The merging of the intellectual growth with social justice concerns was also evident as one student noted that “being here means that I am able to personally reflect on my identity constantly

Figure P



Lewis: Mission, Religion, Religious Studies?

Table 2: What does it mean to be at a “Jesuit” university for you? (Q21) - Representative Sample of Student Responses by Group

<u>Introduction to Islam</u>
Being here means that I am able to personally reflect on my identity constantly and understand that my ability to serve the world can only be accomplished with a well-rounded education.
It means that I can study in a place that is open to and not hostile to a variety of religions. It makes me feel comfortable.
That it is a Catholic university but it does not neglect other religions or dismiss other religions.
Jesuit means for me to be involved as a community.
It means that I attend a university with a moral code. I also learned that Jesuits are quite tolerant, something I strive to be.
To see God in all things around me
It is a university that encourages students to not only learn about their faith but other faiths as well.
It mean that I am having more than just an academic experience. I am learning things that will get me a job, but also things that will make me a better and more socially engaged person.
I don't really know really know up until right now because I don't feel the Jesuit teachings [are] impacting me.
Being at a Jesuit university means focusing on all paths of study for the sake of personal and social benefit.
Being at a Jesuit university means being open, understanding, and accepting of everyone
Being open to all faiths while still holding true to Catholic roots.
The university is very into social justice. They like being diverse and open.
It means to have a “holistic” education with strong core values.
It means to be at a school that humbly embraces the academically religious as well as the secular. And also graciously helps to nurture and provide for those of all faiths.
A very friendly environment that emphasizes a lot on community service and is very tolerant of all religious.
<u>Introduction to Buddhism</u>
The learning style is different compared to other universities. It expands the mind of ideas that wouldn't be known elsewhere. It broadens views of others and more understanding.
To engage in religion and to accept and respect other religions than your own.
That we all look out for one another. Community based.
Take on learning with higher appreciation for ethics, critical thinking, and social service.
To be a Jesuit means to study in the ways of the Jesuit all for the “Glory of God.” They try to bring out the best in us, and try to make us think in an ethical manner.
To attend a college which supports education in all fields and promotes further discovery in matter not related to the Catholic identity.
A university that puts social justice as a priority
Inclusive, Catholic, liberal
Regardless of the Catholic background, they are still open and welcome all, even if they have a different religion or race.
The Jesuit tradition values education and becoming a valuable citizen through knowledge.
Gain an appreciation for a wide variety of religions practices, be exposed to fields of knowledge that I otherwise would not have sought out.
Funding and networking.
It means to be active in the community and help fight social injustice. It also means to gain knowledge about many different subjects.
Set the world on fire à Positivity
More challenging religious classes.
To be a Jesuit means to believe in God while also realizing that others, no matter what religion and background, believe in other forms of God and to not judge but to learn and understand.
It means giving back to the community and receiving a liberal, service-oriented education.
Emphasizes social justice, understanding, and civic engagement.
In all honesty, the only thing that implies that I'm at a Jesuit university is having to take two theology core courses (which I think may be standard?) otherwise, it doesn't mean much to me.

and understand that my ability to serve the world can only be accomplished with a well-rounded education.” Another student mentioned the intellectually expansive aspects of the university as “to attend a college which supports education in all fields and promotes further discovery in matter not related to the Catholic identity.” For others, the more pragmatic and mundane “funding and networking” or “it’s more expensive” arose and some were unclear of the identity as this student expresses: “I don’t really know up until right now because I don’t feel the Jesuit teachings [are] impacting me.” Nevertheless, the great majority of responses are indicated by another student’s summary “it means to have a ‘holistic’ education with strong core values.” See Table 3 for a compilation of these and other select student responses.

The final question of the survey, question 22, asked students to explain why it was “important for a Jesuit school to offer courses in religions such as Islam, Hinduism Buddhism, or Judaism.” Responses seem to fall into a number of categories. The first being a reference to the Jesuit intention of creating “A Home For All Faiths.”²⁵ This included those studying their own religions, another religion, or those studying having no religious identity. Students acknowledged appreciation for being able to study their own religion. “It is important for students who might be a member of any of those religions to have the chance to learn more about their own” and another student wrote, “there are people at this school that are not Christian and to neglect their religion or their desire/desires of other to learn about these other religions would be an injustice to the students.” For students that are studying a religion not their own, the benefits are also recognizable in terms of personal growth and self-reflection through comparison: “you learn more about your own religion that way” and “people need to understand other religions in order to appropriately understand their own.” And one student who disclosed his/herself as non-religious noted that these courses “help(s) one to understand different perspectives of faith in an educated and thought provoking way.” The same student

continues, “for someone like myself who is not religious it has truly benefitted me because I now respect and understand religion from different aspects.” The impact is also inferred outside of the classroom as well “yes, for better acceptance of all religions and to add diversity on campus.” Furthermore, some students saw the course offerings as playing a direct role in the manifestation of Jesuit values writing, “Jesuits tend to be very inclusive so studying religions other than Christianity/Catholicism is important” and “as Loyola claims to be a ‘home for all faiths’ it is critical to uphold that honor” and even to the extreme point that “if they didn’t [offer these types of courses], Jesuit values would have no meaning.” For these students there was no conflict in identity but rather substantiation of it.

Second, students seemed to identify these courses with notions of the Jesuit pursuit of reconciling “faith and reason” and the search for “truth.” One student claimed “yes, we find God in all things, including other religions and those who practice them” and the course “opens the mind to new ideas.” Another student noted the special context of the academic study of religion: “In no other place can you discuss religion in such a safe space. I feel lucky to have gotten the opportunity.”

Third, students linked courses in Islam and Buddhism with ethics and social responsibility. Some noted these courses have an ability to “bring perspective on other religions stances and clears ignorance,” “gets rid of stereotypes,” “makes religion more than a trigger word,” and provides an alternative to “not just what they [students] hear on TV.” Related, students also linked more information with empathy and a tendency towards perspective-taking and ultimately social justice causes. “There are too many misconceptions and prejudices expressed towards those religious groups. We need more informed individuals or intellectual warriors to defeat ignorance.” Or, “it is important to learn to develop informed empathy!” and as one student writes, “As a Jesuit university we are supposed to be men and women for others.” This same student

Lewis: Mission, Religion, Religious Studies?

Table 3: It is important for a Jesuit school to offer courses in religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism because..... (Q22) - Representative Sample of Student Responses by Group

<u>Introduction to Islam</u>
There are too many misconceptions and prejudices expressed towards those religious groups. We need more informed individuals or intellectual warriors to defeat ignorance.
Yes, so that all students can get a true understanding of what different religions believe and not just what they hear on TV.
It is important for students who might be a member of any of those religions to have the chance to learn more about their own.
It enhances everyone's knowledge and helps them understand other religions better. Gets rid of stereotypes.
People need to understand other religions before they can accept them/to not hold false understanding or judgments towards others.
Range of perspective is necessary. Make religion more than a trigger word.
As Loyola claims to be a "home for all faiths" it is critical to uphold that honor.
Yes, we need to be global citizens
We encourage diversity and students to become well-rounded; therefore, different religions should be taught.
As a Jesuit university we are supposed to be men and women for others. The only way we are able to do this is if we can understand where other people are coming from.
Yes. We find God in all things, including other religions and those who practice them.
The only way to have productive dialogues in a religiously pluralistic world is to study and understand other religious traditions.
There are people at this school that are not Christian and to neglect their religion or their desire/desires of other to learn about these other religions would be an injustice to the students.
In no other place can you discuss religion in such a safe space. I feel lucky to have gotten the opportunity.
Also, not everyone at a Jesuit school is Catholic, so these schools need to provide for people who are different religions.
Understanding leads to empathy, and respect. It's interesting
It is important to educate oneself of the other religions of the world. Religion has a major role in history and it would be silly to not learn about it.
It offers students the chance to look and evaluate something which may be familiar or unfamiliar to them and engage with other people who are similarly interested in learning.
Jesuits tend to be very inclusive so studying religions other than Christianity/Catholicism is important.
It is important to know about other faiths so that you have a diverse perspective on life and are able to critically evaluate your own beliefs.
For a well-rounded education. As a student I want to have a broad understanding of the world around me.
it is important to always be open-minded and these classes that may challenge people's beliefs or culture is necessary.
It helps one to understand different perspectives of faith in an educated and thought provoking way. For someone like myself who is not religious it has truly benefitted me because I now respect and understand religion from different aspects.
When talking about one religion – the idea that other religions exist shouldn't be concealed or not addressed.
It is important for everyone to be exposed to other religions and/or be able to critically analyze their own religion from a 3rd person view
<u>Introduction to Buddhism</u>
You learn more about your own religion that way.
It rounds a student about reality, it challenges their beliefs and makes that person reflect on their religion and way of approaching life and what its purpose is.
It brings about diversity to students who otherwise wouldn't venture to seek these courses. It allows for clubs to develop which in turn creates sub-communities within the Loyola community (student body)
We are in a globalized society where it is necessary to learn about beliefs, cultures, and practice other than our own.
People need to understand other religions in order to appropriately understand their own, as well as to interact in a global setting.
Loyola, despite being a Catholic University, is extremely diverse. It is important to have options open for people who wish to expand their knowledge base or explore other religious practices.
It would be hypocritical for a group that strives to seek the truth and learn as much as possible, not to teach a specific aspect of human history and practice because it is an alternative religious study for Catholicism.
It gives individuals a deeper understanding and at times strengthen their faith in their religion.
If they didn't, Jesuit values would have no meaning.
Yes and more
It's beings perspective on other religions stance and clears ignorance.
Students and people everywhere need to be educated about different religions and have a tolerance for other practices and beliefs from their own.
Opens the mind to new ideas.
Variety of options for variety of people.
Yes, for better acceptance of all religions and to add diversity on campus.
One-sidedness leads to assumptions and ignorance doesn't benefit anyone.
It allows for multiple perspectives and the ability to see both good and bad- even in your own belief
Yes! Other faith traditions have made a huge impact on our history and social structure. It is important to learn to develop informed empathy!

continues, “the only way we are able to do this is if we can understand where other people are coming from.” Another student simply answered, “Yes, we need to be global citizens.” Related, students see how these courses connect with a globalized and interdependent world. “It is important to educate oneself of the other religions of the world. Religion has a major role in history and it would be silly to not learn about it.”

Another wrote, “we are in a globalized society where it is necessary to learn about beliefs, cultures, and practice other than our own.” And one student even noted that “the idea that other religions exist shouldn’t be concealed or not addressed” as if to suggest that the teaching of multiple religious traditions is a natural expectation for a broad-based educational experience. See Table 3 for a compilation of select student responses.

Discussion

The initial hypothesis seems to hold, i.e., students found a clear link between religious studies, living in a global world, and the virtues of Jesuit education and identity. While for the quantitative measurements, the students’ starting point was the biggest determinant of the end point. Nevertheless, additional conclusions and conjectures can be made on all the measures.

Three items can be gleaned from the *Student Religiosity* measures. One, the data suggests that religiosity does not seem to shift over the course of the semester (at least for all but one of the four questions and one group to be discussed below). This finding may ultimately be helpful in alleviating fears of those that claim student piety is in danger or compromised with rigorous and/or comparative analysis. This conclusion is supported by my even more robust study of over 1,100 students at Arizona State University and nearby community colleges that were exposed to religious studies curriculum and did not exhibit any loss in religiosity.²⁶ Students seem hungry for informed arguments in contrast to the sometimes loud or emotion-laden televangelists and political voices that claim

religious authority. My own view is that through contextualization, i.e., seeing the forces of time and place in the manifesting of religious phenomena, an approach often utilized in the academic study of religion, greater depth can be mined and simple stereotypes can be dismissed and extremism be opened to questioning.

The second point, and in reference to the above exception, there was, however, one outlier statistic in the set of religiosity questions. For the item “I try to carry religion into all aspects of my life,” the Introduction to Islam group dropped significantly from “somewhat true” (4.00) to “neutral” (3.11) whereas the Introduction to Buddhism group demonstrated a slight uptick from 2.44 to 2.66. So for this group of students, and this question, the course did seem to have a “negative” impact. One theory for this is that the Introduction to Islam classes did spend significant time on contemporary debates within Muslim circles on the nature and relationship of Islam with the secular state. My hypothesis is that students found more compelling the pro-secular state arguments (potentially as a means to protect religion as much to sideline it) and therefore when coming to the question of “carrying religion into all aspects of life,” students were more reserved at the end of the semester. This, however, is just one possible explanation. Another is that the course simply led to students having a greater sense self-realization of what they do/did by answering the more honestly the second time.

The third item to consider is that the Introduction to Islam group demonstrated a much higher beginning and ending level of religiosity than the Introduction to Buddhism class. As for why these students seem to be, by a full point on the Likert scale, more “religious” than their Introduction to Buddhism counterparts is clearly one of self-selection. The high percentage of Muslim students in the Introduction to Islam class and the large self-described as “other” contingent (presumed to be no religion or agnostic) in the Introduction to Buddhism class drives those figures. See Table 1 and

Figure G for numeric and graphic representation.

In terms of the *Social Justice* items and, as to why students may be less willing to support a disrespected minority religious group via social media than other means, i.e., signing petitions or discussing in person with friends, a few reasons can be posited. One, some individuals use social media for reasons more for keeping in touch with friends than to advance political or social causes. Second, by posting online, individuals may feel that they are taking more of a risk or making more of a public investment in a cause about which they may have their own reservations or perhaps they do not feel it is their place to enter the conversation. Nevertheless, the average measure of all three questions showed students growing, if only by a small amount, in their comfort with more social activism relating to religion. Anecdotally, some have claimed that religious studies, and for those not studying their own tradition, the curriculum makes the “other” less strange in ways that leads to greater empathy as individuals see others more like themselves.

In terms of the *Educational Importance of Studying Religion(s)* measure, students overwhelmingly saw the importance of both studying their own religion and, even more so, the religion of others. This latter conclusion makes some sense as a significant number of students taking these classes are taking them as “other religion” and, thereby, are conceivably predisposed to see this option as important. As a result, there is not much of an upward shift because there is very little room to travel any higher. If the general university model continues to move in a direction of the importance of responding to student needs and desires, these classes seem to play some role to that end. As one of my department colleagues noted, a separate question arises: are these classes designed to accommodate the insiders of various religious traditions or for the enrichment of outsiders? My own hope is that the answer is “both” and points to the dynamic nature of such curriculum.

In terms of *Comfort with Religious Diversity*, the trend was slightly positive for both “I often engage in interesting discussion around religious diversity issues” and “I feel I have a basic understanding of a number of the world’s religions.” One of the strengths of religious studies courses is that they provide an example to students of how religion can be discussed, evaluated, celebrated, and critiqued in a public and responsible context. Many students come to the university with an understanding that discussing religion is socially unbecoming at best or conflict laden at worst. As a result, these courses play a critical modeling role for many students to see and feel how discussions related to religion can be intellectually satisfying, relevant, and can serve as a means for building civil cohesion.

In terms of the *Pedagogical Purposes of Theology and Religious Studies*, theology departments are often assumed to play dual roles at the university by both providing critical reflection and depth to their tradition but also, and more generally, understood by outsiders of the department, as cultivators of student religious literacy and even commitment. The research indicates that from the students’ perspective, they see theology and religious studies as playing a decidedly academic role over, say, a faith development one. When asked if the courses should encourage or nourish faith and practice, both groups before and after the course fell into the “somewhat disagree” range. This is confirmed when students are asked if the courses should challenge and critically evaluate religion. Student responses fall squarely in the “somewhat agree” with the Introduction to Islam students making, on average, a jump from “somewhat agree” to “strongly agree.” Students value and engage in rigorous, yet responsible, debate. This need for “real” information on religion has been, I am told by students, compounded by the cacophony of voices and agendas found online and within social media. In the classroom, they expect to be given the tools to evaluate opinions and arguments in order to come to their own informed decisions. Or, perhaps equally important, the goal is to learn how to evaluate sources when questions arise

in the future. Theology and religious studies instructors should not take this responsibility lightly as religion has far-reaching and diverse impacts on individual and social lives.

Lastly, how does all of this, in conjunction with the open-ended questions, address the study's key research question and student perspectives on *Jesuit Identity and as Applied in Theology and Religious Studies*? In general, the trends and shifts, while minor and subtle in most cases, nevertheless suggest that religious studies exposure is not counter to the normative concerns of the mission of LUC. In fact, and in particular, based on student responses to the open-ended questions the results here strongly indicate that religious studies courses in Buddhism and Islam support Jesuit values in important ways. According to the university website, LUC's institutional mission statement is as follows:

*We are Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University—a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith.*²⁷

This same section under the title “Mission and Identity” then proceeds to list a number of ways the mission is supported under a variety of subtitles. “*Faith and Reason*” understands that the “search for truth is carried out in an atmosphere of Academic Freedom and open inquiry.” “*Ethical Behavior*” endorses a curriculum that promotes “ethical awareness, reflection and decision making.” A “*Home For All Faiths*” recognizes its diverse population where “we encourage each person to celebrate their personal faith and to respect and learn from other people of faith within our Loyola community.” “*Social Responsibility*” and “*Global solidarity*” are also identified as key markers of identity where “students must have an educated awareness of society and culture, a sense of being interrelated and interconnected, and a commitment to act for the rights of others.”²⁸ The results section of this paper, in terms of Jesuit mission and the importance of offering courses in Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, links religious studies course curricula with these institutional goals and values. Students see

these courses as a means of welcoming and learning from religious diversity, or their own religion, in ways that leads to social justice and global solidarity. They see the critical engagement of religion as a necessary part of the “faith and reason” calculus and one often lacking in the larger society.

Student comments related to the classroom being the “only place” where these conversations can occur or the “critical” and evaluative aspects of religious studies courses might also point to the special nature of religious studies. It can offer the critical space to view religion from a third person perspective in ways directed primarily towards the goals of understanding complexity with an awareness of the forces of time and place in constructing religion. It is argued that this critical approach is where deep learning occurs and the wrestling with truth and its many real and perceived manifestations is necessary for any lasting dialogue.

Limitations of the Study and Future Directions

Teasing out the impact of a one-semester curriculum on the attitudes of undergraduate students is no easy undertaking. Today's college students are influenced by a variety of social, occupational, familial, and educational factors. A strong argument can also be made that the course's true impact may not emerge until later when the student's life intersects with some personal exigency or a challenge related to religion emerges. In addition, when it comes to religion, “small” changes can also be critical in civic behavior if, perhaps, individuals were to pause and evaluate the potential impact of their actions on others before actually acting in ways that could imperil or damage other people and communities. Self-reported data seems of particular concern when asking students to comment on the nature of the course or Jesuit education while they are still active students in the course. While student anonymity was promised and kept, there may be a number of factors shaping, in particular, the open-ended response questions including but not limited to grade consideration, “ease” in affirmative words rather than defending critiques, or

simply school pride in terms of its Jesuit connections.

In terms of opportunities for analysis, the project was limited in three crucial ways. First, a random student identifier was not provided to match scoring on a student-by-student basis. Second, an opportunity to create a control group was missed, i.e., perhaps from, say, mathematics or natural science courses. By being able to compare two disparate groups, the impact of religious studies courses could potentially be isolated from the broader social and academic influences of a typical undergraduate student. Both of these factors limited any type of rigorous statistical evaluations including statistically significant changes over time. The third limitation in analysis is a reflection of only having two open-ended or qualitative survey questions to better understand the “why” of statistical changes. Rather than the researcher relying primarily on inference and speculation on the processes of change, having student input would add depth and support to the conclusions being drawn. For example, this would be particularly helpful for the questions such as “I try hard to carry over my religion to all aspects of my life” or “socially speaking, religion has been a force for good in world history.” It is one thing to note the statistical shift or mean, but this leaves room for further research to ask the student how he or she ultimately understands the impact of their coursework in determining their numerical response.

In addition to bolstering the design methodology (i.e., adding student identifiers, a control group, and supplemental qualitative questions) it also opens doors for expanding the survey into LUC courses on Hinduism and Buddhism, and naturally into courses in Christian theology. It may be particularly interesting to explore which type of students self-select into religious studies or theology courses in order to fulfill their general education requirements. Furthermore, this survey and its results can also be used as data markers in larger theoretical conversations about the importance of religious studies and its relationship with theology and, in greater

context, the mission statement of other faith-based institutions.

Conclusion

This study has attempted and helped to uncover student perspectives on the role religious studies plays at their Catholic and Jesuit University. Students link Jesuit values to virtues such as tolerance, critical and reflective thinking, civic responsibility, as well as individual growth and expansion of ways of thinking. Based on the results, students expect and desire to be challenged in their theology and religious studies courses and link the opportunity to take courses in many religious traditions as being firmly in line with their understanding of Jesuit values and mission. 

Notes

¹ “Mission and Identity,” Loyola University Chicago, accessed August 3, 2014, <http://www.luc.edu/mission/index.shtml>.

² James Foard, “Beyond Ours and Theirs: On the Global Character of Religious Studies” in *Beyond the Classics: New Essays in Religious Studies and Liberal Education*, ed., F. Reynolds and S. Burkhalter (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990), 163-175; James Foard, “Writing Across the Curriculum: A Religious Studies Contribution” in *Beyond the Classics: New Essays in Religious Studies and Liberal Education*, ed., F. Reynolds and S. Burkhalter (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990), 203-217.

³ Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

⁴ Diana Eck, “Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 4 (2008): 743–776.

⁵ Mark Woodward, “Islamic and Religious Studies: Challenges and Opportunities for Twenty-First Century Indonesia,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 3, no. 1 (2009): 1–34.

⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2010).

⁷ Emile Lester and Patrick S. Roberts, *Learning about World Religions in Public Schools: The Impact on*

Student Attitudes and Community Acceptance in Modesto C.A. (Nashville TN: First Forum, First Amendment Center, 2006).

⁸ Barbara Walvoord, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* (Malden MA: Wiley – Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁹ Bret Lewis, “The Impact of Religious Studies Courses: Measuring Change in College Students’ Attitudes” *Religion & Education* 39, (2012): 284–307.

¹⁰ Janna L. Oakes, “In Ignatian Footsteps: Translational Learning for Educating and Training Adults in the 21st Century,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 41-53.

¹¹ Betsy M. DelleBovi, “Realizing the Jesuit Mission: Teaching Teachers in the 21st Century,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 2, no. 1 (2013): 60-77.

¹² Patrick Lynch, et al., “Values of Exemplary Jesuit College Graduates” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 1, no. 2 (2012): 43-64.

¹³ “Key Facts,” Loyola University Chicago, accessed August 3, 2014, <http://www.luc.edu/keyfacts/index.shtml>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ At the time of data collection, I was in the second year of my position at Lecturer of World Religions at LUC. My earlier dissertation work had focused on the impact of religious studies courses at a large state university, but my research has not been limited to the United States. I have also written on religious studies in Indonesia and, most recently (Summer 2014) completed fieldwork on the relationship of higher education institutions and religion in Tunisia. I have experience both in Catholic theology (undergraduate studies at the University of Notre Dame; current teaching position at LUC) and religious studies (graduate studies and teaching Arizona State University). I give this background in acknowledgment that these multiple perspectives are likely to emerge in the selection of my materials and the direction of conversations in the classrooms under study.

¹⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: Religion History, and Civilization* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002).

¹⁸ Carl Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁹ Edward E. Curtis, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁰ John Strong. *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008).

²¹ Harold Koenig, G. Parkerson, and K. Meador, “Religion Index for Psychiatric Research: A 5-Item Measure for Use in Health Outcome Studies,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 154 (1997): 885-886.

²² Emile Lester and Patrick S. Roberts, *Learning about World Religions in Public Schools: The Impact on Student Attitudes and Community Acceptance in Modesto C.A.* (Nashville TN: First Forum, First Amendment Center, 2006).

²³ Mark Engberg and Matthew Mayhew, “The Influence of First-Year ‘Success’ Courses on Student Learning and Democratic Outcomes,” *Journal of College Student Development* 48, no. 3 (2007): 241-258.

²⁴ Lewis, “The Impact of Religious Studies Courses,” 291.

²⁵ “Mission and Identity,” LUC, <http://www.luc.edu/mission/index.shtml>.

²⁶ Lewis, “The Impact of Religious Studies Courses,” 301–302.

²⁷ “Mission and Identity,” LUC, <http://www.luc.edu/mission/index.shtml>.

²⁸ Ibid.

Appendix 1

Opinion Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study. This is a way to learn more about students' opinions. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to answer the following set of questions.

INFORMATION

We'd like to ask your opinions on religion. We take your views very seriously, so take as much time as you need to fill out the survey and please read the questions carefully. It should take about 15 minutes to complete.

BENEFIT

This survey will benefit researchers and administrators who want to know what students think about religion, politics, and other issues.

CONFIDENTIALITY

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study, so please do not write your name on the survey. No one except the research team will have access to the completed surveys. No one except the research team will have access to the completed surveys.

CONTACT

If you have any questions about the study, or about what you are doing in the study, you may ask Bret Lewis, Department of Theology, Loyola University Chicago. blewis@luc.edu

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate you may change your mind and hand in a blank or partially completed survey. Participants can skip questions if they choose.

Thank you very much for participating!

Now, let's begin with some background questions.

1. Sex
 - A. Male
 - B. Female

2. How many years have you been in college? This is my
 - A. First year
 - B. Second year
 - C. Third year
 - D. Fourth year
 - E. Fifth year or more

3. How would you identify your religious affiliation?
 - A. Atheist
 - B. Jewish
 - C. Christian Protestant
 - D. Catholic or Eastern Orthodox
 - E. Mormon
 - F. Muslim
 - G. Buddhist
 - H. Hindu
 - I. Native American/American Indian
 - J. Other

4. How long have you lived in the United States?
 - A. My whole life
 - B. At least 5-10 years
 - C. Between 1-5 years
 - D. Less than a year

5. In the past (not including this class) how many theology or religious studies courses have you take here at Loyola University of Chicago?
 - A. 0
 - B. 1
 - C. 2
 - D. 3
 - E. 4 or more

6. How often do you attend religious services, gatherings, or meetings?
 - A Rarely or Never
 - B. Once a Year
 - C. A few Times a Year
 - D. A few times a Month
 - E. Once a Week
 - F. More than once a week

7. How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation, or scripture reading?

- A. Rarely or Never
- B. Once a Year
- C. A few Times a Year
- D. A few times a Month
- E. Once a Week
- F. More than once a week

8. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my approach to life.

- A. Definitely not true
- B. Not So Much
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat True
- E. Definitely True

9. I try hard to carry over my religion over into all aspects of my life.

- A. Definitely not true
- B. Not So Much
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat True
- E. Definitely True

Imagine that you lived in a place where most people disrespect members of a small religious group. How likely would you be to take the following actions? For each action, mark a letter from A to D.

10. Defend the small religious group when talking to friends.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

11. Sign a petition supporting the small religious group.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

12. Post on a social networking website defending the small religious group.

- A. definitely would not B. probably would not C. probably would D. definitely would

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

13. It is important that students at Loyola University Chicago learn more about their own religious tradition

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

14. It is important that students at Loyola University Chicago learn more about traditions other than their own.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

15. I often engage in interesting discussion around religious diversity issues.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

16. I feel I have a basic understanding of a number of the world's religions

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

17. A primary purpose of university-level classes in theology or religious studies is to encourage or nourish religious faith or practice in its students

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

18. A primary purpose of university-level classes in theology or religious studies is to challenge and critically evaluate religion

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

19. Socially speaking, religion has been a force for good in world history.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

20. Whether in social or academic situations, The Catholic identity of Loyola is very apparent to me as a student.

- A. Strongly Disagree
- B. Somewhat Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Somewhat Agree
- E. Strongly Agree

21. What does it mean to be at a “Jesuit” university for you?

22. It is important for a Jesuit school to offer courses in religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Judaism because

END OF SURVEY
Thank you for your participation.