

Activity: Religion, Spirituality, and the Classroom at Baylor

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NSE Goal Focus: Faith Formation

Activity Goal: To allow students to reflect on their sense of spirituality and their religious growth both inside and outside the classroom through a guided group conversation.

Activity Objectives: Students who complete this lesson plan will

1. Be able to reflect carefully on their religious experience so far at Baylor, including but not limited to their classwork. What are they learning, and how are they learning it?
2. Connect their curricular experiences inside the classroom to their faith formation outside of it, considering whether and how these classroom experiences are affecting their spiritual lives both individually and in community with others.

Activity:

For some students, the things they are learning as an undergraduate are not only challenging academically. They are also challenging personally. In other words, classwork can sometimes be disorienting, and this unit tries to provide some space for students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it, especially as it relates to their spiritual lives. In this lesson plan, it is important that instructors both support the work that is happening in the core curriculum and beyond at Baylor *and* allow for honest reflection on the students' part. *This lesson plan is intended to be conducted in class.* You may wish to have large paper and markers for students to record their responses.

First, ask your students which of their classes have been most challenging so far. How have they been difficult? Workload? Has the material challenged them to think differently, and has this experience been difficult? How has what they have learned affected them spiritually? Is this a sign of healthy challenge, or does it seem like something else?

Next, start discussions in these groups by asking them *what has been one thing that has challenged you in or about your courses so far this semester?* Allow five minutes for responses and then five minutes for sharing.

Next, ask both groups *what has surprised them about their courses at Baylor? How have they handled those surprises that have been challenging?* Allow five minutes for discussion (checking in with both groups) and then another five minutes for sharing with the larger group.

Next, ask both groups *what has been one thing that you have learned that has helped you to grow spiritually?* Even if groups need some time to get this done, encourage them to think together about how knowing more through their coursework can help them live differently. Again, allow five minutes for discussion and five for sharing.

Next, ask both groups to reflect on the idea from Matthew 22:37 that the person who loves God should do so with “with their mind.” What does it mean to love God with one’s mind? Allow five minutes for reflection and five for sharing.

Finally, ask students to think constructively about how their courses at Baylor should help them to grow spiritually. Ask each group to name at least three ideas.

Cautions: Some students may reflexively criticize or defend their professors for one reason or another. Take care to allow honest room for reflection while keeping professors anonymous as much as possible. The goal here is not to criticize any particular class or teacher, but to help students connect their newfound knowledge to their spiritual lives.