

## TH16208 "Webs of Identity Assignment" (Spring 2014)

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**(They're hybrids and so are you!)**

### **BACKGROUND**

At the beginning of the fall semester,\* I began the course by asking you to share some "data" about yourself on a index card. We looked at global religious demographics and have talked about how things like gender, age, political outlook, generation, global location, etc... affect religious identity. You were asked to write about how you related to one character or situation in Genesis. We looked at key components of Jewish and Christian identities through our study of history and texts.

Throughout your reading responses and other assignments, I've encouraged you to reflect on how the important questions of the course relate to your own understanding of the world and your own identity. This assignment is a sort of capstone opportunity to think back over how your perspective on religion and your own personal identity might have changed over this year. Jeannine Hill Fletcher's<sup>1</sup> essay on religious identity in a pluralist world is a helpful springboard for our discussion.

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\* If you were in a different section of RQ in the fall, you can draw on things that your professor used in that course or stick to materials from this semester. You are not at a disadvantage, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

<sup>1</sup> Her faculty profile:

[http://www.fordham.edu/academics/programs\\_at\\_fordham/theology/faculty/jeannine\\_hill\\_fletch\\_26139.asp](http://www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham/theology/faculty/jeannine_hill_fletch_26139.asp)

In her essay, “We are all Hybrids,”<sup>2</sup> Hill Fletcher introduces the idea of identities as hybrid and the formation of identity as a dynamic process. She argues that our identities are “constructed out of the intersection of multiple fundamentally defining features—religion, race, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, profession, sexual orientation, and so forth.”<sup>3</sup>

For your final, I want you to reflect on your own process of identity formation and the defining features that influence that process.

Specifically related to the topic of this course, Hill Fletcher asserts that, “Our religious identities are not *sui generis*<sup>4</sup> and unaffected by other dimensions of who we are; rather, our very understanding of the religious dimension of our identity is informed by the diverse features of our location and experience.”<sup>5</sup>

As you analyze your own life and identity, give special attention to how the “religious/spiritual” dimension is at play for you—as the lens through which you analyze the other features of identity, as an aspect in conversation with other important ones, as an aspect of your identity that is in flux or has undergone significant change, as a feature that only minimally informs your identity or that is conspicuously absent—or some combination of these. Please comment on how you see the religious/spiritual dimension interacting, informing and being informed by other dimensions of your identity.

Hill Fletcher uses the language of “multiple and mutually informing aspects of identity,” “webs of identity” and describes identities as “hybrid.”<sup>6</sup>

**Drawing on this language, you will prepare and present a narrative that tells the story of who you are at this moment.** I encourage you to adopt her language where helpful.

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<sup>2</sup> Jeannine Hill Fletcher, “We are all Hybrids,” *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), 82-101.

<sup>3</sup> “Hybrids,” 88.

<sup>4</sup> Definition: Unique, peculiar

<sup>5</sup> “Hybrids,” 88.

<sup>6</sup> “Hybrids,” 88-89.

## THE LOGISTICS

### Preparing for your presentation:

- I. Read Jeannine Hill Fletcher's essay (on Drive)
- II. Reflect on your own experience and begin to articulate the defining features of your identity. Think about the communities (i.e family, friends, teammates, classmates, people from co-curricular activities, your race, your ethnic group, etc...) and experiences (i.e. something you recall from growing up, your transition to BC, study aboard, service, etc..) that have shaped who you are.
- III. Meet with your group to discuss the article and to have an initial conversation about how you might tell your story.
- IV. Review other course materials that might help you articulate your narrative
- V. Pair up with someone in your group to meet with again (at least once, but multiple times may yield more refined narratives) to share your narratives, and through conversation, help each other continue to craft and refine your final presentation.

What might this look like: You could take turns telling different bits of your story. Ask each other questions like: Why was that an important moment for you? What did you think about that then? What do you think about that now? How has your perspective changed? What do you mean when you say X? Do you think your perspective on Y influences how you view Z? and other engaged questions that push the conversation deeper.

### VI. Design and prepare your presentation

The format is open for creative interpretation. You can prepare a talk, create a slideshow or movie, or construct a timeline. You can use digital media or use a presentation board or poster. You are encouraged to incorporate pictures and objects. Interpretive dance is also welcome.\*\*

On May 7 or 8, your whole group will meet with Professor Maxey to share the final results as an oral group exam.

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\*\* Okay, that part is a joke.

### **Presentation Format:**

Each group has four members.

The group oral exams will last 90 minutes.

Each member will present their individual reflection (15 mins)

Reflections should include the following elements:

1. Reflection on the religious aspect of your identity and its development in conversation with other aspects of your identity
2. One example of when you've learned something that challenged or transformed some aspect of your identity, caused you to view something about the world differently, or shifted your perspective about something.
3. At least one resource, in addition to Hill Fletcher's essay, **from this course** (first or second semester) that helped/helps you think about your identity.

After all of the presentations, the professor will ask follow up question and we'll have a discussion about the process of working within your group to construct and refine your individual narratives. (30 mins)

### **Grading**

You will be evaluated on:

- A. Whether or not you address each of the components listed above.
- B. On the organization and creativity of the presentation.

In terms of your self-reflection, I am asking you to incorporate aspects of your personal identity and experience, while recognizing the difference between what is personal and what is private. I'd like you to challenge yourself to reflect critically on your identity and development, but you are not required to share any details that go beyond what you are comfortable. Making insightful connections between your experience and the texts and discussions from this course is the goal of the assignment.

Please ask any questions you might have! I'm happy to clarify any aspect of the exam.