Training on Religions and Development Research Course

Instructors' Manual

Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities

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How to use this manual

This manual has been developed to help instructors prepare to deliver the Training on Religions and Development Research course, created by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities. The manual is for instructors, not students of the course. Instructors are advised to read this manual alongside the course materials, and refer back to this manual while leading the course as needed. The manual explains the background to the Training on Religions and Development Research course, the pedagogical approach (i.e., how to lead this course), the course outline, and then how to adapt this course to different lengths (e.g., 2 day seminar, 10 week semester).

There are also three short videos which can be used in addition to the manual. You can find the link for these here:

Video 1: Introduction & background (7 minutes)

🔗   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYQzQ8fiMBg

Video 2: Pedagogical approach (23 minutes)

🔗   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9UxjAjlbac

Video 3: Course outline (26 minutes)

🔗   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzQi5ODBGc8

Background to the course

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) is an international network of researchers and practitioners interested in the roles of religions in humanitarian and development work. Over the years, the JLI has developed expertise in the research (known as the "evidence base") on why and how religious actors are involved in humanitarian and development efforts. In 2022, JLI published its first flagship report on the evidence base called "The State of the Evidence in Religions and Development." This report provides an introduction to the research field of religions and development and then dives deeper into several key topics in each chapter (religions and health, environment, ending violence against children, gender, refugees and forced migration, and peace and conflict). The JLI was then supported by Trinity Church Wall Street to bring the information in this report to a wider audience around the world through seminar series with Anglican partners (and their partners) in the Philippines, Malawi, and Zambia which were implemented in 2022. This manual and the accompanying course now represents the next stage in this work, i.e., to create a course for future Anglican leaders to learn more about religions and development research. This course was developed for/with Anglican leaders in Kenya, Malawi, Sri Lanka, South Africa and the Philippines, but covers a range of different religious traditions in the readings and can be used by people of all faiths or none, with adaptations where required.

Why a "Training on Religions and Development Research" course?

Many religious actors, including most Anglican Dioceses and Provinces, implement programs related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet these religious actors need to build their understanding of how to use research evidence to increase their influence in the international humanitarian and development sectors, how religious engagements are understood in those sectors, the research evidence about the value of religious engagement, and basic research training to understand how to create and use evidence for programming and policy/advocacy. For religious actors, being able to speak up, with an evidence-based approach, in donor settings and policy and practice spaces will significantly contribute to more equal partnerships and improved social ministry.

How was the course developed?

The course was developed in a collaborative, participatory process by the JLI team with an advisory group from five Anglican institutions around the world. The five institutions were Leonard Kamungu Theological College in Malawi, St Paul's University in Kenya, St Andrew's Theological Seminary in the Philippines, College of Transfiguration in South Africa, and the Cathedral Institute of Education and Formation in Sri Lanka. The institutions were consulted to understand their interests in terms of content, format, and activities in the courses. They reviewed course materials and gave feedback. They are also the first testers and adopters of the course, delivering the course materials as part of a pilot in 2024.

Target group for the course:
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Clergy and lay people
- Full-time and part-time students
- Students with a background in theology, religious studies, development, social justice, or adjacent disciplines

Learning outcomes for the course:
- Gain knowledge about the roles of religions in social action, with an introduction to the topic of "religions and development," including its main concepts (faith actors, development, etc.) and key trends, and then analysis of religions around a range of development topics, including climate and environment, gender, health, decolonisation, and peacebuilding.
- Build research literacy by learning about the core research skills for ethically designing, conducting, analysing, and disseminating research, with the aim that students will be able to better understand research and incorporate evidence-based approaches into their work.
- Apply their knowledge through practical activities that encourage them to analyse and research their own roles, often as faith actors themselves, in development work and speak about the impact of their work to other development professionals and organisations.

Pedagogical approach

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) is an international network of researchers and practitioners interested in the roles of religions in humanitarian and development work. Over the years, the JLI has developed expertise in the research (known as the "evidence base") on why and how religious actors are involved in humanitarian and development efforts. In 2022, JLI published its first flagship report on the evidence base called "The State of the Evidence in Religions and Development." This report provides an introduction to the research field of religions and development and then dives deeper into several key topics in each chapter (religions and health, environment, ending violence against children, gender, refugees and forced migration, and peace and conflict). The JLI was then supported by Trinity Church Wall Street to bring the information in this report to a wider audience around the world through seminar series with Anglican partners (and their partners) in the Philippines, Malawi, and Zambia which were implemented in 2022. This manual and the accompanying course now represents the next stage in this work, i.e., to create a course for future Anglican leaders to learn more about religions and development research. This course was developed for/with Anglican leaders in Kenya, Malawi, Sri Lanka, South Africa and the Philippines, but covers a range of different religious traditions in the readings and can be used by people of all faiths or none, with adaptations where required.

Underlying pedagogical principles

The course is based on the pedagogical principles of participation, ownership, solidarity, creativity, and flexibility. Participation prioritises the input and involvement of every student in the classroom. Ownership helps students feel they understand and are actively engaged in the learning process. Solidarity underlines the role of education in bringing about social justice in society and encourages students and instructors to work together with respect and a commitment to deeply listen to each other in the classroom. Creativity highlights that people learn differently and that creative expression and openness to creativity in the classroom can help students learn in fruitful ways. Flexibility helps instructors respond to students' different learning styles and adapt to their context to facilitate learning.

No "experts" required

To teach this course, we do not expect instructors or students to have prior knowledge or experience in these topics. Instead, we take a pedagogical approach that prioritises participatory learning, which means the group will help and support each other to learn together. Our pedagogical approach actively challenges notions of the instructor being "the expert," whereas students are passive learners. The learning spaces we create aim to give all present (instructors and participants) the opportunity to bring in their specific expertise and experience. This requires humility on the instructor's part, who should stress this approach to the students and encourage them to find expertise within themselves. This is not an "anything goes" approach that denies different levels of training or experience, e.g., if the instructor has a PhD and years of research experience, acknowledging the students' expertise in the classroom does not mean to imply that they have the same amount of research skills. Instead, our approach encourages students to value existing skills they may have, such as an analytical mindset, contextual knowledge, and so on. Authenticity on the side of the instructor plays an important role in this. Instructors should be open about their own strengths and areas in which they do not have any existing expertise/experience to encourage students to also be open about any gaps in understanding during their own learning journey.

Instructors as facilitators of learning

This participatory learning is supported by the session outlines for each module, which includes the reading materials needed to develop an initial familiarity with academic and policy/practice-focused discussions in the subject area. Instructors are expected to facilitate the students' learning, helping them work through the reading and then make sense of what is included in the texts through a series of exercises. This approach focuses on student-led learning, with the students identifying their own learning from the reading materials provided rather than being taught what to learn from a lecture (which is a more top-down approach).

Give space for exploration and self-expression

The instructor should familiarise themselves with the reading material beforehand so that they can form their own ideas and understanding about the material. Beyond that, however, they do not need to research the topic or become an expert. Instead, instructors should prepare themselves to help facilitate their students' exploration of the material. This approach requires instructors to listen carefully to what students have to say, give considerable space and time for students to express themselves, and help students (who may not be familiar with such a pedagogical approach and are reluctant to talk) to open up and voice their opinions. Many students are used to more top-down teaching and learning approaches and expect to hear "the right answer" from the instructor. Instructors should challenge these expectations by instead asking students what their opinion is, if students have relevant knowledge they could apply, if anyone else in the classroom can help, or where students could find out more about a question they do not have an answer for. Try to ask open questions (Why? How? What if?) that give students an opening to expand on their answers.

Pre-readings before class

As reading before class is required, students must commit to this work and understand that their reading and interpretation of the reading are central to their learning. When students have not done the required reading, it is possible to inquire who has done the readings and ask these students to give a summary to fellow students. If students still need to do the readings, it is possible to provide some class time for quiet reading so that the instructor can ensure everyone has covered the primary material. This is not preferred; students can and should be reminded of their commitment to each other to prepare beforehand. Another option could be to add an additional half day to the course for students to read together in community, assigning time for the group to do their reading together (either aloud or individually but in the same space). We also believe in open access and the accessibility of knowledge for all. As such, we have only chosen readings for the courses that are accessible to all and not behind paywalls. The course comes with electronic versions of the longer readings, and we also provide links to blog posts and more easily readable materials.

Different learner types

The teaching material is designed to acknowledge different types of learners. Some will flourish with a visual representation of what they need to learn, some will prefer to listen, some learn by doing, while others will prefer to read and write. We have designed the courses to provide different learning opportunities for all these styles of learning. Contextual factors are paramount – the same methods of teaching may not be suitable for a group of high-level leaders, such as a bishop, as opposed to young people from a village (although sometimes one might be surprised by the similarities of learners across different groups). Instructors are advised to familiarise themselves with the material and the background of the specific group in advance of the teaching and adapt the proposed activities as relevant. As can be seen in the following sections, the course is designed to be adaptable, and we welcome adaptation as part of the creativity and flexibility that are core to this pedagogical approach.

Instructor requirements

Overall, we recommend instructors have significant teaching/facilitation experience, with a focus on participatory, interactive, student-led approaches. Instructors are to be accessible, flexible, and open to self-reflection. For module 1, this is more important than extensive subject matter expertise in each of the topics covered. For modules 2 and 3, it is important that the instructor has significant experience in designing and implementing research. If the pedagogical approach of this course is new to you as an instructor, it may help to read some more about "participatory pedagogy" and "participatory learning." We provide some reading below to explain the history of these ideas, and there is also more and more material available online about these approaches. If needed, it could also be possible to organise a workshop for your instructors to discuss how they will practice this pedagogical approach in their facilitation of these courses or seek further training on participatory learning.

📖 Recommended readings

- This is a page from the University of Edinburgh on active and participatory teaching methods. It provides some tips and further reading: [Active teaching methods](#)
- This is a guide from the Ugandan Ministry of Education, supported by Save the Children, on
- "Effective Participatory Teaching and Learning": [Effective participatory teaching and learning](#)
- This guide from the Malawi Ministry of Education, funded by USAID, follows a series of activities to help instructors learn more about participatory teaching and learning: [Participatory teaching and learning](#)
- This is a guide from Herriott Watt University on Active Learning and provides many examples of the types of activities that can be undertaken to increase student-led learning: [Embedding acting learning into your teaching practice](#)
- Paolo Freire was at the forefront of much of the thinking behind the pedagogical approach described above. His most well-known work is "[Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)" (1968), and he is the author of many publications about education. These are some blog posts that explain Freire's legacy and thinking:
  - [Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed at fifty](#)
  - [How a theory born in the 1930s could transform African education systems](#)
- bell hooks often wrote about love, including about education. She is known for many books, including "[Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom](#)" (1994) and "[Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope](#)" (2003). These are some blog posts about bell hooks' approach to teaching and learning:
  - [Who is bell hooks and why should a teacher read her work?](#)
  - [A tribute to bell hooks: For a revolution in education](#)

Pre-course prep checklist

○ Have the course format and topics for module 1 been identified?

○ Have suitable instructors been identified?

○ Have possible training needs of the instructors been confirmed, and has the training, if required, been organised?

○ Have the manual and the session outlines been shared with the instructor so that they can adequately prepare?

○ Have reading lists been checked for any necessary adaptations (e.g., dead links, adding contextualised readings, etc.)?

○ Have session outlines been checked for any necessary adaptations (e.g., are all exercises suitable for this group of learners? Should any exercise be replaced by others? The teaching material was written with ease of adaptation in mind.)

○ Have suitable rooms been booked? (All rooms should have chairs and tables for all students, which can be moved around the room if necessary. It is preferable for chairs and tables to be arranged in U form rather than rows so that students can see each other and the instructor.)

○ Has all the required material been prepared? (Manila/flip chart papers, markers, pens, sticking tape, small papers, post-its, and scissors should be available for all sessions).

○ If online/hybrid courses are offered (see below for more information on adapting the course for online/hybrid teaching), is a reliable internet connection and all other necessary equipment available?

○ Has the course's specific pedagogical approach been mentioned in communications with students to manage expectations?

Course outline

This section describes the overview of the course, including how each session is structured and how you can adapt the block of sessions to create longer and shorter courses overall.

The full course has 16 sessions in total, grouped into three modules. Each session is made up of three parts. The session list is as follows:

Module 1 - Topics in Religions and Development	Module 2 - Doing Research	Module 3 - Practical Application
Session 1: Introduction to Religions and Development	Session 1: Introduction to Research	Session 1: Planning Projects I
Session 2: Climate Change and Religions	Session 2: Research Design	Session 2: Planning Projects II
Session 3: Religions, Health and Development	Session 3: Data Collection	Session 3: Discussing Ongoing Research I
Session 4: Gender, Development, and Religions	Session 4: Data Management and Analysis	Session 4: Discussing Ongoing Research II
Session 5: Peacebuilding, Development and Religions	Session 5: Research Dissemination	Session 5: Reflection and Feedback
Session 6: Decolonisation, Development and Religions		

Session structure

- Each session consists of three parts. Each part is one hour long (three hours total).
    - First part (1 hour): engaging with the readings. In this first part, the sessions use different exercises to encourage the students to discuss what they learned from the readings.
    - Second part (1 hour): contextualising debates. In this part, students are encouraged to use their own experience and expertise to make the debates from the readings relevant to their contexts.
    - Third part (1 hour): creative task. In this third part, students bring what they have learned from the previous two parts together to engage in a creative exercise that demonstrates what they have learned.

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    3. Third part (1 hour): creative task. In this third part, students bring what they have learned from the previous two parts together to engage in a creative exercise that demonstrates what they have learned.
- Short breaks are integrated into each session.
- If you need to reduce the length of a session, you can choose to teach only the first two parts and exclude the third part.
- You can choose to teach the entire session in one go (3 hours) or split it across 2/3 days (1 or 2 hours per day).
- Sessions will include a range of different activities, including lectures, individual reflection, small group discussions, video screenings, analysis of online material, role play, big group discussions, debates, drawings, class presentations etc.
- Homework reading is required from students for each session. This includes one essential reading and a list of optional readings at both advanced and easy levels. All readings are open access and available to all online.

Adapting the course

Out of the 16 sessions, instructors could use many configurations. Below, we demonstrate some of the options available and try to answer any questions that may arise. You will observe that there are two sessions common to each of the different options: "Intro to Religions and Development" and "Intro to Research." These are considered the core sessions and should be included in any adaptation. For module 1, it is then possible to pick and choose the other topics you want to consider (e.g., gender or decolonisation). For module 2, sessions build on each other from one to the next to some extent, so it may be preferable to start with research design and then move to data collection, data analysis, and research dissemination. Unless the students already have good research skills, it would not be the best choice to do the "data analysis" session in isolation, for example. However, to some extent, this depends on the specific cohort of students and their respective experiences and interests.

We underline that each session on a topic is introductory. These are all topics that are expansive – indeed, some people spend their entire careers looking at just one of these topics. They are meant to offer an overview of the topic and an invitation to explore the topics in more depth. If you would like to explore the topics in more depth, you can also add extra parts to each of the sessions for more individual reflection and group discussion. Other options could include more open discussions with students or inviting an external speaker to introduce their perspective on one of these topics to the students.

Timings are suggestions based on experience, but if you have flexibility then you can run longer sessions to allow for more discussion. Or if you need to cut things shorter, each session plan should cover the first part (discussion of reading) and aim to include the second part, contextualising debates. However, creative exercises could be cut if needed.

The reading lists include our recommended readings, but we also welcome additional readings that you would like to add as optional, especially if you know of readings that are specific to your context and would like to expand on the topics covered. Check that the reading links are still working and available to students, and replace links if needed.

What would a 15-week ongoing course look like?

Each module = 5 weeks
Each session = 2-3 hours

Module 1 - Topics in Religions and Development	Module 2 - Doing Research	Module 3 - Practical Application
Session 1.1 (week 1): Intro to Religions and Development	Session 2.1 (week 6): Intro to Research	Session 3.1 (week 11): Planning Projects I
Session 1.2 (week 2): Topic 1	Session 2.2 (week 7): Research design	Session 3.2 (week 12): Planning Projects II
Session 1.3 (week 3): Topic 2	Session 2.3 (week 8): Data collection	Session 3.3 (week 13): Discuss Ongoing Research. I
Session 1.4 (week 4): Topic 3	Session 2.4 (week 9): Data Management and Analysis	Session 3.4 (week 14): Discuss Ongoing Research II
Session 1.5 (week 5): Topic 4	Session 2.5 (week 10): Research Dissemination/ Application	Session 3.5 (week 15): Reflection and Feedback

Topics can be chosen from the following:
- Climate change and religion
- Health and religion
- Mental health and religion
- Gender, development, and religion
- Peacebuilding, development, and religion
- Decolonisation, development, and religion

What would a 10-week ongoing course look like?

Each module = 5 weeks   Each session = 2-3 hours

Module 1 - Topics in Religions and Development	Module 2 - Doing Research
Session 1.1 (week 1): Intro to Religions and Development	Session 2.1 (week 6): Intro to Research
Session 1.2 (week 2): Topic 1	Session 2.2 (week 7): Research Design
Session 1.3 (week 3): Topic 2	Session 2.3 (week 8): Data Collection
Session 1.4 (week 4): Topic 3	Session 2.4 (week 9): Data Management and Analysis
Session 1.5 (week 5): Topic 4	Session 2.5 (week 10): Research Dissemination/Application

What would a 3-day block/residential course look like?

Each session = 3 hours

Module/Day 1: Topics in religions and development	Module 2.1/Day 2: Doing research (part 1)	Module 2.2/Day 3: Doing research (part 2)
AM Session 1.1: Intro to Religions and Development	**AM Session 2.1**: Intro to Research	AM Session 2.3: Data Collection
Lunch	**Lunch**	**Lunch**
PM Session 1.2: Focus on one topic for the entire group or allocate 3-4 topics to small groups of students	**PM Session 2.2:** Research Design	PM Session 2.4: Data Management and Analysis

What would a 2-day block/residential course look like?

Each session = 3 hours

Module/Day 1: Topics in religions and development	Module/Day 2: Doing research (part 1)
AM Session 1.1: Intro to Religions and Development	AM Session 2.1: Intro to Research
Lunch	Lunch
PM Session 1.2: Focus on one topic for the entire group or allocate 3-4 topics to small groups of students	PM Session 2.2: Research Design

Online courses

It is possible to conduct this course either entirely online or in a hybrid manner, with some in-person and some online. Online teaching and learning require some adaptation and particular skills from the instructor. Challenges to online teaching and learning include maintaining the interest and engagement of students, the need for more breaks since it can be more tiring to engage with the screen for a long amount of time, lack of relationship building and interaction among the class, and activities needing considerable changes and taking longer in the online setting. While online courses have the advantage of being able to attract students who would not be able to attend in person, they equally have the disadvantage of being unavailable to students who do not have a regular or reliable internet connection. If their internet connection is unreliable, students may not be able to keep their videos on during the call, making participatory learning more difficult.

In the case of moving the course online, it is preferable for the instructors to have prior experience with online training and teaching. Instructors will need to review the materials and make adjustments to make them appropriate for online settings (N.B., the session guides have currently been written for in-person settings).

Necessary adjustments will often include lengthening the time needed for individual exercises while also spreading the entirety of the sessions and modules over several days so that students do not lose interest and engagement with long periods of screen time. To combat problems with internet reliability, one option is to provide small "data bursaries" so that students can join from internet cafes or buy additional data as needed to secure their participation.

t is also possible to conduct the course in a hybrid manner, with some students being in the classroom and others joining online. It should be noted, though, that the implementation of hybrid courses required additional preparation and adaptation, as the instructor would need to cater to both face-to-face and online learners to make sure both groups are included. In particular, instructors should ensure that online learners do not feel left out when students in the classroom engage in creative or small-group work. It is recommended that instructors leading hybrid courses have prior experience in hybrid teaching.

Acknowledgments