

Education and Security: The Challenge of Religious Diversity

An Intensive Training Course to be held at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 15-20 June 2015.

Executive Summary

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation and McGill University welcome applications from security, policy, diplomatic, education and development professionals and researchers for an Intensive Training Course (ITC) exploring policy options for countering religious extremism through effective education that promotes open-mindedness, understanding and dialogue within often complex faith-based and secular contexts.

The course consists of a series of workshops that will be collegial, constructive and highly interactive, with the goal of sharing expertise and resources, forging networks, generating policy initiatives and furthering research. At each stage of the seminar participants will be invited to apply the thematic discussions to the institutional, political, religious, cultural and educational parameters of their own regional contexts and to analyse the possible policy implications.

Over recent years conflict in the name of religion and conflicts between and within religious groups have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and displaced millions of people across the world. Prejudice that can lead to extremism and violence begins with misunderstanding and ignorance. A lack of education that counters misunderstanding, or education that perpetuates a close-minded worldview, will therefore perpetuate prejudice and its consequences.

The Faith Foundation provides the practical support required to help counter religious prejudice, conflict and extremism in order to promote open-minded and stable societies. Since its founding in 2008, the Faith Foundation has developed education projects based on a unique pedagogy of dialogue that counter the prejudices based in misunderstanding and ignorance about religion and religious 'Others', building resilience to extremism. The experience and expertise that was developed through this has led to the Faith Foundation working with the UN and international counter-extremism organisations in developing strategies for countering violent religious extremism through education initiatives. McGill University has been a core partner of the Foundation since 2009 helping to develop the intellectual grounding of its work. Its international reach and diverse and interdisciplinary approach to engaging with the Foundation's themes provides a rich, inquisitive academic environment for the discussion of these themes.

The course costs CAD2700 (approximately £1500) covering tuition, accommodation (breakfast and lunch inclusive) and field trips. A limited amount of funding is available for scholarships and travel bursaries for participants from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Context

Over recent years conflict in the name of religion and conflicts between and within religious groups have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and displaced millions of people across the world. Prejudice that can lead to extremism and violence begins with misunderstanding and ignorance. A lack of education that counters misunderstanding, or education that perpetuates a close-minded worldview, will therefore perpetuate prejudice and its consequences.

In a speech in November 2013 to the UN Security Council, former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, defined inter-religious and inter-cultural education as a security issue in the 21st century. Education about, and exposure to, religious diversity that promotes an open-minded worldview is an indispensable means of countering oppression or violence related to religion. This does not just have the potential to uproot extremism, but can also uproot the thinking and ideology that fosters it.

Moreover, creating generational change through education that can uproot this thinking is essential to undermining the extremists' ability to recruit and thereby continue cycles of violence, ensuring that money spent today on security and 'hard' counter-extremism measures is not wasted.

The development of sustainable educational capacity for religious mutual understanding and dialogue is beginning to be recognised as a key foreign policy objective for effective long-term prevention of forms of oppression and violence perpetuated by or against religious actors and communities. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 and President Obama's speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 demonstrate this.

However, advancing constructive approaches to religious literacy is fraught with difficulties. Conflicts around religion and education have become sites of deadly violence in many regional contexts. Conflicts over the relationship between state controlled religious instruction and faith-based educational institutions are also sites of real tension and unresolved debate in many Western liberal democracies. Recognising the significance of education as a security issue, and how education can improve long-term security policy, has never been more necessary.

The Course

This weeklong Intensive Training Course will investigate the critical role of education in a world of great religious, and non-religious, diversity. The course, led by international experts on religion, education and security, consists of a series of workshops for security, policy, diplomatic, education and development professionals and researchers. These explore the challenges of delivering effective educational approaches that promote mutual understanding and dialogue within complex faith-based and secular contexts in order to counter religious extremism. These workshops will be collegial, constructive and highly interactive, with the goal of sharing expertise and resources, forging networks, generating policy initiatives, and furthering research. At each stage of the seminar participants will be invited to apply the thematic discussions to the institutional, political, cultural and educational parameters of their own regional contexts and to analyse the possible policy implications.

Participants will:

- Explore the importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious education in security agendas.
- Develop an understanding of educational frameworks and approaches for understanding religion and examine religious and secular patterns of educational exclusion.
- Map existing conflicts and debates over religion and education around the world, investigating case studies of particular situations worldwide and reviewing best practice in informational and formational education.
- Consider core objectives and capacities that security policy would need to address with regard to education, reflecting on the educational conditions and contexts required to implement effective educational approaches to counter extremism.
- Throughout, apply their learning to their own national and regional contexts and security concerns.

The course is a twin-track course for professionals and students, and the professional track will run in parallel with the student track though the majority of sessions will be separate.

The course will be held under the Chatham House Rule. This internationally recognised stipulation helps to create a safe space where participants can speak openly and freely engage with and discuss the best policy options for their countries. The rule states that,

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Participants must not directly quote, name or link material to the course in any report, social media or conversation. A report of the course will be circulated by the Faith Foundation that will abide by this rule.

Course Outline

Each day will consider a particular theme in order to build and develop knowledge constructively across the week. Participants will develop context specific policy proposals throughout the week to practically apply the knowledge they are developing.

There will be various social events with other participants and the course instructors, including an opportunity to network with Canadian officials during a public event in Ottawa.

By building from the emphasis placed on education by the UDHR and CDHRI, the course examines the prevalence and impact of exclusionary and inclusionary educational approaches, both religious and secular, which marginalise or prohibit or encourage meaningful engagement with religious diversity. From this understanding it then explores contemporary scholarship and practical examples of approaches to, and best practice in, educational models engaging religious understanding and pluralism.

Day 1 – Religion, Education and Security Concerns

The course begins by reviewing key security concerns that are related to education and religion. It will consider aspects of religion in violent extremism and look at processes of radicalisation and the role that education can play in these. It will ensure that participants are aware of key ambiguities and nuances in these areas and be able to conceptualise the role of religion and education in these security concerns.

Day 2 – Religion, Education and Conflict

Participants will consider why education is important to security policy and the problems that can arise from problematising education as a security concern. They will look at the frameworks and approaches that challenge us to look at education as a security solution. They will study exclusivist and inclusivist forms of education in both religious and secular environments that can lead to, or alternatively counter, conflict situations, and will analyse examples of these from around the world.

Day 3 – Educational Responses to Security Concerns

Day three will begin our investigation of forms of education appropriate to responding to security concerns. After taking an in-depth look at key concepts and dynamics of counter-radicalisation participants will explore challenges of religious literacy and diversity in education and approaches for incorporating inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding.

Day 4 – Dialogue and Formational Education

Day four will take place in Ottawa and will continue our investigation of forms of education by thinking about the importance of encounter and dialogue in the development of children's attitudes and opinions. In the evening a public event will explore these themes with VIP guests.

Day 5 – Building Sustainable Policy

On day five, also in Ottawa, participants will examine capacity issues within governments, the education sector and the non-governmental sector for the implementation of education in security policy. They will examine case studies of best practice and interrogate their ideas in conversation with policy professionals from the Canadian government.

Day 6 – Building Contextual Policy

Day six will complete the course by assessing the local contexts of the participants and defining opportunities and strategies for developing educational capacity in these contexts, with direct reference to the policy proposals that participants have developed. In the afternoon the course will be concluded with an evaluation session before a closing reception and supper in the evening.

Teaching Team

International experts in the areas of religion, education and security will lead the course.

Professor Thorsten Knauth, University of Duisburg-Essen

Thorsten Knauth is Professor of Religious Education and Director of the Institute for Interreligious Learning at the University of Duisburg-Essen. He was Research Manager and Co-Project Leader of the REDCo Project – a large pan-European research programme on religion in education as a factor contributing to dialogue or to conflict. He is also Visiting Professor at the Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg.

Knauth's extensive publications in the area of religion, education and conflict recently include *Dialogue and Conflict on Religion, Islam in Education in European Countries* and *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society*, all published by Waxmann. He has also authored numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on a variety of topics and case studies under this theme.

Knauth is also a member of the Executive Board of the NGO *Siddhartha – Help for Nepal*.

Professor Peter Neumann, Kings College London

Peter Neumann is Professor of Security Studies at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, and serves as Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR, www.icsr.info), which he founded in early 2008. He has taught courses on terrorism, counterterrorism, intelligence, radicalisation and counter-radicalisation at King's College London, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, and Sciences Po (Lyon).

Neumann has authored or co-authored five books, including *Old and New Terrorism*, published by Polity Press in 2009, and *The Strategy of Terrorism* (with M.L.R. Smith), published by Routledge in 2008, and is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles and influential policy reports dealing with different aspects of terrorism and radicalisation. The most recent are “#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks” (ICSR, April 2014; with Joseph Carter and Shiraz Maher) and “Countering Online Radicalisation in America” (Bipartisan Policy Center, December 2012).

Neumann is a member of the editorial boards of three leading, peer-reviewed journals – *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, the *Journal of Strategic Studies* and *Democracy and Security* – and serves as investigator for the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland. He is an advisor to the Club de Madrid, the association of former Presidents and Prime Ministers, and has given evidence before committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the UK House of Commons.

Professor Ratna Ghosh CM OQ FRSC, McGill University

Ratna Ghosh is James McGill Professor and William C. Macdonald Professor of Education at McGill University. She has served as Director of Graduate Studies and Research for McGill's Faculty of Education, and Acting Director of McGill International. She served as Resident Director and then President of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and has been on the Board of Directors (as well as

the Education and International Committees) of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation. She was President (2011-2012) of the Comparative and International Education Society of the USA.

Ghosh's extensive publications recently include *Education and the Politics of Difference: Canadian Perspectives* (with A. Abdi), published by Canadian Press in 2013; *Redefining Multicultural Education*, published by Nelson Thomas Learning in 2002; and *Contemporary Issues in Diversity and Education* (with D. Lussier) for a special issue of *Canadian and International Education* in 2011. She has done research in Canada, Asia, Africa and Latin America, most recently looking at India and South Asia.

Ghosh was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada (CM) in 2000, Officer of the Order of Quebec (OQ) in 2005, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (FRSC) in 1999.

Professor Daniel Cere, McGill University, Co-Convener

Daniel Cere is professor of Religious Studies and a researcher on religion, law, and ethics. He serves as Director of the Institute for the Study of Marriage Law and Culture and Co-Director of the Newman Institute of Catholic Studies. Cere also specialises in Religious Freedom and Human Rights. Cere has been a consultant for government and religious institutions on issues of religious freedom, reasonable accommodation, and family law in both Canada and the United States.

Applications

The course is open to policymakers, educationalists and interested professionals.

Applications open 5 January 2015 and close 15 March 2015.

Candidates should complete the application form and return it with a copy of their CV to fgi@tonyblairfaithfoundation.org.

Successful candidates will be notified by 30 March 2015. Confirmation of attendance will be needed as per the payment schedule below. Please understand that dependent on the number of applications received, we may not have the time to respond to all applications. If you have not heard from us by this date, please assume that your application has not been successful.

Fees

The course fee is CAD \$2700. This covers all tuition, accommodation (breakfast and lunch inclusive) and field trips. It does not include flights, airport transfer or evening meals.

A limited number of scholarships and travel bursaries are available. Please see the Scholarship and Travel Bursary application form for details. Scholarship applications returned separately to the main application will not be considered.

Payment Schedule

To confirm your place, 50% of the fee will be due by 10th April 2015. The remainder will be due by 30th April 2015. This is fully refundable up to and including 15th May 2015, 50% refundable up to and including 30th May 2015, and non-refundable in the two weeks immediately prior to the course.

Visa

Successful applicants will require a **tourist** visa to enter Canada. Applicants will be responsible for obtaining their own visas. Applicants **should confirm whether they need a visa by checking:** <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp/>.

To apply for a tourist visa, please contact the Canadian Office of Citizenship and Immigration: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/tourist.asp>.

Please note that **if you are travelling via the United States of America you may need a transit visa:** http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_4383.html.

For more information

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