



SOCIAL ISSUES AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program September 2022



Seminar Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of world religions and multiple faiths
2. Strengthen respect, empathy, and understanding for individuals with a variety of different viewpoints, values, and social circumstances.
3. Develop an awareness of social issues that are important to the state of New Mexico.

The New Mexico Agricultural Leadership program is committed to developing knowledgeable, multicultural leaders within the food, agriculture, and natural resource industries of New Mexico.

A New Mexican Gurudwara by Dineh John

Did you know there are about 24 million Sikh worldwide and we have gurudwaras in New Mexico? A section of our Albuquerque Seminar 4- Social Issues and Cultural Awareness included visiting a Sikh Gurudwara. We were lucky enough to meet Satnam Kaur Bhullar, who started the Gurudwara 17 years ago. She was assisted by Dr. Ahiran Singh who is a historian by training.

For the Albuquerque community, they conduct regular Sunday morning programs to allow followers time to participate and have the Gurudwara open to the public. It is also used for ceremonies such as weddings and other social gatherings.

Dr. Singh gave us a great presentation on the history of Sikh. We learned that Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that originated in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent about 1469.

This region is considered the breadbasket of India and Pakistan where the majority of traditional farmers are located. The goal of Sikh faith is to achieve absolute love and obtain core values such as love, equality and service.

It is believed that followers were most likely Hindu before Guru Nanak founded Sikhism. Guru means one who brings light to darkness. He taught his followers that everyone had direct access to God unlike the Hindu Caste System which stated that only the Brahmin, the Priestly Class, could serve as religious teachers.

Originally, the Guruship was passed along through a succession to the eldest son, however Guru Nanak broke tradition by selecting his most devoted disciple, Bhai Lehna who became Guru Angah. This period of Guruship was seen as crucial since the Sikh community moved from a founder to a succession of Gurus. Their society was therefore strengthened.

In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh introduced a new

initiation rite, Khalsa, which meant Warrior Saints. This created the 5 K's of Khalsa which are Kesh- uncut hair, Kangha- wooden comb, Kara- iron/steel bracelet, Kirpan- sword/dagger and Kacchera- a pair of shorts. Khalsa was used to show who was part of the Sikh community. Guru Gobind Singh was the 10th and last Sikh Guru because he proclaimed the Hymn book as the Eternal Guru. It is treated as a person such as having its own bed and bringing food. Since the last succession was passed to the Hymn book is it considered paying respect and not worshipping it.



Juan Sanchez, Travis McKenzie, and Marshal Wilson

In 2021, there was the Farmers Protest in India against three farm acts that were passed by the Parliament of India. Majority of the protests were held in the Punjab where thousands of farmers, including the Sikh, marched toward the nation's capital. The farm acts were referred to as Farm Bills that left farmers at the mercy of corporations. To ensure that the corporations did not control the prices, farmers demanded a minimum support price. After months of protests, the Parliament of India passed the Farm Laws Repeal Bill.

The history presentation and tour provided was very interesting. I encourage everyone to learn about other cultures and religions such as Sikhism. We are thankful for the time Satnam Kaur Bhullar and Dr. Ahiran Singh took to meet with us to discuss the Sikh faith.

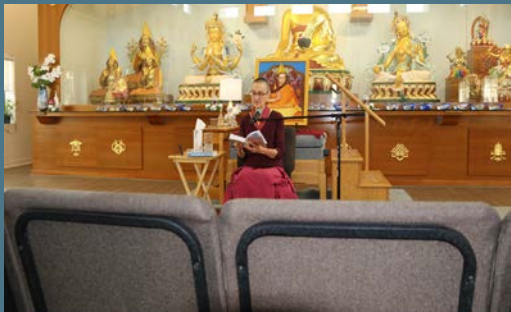


Class 15 Fellows with Satnam Kaur Bhullar and Dr. Ahiran Singh

Buddhist Faith by Juan Sanchez



The theme of Seminar 4 for Class 15 was “Social Issues & Cultural Awareness.” The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of different religions, cultures, and develop awareness of social issues. We had the opportunity to visit the Kadampa Meditation Center to learn about the Buddhist faith. Gen Kelsang Khyenwang, the resident teacher, educated the group on Buddhism and guided us on a meditation.



Buddhism was founded by Buddha Shakyamuni over two thousand years ago in India. Buddhism is one of the major world religions with over 400 million followers worldwide. In Buddhism, followers don't acknowledge a god. They focus on achieving inner peace and wisdom. They achieve enlightenment by meditation. Gen Khyenwang spoke of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche. He is the Founder of the New Kadampa Tradition or Modern Buddhism. He is responsible for bringing Buddhism West through a vision he encountered.

General Khyenwang

As stated before, the class participated in a meditation led by Gen Khyenwang. The practice was about 15-20 minutes. After the mediation, I felt relaxed and re-energized. She expressed that meditation can help overcome stress and anxiety. She also mentioned that mediation can be done anywhere. Meditation can be done in as little as 5 minutes or can last for hours.

After the seminar, I reflected on what we learned and how I can apply it to my daily life. I realized that normal life is often fast paced with too many irons in the fire. I must admit that I have never really meditated. Simply because I don't have time. However, after the exercise and experience, I realize that I can make that time. By doing so, it may help me develop mental clarity and can help create a peaceful and positive state of mind to better benefit my personal and professional life.



Veterans Have Support System with Veterans Integration Center

by Megan Schuller



Many of us know our veterans, maybe we are one ourselves, but do we know what resources are available to them? Class 15 had an amazing opportunity to visit with some of the staff members at the Veterans Integration Center or better known as VIC and see their facilities. This is a great resource for our veterans that need assistance with housing and reintegrating into the community. VIC is located in Albuquerque but has resources available throughout the state.

What does VIC do? As an innovative agency, their outreach efforts are focused on veterans and families that are at-risk. VIC has become the trusted resource within the state of New Mexico since being founded in 2005. Their mission statement is “To enable Veterans and their families to achieve stable housing, financial security, and a renewed sense of community.” VIC works closely with Veterans Affairs to help individuals through the process of navigating their needs. VIC has a very dedicated staff that are very passionate about their roles and relationships with the Veterans. Some are even Veterans themselves which makes a positive impact with the veterans they are serving.

As we looked at our agenda for this seminar, I took a step back and thought how does this apply to an Agricultural Leadership group. What a great experience it was. Visiting this facility opened my resources to what resources are out there for our veterans. As you come across someone you know or someone you just met, having this knowledge about resources is invaluable. You may not be able to directly help someone, but if you are able to guide them to the resources, it could make a major difference in someone’s life. Grateful for the opportunity to visit with the staff members of the Veterans Integration Center and know this is available to our Veterans.



SAVE THE DATE – NMSU’s #GivingTuesday is November 29, 2022. It’s a day where Aggies support other Aggies. For more info, visit giving.nmsu.edu/nm_ag_leadership_fund.html

#supportNMSU #NMSUgivingtuesday #nmsu



Joy Junction Tour by Marcy Ward



The premise of Class 15's 4th seminar focused on society and social awareness. Being exposed to the wide range of social and economic backgrounds of individuals should help leaders be more well-rounded when guiding teams. Poverty and homelessness is an issue that many experience, but few understand. As part of the seminar week, the group toured a privately-run facility called Joy Junction. Located in southern Albuquerque, this organization focuses on keeping family units together and safe off the streets.

The tour was led by Mr. Patrick Hankins, the primary volunteer coordinator for Joy Junction. He began by giving us the program's history. The non-profit was established in 1986, after its founder, Dr. Jeremy Reynolds found himself in a situation he never thought he would be in; homeless. From this experience he built Joy Junction from the ground up, with the goal to keep family units together after severe hardship.

Families and individuals must first go through a screening process, but once accepted into their long-term program, they are provided resources and tools they need to help them get back on their feet. The longest people can stay is nine months, but very few stay that long. Children can still go to school and are provided tutoring as needed. Residents are expected to work to help maintain the buildings, do laundry, or serve meals. This gives people a sense of structure and responsibility that they can use to help get reacclimated into the world. There are rules to abide by and if broken, people are asked to leave immediately.

The facility is clean with plenty of amenities for residents' thanks solely to private donations. At its capacity, Joy Junction can house up to 300 people and will distribute on average 16,000 meals each month. Meals are provided to residents and delivered to communities in need. Mr. Hankins' passion for his role was evident. It takes people like him to help keep the door open and Dr. Reynolds' legacy alive. The take home message is that everyone has their own story, their own reason for ending up homeless. The most poignant part of the tour for me was seeing an elderly woman sitting quietly alone eating a snack. What was her story? It's not for us to judge, but for us to understand and lend a hand.



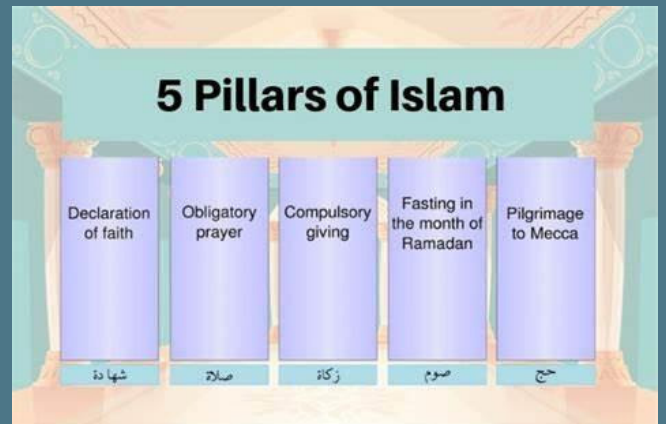
Mr. Hankins discussing the children's learning center

Islamic Faith by Roxanne Chepsongol



“Islam” means submission to the will of God. While in Albuquerque class 15 had the pleasure of speaking with Imam Mahmoud about the Islamic faith and architecture of the mosque.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world and dates back to the seventh century. Imam Mahmoud explained the history of the faith and their belief in an all-knowing God, who in Arabic is known as Allah. The five pillars define their faith, which are declarations of faith, praying five times a day, donating a certain portion of their wealth, fasting during Ramadan, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. Imam Mahmoud gave examples of how the Islam people in Albuquerque obey the directions of the five pillars.



Class 15 was educated about the Islamic calendar which is determined by the lunar calendar which indicates the days of Islamic holidays and celebrations, the most well-known holiday is Ramadan, which is a time of fasting and prayer.

While visiting the mosque the class observed the Muslim evening prayer called Asr which is often conducted in a mosque's large open room. There are requirements for prayer sessions which include the direction to face during prayer, praying five times a day, and men and women pray separately.

The meat that Muslim consume must be “Halal”. This was interesting to the class since Halal is a practice that wasn't well known by the group. Halal slaughter has specific requirements such as blessing by God, precise cutting and bleeding of the animal. The group discussed this practice and what it means to the agriculture meat production industry. The class wrapped up their visit at the mosque with a sweet treat and viewing the architecture of the building and minbar or pulpit which was charismatically made.

As I reflect on seminar 4 it's clear that many religions are similar with respect to being kind, giving to the poor, and focusing on becoming a better person. These practices are relevant to the Agricultural Leadership group since leadership starts with understanding your audience and treating individuals with respect.



Imam Mahmoud with Class 15

The Jewish Faith by Marshal Wilson



During the second week of September, the New Mexico Agriculture Leadership Program met in Albuquerque for our fourth seminar which focused on social issues and cultural awareness. This seminar gave our group an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of world religions and multiple faiths while strengthening respect, empathy, and understanding for individuals of different viewpoints, values, and social circumstances.

One of the stops our group made was to the Congregation B'nai Israel, a Conservative Jewish synagogue to gain a deeper understanding of the Jewish Faith and history. Rabbi Emeritus Arthur Flicker graciously welcomed us into the synagogue and gave us a short yet informative lesson on his faith. To begin with, the men of our group were asked to wear a kippah, a sort of head covering when entering the synagogue. This head covering is considered distinctly Jewish dress and symbolized humbleness before God. Next we observed a prayer book that was written in Hebrew and English. One interesting fact is that unlike English, Hebrew is read from right to left which Rabbi Flicker theorized is because early Hebrew writers used a chisel in stone tablets and it would be more natural to move from right to left.

Following this, the Rabbi showed us some of the articles that are used in the Jewish faith including the Torah, phylacteries, and a ram's horn. The most interesting to me was the Torah, which is the first five books of the Bible and is Judaism's most important text. It struck me that several of the religions we learned about follow the same teachings, principles, and in some cases the same texts, but they all have different and unique perspectives.

With this seminar, I was forced to challenge some of the preconceived notions I had regarding different religions. At the end of the day and despite all of the 'noise' that life throws at us, I believe that the societal and religious issues are exacerbated by focusing on the differences between us rather than taking advantage of the commonalities we share. With so much of our world revolving around the news cycle, I am grateful for this opportunity to learn more about the different religions and societal issues my peers are writing about, so that I can draw my own informed conclusions instead of relying on the viewpoint of others.



Rabbi Flicker showing Class 15 Fellows The Torah

A Word from College Drive by Tina Wilson



In September, we traveled to Albuquerque for a social issues and cultural focus seminar. Some of presenters were the same as we did for class 14, but I still managed to learn something new. Recently, while attending church on a Sunday, a verse from 2 Timothy Chapter 2 verse 6 was read to the congregation. This verse states “It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops.” I couldn’t help but draw a parallel between this bible verse and a repeated theme that I heard from several of the religious leaders that spoke to our fellows. A common thread in the various presentations was that if you have plenty for you and your family and your neighbor is in need, you should help your neighbor. All of the faiths we visited also emphasized that everyone is equal and it doesn't matter if rich or poor all are welcomed at the table. Inspired by a visit to Joy Junction, an emergency homeless family shelter in Albuquerque, class 15 decided to include a service project into the curriculum. This project will be two-fold. The first will be a drive for Joy Junction in which we will collect hygiene items (not mouth wash) and non-perishable food items. The other aspect of this drive will be to collect stuffed animals to given to police departments. Stuffed animals provide comfort to children in times of crisis. If you live in the Las Cruces area or will be visiting, feel free to drop off donations at my office, Gerald Thomas Hall Room 107, any time before November 16th.

This year, New Mexico State University will be participating in Giving Tuesday. This annual day of giving occurs on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving and is meant as day to give back to the community. Did you know that New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program receives very little funding from the state? Yes, it is true! Our program is funded mostly by tuition and investments from donors. Generous donations help NMAL accomplish its mission of developing knowledgeable, multicultural leaders for New Mexico’s agricultural, food, and natural resource industries. If you would like to give now, scan the QR code below.

Finally, join us on December 15th at the Hotel Albuquerque for a New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Alumni Reception. The festivities start at 6:00 p.m. We would love to have you join us. Appetizers will be served.





PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

NEW MEXICO
AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP
ALUMNI RECEPTION

Thursday Dec. 15th
From 6pm - 7pm
Hotel Albuquerque Old Town

RSVP to Tina at 575-646-6691
or nmal@nmsu.edu

