REDEFINING RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

by

Zachary Ross Gutierrez

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors in
the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media

Texas Christian University

Fort Worth, Texas

December 11, 2017
REDEFINING RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Tricia Jenkins, Ph.D.

Department of Film, Television and Digital Media

Charles LaMendola, M.F.A.

Department of Film, Television and Digital Media

Rev. Todd Boling, Senior Associate Chaplin

Department of Religious and Spiritual Life
ABSTRACT

I made three videos for the Department of Religious and Spiritual Life. The first video has seven students from five different faith traditions. Each one of the students all say the same script. The goal of this first video is to help students that might have a me vs. them religious perspective realize that they share much more in common with those of differing faith traditions than they realize. The second video consists of student, faculty, and staff interviews about what the C in TCU means to them. The goal of this second video is to help non-Christian prospective students understand that they are welcome and wanted at TCU. The third video consists of different interviews from two students and one alumni who enjoyed their time in Better Together. The goal of the third video is to promote TCU’s Interfaith Initiative by examining Better Together—an interfaith group on campus. All three of these videos will be used on Religious and Spiritual Life’s new website.
Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... 3
Project Rationale and Description...................................................................................................... 5
Filmography.......................................................................................................................................... 10
Works Cited......................................................................................................................................... 11
I created three videos for Religious and Spiritual Life’s new website to help promote religious tolerance, understanding, and to hopefully help increase the presence of non-Christian students on TCU’s campus. I am the founder and co-president of the Latter-day Saint Student Association and as a result I am intensely involved with those who oversee Religious and Spiritual Life at TCU. Throughout my work with the faculty leadership in Religious and Spiritual Life I have become keenly aware of how out of the twenty-one religious groups on campus only two of those are non-Christian. Both of these organizations, the Muslim Student Association and Hillel, have very low numbers in comparison to their nineteen other Christian counterparts. Thus, I found it of upmost importance to create these videos in order to help the Religious and Spiritual Life Department reach out to current and future non-Christian students. I created these videos because I did not want prospective non-Christian students to feel intimidated by the dominant Christian atmosphere at TCU. I want non-Christian religious groups to understand that there is a place and a space for them here at TCU. My project meets these goals because these videos will be hosted on Religious and Spiritual Life’s new website—where prospective and current students of differing faith traditions can view these videos and understand that Christianity is not a threat and that there is a space and a place for them at TCU.

Religious and Spiritual Life are aware of the dominant Christian atmosphere at TCU, and were already trying to help future and current students of non-Christian faiths understand that there is a space and place for them here at TCU before I started this project. The purpose of this project was to amplify Religious and Spiritual Life’s message of inclusivity and welcome to other faith traditions by creating a series of videos for Religious and Spiritual Life to have, share, and post. I worked alongside the leaders of Religious and Spiritual Life, Todd Boling, Senior
Associate Chaplin, and Angela Kaufman, Minister to the University, to create messages that adequately express Religious and Spiritual Life’s current interfaith initiative.

In the Fall of 2016, I focused on research, storyboarding, coordinating schedules, and having studio space to film in. In my research I discovered how massively dominant Christianity is on TCU’s campus. In the section below I will compare what religious diversity looks like in the world at large and then I will compare that data to what it looks like at TCU. Note, that TCU should be mimicking the world if we truly are to fulfill our mission statement, which is “to educated individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.” Thus, TCU should be mimicking a global community in order to fulfill its mission statement properly.

![Size of Major Religious Groups, 2010](source)

According to the data above, one can conclude that the percentages of those who are Jewish and are unaffiliated with religion are represented at TCU as they would be in the world. However, outside of those categories TCU is doing a terrible job of representing the religious diversity of the world within its campus. Those that are from other non-Christian religious traditions, like Islam and Hinduism, are hardly being represented at TCU in comparison to how their representation and presence is felt throughout the world. Thus, it became apparent to me and the leaders of Religious and Spiritual Life that it was necessary to create videos that addressed the other religious traditions on campus by speaking to other religious groups who might be thinking of applying to TCU. The main purpose of the three videos I created is to speak

to these non-Christian groups and help them understand that there is a place of belonging for them here at TCU.

In order to successfully fulfill this vision, I had multiple meetings with Dr. Jenkins, Rev. Todd Boling and Rev. Angela Kaufman, and other faculty and students to help decide who would be best to interview and how the interviews should be conducted. I also had to decide how I wanted to structure the story and message of each video. I worked on scheduling my interviews around when the Film, Television and Digital Media studio was free. Extensive work went into writing, planning, and coordinating with people’s schedules in order to successfully shoot the three videos in a timely and efficient manner.

In the Spring of 2017, I focused on the lighting, filming, audio, graphic, and editing needs of my production. In January, I worked to light, direct, shoot, capture audio, and edit and complete the first video, “Five Faiths One Script.” This first video encourages all religious traditions to see the similarities within each other, rather than the differences, and to realize that all religions are far more similar than different. The biggest roadblock in making this video was casting. Since TCU does struggle with religious diversity it was very hard to find the diverse cast that I was able to find. My connection with Religious and Spiritual Life was the only thing that made finding such a religiously diverse cast possible. In February, I worked to light, direct, shoot, capture audio, and edit and complete the second video, “Why the C in TCU?”—this video went through many revisions and re-edits. Rev. Todd Boling and Rev. Angela Kaufman both stressed the critical need of painting TCU in a way that shows that it is not in spite of the “C” in TCU that we strive to show religious tolerance as a campus community, but it is because of the “C” in TCU that we strive to show religious tolerance. A message that connects with the central
message of what many Christians believe Jesus taught—tolerance and love. In March, I worked to light, direct, shoot, capture audio, and edit and complete the third video—a promo for an interfaith organization on campus titled “Better Together.” This video needed to be revised several times because many of the b-roll clips I used needed additional color correction. Each video took extensive planning, preparation, and work.

My hope is that my project will help prospective and current non-Christian students feel like they have a welcoming space here at TCU to look forward to and enjoy. I hope that these videos will help inspire more students of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds to more fully consider TCU as the school of their choice. Links to the final projects can be seen below.
Filmography

Five Faiths One Script: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kx8aNPAYWY0

Why the C in TCU?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DNK2Tzoke0&t=52s

Better Together Promo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4pmzYMfPSY
Works Cited
