

# Introduction to Liberal Religious Education Syllabus

**ED 4212 Thursday 9:40-12:30**

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Sheri Prud'homme

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For urgent matters: 510-845-8084 (home study, voice only – leave messages between 9 am and 9 pm Pacific Time and indicate a good time to reach you)

Office Hours: by appointment

This course provides a broad introduction to the theory and practice of liberal religious education, with an emphasis on Unitarian Universalist congregations. Students of all religious traditions are welcome. Topics include an overview of the history and philosophy of UU religious education, teaching methods and learning processes, theories of human development, the congregation as an educating community, current approaches and innovations in religious education for all ages, collegial relationships and professional standards for religious educators, and curriculum resources. Coursework includes a field placement in a local congregation's religious education ministry (2-3 times/month), weekly journaling, periodic written assignments, responsibility for leading class openings and discussions, and a final project of significance to the student's future ministry.

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After engaged participation and successful completion of this course, students will

- Be able to articulate a philosophy of religious education rooted in the theological heritage of their tradition and Starr King School's values of educating to counter oppressions and create just communities.
- Be able to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of a congregation or other ministry site as an educating community.
- Have applied their philosophy of religious education, knowledge of effective teaching methods, and knowledge of human development to create and provide primary leadership for at least two educational experiences in their field placement site.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the history of liberal religious education, several educational learning theories, contemporary curriculum resources, best practices for collegial relationships, and professional standards for religious educators within the UU tradition.
- Have identified two or three areas of for future inquiry, study, and practice.

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## REQUIRED TEXTS –

Articles in *Reader for Introduction to Liberal Religious Education*. A Graduate Level Course for Unitarian Universalists. (provided by professor)

- Bellevance-Grace, Karen. *Full Week Faith: Rethinking Religious Education and Faith Formation Ministries For Twenty-First Century Unitarian Universalists*, 2013. (provided by professor)
- Essex Conversations Coordinating Committee. *Essex Conversations*. Boston: Skinner House, 2001. ISBN: 9781558964143 \$16 UUA Bookstore
- Foster, Charles R. *Educating Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. ISBN: 978-0687002450 \$15
- Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. ISBN: 978-0664240523 \$16 Amazon
- Hurd, Tracy. *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook*. Boston: Skinner House, 2006. ISBN: 9781558965003 \$15 UUA Bookstore
- Middleton, Betty Jo. *To Touch Inward Springs: Teaching and Learning for Faith Development*. Bloomington, IN: IUUniverse, 2015. ISBN: 9781491773581 \$17.95 UUA Bookstore
- Patton, Sally. *Welcoming Children with Special Needs*. Boston: UUA, 2004.  
[http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfd/welcoming\\_children\\_specialneeds.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfd/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf)
- Spencer, Laura. *The Mosaic Project Report: An Assessment of Unitarian Universalist Ministry to Youth and Young Adults of Color and Latina/o and Hispanic and Multiracial/Multiethnic Descent*. Boston: UUA, 2009. [http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/idbm/mosaic/0904\\_report.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/idbm/mosaic/0904_report.pdf)
- Sweeney, Kimberly. *The Death of Sunday School and the Future of Faith Formation*. New England Region of the UUA, 2017. [https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the\\_death\\_of\\_sunday\\_school\\_and\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_faith\\_formation\\_ksweeney\\_june2017.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf)

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- Aron, Isa. *Becoming a Congregation of Learners*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002.
- Erslev, Katie Tweedie. *Full Circle: Fifteen Ways to Grow Lifelong UUs*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 2004.
- Faber, Adele & Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*. New York: Perennial Currents, 2004.
- Groome, Thomas H. *Christian Religious Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995,1999.
- Nieuwejaar, Jeanne. *The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1999.
- Wilkerson, Barbara, ed. *Multicultural Religious Education*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1997.

### REQUIREMENTS TO PASS (Let me know the first week if you need a grade):

- (1) **Field Placement in a Local Congregation**—Each student will need to arrange a field placement in a local congregation where you will be teaching or leading a group of children or youth approximately three times per month. While religious education spans

a lifetime, seminarians generally have very little practice working directly with children and youth and more opportunities to work with adults. (If your life experience is an exception to this, let me know and we can negotiate something that meets your learning goals). Therefore, in the supportive context of this course you are required to work with children or youth. Please speak with me before the semester begins if you want my assistance finding your field placement. You will be asked to journal about your experiences. Twice during the semester you will present a reflection on an educational experience you led and connect it to your philosophy of religious education, knowledge of effective teaching methods, and knowledge of human development, as well as future areas of inquiry, study, or practice that it points you to.

- (2) **Weekly participation in engaging the course readings, class discussions, and class openings**—You will be expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and having prepared some questions for discussion. You will be expected to lead a class opening at least once during the semester.
- (3) **Periodic Written Assignments**—There will be several written assignments to synthesize or apply course material during the course of the semester.
- (4) **Final Project**—Final projects have two parts: 1) A statement of your philosophy of religious education rooted in the theological heritage of your tradition and Starr King School’s values of educating to counter oppressions and create just communities. 3 pages maximum. 2) A project that builds upon your learning in the course and is of use to you in your future ministry. Some examples from past students include developing a sermon series on religious education, developing a program or curricula for a congregation, writing a paper on a particular aspect of religious education drawing on two or more theorists. Your final project should demonstrate significant engagement with one or more thinkers and concepts we have read in the course.
- (5) **ABSENCES:** One week's absence is permissible, but please do let us know. Additional absences can be negotiated with the instructor in extreme situations.

**LEARNING DISABILITIES or OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS:**

If you have any learning disabilities or personal situations that will impact your participation in the course, please let me know in the first week of the course so that we can make appropriate accommodations.

<b>CLASS SCHEDULE</b>
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*(Note: the instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule as she sees fit; if changes are made, efforts will be made to consider student needs and communicate changes in a timely manner)*

<b>Feb 6</b>	<p><b>General Topic: Introduction and a Brief History of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education Theory and Practice</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “A Short History of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education” by Eugene B. Navias, in the <i>Reader</i>.</li> <li>2. Introduction and Chapter One in <i>To Touch Inward Springs</i> by Betty Jo Middleton.</li> </ol>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introductions of one another</b></li> <li>• <b>Check in about field placements, expectations for journaling and expectations for presentations</b></li> <li>• <b>Overview of course and sign ups for leading openings</b> <b>Handout page on crafting a good discussion question</b></li> <li>• <b>Discussion: Why do kids, youth, adults come to church? And discussion of the readings</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Feb 13</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: It’s More Than Just the Basement</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church</i> by Maria Harris. (Read part one, skim parts two and three)</li> <li>2. <i>William Ellery Channing on Religious Education</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Bring with you one discussion question for today’s discussion of the readings</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Feb 27</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Educating Congregations</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Educating Congregations</i>, by Charles Foster</li> <li>2. “Margin and Center,” by Tracey Robinson-Harris, in <i>Essex Conversations</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Evaluate your congregation using Foster’s lens. No more than 7 pages double-spaced. Questions to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the times and places in your congregation where people are engaged in what you would call “religious education?” Include classes, study groups, special programs, new member orientation, certain worship services, etc. Be specific.  How effective are these? And how do you decide what is effective?</li> <li>2. What events are central to your congregation’s life over the year? Calendar year; religious events, seasonal events’ occasional events; unexpected events this year or other years.  How does the community prepare for central events? How do they reflect on them?</li> <li>3. Where in the life of the congregation—classes, worship, administration, social justice, service, fellowship setting - are children, youth, and/or adults encouraged to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for religious meaning, make a connection to history, stories,</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hymn, art?</li> <li>• Listen for intentions?</li> <li>• Find clues as to ways they can respond to the call of their faith in the situation?</li> </ul> <p>4. Go back to the list of events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which events bind the generations?</li> <li>• Which create patterns of partnership among people typically separated from one another by age, gender, ethnicity, social class, occupation, or other factors?</li> <li>• Which nurture hospitality for strangers in and beyond the life of your congregation?</li> <li>• Which hinder the building of community among church members?</li> </ul> <p>5. Foster sees four education tasks in community building (which I have adapted to Unitarian Universalism):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transmitting the vocabulary</li> <li>• Sharing the stories of faith</li> <li>• Nurturing interdependent relationships</li> <li>• Practicing a “faith-full” life</li> </ul> <p>6. Take one event from your time line. Identify how and where the four educational tasks are found.</p> <p>7. What are the most valuable insights or inspirations have you gained from today’s readings in regards to your congregation?</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Mar 5</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Educating to Counter Oppression and Create Just and Sustainable Communities – Factors to Consider in Multicultural, Anti-Oppressive, and Justice Seeking Congregations</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Starr King’s ECO philosophy and educational philosophy</li> <li>2. Welcoming Children with Special Needs by Sally Patton <a href="http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfid/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf">http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfid/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf</a></li> <li>3. The Mosaic Project Report: An Assessment of Unitarian Universalist Ministry to Youth and Young Adults of Color and Latina/o and Hispanic and Multiracial/Multiethnic Descent by Laura Spencer <a href="http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/idbm/mosaic/0904_report.pdf">http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/idbm/mosaic/0904_report.pdf</a></li> <li>4. “For the Generations to Come,” by Susan Suchocki Brown, and “Education as Liberation” by Rebecca Parker in <i>Essex Conversations</i>.</li> </ol>

	<p>5. “Choosing a Social Justice Project,” by Jacqui James, in the <i>Reader</i>.</p> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Bring with you one discussion question for today’s discussion of the readings</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Mar 12</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Learning and Teaching in Liberal Religious Education – Part I</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chapters two-six in <i>To Touch Inward Springs</i> by Betty Jo Middleton.</li> <li>2. “The Teacher as Spiritual Guide” by Roberta M. Nelson, in <i>Essex Conversations</i>.</li> <li>3. “The Method is the Message” by Angus MacLean, in <i>Reader</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Write one or two pages reflecting on the readings as they interact with your own experience and questions. What did you discover? What appeals to you or excites you? Has it impacted your vision for religious education in any way? If so, how? What questions does this session raise for you? Bring this with you to class.</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Mar 19</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Learning and Teaching in Liberal Religious Education – Part II</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chapters nine-sixteen in <i>To Touch Inward Springs</i> by Betty Jo Middleton.</li> <li>2. “Creative Midrash,” by Sherry H. Blumberg, in the <i>Reader</i></li> <li>3. “It’s Elementary, My Friend. It’s Child’s Play,” by John Tolley, in <i>Essex Conversations</i></li> <li>4. Online research – do a search for “effective teaching” or “instructional methods” or “teaching methodology.” Choose one article that you found particularly helpful. Post the web address to share with the class.</li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Bring with you one discussion question for today’s discussion of the readings</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>Mar 26</b> <b>Reading Week</b></p>	<p>One-page proposal for your final paper or project is due next week.</p> <p>Your final project should demonstrate significant engagement with one or more writers and concepts we have read and discussed in the course. It must include at least one resource from beyond the required reading – the GTU library has great resources for local and distance students. Some examples are a 12-15 page paper, an outline of a sermon series with one completely written out, an adult or youth religious education</p>

	<p>curriculum for a workshop, or something of the like. It needs to demonstrate your learning and integration of course materials and should cite them accordingly. It should be conceived of as something useful to you in your ministry.                  Your one-page proposal must indicate the following: (A) Your topic and methodological approach (B) Some of the references you will be using, and (C) What (if any) your concerns are.</p>
<p><b>April 2</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Human Development/Faith Development</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook</i> by Tracy Hurd.</li> <li>2. “Gabriel Moran’s Theory of Religious Education Development,” by Makannah Elizabeth Morris, in the <i>Reader</i>.</li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Create a chart representing the stages of faith development at different ages. Bring it with you to class for discussion.</p> <p>Final Project proposal due today.</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>April 9</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Models of Religious Education and Faith Development in UU Congregations</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chapters seven and eight in <i>To Touch Inward Springs</i> by Betty Jo Middleton</li> <li>2. “Outside the Box” by Susan Davison Archer in <i>Essex Conversations</i>.</li> <li>3. “Sunday School is Dead – Long Live Sunday School” by Greg Stewart in <i>Essex Conversations</i>.</li> <li>4. <i>The Death of Sunday School and the Future of Faith Formation</i> by Kimberly Sweeny. <a href="https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf">https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf</a></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Write a description of the model of religious education and faith development used in your church. Is it the same for children? Youth? Adults? Reflect on the model in light of today’s readings. No more than 5 double-spaced pages. Plan ahead for this assignment as it may require an interview with a religious education committee member or religious education professional in the congregation.</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>April 16</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Curriculum and Content</b></p>

	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Useable Truth,” by Richard Gilbert and “Spreading the Good News,” by Susan Harlow, in <i>Essex Conversations</i>.</li> <li>2. Explore Tapestry of Faith curriculum resources, Our Whole Lives Curriculum, and Coming of Age Handbook at <a href="http://www.uua.org">uua.org</a>. Also independent UU curriculum writers at <a href="http://www.uucards.org">http://www.uucards.org</a></li> <li>3. Full Week Faith by Karen Bellavance-Grace</li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Chose one curriculum at each age level – young elementary, upper elementary, middle school, and high school. Note the theological and educational assumptions and methodologies used in each religious education curriculum.</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>April 23</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Multigenerational Worship</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Draft. Common Worship—Why and How? The UUA Commission on Common Worship;” <i>Reader</i></li> <li>2. “Intergenerational Worship in Unitarian Universalist Communities” by Ginger Luke; <i>Reader</i></li> <li>3. “Intergenerational Worship Suggestions” by Kathie Davis Thomas, <i>Reader</i></li> <li>4. Explore the resources at <a href="http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/tag/multigenerational-worship/">http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/tag/multigenerational-worship/</a></li> <li>5. Watch a few of the videos from the video course emerging from Sophia Fahs Sunday 2016 on Multigenerational Worship <a href="http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/tag/multigenerational-worship/">http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/tag/multigenerational-worship/</a></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Write a brief rationale for multigenerational worship after reading the assigned material (250 words or less). Bring with you a list of at least 20 experiences of being human that are shared across the generations and could be raised up in worship.</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>April 30</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Youth and Young Adult Ministry</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “What Youth Want” by Logan Harris, <i>Essex Conversations</i> pp. 99-121</li> <li>2. Explore the resources at <a href="https://www.uua.org/middle-school">https://www.uua.org/middle-school</a>, <a href="https://www.uua.org/youth">https://www.uua.org/youth</a>, and <a href="https://www.uua.org/young-adults">https://www.uua.org/young-adults</a>.</li> <li>3. Familiarize yourself with Blue Boat at <a href="https://www.uua.org/blueboat">https://www.uua.org/blueboat</a></li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Bring with you one discussion question for today’s discussion of the readings</p>

	<p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>May 7</b></p>	<p><b>General Topic: Collegial Relationships and Professional Standards for Religious Educators</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LREDA Code of Professional Practices, Guidelines for Professional Religious Educators <a href="http://www.lreda.org/code-of-professional-practices">http://www.lreda.org/code-of-professional-practices</a></li> <li>2. From Starting to Parting <a href="https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/from_starting_to_parting_-_january_2016.pdf">https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/from_starting_to_parting_-_january_2016.pdf</a> and glance at The Search for Religious Education Leadership, Best Practices for Unitarian Universalist Congregations <a href="https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/re_leadershipguide.pdf.pdf">https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/re_leadershipguide.pdf.pdf</a> and</li> </ol> <p><b>Prepare:</b> Bring with you one discussion question for today's discussion of the readings</p> <p><b>Opening:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Reflection on leading an educational experience:</b> _____</p>
<p><b>May 14</b></p>	<p><b>Final Projects Due</b></p>

### Other Resources

- Boys, Mary C. *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*. Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press 1989.
- Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Wilmington, MA: Houghton-Mifflin 1991.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum 1994.
- Groome, Thomas H. *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. The Way of Shared Praxis*. San Francisco: HarperCollins 1991.
- Hawkins, Thomas R. *The Learning Congregation: A New Vision of Leadership*. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press 1997.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge 1994.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Teaching From the Heart*, new ed. Harrisburg: Trinity Press 1998.
- Nelson, Roberta M. *Claiming the Past, Shaping the Future: Four Eras in Liberal Religious Education 1790-1999*. Liberal Religious Education Association 2006.
- Orr, David. *Earth in Mind. On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*. Washington, DC: Island Press 1994.
- Palmer, Parker *To Know As We Are Known*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Wickett, R.E.Y. *Models of Adult Religious Education Practice*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press 1991.

**Recommended, out of print, may be available from ministers or in church libraries:**

Fahs, Sophia Lyon. *Today's Children, Yesterday's Heritage*

Frediani, Judith, ed. *Curriculum Mapping: A Guide to Unitarian Universalist Curricula*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association 1996. Updated, available online at [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org).

Gilmore, John, ed. *Unitarian Universalist Selected Essays 1996*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association 1996.

Harris, Maria. *Teaching and Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching*. San Francisco: Harper & Row 1987.

Hollerorth, Hugo J., Editor. *Stone House Conversations*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association 1979.

Liberal Religious Education Journals

*Report of the Religious Education Futures Committee to the UUA Board of Trustees*. Boston Unitarian Universalist Association 1981.

Rosen, Harold. *Religious Education and Our Ultimate Commitment: An Application of Henry Nelson Wieman's Philosophy of Creative Interchange*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America 1983.

Spoerl, Dorothy Tilden. *The Creative Process and Religious Education*. Boston. Unitarian Universalist Association, 1964.

Assignments and due dates:

Discussion question, bring to class Feb 13

**Evaluate your congregation using Foster's lens, due Feb 27**

Discussion question, bring to class Mar 5

**Reflection paper, due Mar 12**

Discussion question, bring to class Mar 19

Chart representing stages of faith development at different ages, bring to class April 2

**Final project proposal, due April 2**

**Models paper, due April 9**

**Curriculum assignment, due April 16**

Rationale for multi-gen worship and 20 experiences across the ages, bring to class April 23

Discussion question, bring to class April 30

Discussion question, bring to class May 7

**Final project can turn in any time between May 7 and May 14**