

2017 HOPE Nomination

For Professor Mark Chancey

Residence Life & Student Housing asked student leaders in each Residential Commons to nominate a professor who has influenced and inspired them in their time here at SMU. The student was asked to provide examples pertaining to the professors teaching style, passion, engagement, and advocacy. Lucy McCollom nominated you and shared the following,

Dr. Chancey is an excellent educator. Beyond providing clear expectations and feedback to each of his students, Dr. Chancey's passion for teaching and broadening students' understanding of religious studies is infectious. In his course, Introduction to Western Religions, Dr. Chancey provided a detailed, multi-disciplinary introduction to three of the world's largest religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Though there are many ways that his class has connected religious studies to personal student experiences and other subjects, such as history, sociology, and current events, the most meaningful experience came from our class visit to the Islamic Association of North Texas (IANT). Our trip fell on the Friday after the 2016 Presidential Election, during an afternoon community prayer time. Our class had the opportunity to observe a brief message, a series of prayers, and following the service, we got to speak to the Imam and ask further questions about Islam and about the community's response to the election. Throughout the course, our class was also able to attend traditional Jewish and Christian religious services. After each of these experiences, Dr. Chancey challenged students to write response papers and reflect on how each encounter had impacted our perception of religion – challenging our stereotypes, beliefs, and misperceptions of religion and other people. Additionally, following these visits Dr. Chancey dedicated a large portion of class time to discussion and encouraged students to share their unique perception of each service.

Dr. Chancey's passion for teaching is revealed through his encouraging students to ask questions and engage in open dialogue, challenging them to dig beyond the text, process the information they are learning, and apply it to the world around them. Given the sensitive nature of a topic such as religion, Dr. Chancey took care to present each religious tradition from an unbiased, academic perspective – focusing on the history and content of religion, rather than the validity.

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During his course, Introduction to Western Religions, Dr. Chancey arranged multiple off-campus opportunities that allowed the class to gain greater understanding of each religious tradition. By attending services at Temple Emanu-el, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, and the Islamic Association of North Texas, the students were challenged to think beyond our preconceived notions about religion and consider a different point of view. These experiences been some of the most enriching parts of my time at SMU. Dr. Chancey has also been available for additional questions and feedback on class material, essays, and tests during office hours and via email. At the end of the semester, I missed several classes due to illness and interviews. Dr. Chancey was incredibly understanding, working to ensure that I was able to complete all the coursework and succeed in the class.

Dr. Chancey has served as a mentor, an advisor, and an advocate by encouraging his students to develop a broader understanding of the world around them. Through studying different religious traditions, I have learned that within each there is great variation. You cannot possibly define an entire religion or people by the extreme views of a minority group within them. Dr. Chancey encouraged his students to let knowledge and understanding guide our actions, rather than fear.

Once again, congratulations! You make SMU a better place!