?Do they really believe that??: Experiential Learning outside the Theology and Religious Studies Classroom

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You can download Catherine and Denise's PowerPoint presentation.

During this academic year, we have been working on an Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies-funded project about experiential learning in Theology and Religious Studies (TRS). Students may engage with Cultural and Religious Diversity (CRD) in a number of ways, including textbook accounts, media portrayals, interaction with staff and fellow students in the classroom. However, the project has been concerned mainly with CRD outside the classroom when students meet and even live with people of faith in their own communities. At Bath Spa University, experiential learning takes a variety of forms, among them a week-long placement in a religious community which cannot be one to which the student belongs or with which s/he is already familiar. This presentation examines the issues and opportunities arising from this placement and other experiential elements, mainly day visits, in the wider context of the project. It also discusses examples of experiential learning across TRS programmes, findings from a survey of departments and an audit of skills associated with this form of learning. It concludes that experiential learning is particularly conducive towards a positive response to diversity, combining individual integrity with respect for others and promoting the development of constructive strategies for coping with the sometimes controversial, often challenging, nature of CRD in our society and beyond.

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