Dear Woolf Friends,

At the end of April I joined the Woolf Institute in the new role of Public Engagement Fellow. The Woolf Institute has a long history of publicly-engaged, outward-facing programmes and I am honoured to now have oversight of the development and delivery of this aspect of the Institute’s work.

But why ‘public engagement’? The outward-facing work of institutions like Woolf has historically carried labels such as ‘public education’ or ‘outreach’ or other similar titles. I prefer to speak of ‘public engagement’ because it brings our vocabulary into alignment with what we already do at Woolf. Language about educating others or reaching out to them can sound entirely one-directional and one-sided: as if we have all the important content and we are going to give it to you. But our actual experience and practice at Woolf is more mutual and interdependent: we engage with many people, groups, and sectors beyond the institute to share our learning as well as to learn from them – to disseminate our expertise as well as to explore and partner with important faith and interfaith communities, relationships, networks, and realities. Together we work towards building trust between people and communities of faith, and between these communities and other local, societal, and national communities and institutions.

For example, one of our public engagement programmes, Living in Harmony, has allowed us to deliver sessions to over 4000 school students sharing our expertise about positive cultural encounters between Jews and Muslims through
music, and it has also allowed us to learn about
Religious Education in secondary schools,
technology and techniques for engaging students in
learning about religion, and the questions and
interests of these students. This learning
continuously reshapes the programme as it
continues.

In November we will be hosting RE teachers to
share with them what we have learned, and also to
learn from them about their experiences as RE
teachers, as well as what programmes and
resources they would value from us as we shape our
public engagement plans for the coming years. This
will be an important professional development
opportunity for the teachers who attend, and an
important opportunity for us to learn more from the
RE teaching community. If you teach RE or know
someone who does, we hope you will contact us for
information and to register: livinginharmony@woolf.cam.ac.uk. Or you can help
us learn through our survey of RE teachers here.

I look forward to learning from you, and to all the
ways we will continue to engage with one another,
sharing lived experiences of faith, building trust, and
making space for mutual encounter.

Best wishes,

Dr Elizabeth Phillips
Public Engagement Fellow, Woolf Institute

LIVING IN HARMONY
TEACHERS’ SEMINAR
17 NOVEMBER 2022

LIVING IN HARMONY TEACHERS’ SEMINAR

The Living in Harmony team has created a dynamic outreach programme
based on research from the project to teach students across England about
faith communities and coexistence through music. Currently, we offer fun and
engaging workshops that provide students a unique experience of Middle
Eastern music, religion and history. We are now also providing training for
teachers who are interested in expanding their knowledge of interfaith relations
and acquiring new tools and lesson plans for the classroom.
READING GROUP: QUR'AN AND BIBLE 11 OCTOBER @18:00

This reading group, convened by Rick Sopher and chaired by Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner, is anchored in a project which compares Torah portions of the week to the relevant Qur'anic passages. Matters discussed will include similarities and differences in biblical and Qur'anic narratives, infallibility of prophets, scriptural hostility, the availability of Jewish sources in Arabia in the 7th century and the benefits of studying one another's scriptures.

“Faith and Family in the Qur'an: The Cases of Noah, Abraham, and Moses”

In this session we will be joined by Prof. Gabriel Reynolds.

PODCAST: BLASPHEMY ON THE BIG SCREEN

When the film LADY OF HEAVEN was released, there were vigorous protests and Cineworld withdrew the film. What was going on?

There is no orthodoxy that could not have been construed as blasphemous.
when it started. Christianity was accused by Jews of being blasphemous for proclaiming Jesus as divine, and Muhammad was criticised by his polytheistic Arab contemporaries for preaching monotheism. So how do the movies come into it? Emanuelle Degli Esposti and Mohammed Ahmed explain...

COMING SOON
Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

FEEDING BODY AND SOUL

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