Article

Reporting Religion from Boston

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Northeastern University students report on religious diversity just outside the academy walls.

Fourteen Northeastern University students participated in the "Reporting Religion" course, co-taught by religious studies professor Carlene Hempel and journalism professor Elizabeth Bucar. This entailed reporting on religious life 3,510 miles away in Granada, Spain. Understanding religious life and diversity beyond the classroom was, however, just as important as the study abroad experience. Catholicism is the major religion practiced in the metro Boston area. In fact, according to the Public Religion Research Institute, Boston ties with New York City and Pittsburgh as the most Catholic city in the United States. Boston also has one of the biggest Jewish populations in the country. Overall, 10 percent of Boston's population practices non-Christian religions.

Bucar and Hempel's students reported on a wide range of religious issues and populations in the Boston metro area. Their projects explored efforts to welcome LGBTQ people into faith communities; how the expansion of colleges and universities in the Boston area affects the survival of local churches; the quandaries of state

involvement in historical and religious preservation; how churches' struggle for financial survival limits their ability to adjust to the evolving spiritual needs of the community; and how one Lutheran church has served as a home for activism for 100 years.



Source: Mara Araujo via Unsplash.

The following reports stemmed from the Boston component of the "Reporting Religion" course:

- "LGBTQ-Targeted Churches Prioritize Community, Political activism" by Lucas Dean
- "Boston Religious Centers Adapted to Student Population, but the Mission Church Lags Behind" by Charlie Wolfson
- "Local Lawsuit Questions Balance Between Church-State Separation, Historical preservation" by Marie Sheena
- "Locked Church Doors Mark Missed Opportunities for Spirituality" by Paxtyn Merten
- "Our Saviour's Lutheran Church: Supporting Local Activism Since 1910" by Tyler Blint-Welsh

You can explore all the student journalism stemming from Bucar and Hempel's course here.