



Emad Shahin, Henry R. Luce Associate Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.
COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Crossing Academic Boundaries

THE HENRY R. LUCE PROFESSORSHIP PROGRAM

When Emad Shahin, a political scientist and Middle East expert, was appointed Henry R. Luce Associate Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, he embarked on two self-directed inquiries: as a specialist in Islamic law and politics now teaching at a Catholic university, Shahin wanted to gain a deeper knowledge of Catholicism; as a member of the university's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, he sought to immerse himself in the literature on peace and conflict resolution.

"Notre Dame has some of the leading experts on these issues. I wanted to build a bridge between the role Islamic values can play in promoting peace and the teachings of Catholicism and other faith traditions."

Shahin is one of several current Luce Professors in positions made possible by Foundation support to institutions that promote teaching and research across conventional academic boundaries. Since 2009, Professor Shahin has taught courses at Notre Dame on such subjects as contemporary political Islam and globalization, development and democracy in the Middle East. He has also explored with his students and other colleagues Catholic and Islamic perspectives on war and peace and the correlation between Catholic social teachings and Islamic principles of social justice. For a course on Islam and modernity, Shahin invited three other faculty members to provide a comparative examination of Catholic views on the challenges of adjusting to a rapidly changing world.

"This great interdisciplinary mix has enriched my own knowledge, my scholarship and my teaching," he says. Students have also benefited from exposure to broader religious and cultural perspectives.

"There is a very encouraging environment here for this kind of work. The students are curious to understand how people think and behave in other cultures."

At Princeton University, Daniel Osherson holds a Luce Professorship in Information Technology, Consciousness and Culture. A cognitive scientist based in the Department of Psychology, Osherson works with colleagues from a range of other disciplines—linguistics, philosophy, economics and computer science—to explore "what it means to be human in the face of new technologies." He has joined with professors from several of these fields to co-teach courses, and he created a monthly interdepartmental faculty seminar that discusses new research on such topics as human and artificial reasoning, the neurological and evolutionary basis of cognition and the role of language in thought.

In addition to distinguished academics, Luce Professors have also included public intellectuals from outside the academy. At Bard College, a Luce Professorship in Human Rights and Journalism was jointly held by two prominent investigative journalists—Mark Danner and Ian Buruma. Through their books and their articles in such publications as *The New York Review of Books*, they have illuminated complex political and cultural topics of international scope. Based in the Human Rights Program at Bard, both professors developed and taught courses that straddled history, political science, literature, cinema and Asian studies. In 2008, Danner accepted a chaired professorship at Bard, and Buruma has continued as sole Luce Professor at the college.

His most popular courses cover a range of disciplines not typically combined in the classroom. For example, one course studied the representation of great dictators in films, literature, journalism and theater. "As a Luce Professor, I've had an enormous amount of freedom to design courses that might not be easily categorized as belonging in one specific department," Buruma says. "You'll find human-rights majors in my classes, but also students from the music conservatory, literature and psychology." ■