



STRANGER/SISTER

HATE CAN'T STOP A SISTERHOOD.

a documentary film by Kirsten Kelly & Katie Taber

Classroom Discussion Guide

strangersister.com

Classroom Discussion Guide created by

The Pluralism
Project

HARVARD
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The Pluralism Project's online guide is an invitation to engage with the documentary film **STRANGER/SISTER** through the discussion of key themes. Participants are encouraged to consider these themes and questions—open-ended by design—while viewing the film. As viewers learn about the groundbreaking efforts of the [Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom](#), they are also invited to **reflect on their own responses to hate, the role of interfaith activism, women's leadership, and the challenges of relationship-building across lines of difference.**

Themes include:

- Ritual & Space
- Gender
- Political/Personal
- Courage & Empathy
- Activism
- The Sisterhood
- Israel/Palestine
- Interfaith in Practice



Facilitators are encouraged to consider other key resources in the larger guide, such as the trauma-informed guidelines and the [Southern Poverty Law Center's](#) fact sheets, which may also inform and enhance online discussions. To learn more about other interfaith efforts in the U.S., including a profile of the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, or to learn more about religious diversity in America, please visit pluralism.org.

This discussion guide—which includes tips for use in the classroom and educational community screenings and discussions—was developed by students and staff at the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. We hope you find it a useful framework for your learning and teaching.

Option One: Online classroom, watching the film in advance

Before Class

Prior to the class discussion of *STRANGER/SISTER*, ask your students to review the discussion guide, view the film, and respond to one of the thematic prompts. At least two days before the class meets, provide the dedicated link and password for the short film *STRANGER/SISTER* and the link to the discussion guide, specifically the Discussion Themes section (pages 8-11). Ask students to review the guide in advance so they can consider some of the key themes and questions while watching the film.

Your message to students might include a brief introduction to the film, such as the LOGLINE: “*STRANGER/SISTER* is the story of two ordinary women, one Muslim and one Jewish, who dare to believe they can join hands to stop the wave of hate.”



Or the SHORT SYNOPSIS: “*STRANGER/SISTER* is a documentary short film about the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom. Founded by a Jewish woman, Sheryl Olitzky, and a Muslim woman, Atiya Aftab, the Sisterhood is an effort to build respect and relationships between these two communities. Together, women work to limit acts of anti-Muslim and Jewish sentiment, stand up to hate, and engage in social justice work. The film follows various chapters across the U.S., offering a unique glimpse of grassroots interfaith efforts in America.”

Students should be asked to access *STRANGER/SISTER* well in advance of the class meeting in case they encounter any difficulty streaming the film. Advise them to set aside at least one hour for this assignment: 40 minutes to watch the film and at least 20 minutes to note their responses to one of the thematic prompts. (Depending on the size and scope of the class, you may also choose to assign students to a specific prompt.)

Ask students to email you their response to their selected theme/questions the day before class so that you may set up breakout groups in advance; you may need to combine some of the themes to balance the size of the breakout groups (3-5 per group is ideal). Take note if there are significant themes not chosen by students that could be explored in the large group discussion.

Preparation for the class session

- Have the online discussion guide available (on screen or a printed copy)
- Cue up the film in case you want to screen share a clip from the film during class
- Form breakout groups based on themes selected
- Note possible topics for large group discussion

Online Class Meeting

Warm Up (5-10 minutes)

As students enter the online classroom, invite them to mute their mic and turn on their camera. Ask them to use chat to comment on the film, responding to a prompt such as: “What scene from this film was most memorable for you?” or “Did anything surprise you about this film?” Take note of the range of responses, and narrate any patterns emerging for the group. (Note that these comments warm up the initial discussion and may also be useful for “warm calling” in the large group discussion later.)

Share the agenda for the class discussion verbally and in the chat. For example:

10 minutes: Breakout groups by theme

20 minutes: Report out by theme

15 minutes: Large group discussion

5 minutes: Wrap up

Before sending students into small groups, ask them to discuss their responses to the questions and to select one student to report out. Let them know what time they’ll be re-joining the large group. As a final step, share the link to the discussion guide so they may refer to it in their discussion.

Breakout (10-15 minutes)

Set a timer to reconvene the breakout groups at the designated time. While the breakout groups meet, you may choose to drop in to the discussions; some instructors prefer to provide a basic template in Google docs to monitor progress and guide the report-out.

