



UNION

Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Hindu House of Worship Fieldwork Project

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Abstract

This field research project gives students a first-hand experience of the diversity within Hinduism and Hindu communities in the Los Angeles area. Small groups of students will also be required to present their experiences to their peers.

The project was designed for students a semester-long World Religions course for seniors at Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks, California – a coeducational private Catholic high school with a student population of 1,230.

Broader Curriculum

This course covers the history and development of a number of religious traditions. It is also important for students to understand how these traditions are lived today in different areas in the world, and particularly here in Los Angeles. Often what is learned from a textbook is limited to the ideals presented about each religion, so it is essential to offer experiences that expose students to the lived practice and diversity within each religious tradition.

Practical Details

Throughout the course, students are required to work on projects in groups of four or five. For this project, each group will visit a Hindu place of worship of their choice. The project can also be adapted, fairly easily, for the study of other religious traditions. Students will visit Hindu temples in the area to observe/participate in prayer experiences, and interview both practitioners and priests. When they return to the class they will present what they have experienced and learned. They'll also turn in the responses of the people they interviewed at the temple.

The following pages include: 1) a sample handout for students, explaining the assignment; 2) a list of suggested Hindu sites in the Los Angeles area; 3) a series of questions to guide student observations of these sites and interviews with community members; and 4) self-evaluation and evaluation forms for the assignment.

(A special thanks to my colleague Scott Poteet, who helped develop the questions students use on their fieldwork visits.)



We all drink from one water

We all breathe from one air

We rise from one ocean

And we live under one sky

~ Anwar Fazal

Hindu Temple Group Project • Student Assignment

This group project requires you to visit a Hindu Temple. This activity will enable you to see what you have learned come to life as you visit the temple, participate in a service, speak with a Brahmin and a layperson. You will do the following:

1. Select a group of 4 or 5 people to be in your group
2. Select a first, second, third and fourth choice of the temple at which you would like to spend some time experiencing.
3. Arrange to visit the site long before you go
4. Do research on the religion before you go (review your notes on the chapter on Hinduism as well as your notes on Puja. Read the section on Hinduism in [*How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*](#), pp. 100 - 109)
5. Ask if you may take pictures of the place, the worship service and the person (s) you will be interviewing
6. Everyone in the group must attend
7. A picture of the entire group at the place of worship is required
8. Fill in the sheet with all the questions.
9. Due Date: to be determined when school begins; however students will be given three weeks to complete this assignment

On the due date you will turn in and do the following:

1. Do a PowerPoint presentation of (no less than 5 slides) of your visit in which you will tell the class which temple you visited, what you expected you might see there and any apprehensions you had prior to your arrival, tell them about the temple, where it was located, what it looked like, what the service was like, and share information about the interview. You should include pictures of the temple (outside and inside), the service, and the person(s) interviewed. The presentation will last no longer than 15 to 20 minutes.
2. Turn in the packet with your answers written neatly in them.
3. Turn in your evaluation sheets.
4. This project is worth 100 points (70 points for the group and 30 points for your personal contribution).
5. At the next class period you will have an opportunity to discuss the differences you noticed about the type of Hinduism your peers encountered in their visits. We will do this in small group discussions and share those discussions with the rest of the class.

**PLACES YOU MAY WISH TO VISIT
(BUT YOU ARE NOT LIMITED TO THESE PLACES)**

Hindu Temple Society of Southern CA

1600 Las Virgenes Canyon Rd
Calabasas, CA 91302
Phone: 818 880 5552

Temple Hours:

The temple is open every day of the year. <http://www.hindutemplesoutherncalifornia.org/undefined>

Summer hours: 9:00 A.M to 12:30 Noon and 5 P.M to 8 P.M.

Winter hours: 9:00 A.M to 12:30 Noon and 5 P.M to 7 P.M.

Valley Hindu Temple

18700 Roscoe Blvd
Northridge, CA 91324
(818) 772-7736

Temple Hours:

Monday to Saturday, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm and 4:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Sunday, 8.00 am - 8.00 pm

Vedanta Society of Southern California

1946 Vedanta Place
Hollywood, CA 90068
323-465-7114

The Hare Krishna Temple (ISKCON)

3764 Watseka Ave.
LA, CA 90034
(310) 836-2676

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DISCUSS YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF YOUR VISIT TO THE HINDU, ISKCON, OR VEDANTA, TEMPLE, ETC.

BEFORE YOU GO, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO SEE?

WHAT ARE SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT GOING TO A NEW RELIGIOUS PLACE? DO YOU HAVE ANY APPREHENSIONS OR CONCERNS?

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE TEMPLE WHAT DO YOU SEE? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT?

WHEN YOU GO INSIDE, DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SEE? WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE FOCAL POINT?

ARE THERE PEWS, CHAIRS, CUSHIONS ON WHICH THE PEOPLE SIT?

ARE THERE STATUES OR IMAGES OF GOD OR GODS, A FOUNDER OR SAINTS?

ARE THERE ANY SMELLS THAT STAND OUT (INCENSE, CANDLE WAX, ETC.)?
DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SMELL.

ARE THERE PEOPLE AROUND? WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

WHAT IS THE SERVICE LIKE? WHO LEADS THE SERVICE? WHAT DO THEY DO?
WHAT DO THE PEOPLE DO? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU USUALLY DO
AT WORSHIP?

ANSWER THIS QUESTION AT HOME. HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN
THERE? WHAT IMPRESSIONS OF THE RELIGION DO YOU HAVE?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK A PRIEST, MONK OR DEVOTEE:

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A PRIEST (MONK DEVOTEE)?

WHY DID YOU BECOME A PRIEST (MONK DEVOTEE)?

WHAT DOES A PRIEST (MONK DEVOTEE)? DO ALL DAY?

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU BELIEVE?

WHAT CAN YOU AS A PRIEST (MONK DEVOTEE)? DO TO HELP LOS ANGELES FACE ITS MANY PROBLEMS?

AS A HINDU, MEMBER OF SICKEN OR VEDANTIST WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS IN LOS ANGELES? WHAT CAN YOU TEACH US THAT WOULD HELP US WITH THIS PROBLEM?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK A LAYPERSON:

WHY ARE YOU A HINDU (MEMBER OF ISKCON, VEDANTIST)?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE A HINDU (MEMBER OF ISKCON, VEDANTIST)?

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE MOST ABOUT YOUR RELIGION?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO TEMPLE?

WHY DO YOU GO TO THE TEMPLE?

DO YOU PRAY? TO WHOM OR TO WHAT DO YOU PRAY? WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO HAPPEN AS A RESULT OF YOUR PRAYER?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN LOS ANGELES TODAY?

HOW CAN HINDUS (MEMBERS OF ISKCON, VEDANTISTS) HELP WITH THE PROBLEMS OF LOS ANGELES?

World Religions: Eastern Traditions

Place of Worship Group Project Self Evaluation

Temple Visited: _____

Your Name : _____

Members of Group : _____

PERSONAL GRADE:_____ include a grade you believe you earned and check off all items that apply below: (27-30=A; 24-26=B; 21-23=C; 18-20=D)

___ I have given evidence of visiting a place of worship

___ I have given evidence of attending a service

___ I have given evidence of an interview with a minister (monk etc)

___ I have given evidence of an interview with a layperson

___ I have included picture of myself at the temple

___ I was present on the day of our presentation
(if not: the reason you are not present: _____)

COMMENTS: Here you could anything you would like to add about your experience or about what it was like to work with your group.

Temple Group Project Group evaluation

Temple Visited: _____

Members of Group: _____

GROUP GRADE: _____ / 70 (63-70=A; 56-62=B;49-55=C; 42-48 D)

Check all that apply. If any are left unchecked, explain why in the comments section.

- evidence of visiting the temple
- evidence of attending a service
- evidence of an interview with a monk / priest / devotee
- evidence of an interview with a layperson
- PowerPoint presentation: minimum five legible slides
- picture of the place of worship
- picture of everyone at the place of worship
- 15 to 20 minute presentation
- cover sheet and packet turned in

COMMENTS: