



INTERFAITH
CENTER OF NEW YORK



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

UNION

Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Exploring Lived Religion through Multiple Lenses

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This project is extensive and intended to be worked on throughout the semester of a World Religions course. I would assign the second week of the course and do periodic checks on student progress during the semester.

1. Choose a novel or a memoir: (A rubric will be created for this activity.) Students will annotate the book and answer a series of questions in preparation for discussion.

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt

Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya

Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan

Bread Givers by Anzi Yezierska

Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko

Cry, The Beloved Country by Alan Paton

Does My Head Look Big In This? by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Even After All This Time: A Story of Love, Revolution, and Leaving Iran by Afschineh Latifi

Go Tell It on the Mountain: by James Baldwin

Holy Ghost Girl by Donna M. Johnson

Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust by Immaculee Ilibagiza

Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn by Karen McCarthy Brown

Memories of a Catholic Girlhood by Mary McCarthy

Neither Wolf Nor Dogs: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder by Kent Nerburn

Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind: The Life and Letters of an Irish Zen Saint by Maura O'Halloran

The Chosen by Chaim Potok

The Color of Water by James McBride

The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf by Mohja Kahf

The Mango Season by Amulya Malladi

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts by Maxine Hong Kingston

Read/annotate for religion and how this individual lives religion. Questions to answer: Why did you choose this book? What is the religion of the main character? How is religion a part of their everyday life? How does it impact decisions that they make? Address the issue of identity for the main character(s) of the book, how is religious identity constructed? How does the individual's religious identity complicated or possibly made easier by race, gender, age, or location? What does the main character(s) learn about religion? What do they learn from their religious experiences?

OR

2. Two site visits: visit two places of worship for a service that is different than your own or one that you have grown up in. They must be two different types of services, either different religions or different branches within a religion. (create a rubric)

Questions to answer:

Where did you visit, when? Why did you choose this particular religious service?

What do you see? Describe the architecture, what are the religions images that you see, how do they demonstrate the religion? Describe icons, design, and décor. Describe the congregants: ie dress of people, how are they living their religion? Actions? What else do you see?

What do you hear? Sermon? What is it about? Songs? What do they indicate? Music? If there is no music why not? Prayers? Role of the leader? The message? Universal message?

How do you feel about the experience? What is your emotional reaction to this experience?

What makes it similar or different to other places of worship that you have been to? Additional notes or comments. What did you learn about this religion from your visitation?

Compare and contrast these experiences. How are they similar? Different? Why do you think these experiences were similar and different?

AND

3. Interviews: 5-8 (create rubric)

Must include 1 adult follower, 1 peer, and one religious leader

Must include either a Hindu or Buddhist, a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim and two others: ie Bahai, Sikhism, Jainism, Native American, Unitarian, Afro Caribbean, Neo Pagan, Atheist, Eckankar, New Age, Spiritual . . . You may include or sub branches as well, such as Jehovah Witness, Mormon, Messianic Jews, Nation of Islam, Quaker, Christian Scientist. Bring in artifacts to share in your small groups as well. Specify the branch ie Catholic, Baptist, or Methodist.

Questions:

Where they worship?

How do you worship?

When do you worship?

Why do you identify yourself as a _____?

How do you define being your religion? What does it mean to be member of your religion?

How is your daily life influenced by your religion?

Are there any aspects of your religion that you disagree with or do not practice?

Why?

You choose two common themes in religion to ask about: Golden Rule, Judge Not, Better to Give than to Receive, Love thy Neighbor, Speak the Truth. How do they live their life according to this message?

Have you personally ever faced discrimination (either individual or institutional or both) due to your religious beliefs?

Is there anything else about your faith that is important for us to know about?

This may be done via email, Face to Faith, or contacting a religious leader outside of the Atlanta area. I have some contacts if they need it. Ideally your interviews should be done in person, so you can see the individual, but if you want to speak to someone of another religion that you can not access personally, that is fine.

Start with groups of five to share info over a day or two. Change groups and share again for a day or two. Based on interviews, visits, and novels, what can they say about the lived religious experiences that people have? How are these experiences similar and different to each other, particularly within Christianity, Islam etc. Structure the discussion in a way that they start with the religions that they have all done; ie Christianity or Judaism, what are the branches they have learned about, how are they similar and different? Summarize and discuss as a large class. Include a reflective piece after everything is completed. What have you learned about lived religions?

***For information about the
Religious Worlds of New York summer institute for teachers,
and many more resources to enrich your teaching on
religious diversity, see:***

www.religiousworldsnyc.org