



UNION

Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Auto-Ethnography and Youth Development

Susan Smith, Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY

Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference

- Jane Goodall

Abstract

11th and 12th grade students in Islamic schools want and need to connect in a mindful and meaningful way to the world in which they live. Raised in Muslim homes and attending Islamic schools, they may have limited exposure to people of different faiths and cultures. In the increasingly high-tech, complex global village in which we live, they need not only to be competitive for career and personal success, but also have a positive impact on the micro and macro communities in which they live. As Muslims and citizens of the world, they want to show the world the true face of Islam and help achieve peace and prosperity.

First, however, they need to know who they are as individuals in relation to the broader family, local, national, and global communities in which they live. This is the goal of auto-ethnography – a form of self-reflection that explores one’s place in larger social structures and histories.

[Click here to view a sample auto-ethnographic film, produced by the educator who designed this project.](#) Keep reading for details about the project.

The Project and the Process

The ultimate goal of the assignment is students to make a 5 - 7 minute auto-ethnographic film, using Windows Movie Maker, iMovie, or other such program. The film-making process typically involves:

1. diversity training
2. writing a script/ their own narratives
3. choosing non-copyrighted pictures off the web or personal photos and uploading them onto Windows Movie Maker
4. recording the script and uploading it onto Windows Movie Maker
5. adding titles and captions
6. exporting it to Youtube
7. viewing and discussing the videos in class
8. forum posts on the class web page/intranet (after training on appropriate commenting) using sentence stems ie. "I really like that ____." "I notice your family does _____. Mine does _____."

The project would take a total of ten 50-minute class periods (2 weeks). Students would spend four class periods reading and discussing relevant sources, such as:

"I Am" Poem

Bio-Poem "Facing Religion in Myself"

Alexei.The_Lone_Ranger_and_Tonto_Fistfight_in_Heaven.Indian_Education.pdf

Ernesto_Sanchez_s_Autobiographical_Analysis.pdf

White_Privilege_and_Male_Privilege (1).pdf

Knaus_C.Shut_Up_and_Listen.Chpt_1.pdf

The Freedom Writers Movie

What Do You Believe Movie

Boy in the Striped Pajamas

Ravelunravel.org

Havealittlefaith.org

During this time, they would write their own 5 - 7 minute narratives.

They would then spend three class periods producing the video in the Media Center, followed by a weekend to produce and fine-tune their Youtube videos at home, then three periods to share and discuss student's videos. During this time, they would receive support and feedback from the Social Studies teacher, school principal, and Technology teacher.

Students would post the videos on a confidential class web page, or the school intranet. They will be asked to make meaningful comments on the videos of two classmates who have not yet received

comments, and then respond to comments made on their own videos. Youtube videos would be on private settings unless students chose to make them public with parental permission. Some videos would be posted on the school website along with a brief story about the project.

The Importance of Media Literacy

Living in a 21st century technology-suffused society, Islamic school students need to learn 21st century skills such as digital and media literacy, in addition to global competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. Skills like these are stressed in the new Common Core Curriculum standards, as well as the International Society for Technology in Education standards for students.

Criteria for Success

Sharing ethnic histories. Written, verbal, and media articulation of self-discovery; interest and respect for narratives of other students; inquiries and feedback to classmates; evidence of enhanced kinetic energy and bonding between students as they share their personal lives with honesty and empathy, compassion and respect, and concern with the state of humanity and articulation of the desire to do good. The awareness that there are more than 7 billion narratives in the world and that many tell stories that can be impacted by help from others (emotional, spiritual, material, monetary, etc.)

Rubric for grading to be developed based on readings, components of the video production, class participation, comments on the webpage forum, etc.

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