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Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

Islamophobia in Local and National Contexts

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Abstract

This learning segment is designed for a high school in a midwestern city that is predominantly White and Christian. The city experienced an Islamophobic hate crime in 2019 when the garage of a Muslim-owned taxi service was graffitied with a racist and Islamophobic slur. The larger community responded to the hate crime with rallies, teach-ins, and shows of solidarity that were widely attended and publicized, and artists painted over the garage door with a mural that read “one community, one family, hate has no business here.” Community members also put up yard signs in the aftermath of the crime that read “hate has no home here,” and these signs remain prominent in many neighborhoods years later. Students will be very familiar with the signs, some likely having them in their yards, but may not know their local and historical context.

This learning segment starts with a review of Islam from their freshman year class by looking at misconceptions, discusses the rise of Islamophobia post 9/11, examines a newspaper article about the hate crime in the city, and then asks students to reflect on their learning and design their own yard sign or mural responding to either Islamophobia or another community issue they are passionate about.

This learning segment is situated within a post-9/11 unit at the end of the school year that looks at the diverse experiences of 9/11, responses to the event, and its aftermath through the lenses of first responders, Muslim Americans, artists, and political policy. Students will have had an introduction to Islam in previous courses.

Lesson 1: Intro to Islamophobia after 9/11

Essential Questions

1. What is Islamophobia and what does the data say about Islamophobic hate crimes?
2. How were some of the diverse ways American Muslims experienced the aftermath of 9/11?
3. What are common misconceptions about Islam?

Lesson Procedures/Materials

1. Part 1: The introductory slide will start with a “Hate has no home here” sign that is often found in neighborhood yards to prompt conversation about if students have seen the signs and if they know why and how the signs became popular. Students will learn that the yard signs in the community came in response to an Islamophobic hate crime in 2019. Introduce the essential questions and vocabulary for the lesson, including hate crime, Muslim, Islam, and Islamophobia, and review data that shows hate crimes rising since 2001 and 2016.
2. Part 2: As a class, students will read the [Debunking Misconceptions about Islam and Muslims](#) handout from Learning for Justice.
3. Part 3: Students will read the New York Times Upfront Article titled “Islam in America” in small groups. A leveled text is available for students who would benefit from differentiation. Students will annotate the text and discuss it in small groups.
4. Formative assessment: Students will fill out a 3:2:1 exit slip at the end of the class period, with three key takeaways that someone should know from this lesson, two new things they learned, and one question they are left with.

Lesson 2: Local Experiences, National Context

Essential Questions

1. How can first person stories add to our understanding of Islamophobia?
2. How did La Crosse respond to an Islamophobic hate crime in 2019? What does that reveal about our community, and about living in a pluralistic society?

Lesson Procedures/Materials

1. Part 1: Students watch the Ted Talk [“What it is like to be a Muslim in America”](#) by Dalia Mogahed as a group.
2. Part 2: Students will read a [newspaper article](#) about a hate crime that occurred in their community in 2019. Teacher-led discussion of the article will focus on community response and lasting impacts of the hate crime, including the yard signs and anti-Islamophobia groups in the community, including the Anti-Islamophobia working group at a local university, and a [local chapter](#) of the [Shoulder to Shoulder](#) interfaith movement against Islamophobia.
3. Part 3: Students will be told they have a summative assessment the next class that will ask them to respond to some of the essential questions and design a new mural for the garage door, or a new yard sign, either about Islamophobia or another important community issue. Class discussion will generate some ideas for murals/signs so students can start thinking about what they want to create the next day.

Lesson 3: Summative Assessment

Students will complete a summative assessment (included below) reflecting their knowledge of local and national issues surrounding Islamophobia, as well their own creative response to these issues.

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

Name: _____ Hour: _____

Islamophobia in a Local and National Context Summative

Part 1: Short Answer Questions

1. What is Islamophobia and what does the data say about Islamophobic hate crimes?

2. How were some of the diverse ways American Muslims experienced the aftermath of 9/11?

3. How did La Crosse respond to an Islamophobic hate crime in 2019? What does that reveal about our community, and about living in a pluralistic society?

Part 2: Creative Sign or Mural

Directions: In the box below (or a separate sheet if you would like more room), design either a new yard sign or a new mural that relates to either Islamophobia or another issue that you feel is important in our community. Provide an explanation of the design or an artist's statement under it, describing the meaning behind the yard sign or mural, why you created it, and why the issue is important in our community.



Artist's statement:
