



Challenging Perception: Understanding the Religious Complexities and Religious Identity of Islam

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Advanced Placement (AP) World History, World History, Grades 9-12

Keywords: World History, religion, identity, Islam, Muslims, religious complexities, religious identity

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Students of World History will learn about the complexities of a lived religion through study of the world religions with an emphasis on understanding the 3Bs (beliefs, behavior, and belonging). In particular, the focus for this unit is on the complexities of Islam and the religious identity Muslims. Throughout this unit lessons are integrated into the AP World History and World History curriculum giving educators the ability to explain what religious complexities are while dispelling common misconceptions westerners have about the world's religions with emphasis on Islam and Muslims. Divided into three crucial parts, students explore what religion is before moving onto the basic beliefs, behaviors, and community characteristics of Islam. Over the course of the semester/year, students will cover topics that discuss impacts of the world religions on society both regionally and globally, with special emphasis on the changes and continuities over time with the spread of Islam, the Islamic Caliphates, and the intersection of modernity and Islam in the 20th and 21st centuries.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 135 students in AP World History and World History.

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Keshia Horn

Introduction

As a world history teacher, I understand the importance of learning and experiencing different cultures, especially in a world that is becoming more and more interconnected. It's even more important as borders begin to close and there is a resurgence in nationalistic politics. Cultures help to shape our identities as individuals and as nations, but often times people look at other cultures through the lenses of their own. Throughout all of history, Western civilizations have placed their own comprehension of culture upon other cultures leading to generations of misunderstandings. This couldn't be more apparent than with religion and its impact of culture and society. Religion has played an important role in shaping societal and cultural identities since ancient times in places like Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and so on.

Religion, however, is complex and not as black or white as I myself have taught in the past. Teaching world history in high school, I get the opportunity to help my students research the five major religions of the world (Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism). Oftentimes, however, students are filling in a chart that compares the different beliefs system side by side. They learn about where they each begin, what type of religion (monotheistic versus polytheistic), the religious texts, their rules or laws, and the main beliefs. The issue with this is that it doesn't delve into the complexities of each religion. To teach religions this way flattens them to static belief systems and fails to acknowledge that religion is more than just religious texts and laws.

Religion extends well beyond the flattened characterization we teach in school. Religion is as complicated and complex as we are as humans. In order to fully understand how the various world cultures impact society, we need to understand the basics of the religion as well as the religious identities that develop with each religion. Religious identity stems from the crucial role religion plays on the lives of those who practice. Religious doctrine and practices give humans a sense of belonging. It helps bring together different people through a shared belief, purpose, and/or experiences.

In order to study the complexities of religion, we must adopt a model that allows us to look deeper than basic understanding we have of religion. The model I used to research and develop my curriculum unit is the 3Bs (beliefs, behavior, belonging) from Religion For Breakfast.¹ By adopting this model, I can guide students to acknowledge the complexities of Islam and the religious identities of Muslims while exploring the impact of Islam on the global society. It's important for students to understand the complexities and religious identities of Islam because there are so many misconceptions about Islam and the Islamic world.

My goals with developing this curriculum unit is to address the untrue common beliefs that many hold about Islam through exploration of religious complexities and religious identities. For students in the modern world enrolled in global studies, religion plays an important part in the

¹ "What Does It Mean to Be Religious - YouTube." ReligionForBreakfast, 2017. www.youtube.be/MrLj2MEcXO8

development of societies. Even in the world today, religion plays an important role in governments, societal structures, and how nations interact with one another. Students should understand that religion is not static nor two-dimensional, and that religious identity is shaped by religious experiences. For students to truly understand the complexities of religion, it's important for them to conduct research and complete activities that give them a well-rounded view of Islam and Muslims.

To achieve this goal, students must understand the complexities of religion and what it means to have a religious identity. First, students will discuss the common beliefs held about Islam and decide if these common beliefs are true or false. A list of common beliefs starts a conversation about Islamophobia (without mentioning the term) and begins to breakdown the narrative Muslims have encountered in the West. These are all common misconceptions that they have encountered through their everyday life, like watching television, social media, and conversations with family. The list is taken from the website Encountering the World of Islam and provides 15 common misconception about Islam, from all Muslims are Arab to how Muslims view *jihad* and terrorism to the importance education and the role of women.²

Once finished with the introductory activity, students will complete activities that will look at the belief system Islam. They will learn about the Quran, religious practices, the Five Pillars of Islam, mosques, art, architecture, etc. but they will also learn about the behaviors like various significant holidays, prayer/worship services to name a few. Then they will examine the community of Muslims and the nature of belonging for Muslims. By establishing a religious community, practitioners have the opportunity to share common interests and build relationships through the practice of Islam. As students will see through continued learning of the Islamic Caliphates and the impact of Islam on the global community, the religious community aids in the expansion of Islam along the trade routes of the Old World (East/Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Europe).

Finally, to understand the impact of religious complexities and identities, students will complete a book study of *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and view the film *New Muslim Cool*. This book is an autobiographical two-part graphic novel about Satrapi's childhood through her early adult years in Iran during and after the Islamic Revolution. Part One, *Persepolis: A Story of a Childhood*, depicts life prior to the Revolution and the struggles Satrapi faced growing up in a French school with western influences to all of sudden living under sharia law. *New Muslim Cool* follows Hamza Perez, a Puerto Rican American rap artist who converted to Islam. By studying this graphic novel and viewing the film, students will challenge their own perceptions and allow them to see different points of view and perspectives offered by other religions and cultures. *New Muslim Cool* will also give students insight on being Muslim in the United States.

Both the books *Persepolis* and the movie *New Muslim Cool* help to demonstrate not only the complexities of Islam but the complexities behind defining religion and the people who practice it. In particular, these sources challenge people's perspective who accept the stereotypical narratives on Islam and Muslims. In reviewing and analyzing the book and the movie with

² "Common Misconceptions about Muslims," Encountering the World of Islam, 2018.
<https://www.encounteringislam.org/misconceptions>

students, they should be able to experience some of the things Marjane Satrapi and Hamza Perez have been through in their lives. As Satrapi herself explains:

If people are given the chance to experience life in more than one country, they will hate a little less. It's not a miracle potion, but little by little you can solve problems in the 'basement' of a country, not on the surface. That is why I wanted people in other countries to read *Persepolis*, to see that I grew up just as other children do.³

This unit will be taught to AP World History and World History students at David W. Butler High School in Matthews, North Carolina. The school is located outside of Charlotte, North Carolina and features a very diverse student body. The school is comprised of approximately 35% Caucasian students, 29% African American students, 24% Hispanic students, 7% Asian students, and 5% Native American students and students who identify with two or more races. The unit will be modified to support students of caring academic levels.

Content Research

Understanding Religion

This unit will focus on dispelling common beliefs about Islam and Muslims by addressing the religious complexities and religion identities. Students will participate in activities developed from research that is based in understanding religion in general, understanding Islam specifically, and then understanding the community of people who practice it. It's important to first start with understanding what religion is and how it has impacted the human race. Gaining this knowledge gives insight to human interaction, why certain communities were formed, and how empires grew and fell.

Another important aspect is comprehending the role of religion in pop culture. I like to start with deconstructing religion in the world today then moving backwards into history. One of the historical thinking skills I teach my students is to use the knowledge they have today to help analyze the events of the past. Taking this same thinking, I am able to have a discussion with students about religion and popular culture. It's important for students to understand how impact religion has on the things they watch, see, and do in order to comprehend the impact religion has had on society.⁴

According to Clayton and Clark, we encounter ideology so frequently that we only have a vague understanding of religion in general, and even less on specific faiths and denominations.⁵ Whether we realize it or not, we all consume common assumptions about faith in the media, advertising, music, etc. Those assumptions cause us to form opinions about particular faiths and they often go unchallenged. In some cases, those assumptions are reinforced.⁶

³ Marjane Satrapi, "Why I wrote Persepolis," *Reading Writing Link*, Nov./Dec, 9-11. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://greatgraphicnovels.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/whyiwrotepersopolis1.pdf>

⁴ Megan Goodwin & Ilyse Morgenstern Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.

⁵ Dan Clayton Jr. and Terry Clark, *Understanding religion and popular culture: theories, themes, products and practices*, London: Routledge, 2012.

⁶ Clayton and Clark, *Understanding religion and popular culture*.

Then what is religion? If religion isn't so cut and dry, how do we begin to teach it? A good place to start is by talking about what religion is and its purpose. When hearing "I study religion," it often times brings to mind one's own beliefs. This thinking is indicative of a larger problem because it flattens all religions to specific what a few people believe in. People are so familiar with their own practices that they can see similarities in other faiths, but they don't take the time to understand that religion is more than just doctrine and written religious law. It neglects the practices, beliefs, and people.⁷

Religion can be found in every facet of society from books to television shows to advertisements to even Star Wars and beyond. In order to understand religion, we have to look at the religious complexities and religious identity formed from practicing. But first, one must to unlearn what they have learned about religion or specific religions. If one is not Muslim but only trusts the myths about the religion, the first thing they must do is understand those myths and what is true about it. To address religious complexities and religious identity, the 3Bs model discussed by Benjamin Marcus which breaks down religion to look not only at the beliefs but also the rituals and behaviors of the people who practice it.

Religious Complexity and Religious Identity

As previously stated, religion is not flat and static. Religion should not be reduced to just a set of beliefs because there is more to each world religion than religious doctrine. This is where the concept of religious complexity comes into play. Religions are complex. They include doctrines but each religion is comprised of sects who, at the heart of the religion, believe the same things but the specifics many vary. For instance, a major difference between the Catholic Church and the Church of England is who is the head of the church, but outsiders may not perceive *any* difference unless they knew where to look.

Religion provides many layers of unexpected meaning. Each prayer, ritual, holiday within a particular faith has immense meaning to the people who practice it. It's not as simple as filling out a religion comparison chart with the different deities, religious texts, and significant holidays or laws. Each religious event has a profound sociological affect especially in the world of religious extremism. There is also a difference between religion and belief. They are not interchangeable. For some people, they are the same but, for others, they are not. Protestant Christians often understand their religion as, ultimately, a matter of belief and faith. Historically, however, belief is not the only—or even the major—part of religion, and so the terms are not interchangeable. There is no measure for belief and the United States Supreme Court says we cannot measure the sincerity of someone's belief.⁸ Religion is complex and complicated so adopting the 3Bs model helps to unravel the complexities.⁹

The first B to examining religion is belief. Belief looks at a person's or groups understanding of the deities through study of doctrine and scripture. The doctrine and scripture usually have a profound impact on a person's life. For example, Judaism and Christianity's rules are the Ten

⁷ Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.

⁸ Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.

⁹ Religious Freedom Center. (n.d.). Religious Identity Formation.
<https://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org/grounding/identity/>

Commandments (ten ethical rules) whereas Islam's Five Pillars of the Faith are practices of the religion. But these rules, laws, or basic practices can be interpreted differently and how they are practiced depends on the religious community. Remember, not every religious community believes the same thing or there may have different interpretations of those beliefs. Just about each religion seen in the world today has different sects because they slightly interpret the religious doctrine differently. In some cases, they may even believe the exact same doctrine, but practice it differently. Protestants and Catholics, Sunni and Shi'a Islam: these are just some common examples.¹⁰

The second B is behavior which examines how individuals or a group acts within the faith. These acts include rites, rituals, holidays, daily devotional practices, etc. These greatly vary based on individual expression, ethnic and racial groups, or even by the current time period. Sometimes behavior can present itself inside and outside of the religious settings depending on the people or group as a whole.¹¹

Lastly, the third B is belonging. This one takes into account the reaffirmation of a sense of mattering to others or to a group. A sense of belonging is established through shared experiences and usually intersects with racial, ethnic, familial, gender, class, and other identities. This sense of belonging is where we see the final step in the creation of a religious identity. A religious identity is shaped when membership to a religious group or community meets the importance of membership to the individual.¹²

But even religious identities can vary from person to person. Religion and faith are both deeply social *and* deeply personal. For some individuals, religious practices and the beliefs are central to their lives which others may not be as strict. For example, it would be like adopting a religion's culture but not attending services. Feeling like you are a part of something bigger than yourself opens the door to meeting people like yourself and creating a community that you can turn to when, or if, you need it.¹³

For this part of the unit, students will investigate the origins of religion and why religion is so important to billions of people in the world today. Using the 3Bs model for identifying religious complexities and religious identities, students will gain insight on the major world religions while looking at the culture, art, architecture, and overall impact the religion had on society, including how each religion spread. For this curriculum unit, students will focus primarily on Islam in order to gain a better understanding of why there are so many misconceptions surrounding the religion and those who practice it.

Understanding Islam and Muslims

The second part of this unit looks to examine Islam using the 3Bs model. Focusing on learning the beliefs, behaviors, and the Islamic community to understand the development and spread of

¹⁰ Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstern Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.

¹¹ Religious Freedom Center. (n.d.). Religious Identity Formation.
<https://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org/grounding/identity/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Religious Freedom Center. (n.d.). Religious Identity Formation.
<https://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org/grounding/identity/>

Islam throughout the ages. Through this evaluation, students will look at the doctrine of the Islam. They will gain an understanding of the religious laws that impact the daily lives of Muslims while also learning the transcendental reality or experiences of the divine. Through evaluation, students will come to realize that not all Muslims hold the same beliefs and that those beliefs can change over time.

In the western world, Islam is greatly misunderstood and often seen as an extremist religion, or at least its practitioners are frequently stereotyped as extremists. In the media and even in textbooks, there is a distinction between the “Muslim world” and the “west,” but actual knowledge and understanding doesn’t seem to exist of Islam for a majority of people. When there is a lack of knowledge, there is often times a sense of fear and confusion that emerges. Even when the media claims to have taken great care to present their findings, there’s a lack of understanding which facilitates the fear.¹⁴ These misconceptions stem from the colonial beliefs of orientalism and the heightened sense of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the mission to civilize.¹⁵

According to Tariq Ramadan, Islam is as complex as Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity in terms of intellectual, spiritual, and religious practices. Far too often, however, westerners view Islam through the lens of colonial-era assumptions; the idea of dividing Muslims into “good” and bad,” or “moderates” and “fundamentalists.” Not surprisingly, those who share western values are often deemed as “good” while everyone else is classified as potentially dangerous. These assumptions are taken from outdated and misguided views that further fuel the spread of common beliefs that don’t portray Islam and Muslims accurately.¹⁶

Within the beliefs of Islam, the Five Pillars of Faith (shahada, salat, zakat, sawm, and hajj) are the foundation and unity of the faith, no matter what sect of Islam the individual falls into, but after this foundation, there lies so much diversity within Islam. There have been notable differences in interpretation of the religious texts, who was the true successor of Muhammad, etc. Varying interpretations have led from traditional and literal beliefs to mystical and reformist. In addition, there are political interpretations that have shaped many trends and the expansion of Islam.¹⁷ Even the Five Pillars of Faith can be interpreted differently as with Malcolm X’s hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). For him, it was a cleansing of racial divide seen in the United States.¹⁸

Then, of course, we have the varying cultural influences of Islam that influence Muslims today in expressing their sense of belonging. During the spread of Islam through the caliphate years (7th to 12th centuries), Islam spread from the Middle East into North Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America during exploration. Within this spread stretches a rich variety of cultures that feature incredible works of art, architecture, literature, language, scientific and medical advancements, etc.¹⁹

¹⁴ Tariq Ramadan, “Islam Today: The need to explore its complexities,” *Neiman Reports, Summer*, 2007. Retrieved September 23, 2020 from <https://niemanreports.org/articles/islam-today-the-need-to-explore-its-complexities/>

¹⁵ Cemil Aydin, “What Is the Muslim World?,” *Aeon*, 2018. Retrieved November 14, 2020 from <https://aeon.co/essays/the-idea-of-a-muslim-world-is-both-modern-and-misleading>

¹⁶ Tariq Ramadan, “Islam Today: The need to explore its complexities,” *Neiman Reports, Summer*, 2007. Retrieved September 23, 2020 from <https://niemanreports.org/articles/islam-today-the-need-to-explore-its-complexities/>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Malcolm X, and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York: Grove Press, 1965.

¹⁹ Tariq Ramadan, “Islam Today: The need to explore its complexities,” *Neiman Reports, Summer*, 2007. Retrieved September 23, 2020 from <https://niemanreports.org/articles/islam-today-the-need-to-explore-its-complexities/>

In the world today, however, we have what's called political Islam. This idea that has been presented in the media highlights radical Islam like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. These extremist Islamic groups are featured in the media so often that it paints an unfair picture of Islam and Muslims as fundamentalists who shun everything the west stands for like individual freedoms and women's rights. This ideological bias has only furthered misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.²⁰

What lacks in the conversation over religious politics is that the United States is arguably more dominated by religious politics than many other countries in the world. For example, the majority of those elected to office identify as Christian. Political organizations hold events where a significant number of public officials attend. Not to mention, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld a long-standing requirement that the US House of Representatives opens each daily session with a prayer.²¹ Moreover, the United States Senate has its own Chaplain since 1789. Out of the 62 Chaplains who have served the US Senate and 52 for the US House of Representatives, all of them have been Christian. The point is that what counts as "political" is not a stable, neutral set of phenomena. Rather, the term "political" when applied to religious groups is usually meant to demean rather than describe them. A comparative study of the world suggests that religion and politics are always intertwined, but this only becomes upsetting to Westerners in specific moments.²²

Muslims living in the west are increasingly trying to find their religious identity with the free expression offered in Europe and America. According to Richardson and Ramadan, there is an emergence of a new Muslim personality that features an identity that is rooted in both western culture and Islamic principles.²³ This blending of cultures is also further explored by Zareena Grewal in *Islam is a Foreign Country* where she looks at the struggle of Muslim Americans, who devoutly religious and their desire to join American mainstream society. While there is no inherent or unavoidable struggle between Islam and the cultures of Europe and the United States, there have been undeniable tensions between Muslims and Euro-Americans since the colonial-era—in large part due to the history of European and American colonization of Muslim-majority regions.²⁴

There has been a struggle between western culture and Islam since colonization. This struggle can really be seen in the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi. This autobiographical book series is about growing up before, during, and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Prior to the start of revolution, the book opens with Marjane as a little girl attending a French school, loving punk rock music, and enjoying western influences. After the start of revolution, those things could land a person in jail, tortured, and never seen again. This is when Satrapi was introduced to the veil and sharia law. Because she was so outspoken, Satrapi's family chooses to send her to Europe to finish her education. This book demonstrates the struggle

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Catholic News Service, "Court upholds rule that House open each day it is in session with prayer," National Catholic Reporter, 2019. Retrieved October 23, 2020 from <https://www.ncronline.org/news/quick-reads/court-upholds-rule-house-open-each-day-it-session-prayer>

²² "Chaplains of the House of Representatives," (n.d.). Retrieved October 23, 2020 from <https://history.house.gov/People/Office/Chaplains/>

²³ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2005.

²⁴ Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014.

between the west and Islam, as well as the struggle between adapting to new and opposing cultures. Satrapi describes how she was too Iranian for the west but too western for Iranians.²⁵

A deeper understanding in the struggle with religious identity can also be seen in *Islam is a Foreign Country*. For starters, the Muslim community in the US is one of the most diverse communities, representing different backgrounds, ethnicities, and races. This diversity creates divisiveness within the Muslim community as there is a struggle of which group controls the narrative of Muslim life and who's in charge of the mosques. In addition, young Muslims are also battling with the perception of being a Muslim and living in the United States and dealing with policies that systematically criminalizes Muslims and "Muslim-looking" people. To show pride in the country where their families came from, often equates to homegrown terrorism and constant surveillance.²⁶

Even converts of Islam have to manage life while being criminalized and surveilled, as seen in the film *New Muslim Cool*. In the documentary, Hamza converts to Islam and moves to Pennsylvania and establishes a mosque. It was then that Hamza encountered what it was like to be a Muslim in a post-9/11 United States as the mosque was raided by the FBI. A year later, he has his clearance revoked at the county jail which prevents him from teaching classes and holding religious ceremonies. Hamza, however, does not let all the transgressions stop him from being a devout Muslim, father, or husband. Today, he continues to help the youth in Pittsburgh and spread his faith and religious message through hip hop.²⁷

Teaching Strategies

Book study: For students to understand the complexities of religious identity, a book study of the graphic novel *Persepolis* demonstrates the struggle with belonging in groups that don't understand your background.

Flip grid: This website is an educational tool that allows students to record their responses to questions or situations and respond to classmates. It's like a discussion post with the features of TikTok or Snapchat.

Long Essay Question: I use LEQs throughout class as a way for students to practice writing for the AP exam, but also as a way to reflect on what they learned. They have to choose at least two aspects of what they learned to analyze and explain why it stuck out to them while providing specific examples to help support their reflection.

Source analysis: This important skill, especially in history, allows students to review primary and secondary sources and evaluate their meaning, who the text is meant for, and explore their meaning in a greater historical sense.

Small group inquiry: At some points, students will work in small groups to analyze specific topics related to religion. This allows students to work together to critique and assess the

²⁵ Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2003.

²⁶ Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014, p. 39-45.

²⁷ Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, Hamza Pérez, Salman Ahmad, Rey Nieves, Sean Jones, Chris Strollo, and Soy Sos. 2009. *New Muslim Cool*. [Arlington, Va.]: [Dist. by PBS].

assigned material. They can then share with the class major points/events/etc. they found as a group.

Socratic Seminar: A popular practice in a variety of classes, Socratic seminars are formal discussions, usually based on a text, where their leader asks open-ended questions. Students listen and respond to one another using critical thinking skills to articulate their thoughts and the thoughts of others.

Videos: Another opportunity for students to examine beliefs, behaviors, belonging, and religious identity, playing videos can provide a different perspective. In some cases, students are provided with firsthand experiences and can see for themselves what each of these facets look like.

Webquest: An opportunity for inquiry-oriented learning, web quests give students the opportunity to explore material and delve into the material to gain a deeper understanding of religion and religious practices.

Lessons/Activities

****Start assigning *Persepolis* readings about two weeks prior to unit.****

Day 1: Introduction (Belief)

Objective: Examine the belief systems of Islam by identifying common misconceptions the West has about the faith and Muslims.

- *Opener activity:* Based on students' own knowledge, identify which of the most common states about Muslims are true and which are false. Where possible, if the claim is false change the statement to make it true. Write the new statement underneath the false claim. Once finished, go over the activity and explain each point (See Appendix 2).
- *Lecture:* Basic beliefs with guided notes
- *Closure activity:* Flip grid
 - What is religion?
 - What is belief?
- *Book study* introduction

Day 2: Belief (con't)

Objective: Analyze the Biblical and Quranic stories of Hagar and Ishmael to understand how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are part of the Abrahamic religions and

- *Socratic Seminar:* Story of Hagar - Bible versus Qur'an. Separate students into groups of 3. Give each group the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic interpretations of the story of

Hagar. Each student will read their interpretation then share it with their group. They will record their analysis of each. Once this is complete, start the Socratic seminar.²⁸

- What are the story of Hagar interpretations?
- What do these stories tell us about what Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe about the story of Hagar?
- How do they fit together?
- Deeper dive into what this demonstrates about religion:
 - What theologies, doctrines, sacred narratives, social and ethical values, and holy texts do individuals and institutions refer to when speaking about their beliefs?
 - How do religious beliefs influence behaviors and create communities of belonging?
- Read *Persepolis*

Day 3: Behavior

Objective: Through research, examine the rites and rituals surrounding the coming of age within Islam.

- Inquiry-based activity: Research the rites and rituals surrounding the coming of age in Islam. What are the traditions? Are there any differences between how each gender celebrates these rites and rituals? Are these celebrated the same across the globe? Are they different/similar to other religions?
- Discussion
 - What are important rites, rituals, and practices associated with daily life and major life milestones that shape religious behavior?
 - How do behaviors create beliefs and a sense of belonging to a community?
 - What can you infer about religions based on their rites and rituals?
- Read *Persepolis*

Day 4: Belonging

Objective: Religious, racial, ethnic, familial, gender, sexual, and other identities affect the lived experiences of religious individuals and communities. It is critical to remember that the shared experiences of the communities with which we associate can affect our religious beliefs and

²⁸ Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

behavior. Students will explore how the mix of a certain set of community markers can affect the beliefs and behaviors of religious individuals.²⁹

- Music is an instrumental part of everyone's life whether it's jazz, classical, alternative or hip-hop. In this activity, students will choose three songs from the Islam and Hip Hop Spotify playlist to listen to and research the lyrics.
(<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1vZfiYz70N9h2HWakq9g8n>) **warning** some songs do have explicit content
- Class discussion
 - What does the song say about the artist who wrote/performed the piece?
 - What can you gather from the songs about the artist's perspective about their faith? About the world around them?
 - How do religious groups or sub-groups create a sense of community? What is the role of "non-religious" or cultural factors in the lived experiences of religious communities?
 - How does belonging to a specific community affect the beliefs that constitute a worldview or the behaviors that are prescribed or proscribed?
- Read *Persepolis*

Day 5: Religious Identity

Objective: Through discussion on orientalism and discussion of *Persepolis*, we will begin to understand the power of colonialism and propaganda on the perception of the Muslim World, and how it fueled the common misconceptions. *Persepolis* provides insight on the religious identity struggle Muslims have living in the West, and how the lack of a religious community can affect one's sense of belonging.

- Video and discussion on orientalism (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZST6qnRR1mY)
- Review orientalism propaganda seen in the video and the misconceptions that remain in world as a result of colonialism.
- *Persepolis* discussion³⁰
 - Discuss why and how the graphic novel form is used to convey the story's difficult subject matter.
 - Analyze how the novel's images and text create a compelling narrative.

²⁹ Benjamin Pietro Marcus, "Six Guidelines for Teaching About Religion," *Education Week*, 2016. Retrieved October 23, 2020 from

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global_learning/2016/04/six_guidelines_for_teaching_about_religion.html

³⁰ Chris Griffith, "Free Teaching Guide: Persepolis," updated July 2020. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://www.prestwickhouse.com/blog/post/2020/08/how-to-teach-persepolis>

- Analyze how Marji's perspectives about religion and politics change over time.
- Trace the political and religious regimes that take hold of Iran, and explain how they influence the actions of Marji and her family.
- Determine how Marji's identity is shaped by her life experiences.

Day 6: Religious Identity in the West

Objective: Viewing *New Muslim Cool* demonstrates the diversity of Muslims in the West while showcasing the struggles of religious identity within an established religious community and the impact of United States' policies concerning the Islamic community.

- View *New Muslim Cool* (<https://tubitv.com/movies/15640/new-muslim-cool>)

Day 7: Religious Identity in the West

Objective: Religious communities don't exist in a vacuum. They change and shape cultures by having an impact on social, economic, political, and other conditions present in the community. Through text examination and discussion, determine how religious communities react to and influence the world around them.

- *Opener:* Read excerpts of *Islam is a Foreign Country*, and analyze the pictures. Think about the following questions as you move through the documents (See Appendix 3).
 - What comes to mind as you read/look at the pictures?
 - Are other groups treated in a similar manner? Why and how?
- Video discussion
 - What was the first thing that stuck out to you from the movie?
 - How does *New Muslim Cool* demonstrate the struggle of religious identity in America?
 - What surprised you as you watched the movie?

Assessments

LEQ: Develop an argument that evaluates how religious complexities and religious identities impacts the modern world. Be sure to reflect and use the material covered in this unit to help support your argument. (See Appendix 4 for rubric)

Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

Theme 2: Cultural Developments and Interactions (CDI) - The development of ideas, beliefs, and religions illustrates how groups in society view themselves, and the interactions of societies and their beliefs often have political, social, and cultural implications.

KC-3.1.III.D.iii Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and the core beliefs and practices of these religions continued to shape societies in Africa and Asia.

KC-3.1.III.D.v Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and the core beliefs and practices of these religions continued to shape societies in Europe.

Appendix 2: Common Misconception Assignment³¹

The Most Common Beliefs About Muslims

Directions: Based on your own knowledge, identify which of the most common states about Muslims are true and which are false. Where possible, if the claim is false change the statement to make it true. Write the new statement underneath the false claim.

1. The majority of Muslims are of Arabic descent.
2. Muhammad was the founder of Islam, and Muslims worship him.
3. Jesus and his mother Mary are seen as false prophets in Islam.
4. Often times, wherever Islam spread throughout history, women lost their social status.
5. All Muslims fall into one of two groups; Sunni or Shia.
6. When Muslims speak of the 'Greater Jihad' they are talking about conflicts with western nations (US, Europe)
7. Most Muslims live in the Middle East.
8. Education is less valued in societies throughout history that practice Islam.
9. Because of the early conquering traditions of Islamic history, Muslims are more likely to support violence/terrorism.
10. Islam is growing faster than any other religion.

³¹ "Common Misconceptions about Muslims," Encountering the World of Islam, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.encounteringislam.org/misconceptions>.

The Most Common Beliefs About Muslims Explained

1. The majority of Muslims are of Arabic descent.

An Arab is a person who speaks Arabic as his or her native language, and only 20% of Muslims fall into this category. Millions of Arabs are Christians! There are about 300 million Arabic speakers in the world today. Arabic is the majority language of twenty-three nations. Turkish, Iranian, Indonesian, Pakistani

2. Muhammad was the founder of Islam and Muslims worship him.

Muslims believe that Muhammad was God's last prophet and communicated God's final revelation. Muslims consider Adam the first Muslim. Muhammad is seen as the best example of how to be a good Muslim. He is held in great esteem, but he is not to be worshiped. Worship is reserved for God alone, and it is strictly forbidden to worship anyone or anything else. Muslims may celebrate Muhammad's birthday in the same way that we may celebrate Martin Luther King Day or Columbus Day.

3. Jesus and his mother Mary are seen as false prophets in Islam.

Muslims highly respect Jesus as a prophet of God and value his teachings. Muslims often name their sons after Jesus, who they call Isa. The Qur'an, however, mentions Jesus 93 times, teaching that he performed miracles, was born of a virgin, and will return again as Messiah. Mary has three chapters devoted to her in the Quran

4. Often times, wherever Islam spread throughout history, women lost their social status.

Most of the oppression of women by Islam and Muslims that is highly publicized is usually due to local customs and traditions. Muslim women have been presidents and prime ministers. Violence towards women and forcing them against their will is not permitted by Islam. Care for widows, orphans, and the poor is one of Islam's strongest teachings. Unfortunately, many women are oppressed,

5. All Muslims fall into one of two groups; Sunni or Shia.

Like Christianity, there are many sects of Islam. There are thousands of sub-groups, each having different doctrines, their own theology, and different Islamic schools of thought and law.

6. When Muslims speak of the 'Greater Jihad' they are talking about conflicts with western nations

The meaning of the Arabic word jihad is to struggle. It usually means a struggle of one's soul against the self and sinful desires. Muslims refer to this inner struggle as the greater jihad. Muslims also have social campaigns to end poverty and hunger which they also call jihad.

7. Muslims live in the Middle East.

Most Muslims (one billion) live in Asia, predominately in south and southeast Asia. More than 300 million Muslims live in Sub-Saharan Africa as well.

8. Education is less valued in societies throughout history that practice Islam.

Muslims place a high value on education. Until the industrial age, Islamic universities were the world leaders in math, medicine, science, law, architecture, and many other fields of study. The scientific method has its basis in the Muslim advancement of science. Muslims cite the Qur'an as their encouragement to seek knowledge of the world around them.

9. Because of the early conquering traditions of Islamic history, Muslims are more likely to support violence/terrorism.

The vast majority of Muslims are moderate, pious people who suffer more from terrorism and violence than non-Muslims. Ninety-three percent of Muslims do not support extremist views of terrorism. Gallup, Inc. conducted a revealing poll about Moderate vs. Extremist Views in the Muslim World.

10. Islam is growing faster than any other religion.

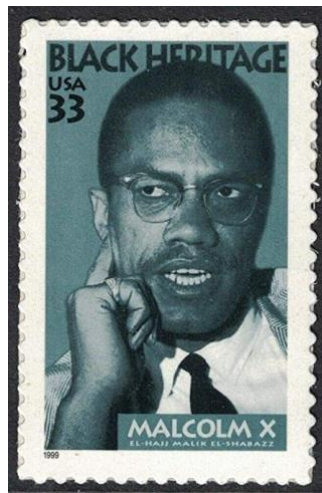
True

Appendix 3: Photos and Excerpts from *Islam is a Foreign Country*

Each photo and excerpt was specifically chosen to facilitate a conversation about how Muslims are perceived in the world, and the different communities that have emerged in the 20th and 21st centuries.



Photo 1: Iraqi American teens in Dearborn, Michigan celebrate Iraq's Asia Cup win as the US-led forces remain at war in Iraq against opposition forces that see "Operation Iraqi Freedom" and



"Operation New Dawn" as military occupations. (Photo courtesy of Reuters)³²

Photo 2: American Muslims celebrated the US postal stamp honoring Malcolm X; however, in US mosques, Malcolm's legacy of private spirituality looms larger than his radical political commitment to social justice.³³

³² Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014, p. 3.

³³ Ibid, p. 120.



Photo 3: The Moors drew the attention of crowds, the press, and politicians with exotic dress, parades, and healing self-care products. (From the Digital Collection of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)³⁴

Excerpt 1: “When Americans refer to the ‘Muslim World,’ they reproduce, amend, and complicate Colonial Europe’s moral geography of the Orient. Often Americans mistakenly use the terms ‘the Muslim World’ and ‘the Middle East’ interchangeably; both terms refer to far more sweeping groupings of peoples and lands than those defined by the specific and narrow American political and cultural interests in these geographies over time.”³⁵

Excerpt 2: “...the US press often linked the question of a female imam [religious prayer leader in the mosques] to the movement for female priests in Catholicism, even though it is religious scholars, not imams, who hold the highest religious ranks in Sunni Islam, and women... are not technically restricted from becoming religious scholars and preachers.”³⁶

Excerpt 3: “The social upheaval and trauma of the Great Migration in which nearly five million blacks, mostly Christians, moved from the slavery-tainted South to the industrial, urban centers of the North beginning in the 1920s, was depend by a simultaneous crisis of religious authority within the Black Church, which had conspicuously fallen out of step with the rhythm and logic of the subversive, resistant, protest spirit of Black Religion. In this context, thousands of blacks,

³⁴ Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014, p. 89.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 5

³⁶ Ibid, p. 319.

displaced from the South and disaffected with the church, converted to Islam in part because its message appealed to their religious and political sensibilities.”³⁷

Appendix 4: AP History Document-Based Question Rubric

<u>SKILLS</u>	<u>SCORING DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>DECISION RULES</u>
A. THESIS/CLAIM	1 Point Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.	<i>To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.</i>
B. CONTEXT	1 Point Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.	<i>To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.</i>
C. EVIDENCE	1 Point Provides specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.	<i>To earn one point, the response must identify specific historical examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.</i>
	2 Point Supports an argument in response to the prompt using specific and relevant examples of evidence	<i>To earn two points the response must use specific historical evidence to support an argument in response to the prompt.</i>
D. ANALYSIS AND REASONING	1 Point Uses historical reasoning (e.g. comparison, causation, CCOT) to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.	<i>To earn this point, the response must explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document’s point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.</i>

³⁷ Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014, p. 84

	<p>2 Points</p> <p>Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.</p>	<p><i>To earn the first point, the response must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced. To earn the second point, the response must demonstrate a complex understanding. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables</i><i>• Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both causes and effects</i><i>• Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods</i><i>• Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes</i><i>• Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence</i> <p><i>This understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</i></p>
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Resources

- Common beliefs about Muslims activity
- *Persepolis* (for grades 6-8, I suggest just part one)
- Excerpts and pictures from *Islam is a Foreign Country*
- Comparative stories of Hagar from Robert C. Gregg
- Video on Orientalism (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZST6qnRR1mY)
- Access to the New Muslim Cool documentary (<https://tubitv.com/movies/15640/new-muslim-cool>)
 - You can request to borrow a hard copy PBS through their POV program which can be found here:
https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/?utm_source=pov&utm_medium=website
- LEQ rubric

Student Resources

Satrapı, Marjane. *Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003.

This graphic novel is needed for this unit, but it is also a great resource to challenge students' perspectives on a variety of issues they can identify with as teenagers. It details the experiences of Marjane Satrapi just before, through, and after the Iranian Revolution that removed a progressive monarch from office and placed a more restrictive religious group in power. The themes of the graphic novel include family struggles, fitting in a new country, being too much for some people but not enough for others, etc.

Teacher Resources

Grewal, Zareena. *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

This is a great read in general about the complexities of Islam and Muslims in the United States. The book also provides great insight in the roots of Islam in America as well as tackles why westerners, in particular, use the terms "Muslim World" and "the Middle East" interchangeably when they individually mean so much more. The book is a great start on understanding the religious complexities when it comes to the struggles of joining the mainstream in America. It also provides a great introduction into the spread of Islam in the African American community in the 20th century.

Goodwin, Megan, & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?." episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*. iTunes, podcast.

To say this podcast is amazing would be an understatement. I recommend this podcast to students who want a better understanding of religion and many other topics we cover in history. In this particular episode, Goodwin and Morgenstein Fuerst tackle the basic complexities of religion and how sometimes we flatten religion into just a chart of beliefs, texts, and rituals when religion is more than these basic ideas. They go into detail about how religion is about the sense of community along with the beliefs and behaviors associated

with the religion. It's a great episode to get a basic understanding of religion before tackling the teaching of religion.

Taylor, Jennifer Maytorena, Hamza Pérez, Salman Ahmad, Rey Nieves, Sean Jones, Chris Strollo, and Soy Sos. 2009. *New Muslim Cool*. [Arlington, Va.]: [Dist. by PBS].

I include *New Muslim Cool* here because it's a great resource to understand the complexities of the Muslim community. When I watched this movie for the first time, it challenged my perspective of the Islamic faith and who I perceived to be Muslim. Before teaching about Islam, I think this is a great resource that showcases the religious complexities of Islam beyond the colonial view westerners have of Islam and Muslims. The movie also speaks to the level of mistrust the government has towards Muslims regardless of where they came from, whether it be the born and raised in the US or from abroad.

“What Does It Mean to Be Religious - YouTube.” ReligionForBreakfast, 2017.

www.youtube.be/MrLj2MEcXO8

Along with *Keeping It 101*, this video helps to lay how to better address learning about religion. Since religion is not flat and static like we think, this video provides a base understanding of the 3B model (belief, behavior, and belonging). It addresses the how having this well-rounded view of religion allows for better understanding of how the people who practice operate as well as their religion. Faith and belief do not mean the same thing and this short video helps to concisely explain this better.

Notes

- 1 "What Does It Mean to Be Religious - YouTube." ReligionForBreakfast, 2017.
www.youtu.be/MrLj2MEcXO8
- 2 "Common Misconceptions about Muslims." Encountering the World of Islam. 2018.
<https://www.encounteringislam.org/misconceptions>
- 3 Marjane Satrapi, "Why I wrote Persepolis," *Reading Writing Link*, Nov./Dec, 9-11. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from
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- 4 Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.
- 5 Dan Clayton Jr. & Terry Clark, *Understanding religion and popular culture: theories, themes, products and practices*, London: Routledge, 2012.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Religious Freedom Center. (n.d.). Religious Identity Formation.
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- 10 Megan Goodwin & lyse Morgenstein Fuerst, "What the heck is religion, and what the heck is this podcast?," episode 101 on *Keeping it 101*, iTunes, podcast.
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<https://www.religiousfreedomcenter.org/grounding/identity/>
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Tariq Ramadan, "Islam Today: The need to explore its complexities," *Neiman Reports*, Summer, 2007. Retrieved September 23, 2020 from <https://niemanreports.org/articles/islam-today-the-need-to-explore-its-complexities/>
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- 20 Ibid
- 21 Catholic News Service, "Court upholds rule that House open each day it is in session with prayer," *National Catholic Reporter*, 2019. Retrieved October 23, 2020 from <https://www.ncronline.org/news/quick-reads/court-up-holds-rule-house-open-each-day-it-session-prayer>

- 22 “Chaplains of the House of Representatives,” (n.d.). Retrieved October 23, 2020 from [https://history.house.gov/ People/Office/Chaplains/](https://history.house.gov/People/Office/Chaplains/)
- 23 Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2005.
- 24 Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014.
- 25 Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2003.
- 26 Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014.
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- 28 Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- 29 Benjamin Pietro Marcus, “ Six Guidelines for Teaching About Religion,” *Education Week*, 2016. Retrieved October 23, 2020 from https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global_learning/2016/04/six_guidelines_for_teaching_about_religion.html
- 30 Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014
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- 32 Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, New York: New York University Press, 2014, p. 3.
33. *Ibid*, p. 120
- 34 *Ibid*, p. 89
- 35 *Ibid*, p. 5
- 36 *Ibid*, p. 319
- 37 *Ibid*, p. 84

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