

Freedom of Religion

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the US Constitution’s guarantee of freedom of religion granted in the First Amendment. Focusing on Sikhism, students will explore the concepts of intolerance and prejudice as they relate to religion, learning the importance of education and open mindedness in combatting these issues. To culminate this lesson, students will work in groups to design and present an educational campaign focused on a particular religion and encouraging religious tolerance in general.

Courses

Civics and Economics
US History

North Carolina Essential Standards for Civics and Economics

- CE.C&G.1.4 - Analyze the principles and ideals underlying American democracy in terms of how they promote freedom (i.e. separation of powers, rule of law, limited government, democracy, consent of the governed / individual rights –life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, self-government, representative democracy, equal opportunity, equal protection under the law, diversity, patriotism, etc.
- CE.C&G.1.5 - Evaluate the fundamental principles of American politics in terms of the extent to which they have been used effectively to maintain constitutional democracy in the United States (e.g., rule of law, limited government, democracy, consent of the governed, etc.
- CE.C&G.2.3 - Evaluate the U.S. Constitution as a “living Constitution” in terms of how the words in the Constitution and Bill of Rights have been interpreted and applied throughout their existence (e.g., precedents, rule of law, Stare decisis, judicial review, supremacy, equal protections, “establishment clause”, symbolic speech, due process, right to privacy, etc.)

North Carolina Essential Standards for American History I

- AH1.H.5.1 - Summarize how the philosophical, ideological and/or religious views on freedom and equality contributed to the development of American political and economic systems through Reconstruction (e.g., natural rights, First Great Awakening, Declaration of Independence, transcendentalism, suffrage, abolition, “slavery as a peculiar institution”, etc

Materials

- “Freedom of Religion” accompanying Power Point, available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, e-mail the file name to Carolinak12@unc.edu
- “On Common Ground - Law Enforcement Training Video on Sikhism,” available at <http://www.justice.gov/crs/video/ocg-video.htm>.
- Excerpt from “How Will We Teach About Sikhism After the Tragedy?” by Laurie Patton, attached
- Create a Freedom of Religion Educational Campaign, assignment attached

Preparation

- Religion is a complex issue to address in the classroom, yet it is important for teachers to allow students opportunities to grapple with such issues, even if they can prove to be controversial. In order to discuss religion in a safe and tolerant manner, firm expectations and ground rules of respect and civil dialogue must be present in the classroom. For activities to help lay such a foundation in your classroom, see Carolina K-12’s activities section of the [Database of K-12 Resources](#). (Search “Classroom Management/Setting Expectations.”)

- Throughout the discussion of religion, teachers should ensure favoritism for one faith over another is not shown, and that promotion religion in general over atheism or vice versa is not promoted. Teaching students *about* diverse faiths and their influences on societies and cultures is constitutional, indoctrinating students or encouraging them to participate in faith activities is not. (Source: <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/maintain-neutrality>)

Procedure

Warm-Up: Exploring Religion

1. As a warm-up, project slide 2 of the accompanying Power Point and ask students to share what comes to mind (i.e. the symbols, structures, groups/clubs, actions, emotions, etc.) that they associate with religion. Compile student thoughts in a list. Further student thinking by asking the class to think of what in particular they notice in everyday life that is connected with religion (i.e. the church on the corner, wearing a cross necklace, praying before a meal, specific religious holidays, etc.)
 - **Teacher note:** Some of what students note will certainly be positive, but some answers may also highlight negative characteristics, events, etc., that students associate with religion. It is important to let students express their opinions and not censor responses, as long as they are respectful. Any comment presented in a derogatory manner or representing intolerance should be respectfully corrected by the teacher.
2. Next, tell students you want to show them a short bit of video and that they should be prepared to offer observations and thoughts afterwards. Play the first minute of “On Common Ground - Law Enforcement Training Video on Sikhism,” available at <http://www.justice.gov/crs/video/ocg-video.htm>. Do not give students any information regarding the video or what they will see. Pause the video after approximately a minute, right after the woman reports “suspicious activity” to the officers and they tell her to wait while they investigate. (Do not play beyond this point at this time.) Discuss:
 - What took place in this video?
 - What is your first impression of what was happening?
 - Why did the woman feel the need to speak to the police? In particular, what made her uncomfortable?
 - How would you characterize her response?
 - If you were in the woman’s situation, how would you feel? How would you react?
 - What do you think is going to happen next?
 - What role did religion play in this clip? (Students will likely be unable to identify the man as a follower of the Sikhism, but will hopefully be able to identify his turban and/or facial hair as having religious significance.)
 - (Project slide 3 which contains an image of a nun and refer to it as you pose the next question.) What if this were the person the woman saw taking pictures at the monument? Do you think the woman in the video would have still talked to the police? Why or why not?
 - **Teacher Note:** Throughout the above discussion, take note if students also assume the man is suspicious or if they predict illegal activity will occur next and be prepared to address it in the next round of conversation.
3. Continue playing the video again for approximately 30 more seconds, stopping after the officers apologize to the man and shake his hand. Discuss:
 - What did we find out regarding the “suspicious” man? Why was he taking pictures?
 - How did the man react to being questioned by the officers?
 - The man explained that since he is Sikh, he is used to being viewed as suspicious. Why do you think this is?
 - Do you know anything about the Sikh religion?
 - What would you consider to be the “mainstream” religions in America? Do you feel that all religions are viewed respectfully and treated equally? Explain. What issues sometimes occur for religions and their followers that are not mainstream?

- (Project the images on slides 4 and 5, and ask students to discuss what they see.) What do all of these images have in common? Are there any people pictured who might be treated differently based on how they look, or might even make you uncomfortable if you saw them in public? Which ones and why? (If students admit that particular people would make them uncomfortable or might experience different treatment, discuss what those particular images of people have in common.)
- (Project slide 6 and discuss the images pictured.) What do these images have in common? Although they all illustrate people praying, why might we be more comfortable with one image than the other?
- In your opinion, is religion a topic most people are comfortable talking about? Why or why not? What can be difficult when discussing religion?
- Do you think most people in your community are educated about other religions other than their own? Why or why not? What role might a lack of education play in people being disrespected or treated differently because of their religion?
- Do you think most Americans believe that people should have the right to practice whatever religion they choose freely? Explain.
- What types of laws exist in our country that address religion?

The First Amendment and the Establishment Clause

4. Next, without yet telling students the source, project slide 7, which contains the text of the First Amendment. Discuss:
 - Raise your hand if you recognize this text. Who can identify where it is from? (First Amendment to the US Constitution)
 - Are there any words that are unfamiliar to you?
 - Students may need clarification regarding words such as thereof [of it], abridging [reducing], and redress [to make right.]
 - According to this text, what is the purpose of the First Amendment? What does it set forth? Who and what does it protect? Why do you think the Framers felt this was important enough to include in the Constitution?
 - Has anyone heard the term “Establishment Clause?” What can you tell me about it? (Allow students to share what they already know and then project slide 8, which highlights the Establishment Clause, the first 10 words of the Amendment.) What is your interpretation of this clause? What specifically is this phrase saying?
 - Ensure students understand that in addition to providing for general religious freedom, this clause deems that Congress cannot establish an official church, such as the Church of the United States. Further, through a series of Supreme Court decisions, the Establishment Clause has been extended to not only apply to Congress, but also state government through a process known as incorporation. While this concept does not need to be thoroughly explained to the class, ensure they understand that the Establishment Clause applies to both federal and state governments.
 - We know that the First Amendment grants religious freedom. How do you define religious freedom? (Share a definition with students, such as “the right to practice any religion you choose, or to live without any religion at all.”)
 - Why is having the right to freedom of religion important?
 - Even though we have the right to freedom of religion, we’ve already pointed out that many people are mistreated, stereotyped, judged, persecuted, etc. for practicing their chosen religion. Why does this disconnect exist?
 - What will it take (and on whose part) to bridge such a disconnect? How can we better ensure tolerance of all religions? (Summarize student thoughts in a list on the board.)

Education and Tolerance

5. Next, remind students of the video they viewed at the start of class, in which a tourist was reported to the police for taking videos because of his appearance. Explain to students that people practicing Sikhism experienced a rise in hate crimes since 9/11. Discuss:

- What is meant by the term hate crime? (Allow students to discuss then project the definition on slide 9.)
 - Why do you think Sikhs have been the target of more hate crimes since 9/11?
 - Project slide 10 and discuss that Sikhs, Muslims, Arabs, and other people assumed to be Middle Eastern have all experienced an increase in hate crimes.
 - Project slide 11 and share a recent example of such hate crimes – the August 5, 2012 Sikh temple shooting. (Teachers can read more details to share with students at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/06/us/shooting-reported-at-temple-in-wisconsin.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.)
 - What is the best way to prevent hate crimes from occurring? When a hate crime has occurred, how should a community respond?
6. Next, provide the attached article excerpt, “How Will We Teach About Sikhism After the Tragedy?” by Laurie Patton to students. Either individually or in partners, instruct students to read the article then answer the corresponding questions. Once students have read, discuss the article as a class:
- How did Sikh temples respond to the August 2012 shooting?
 - Describe the role of hospitality in the Sikh religion.
 - What does Patton say can help avoid misunderstandings and tension regarding religion?
 - Why is education regarding religion important? Whose responsibility is such education?
 - The author ends with asking for ways we can all participate in the educational process regarding religion. What should each person, as members of tolerant communities, do?
 - Does being tolerant of religion mean that you can’t question or critically analyze religions?
 - As students discuss, share the quote on slide 12 to further the conversation : "I think there's got to be a very firm distinction between criticism and persecution. And I think people misunderstand the idea of tolerance often. They think that tolerance is the same thing as lack of criticism. But to me, tolerating somebody else's beliefs is not failing to criticize them, it's not persecuting them for having those beliefs. That is absolutely important. You should not persecute people for their beliefs. But it doesn't mean you can't criticize their beliefs-those are not the same thing. I think people have tended to sort of run these two things together, and they perceive criticism as if it was persecution. But it isn't."
 - Do you agree with McGinn? Why or why not?
 - What is the difference between criticism and persecution/intolerance?
7. **Optional:** To share additional information regarding the Sikh religion, return to the “On Common Ground - Law Enforcement Training Video on Sikhism” and play the next 12 (or more) minutes of the video for students, which provides educational information regarding Sikhs. Afterwards, discuss:
- David Baker stated: “...We process differences before similarities and the reality of that is if we don’t understand what the differences signify there is a mystery to that. And sometimes mystery can breed misunderstanding and misinformation and sometimes it keeps us from meeting each other on common ground.” What message is he trying to convey? What are some ways you can check yourself to ensure you aren’t reacting to another person based on misunderstanding and misinformation?
 - Who are Sikh Americans? Summarize what the video shares regarding Sikhism.
 - What misconceptions exist regarding Sikh’s?
 - In what ways are Sikhs integral to American life and culture?
 - Why do you think the Department of Justice created this video as part of its law enforcement training? Who else needs to consider information such as this?
8. As a culminating activity, provide students with the attached group project “Create a Freedom of Religion Educational Campaign” and go over the details with the class. Teachers will need to determine whether to assign groups or allow students to choose, as well as whether to assign or allow choice regarding the religion each group focuses on. Teachers will also need to determine and inform students of how much class time and homework time will be provided for completing the project, as well as the due date.

9. On the date the project is due, allow students to meet with their groups at the start of class to organize themselves then have each group present their PSA as it would be aired on television. Before beginning performances, remind students of the expectations of respectful audience members (in particularly ensuring students do not continue working on their own performances but rather pay attention to the performers.) As students watch, they should take notes in the format below:

Religion addressed in PSA	Information/facts shared	Myths/stereotypes dispelled	What I liked about the PSA

10. Groups should also hang their final posters around the room and either before or after the PSA performances, allow the class to do a gallery walk in which they spend a few minutes examining each poster and taking notes in the format above.
11. Allow time for students to discuss the performances and posters, sharing their responses to both out loud. Teachers can also have students vote on which poster and/or PSA they felt was most effective in terms of promoting education and religious tolerance and why. Close by discussing:
- What similarities can you identify between all of these religions?
 - Why do you think some people are so uncomfortable based on differences such as headdress, facial hair, skin tone, clothing, etc.?
 - Discuss with students how while aspects of a religion other than one with which we are familiar might seem abnormal, foreign, or strange, it's important to remember that to the person practicing that religion, it's familiar, comfortable, and part of their everyday existence/routine.
 - If you consider yourself a religious person, consider your own religion from the perspective of someone practicing a different religion on the other side of the world. What about your religion might someone else unfamiliar with it find unusual or strange?
 - If you find yourself in a situation where you are uncomfortable around someone who is different than you in some way, what do you think you should do? What are some strategies you can employ for practicing tolerance?

Additional Resources

- For additional lesson plans addressing religion, see Carolina K-12's Database of K-12 Resources, including:
 - Religious Symbols in Public Schools: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/ReligiousSymbolsinPublicSchoolsDELIBERATION.pdf>
 - Breaking the Muslim Monolith - Exploring Stereotypes: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/MuslimMonolith9.pdf>
 - Women's Rights in Iraq: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/Iraq.pdf>
 - The Establishment Clause and *Lee v. Weisman*: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/LeevWeisman.pdf>
 - Public Christmas Displays and *Lynch v. Donnelly*: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/LynchvDonnelly.pdf>
 - *Marsh v. Chambers* & the Establishment Clause: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/MarshvChambers.pdf>
 - Establishment Clause and *Van Orden v Perry*: <http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/VanOrdenvPerry.pdf>
 - If the above links don't work, visit k12database.unc.edu and search the lesson title.

- The First Amendment Center offers numerous lesson plans on the topic of the freedom of religion:
http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/resources/lessonplans_religious.aspx
- Lesson plans from the Constitutional Rights Foundation on religious tolerance can be accessed at:
<http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-1.html>
- Each of these 10 expert-developed, media-rich lesson plans provides ideas for teaching students in grades 4-8 about Islamic holidays, traditions, and cultures.
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/accessislam/lesson.html>
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How Will We Teach About Sikhism After the Tragedy?

by Laurie Patton

Access to the Sikh temple in Oak Creek Wisconsin is still restricted as police search for clues to the unspeakable violence that occurred there last Sunday. But across the country, other Sikh temples are responding to the shooting not by shutting their doors, but by opening them.

The Sikh temple in San Jose held an open house and gave out free head coverings. Over five hundred people gathered for a vigil at the *gurdwara* [Sikh spiritual center] in Plymouth, a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. This weekend, many Sikh temples have issued an open invitation to all to come and worship, in a concerted effort to welcome and educate America about their traditions.

Hospitality is a key element to the Sikh tradition. All four doors of a *gurdwara* are meant to be open, symbolizing the fact that everyone, regardless of faith, is welcome. The Sikh tradition of *langar* is perhaps the most dramatic symbol of radical hospitality: every visitor to the temple is fed in the “guru’s free kitchen.” *Langar* is based on the idea, begun by Nanak Dev, the first Sikh guru, that feeding and clothing people is the most fundamental human transaction of all. To feed people is *seva*—voluntary, selfless service.

A Sikh community in Medford, Massachusetts, Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar, is typical of many Sikh places of worship in this tradition of hospitality. On Sunday, August 12 the Gurdwara is holding a vigil for those injured or killed in the Oak Creek shootings. Everyone in the community is welcome, and non-Sikhs are invited to show their solidarity.

Just underneath that announcement of welcome, the “Law Enforcement Training Video On Sikhism” is posted. The description of the video reads:

“Awareness of cultural and religious observations, including those of Sikhism, can help avoid misunderstanding and tension—assisting the public in understanding the challenges and realizing the contributions of the Sikh community in America.”

The need for this video indicates the deep price of such open hospitality—a kind of vulnerability that many minority communities still face—especially when they become religiously organized.

Indeed, when one or two Sikhs lived in a town, they may have been the town’s “quirky” exceptions, the strangers that were token symbols of tolerance. But when a community of Sikhs began to gather amongst themselves, and to build buildings, they could easily become different kinds of targets of hate crimes. They became group targets by virtue of the fact that they were, indeed, now no longer an exception, but an integrated thread in the larger fabric of the town.

As a result, and especially after a tragedy, each minority religious community that suffers discrimination must pay a cultural tax: the extra burden of educating the rest of the country about its traditions, its rituals, and its cultures. After 9/11, there was a massive outpouring of videos, blogs, and articles by Muslim leaders aiming to educate Americans about Islam. In the various radio appearances by Sikh leaders this week, all of them articulated the need for education about Sikhism.

To be sure, this is part of the bedrock upon which American society is built. Minority religious communities should have the right and freedom to represent themselves and their traditions—however, wherever, and whenever they choose.

But something is deeply wrong when the burden remains exclusively on the community itself to conduct all of the outreach, to articulate its values and defend its contributions to the rest of society. There is a deep isolation, not to mention exhaustion, in that “cultural tax”—especially after a tragedy.

Do we as Americans simply leave the community to articulate itself to its neighbors? Do we ask them to teach us at the same time as they are burying their dead? Or are there ways that fellow travelers can participate in the educational process?

1. How did Sikh temples respond to the August 2012 shooting?
2. Describe the role of hospitality in the Sikh religion.
3. What does Patton say can help avoid misunderstandings and tension regarding religion?
4. Why is education regarding religion important?
5. Whose responsibility is such education?
6. The author ends with asking for ways we can all participate in the educational process regarding religion. What should each person, as members of tolerant communities, do?

Source:

http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/atheologies/6270/how_will_we_teach_about_sikhism_after_the_tragedy

Group Project: Create a Freedom of Religion Educational Campaign

- I. Assignment: Lack of education, misinformation and intolerance have been identified as key components that lead to misunderstandings and in the most extreme form, hate crimes. To assist in combatting religious intolerance and to remind the public of the right to religious freedom, your group will launch an educational campaign focused on a particular religion and encouraging religious tolerance. The content of your educational campaign must:
 - Contain accurate facts regarding the religion assigned to you
 - Facts should include information about the religion's history, beliefs, habits and rituals of worship, values, customs & traditions, dress, holidays, etc.
 - Dispel common myths and stereotypes regarding your assigned religion
 - Compare the similarities between your assigned religion and other religions
 - Teach the viewer about the First Amendment and each American's right to religious freedom
 - Address the importance of religious tolerance in general, with direct attention paid to combatting stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and hate crimes

- II. Your final educational campaign will include two components:
 1. A Public Service Announcement (PSA): A PSA is an informational commercial. Your final PSA:
 - Must be at least 3-5 minutes in length when aired on television
 - Should contain the content addressed in step I
 - Should be respectful, educational, and creative . Your infomercial can contain music, props, a unique setting, etc. While the purpose is not to be comedic, you can employ humor as an educational technique as long as it is done so in a respectful manner. Make sure that you do not engage in stereotyping, since part of the purpose of the PSA is to combat such behavior.
 - Will be performed in front of the class, with all group members taking active, committed roles in the presentation. Performances should be presented in a serious, organized manner.

 2. An educational poster to be posted in schools, community centers, on Face Book, and other public places. Your final poster must:
 - include text and illustrations that share the points that you feel are most important to convey regarding your assigned religion and the concept of religious tolerance in general (see step I above)
 - be creative and catch the viewer's eye
 - the overall work should be artistic, organized, and grammatically correct. It should be evident that focused effort was put forth in creating and completing the poster.

- III. Possible religions that your campaign may focus on include:
 - Christianity
 - Islam
 - Hinduism
 - Buddhism
 - Sikhism
 - Judaism
 - Bahaism
 - Confucianism
 - Jainism
 - Shintoism
 - Other (if you would like to work on a religion not listed here, discuss with your teacher)