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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

TEACHING CHRISTIAN SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS ABOUT OTHER FAITHS

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**Presented at:
NACSW Convention 2007
March, 2007
Dallas, TX**

Respecting All Paths

Teaching Christian
Social Work Students
About Other Faiths

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Presented at NACSW's National Convention
Dallas, Texas
March 2007

Session Objectives

By the end of this session participants will be equipped to

- Impart knowledge about the world's major religions
- Encourage respect for all faiths
- Help Christian social work students understand the importance of knowledge about and respect for other faiths

Integrating Faith with Practice

- Integration of Christian faith with practice can be difficult for our students
- Integration of knowledge about and respect for other faiths can be even more challenging
- YET, it is very important

Why?

- work with clients from all walks of life
- religious ideas and beliefs address important life questions
- understanding religious beliefs and practices can better help us connect with our clients

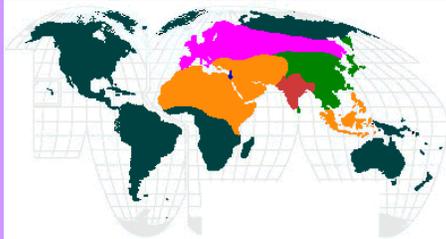
How?

- Basic Information
- Major Holidays & Celebrations
- Guest Speakers
- Role Plays
- Community Experiences

Basic Information

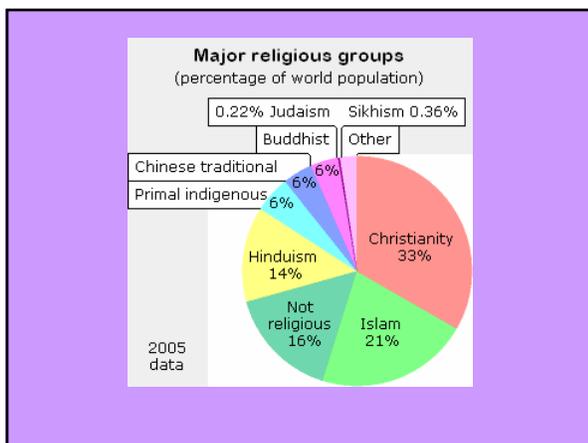
- Timeline of major world religions
- Map of beginnings of major religions
- Map and #s of religions today
- Religion "grid"

Original Geographical Locations of World Religions



Animism Judaism Christianity Islam Buddhism Hinduism





Religion Grid

- Basic beliefs of each major religion
- Holy book(s)
- Major holidays & celebrations
- Basic terminology
(terms for religious leader, place of worship, etc.)

Etiquette

- Community Experiences are vital
- Knowing some basics rules of etiquette is essential

Review of How?

Basic Information
Major Holidays & Celebrations
Guest Speakers
Role Plays
Community Experiences

STRESS RESPECT
(not agreement)

Be HONEST with students – Learn Together

Be Creative

MAKE IT FUN

The Golden Rules

Appreciating similarities and differences helps people to learn tolerance. Then people can truly be neighbors, living in harmony, each group in its own way – living every day by the Golden Rule.....

Some information for handouts was taken from Maestro, B (1996). The story of religion. New York: Clarion.

The Sacred Books

Confucianism: The Analects

The Analects is a collection of the selected sayings of Confucius, put together after his death. It is only one of four books that contain the teachings of Confucius, by many to be the most important and is certainly the best known.

Hinduism: The Vedas

There are four Vedas, made up of hymns and verses containing the main teachings and beliefs of Hinduism. The Rig Veda, the oldest, has ten thousand verses in a thousand hymns. The Upanishads, the last books of the Vedas, contain teachings of Brahman and writings about the other Vedas. The Puranas (myths) and two epic poems, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are also part of the sacred literature. The Mahabharata is the longest poem in the world and contains the popular and beloved Bhagavad Gita (Song of God)

Buddhism: The Tripitaka or Pali Canon

“The Three Baskets” of Buddhist Law contain the teachings of the Buddha in the Dhammapada, rules for monks and comments about the teachings. There are thirty-two books in all. Different Buddhist sects use different versions of the texts, some written in Pali and some written in Sanskrit (both ancient languages). The Sutras and Jataka Tales also relate to teachings of the Buddha.

Judaism: The Tanakh

The Tanakh is made up of the Pentateuch or Torah, which contains the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim). The Tanakh is the same as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. The Talmud contains many volumes of discussion and interpretation of Jewish Law. The teachings of scholars and rabbis help to apply the laws to real life

Christianity: The Bible

The Bible is made up of two books: The Old Testament, which is the same as the Jewish Tanakh, and the New Testament. The writings of the Old Testament tell the story of the Creation and give the history of the religion shared by Christians and Jews up to the time of Jesus. The New Testament is made up of writings by Christians in the first century A.D. They relate the teaching, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as told by his followers and disciples. The Apocrypha is made up of Jewish writings that are not in the Old Testament but are included in some Christian Bibles.

Islam: The Qur'an

The Qur'an (Koran) sets out the Word of God as told to Muhammad. It contains rules and laws for every aspect of human life. There are one hundred fourteen suras or chapters, meant to be recited aloud. The word *Qur'an* means “recitation” in Arabic. This sacred text is considered perfect only in its original Arabic, so any translation is inadequate. Many Muslims can recite the Qur'an from memory.

Etiquette

1. General Principles:

- Please remember that while participating in “community experiences”, you are a representative of the university, as well as our class. Identify yourself when you call or visit, and briefly explain your assignment.
- Before visiting a religious center, contact the religious or lay leader of the community as a courtesy. Inquire about the best time to observe religious services and ask who you might speak with to find out more about the history and current activities of the community.
- Please keep in mind that, in addition to being a researcher, you are also a guest. As such, please be respectful of the atmosphere of ritual or worship; always respect and follow the practices of your host community. Be sure to thank your hosts for their time and efforts on your behalf, and send thank you notes when appropriate.
- Closely observe the practices of community members, and when appropriate follow their example. If everyone is taking off their shoes at the door, offering a particular greeting, or speaking in hushed tones, follow suit. If unsure, ask a member of the community; inquiries often should be directed to a person of the same sex.
- Ask for permission before taking photographs, videotaping, or tape recording in any religious center. Avoid talking or note taking during a worship service. Don't take out pen and paper, camera, or tape recorder, unless you have made quite certain that it would not be intrusive or rude. Use this as an occasion to sharpen your powers of sheer observation. If the atmosphere permits, making a few notes as you visit a place will permit you to recall more accurately when you sit down later to write your paper.
- Both men and women should dress modestly and neatly; loose clothing is recommended as, in some centers, you may sit on the floor.
- Guests at religious centers are discouraged from openly displaying jewelry with other religious symbols or images, including the cross, the Star of David, zodiac signs, pentacles, or images of people or animals.
- Wear shoes that are easily removed, as it is the practice to take off one's shoes before entering the prayer halls of Islamic centers, Hindu temples, as well as most Buddhist temples.
- In many of the aforementioned communities, feet should not be touched, should not touch another person, should not be stretched out in front, and should not point directly towards the altar, holy book, or religious leader.
- In many situations, it is appropriate to avoid physical contact, particularly with people of the opposite sex. Many religious communities discourage shaking hands with someone of the opposite sex; others, such as some Muslim communities, discourage a private meeting between a man and a woman. (This can be circumvented by working in teams, or arranging to meet with two community members at the same time.) Other communities, such as some Buddhists, might discourage touching the head of another person, even that of a child.

2. Guidelines by Tradition. These are not intended to be comprehensive, but are intended to provide some basic information for first-time visitors.

- **Jewish**

- The religious leader, or "Rabbi" may be the best contact person; in some cases, the temple president is designated for outreach.
- In Orthodox synagogues, women and men worship in separate sections.
- Women should cover their head and wear clothing that covers the arms and legs in Orthodox synagogues; head coverings are required in some Conservative synagogues as well. Men are required to wear a small head covering, known as a *yarmulke*, or *kippah*, in Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist synagogues, as well as some Reform synagogues. They are available at the entrance to the main sanctuary.

- **Christian**

- Participation in worship is optional. Visitors are always welcome.
- On the whole, participation in communion is limited to baptized Christians; in some cases, it is limited to members of that denomination. There are usually words of invitation at the beginning of the communion service that make clear who is invited to participate.

- **Muslim (Islam)**

- Remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall of a masjid or Islamic Center; in some cases, the shoes are removed at the front door.
- Women should cover their heads and wear loose-fitting clothing that covers their legs and arms. A large scarf, draped over the head, neck, and shoulders, is ideal. Men should also dress modestly; wearing a "kufi" (skullcap) is optional for men.
- Some masajid or Islamic Centers have separate entrances for women and men. All prayer areas have separate sections for men and women. The women's area is often in the back of the room, sometimes separated with a divider; in other cases it is in a separate room.
- The Muslim greeting is "Salaam Alaykum" (Peace be upon you); the response is "Wa Alaykum Salaam" (And upon you Peace). Non-Muslims are welcome to exchange this greeting with their hosts.
- The religious leader is called an "imam"; he leads prayers and delivers the "qutbah" (sermon) during Jum'ah prayers (weekly communal prayers held mid-day on Friday). In some cases, he will serve as a spokesperson for the community; in other cases, the center may have a President or community member designated for this role.
- Non-Muslims should not participate in worship, although visitors are welcome in the prayer hall. N.B. Visitors do not enter prayer rooms in Nizari Ismaili *jamaatkhanas*.
- One should never walk in front of a person who is performing their prayers. Please keep this in mind if you have been given permission to take photographs during worship.

- **Hindu**

- Remove your shoes before entering the temple, as well as most private homes of Hindus.
- It is appropriate to offer the greeting of "Namaste" (with the palms of the hands pressed together in front of your chest, bowing slightly).
- Participation in worship is optional.
- During the service, food and water that has been blessed, "prasad," may be offered to participants. One should accept the "prasad" with the right hand. Non-Hindus are welcome and encouraged to accept "prasad."
- During the service, an oil lamp of "arati" may also be passed. It is customary to pass fingers through the flame and then touch the fingers to the forehead.
- Religious leaders may be called a "Pandit," "Priest," or a "Pujari."
- In some communities, the religious leadership may not speak English fluently; you may ask to speak with the temple president.
- In some instances, it is appropriate to make a small donation to the temple (\$1-\$5, generally in a small box marked accordingly). In some temples, a box called a "Hundi" is provided for this purpose.

- **Buddhist**

- In most cases, it is appropriate to remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall, meditation room, or main temple.
- One should not enter or leave a temple during meditation.
- Participation in worship is optional.
- In some instances, it is appropriate to make a small donation to the temple (\$1-\$5, generally in a small box marked accordingly).
- Religious leaders have various titles, including "Monk," "Reverend," "Venerable," "Minister," "Priest," "Lama," or "Roshi," depending on the denomination.
- In some communities, the religious leadership may not speak English; you may ask to speak with the temple president.

- **Pagan**

- Participation in worship is optional.
- You may be invited to place personal items on an altar during Pagan ritual; however, never touch anything else on the altar.
- If you have joined a circle and wish to leave, you must acknowledge and honor the circle before doing so. (Visualize an opening, step through, and visualize the space closing as you leave.)
- While the event may be celebratory, with dancing, singing, and feasting, remember that it is a religious ritual.
- It is rarely appropriate to take photographs of Pagan religious practices.