

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

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Humanities Discipline: American History

October 30, 2015

World Religion: Judaism

Teaching Module Title: Jewish Religious Traditions in American History

Teaching Module Goals:

- 1-Understand the various Jewish divisions and groups in the United States. How are they similar and how are they different? How do their religious practices differ?
- 2-Understand the origins of Judaism, the laws, Torah, and Jewish festivals
- 3-Understand the importance of Jerusalem and the impact of the Holocaust

Assigned Readings

Bowker, *World Religions*, "Judaism" chapter beginning on page 122-147.

Additional Sources: You Tube Video: "Jewish Americans 1 & 2. They came to stay & a world of their own" by PBS. www.pbs.org/jewishamericans.

Study Questions and Discussion Prompts for Students:

- 1-What are four main and critical events in the origins of Judaism?
- 2-What are the components of the Laws of God that are observed? What is a covenantal relationship?
- 3-What does the word "Messiah" mean? What is the role of the Messiah? Describe how differing views of the Messiah influence Jewish attitudes toward Israel today.
- 4-Describe three elements of the Jewish worship. What is the role of the Torah?

5- What are the sectarian divisions in Judaism? Reform versus Orthodox? How are they similar and different?

6-Describe three of the festivals celebrated in Judaism.

7-What is the name given to the rites of passage for boys and girls? How are the role of men and women defined and debated in these rites? What is the significance of this coming of age rite?

8-What is the significance of Jerusalem in Judaism and to Jews?

9-What was “The Final Solution”?

Written assignments:

1-Please bring your written responses to the above questions to class.

2-Write an essay describing the following:

Imagine that you are an observant Jew. Explain the importance of your religion in your life, making sure to make clear what interpretation of Judaism that you practice. How does it guide you in your everyday life? What doctrines do you find important and how would you practice your faith? How do you relate to the other sects or groups in Judaism? What festivals do you participate in? What was your perspective as you went thru the rites of passage? How do you feel about Jerusalem and Israel? What are some of the challenges you face practicing your faith?

3-An alternative essay:

Define and explain the importance of these three aspects of Jewish faith and tradition: “Laws of God”, “Waiting for the Messiah,” and “Jerusalem.” How are they inter-related and connected to each other? How do they matter to the everyday life of Jews from various backgrounds?