

IUPUI National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute  
"The Many and the One: American Religious History"

## **LIVED RELIGION**

**The Many Expressions of the One Religion:  
Lay Religious Practices from Antiquity to Today  
Sarah Shmitt, Portland High School  
Portland, MAINE**

### ***TEACHING SITUATION:***

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Portland High School in Portland, Maine is currently the most diverse high school--public or private--in the state of Maine, and the second oldest continuously running high school in the country. PHS has students from forty-one nations who speak twenty-six different languages and, within those languages, countless distinct dialects (Portland is a federal Refugee Resettlement community for Somalis, Sudanese, Eastern Europeans and a number of Southeast Asians). Some of these students arrive in Portland from refugee camps or war-torn countries having never attended school; others arrive with advanced literacy and numeracy skills, many with facility in more than three languages, including English. A majority of these students are practicing Muslims or Eastern Orthodox, whereas the native-born population is, generally, secular, Pentacostal/Evangelical or Catholic.

In 2009-10, PHS began offering a two-semester elective World Religions class that I designed and now teach: one semester explores the three major monotheistic religions and the other the religions and traditions/philosophies of Asia. It is for this class that this 'unit' is intended, though I also teach Advanced Placement English Literature 12, all other levels of senior English, as well as a reading/literacy class for students whose reading level is at least two grades below their grade level. In

years past, I have taught Honors Early American History, Asian Studies, Honors British Literature, and Humanities. I am currently the Director of the PHS Global Studies Program.

Because electives accept any mainstreamed student at any reading or grade level, the World Religions class is extremely diverse in every category, from reading ability to grade level to Autism spectrum. While this is what makes it fun and especially fruitful, it is also what makes it particularly tough to teach. Last year, the class was 50% Muslim and 50% everybody else, including a Wiccan, two Pentacostals, a Seventh Day Adventist, a smattering of mainline non-practicing Christians and some secular humanists. With the exception of the Muslims, most have not read any of the Tanakh and only selected parts of the New Testament. The Muslim students know much of the Bible and all of the Koran by heart, and thus offer enriching and sometimes challenging commentary on Christianity. None of last year's student knew anything about Judaism, and I anticipate the same will be true this year.

Classes meet every other day for 75 minutes.

### ***LIVED RELIGION: Lay Religious Practices from Antiquity to Today***

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Because of my students' lack of religious literacy and the wide range of their reading and writing abilities, a great deal of time is spent on connecting the sacred stories/scriptures of each religion to the historical context. This leaves very little time for discussion of how each religion is actually lived on a day-to-day basis by lay adherents, and yet this is, for students, the most relevant and interesting aspect of religion. This 'lesson plan' aims to provide students with examples of lived religion from Antiquity to today for Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the religion of Maine's Penobscot Nation.

## Essential Questions

### How did/do ordinary people express their religious beliefs?

- How do these expressions of belief fit into the eight categories of religion we identified at the beginning of the semester (see attached)?
- What kinds of written, verbal, artistic/musical and/or ritual expressions convey ordinary people's beliefs?
- How do these expressions of belief differ from religious institutional doctrine?
- How do these expressions of belief incorporate indigenous religious beliefs/practices?
- What factors caused practices and beliefs to change over time?

## Lesson Organization

The three major monotheistic religions are explored chronologically through scripture, maps, historical primary and secondary sources, architecture and the arts. To augment our exploration of the developments of religious law, doctrine and ritual at the institutional level, I propose incorporating an example of religion as it was and is lived and practiced by 'regular' people during the following historical periods:

- 1) **Antiquity:** during the religions' early years;
- 2) **Middle Period:** during the centuries from the High Middle Ages to the early 20th century; and the
- 3) **Modern Period:** from the mid- 20th century to today.\*

In order to connect these lessons to Maine specifically, we will also explore the religious practices of

the Penobscot Indians over time, even though they are not considered a traditionally monotheistic culture. The Penobscots are one of the most populous, visible and culturally resilient tribes in Maine and offer a different perspective on both religion and history. Teachers in other locations may choose to focus on whatever indigenous religion is/was practiced in their area.

After an introduction to religion in general and the identification of the Eight Elements of Religion (see attached) at the beginning of the semester, the class explores each religion in chronological order. Thus, the assignments described below will be given accordingly. This means that this "lesson plan" will be used over the course of the entire semester.

*\* It is understood that these chronological divisions are arbitrary and artificial, but because these religious traditions developed in some cases sequentially and in others in parallel, these there had to be some way to organize the available sources logically.*

## Assignments

A. For both Antiquity and the Middle Period, students will complete a short reading or explore a photo, map, artifact, piece of art, or mp3 file, preferably a primary source, that exemplifies or describes lay religious practices and beliefs.

B. Next, in small groups, students will draft answers to the Essential Questions, above, and create a graphic organizer (see example) that, by the end of the semester, will allow easy comparison of the three time periods and the four traditions explored. The graphic organizer should

- 1) Include the three time periods above;

2) Include sources that depict lived religion for the three monotheistic religions and the Penobscot religion;

3) Identify which of the eight elements of religion each source depicts (for example, the lyrics of the Hasidic rapper JewDa Maccabi include verses from the Tanakh; one of his songs would be an example of the following elements of religion: Worldview, Central Stories, Emotional Expression).

C. Students will also be asked to develop their own open-ended questions to share with the class in discussion.

D. For our study of the Modern Period in each religion, students will be asked to find examples on their own of ethnographies, photographs, videos, art, music, or any other contemporary lay expression of religious devotion. These they will include in their graphic organizer.

E. Students will present their individual research on the Modern Period to the class in a Wiki (see <https://sites.google.com/site/americanbuddhismtodayss/>). One section of the Wiki will be a written response to the Essential Questions (see rubric) that reflects the transformation of lay religious practices over time.

## **Assessments**

- Graphic Organizer (small groups)
- Open-ended questions (small groups/individual)
- Class Participation: discussion

- Wiki (individual)

## EXAMPLE: Graphic Organizer for Lesson on Lived Religion

	<b>JUDAISM</b>	<b>CHRISTIANITY</b>	<b>ISLAM</b>	<b>PENOBSBOT</b>
<b>ORIGINS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Josephus</i>: Parallels with the Bible (<a href="http://www.josephus.org/ntparallels.htm#KingHerod">http://www.josephus.org/ntparallels.htm#KingHerod</a>)</li> <li>● Exodus 20: 2-17; Leviticus</li> <li>● Map of the Tabernacle</li> <li>● Picture of Shofar (and recording of its sound)</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Ethics, Ritual, Central Stories, Worldview, Material Expression, Sacredness, Emotional Expression, Community</i></p>	<p>Diocletian Persecution Primary Sources (<a href="http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/persecution-sources/">http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/persecution-sources/</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Megiddo Mosaics: Early Christian Art (<a href="http://armageddonchurch.com/?Possible%26nbsp%3Borigin_of_the_Altar_and_Communion_rite_in_the_Megiddo_prison_mosaic.">http://armageddonchurch.com/?Possible%26nbsp%3Borigin_of_the_Altar_and_Communion_rite_in_the_Megiddo_prison_mosaic.</a>)</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Material Expression, Community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Messenger of God" (Anthony Hopkins movie)</li> <li>● Sunnah (in English: In Arabic:</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Central Stories, Ethics</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>"Glusgabe Story"</b>: <a href="http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/GluscabiandtheWindEagle-Abenaki.html">http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/GluscabiandtheWindEagle-Abenaki.html</a></li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Central Stories, Ethics</i></p>
<b>EARLY MODERN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>The Bread Givers</i> excerpt</li> <li>● <i>The Talmud</i>: (<a href="http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/index.htm#talmud">http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/index.htm#talmud</a>)</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Worldview, Ethics, Central Stories, Sacredness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>The Black Robe</u>: film about French Jesuit missionaries to the Hurons in Canada</li> <li>● "Lydia Prout"</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Emotional Expression, Sacredness, Ethics</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Journey of Ibn Battuta</u></li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Ethics</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Excerpts from Champlain's <u>Des Sauvages</u></li> <li>● <u>Life and Conditions of the Red Man</u> by Joseph Nicolai</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Central Stories</i></p>
<b>MODERN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Matisyahu</i>, Lubavitcher Reggae performer, or <i>JewDa Maccabi</i>, Hasidic rapper</li> <li>● Jews @ the Wailing Wall, 2007 (<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecgwyDsor0Q&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecgwyDsor0Q&amp;feature=related</a> 2007)</li> <li>● Shabbat Today: (<a href="http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Shabbat2.html#Set">http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Shabbat2.html#Set</a>)</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Ritual, Material Expression, Sacredness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Habitat for Humanity</i>: (<a href="http://www.habitat.org/how/default.aspx">http://www.habitat.org/how/default.aspx</a>)</li> <li>● Clip from "<i>Friends of God</i>," a film about Conservative Christians from the perspective of a very liberal filmmaker (Nancy Pelosi's daughter, Alexandra Pelosi)</li> <li>● Christian Teen Web Magazine: <a href="http://streetbrand.com/">http://streetbrand.com/</a></li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview, Material Expression, Ethics</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "<i>Covered Girls</i>" video</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Worldview: Material Expression</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Call to Prayer: youtube (<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1LaUCAQIQQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1LaUCAQIQQ</a>)</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Ritual, Sacredness, Central Stories, Emotional Expression</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Film: "<i>Wilderness and Spirit: A Mountain Called Katahdin</i>"</li> </ul> <p><i>E of R: Sacredness, Ritual, Material Expression,</i></p>

