

what do you believe?

DISCUSSIONSTUDY GUIDE

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NOTES TO THE FACILITATOR

Overview and Important Considerations

Purpose

This guide which accompanies the What Do You Believe? documentary is intended to help young people and adults explore an emerging religious diversity in the United States and to engage in activities that will promote interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural awareness. It is designed to protect religious pluralism, one of the most fundamental values of the United States.

Setting Ground Rules

The documentary and guide are not intended to teach religion, instead they teach *about* religion and spirituality from diverse American teenagers' views. As the teacher/facilitator it is important to keep this in mind, and to make sure that none of the participants use the activities in the guide as an opportunity to proselytize. **The ground-rules activity should be done even before watching the film (pages 7-10).** The ground rules ensure that group members understand the challenges of talking about religion and spirituality and agree to creating a safe, non-proselytizing environment. As the facilitator, it may be helpful for you to look at some of the legal issues surrounding "teaching about religion" addressed at the end of the guide in the section from the Anti-Defamation League on religion in public schools (page 28).

The Activities

You will find several activities designed for both before and after watching the video. They might not all be appropriate for your setting. Hopefully you will find the right options for your group. Some activities are more academic and some are more personal. Most of the activities are designed to have a great deal of group input and voice. They are designed in this way to promote interfaith dialogue and the teacher should act more as a facilitator. This means creating and stimulating discussion and then allowing the group to share and learn.

Creating A Space

Since many of these activities involve conversations and group work it's a good idea to create a space where the group can sit in a circle and move around freely. Sometimes it will be better not to sit at desks, or to have groups sit around large tables if possible.

Cautioning Viewers Against Generalizing

Lastly, the documentary does not cover all viewpoints, nor are the teens who appear in it representing their entire religion and all the people who follow it. They represent themselves. Please make sure that viewers understand this.

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PRESCREENING ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES FOR INTERFAITH GROUPS

Find Someone in the Room Who..... Ice Breaker Activity

Objectives To meet new people.
To establish things in common without focusing on religion.
To allow young people from different faiths to connect with each other.

Materials Photocopied "Find Someone Who..." Handout, enough for each person in the group.

Time For a group of 20 approximately 1/2 hour, for a smaller group less time, and for a larger group more time.

Instructions

Hand out sheets.

Tell the group the time that is allotted to fill out their sheets.

Instruct participants to walk around the room to find one person for each of the categories and write their name next to the category.

Stop activity when time is up.

Variation

You can time this game and the first person to fill out their sheet wins.

Debrief

Go down the list and ask people to share what they found, or pick out some more interesting ones and have people share about these by asking things like: "who knows how to cook, and what do you cook?" Make sure you repeat people's names, so the group gets to know each other.

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Find Someone in the Room Who.....Handout

Instructions: Write Name(s) of person next to the quality, skill or attribute

Name:

1. Has A Sister
2. Listens To Rap Or Country Music
3. Loves Chocolate
4. Is A Vegetarian
5. Is Good At Math
6. Plays Basketball
7. Has Traveled Outside Of The U.S.
8. Can Do A Handstand
9. Knows How To Cook
10. Plays A Musical Instrument
11. Wants To Be A Doctor
12. Has Swum In The Ocean
13. Likes To Day-Dream
14. Has An Unusual Pet
15. Does Volunteer Work
16. Has Their Own Web-Site
17. Recently Bought A CD
18. Stays Up Late At Night
19. Writes Poetry
20. Has A Special Talent

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Circle Conversation Ice Breaker Activity

Objective	To provide participants a chance to get to know each other without focusing exclusively on religion.
Materials	None
Time	15-25 minutes
Note	This activity can be used with a group with members of two different religions or a group with members from several religions. If there are only two religions represented try to put all of the participants from each religion in the same group when you form two groups.

Instructions

Form two groups.

Group #1 stands in the middle and makes a circle by standing shoulder to shoulder.

Group #1 turns so they are facing out.

Each person in Group #2 makes another circle around Group #1, and stands facing someone from Group #1.

Tell Group #2 that they will be moving clockwise, to the next person in circle #1, and tell circle #1 that they will stay stationary. If the numbers are not even in Group #2 ask two people to pair (act as one) and move with each other around the circle together.

Tell both groups that you will call out topics and they have to talk to about them, until you say switch and give them another topic. **They can say whatever they want about the topic. The only rule is that they can't stop talking!**

The facilitator should:

- Tailor the topics to the group
- Decide when to change topics and rotate clockwise by circulating and monitoring the energy of the group
- Make sure the pairs keep talking
- Keep the pace quick and switch at different time intervals to make it fun

Here are some sample topics:

Travel, Movies, Food, Family The Future, Love, Sports, School Hobbies, Politics, Cars, Friends, T.V

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Sharing Stories

Objective	For participants to share more personally before watching the film.
Materials	None
Time	15 minutes
Instructions	Write the questions below on the board. Break the group up into pairs and have them discuss the questions. They might want more of an explanation before they answer, but its best to have them interpret the questions for themselves. The idea is to keep the questions open ended!

1. What is important to you?
2. How would you define yourself, what makes you special?
3. Do you feel accepted for who you are?
4. What do you believe?

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DEVELOPING GROUND RULES

Challenges and Ground Rules Activity

Objective	To prepare the group to watch and discuss the documentary. To ensure the experience is safe, non-proselytizing and respectful. To allow the group to develop their own ground rules.
Materials	Paper, pens, chalkboard, chalk or flip charts and markers, and tape.
Time	20-25 minutes to develop Challenges List 20-25 minutes to develop Ground Rules

Instructions

Part 1. Creating A Challenge List

Explain to the group that they will spend the next 25-30 minutes looking at issues that might come up with their own rules for discussing religion and spirituality with people from different backgrounds.

Write these *Challenges Questions* on the board or flip chart:

What might make it hard to for someone to talk about their religious and spiritual beliefs with other people from different backgrounds?

What specific problems might come up in a public school?

What problems might come up in a youth group, or a setting outside school?

Small Groups

Form small groups of 4-5.

Give each group paper, pens, a marker and if possible flip chart paper.

Assign a number to each group so you can refer to them when you review lists as a whole group.

Each group makes a list of 8-10 the challenges and possible problems related to discussing religion with people from different backgrounds, using the questions as their guide.

One person should be the recorder (writer of their list).

If possible each group writes their list on the flip chart paper with a marker. If not they should use a piece of paper, and be prepared to write their list on the blackboard.

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Challenges and Ground Rules Activity (continued)

Whole Group Reporting

Each group takes their flip chart list and tapes it on the wall or writes their list on the board, including their group number on their list.

The whole group walks over to the lists and reads the other groups' Challenge Lists.

When all the groups are finished, the facilitator should summarize the challenges by writing a whole group list eliminating duplicates. Check with the whole group to see if there is anything missing.

Covering All The Challenges

Go through the list below out loud and ask group to check their whole group list to see if they have covered all these challenges. Add anything that is missing!

1. Possible Group Leader/Teacher bias, this includes promoting or denigrating a specific religion, promoting or denigrating religion in general or promoting or denigrating a lack of religious belief
2. A group member/student who doesn't have a religion or spiritual orientation who might be made to feel uncomfortable by the others in the group who do
3. A group member/student who is the only one from their specific religion who might be asked to be an 'expert' or represent everyone from their religion
4. A group member/student who might use the discussion as an opportunity to proselytize
5. A group member/student that might feel peer pressure to conform to the majority
6. A group member who might not be able to be part of the discussion because talking about other religions is against their religion, and who might need to be exempt, and shouldn't be ostracized by the group or the teacher for this
7. What the group should do when there is no one from a particular religious background in the group
8. Make sure all know they have a 'Right to Pass' which means if they are uncomfortable at any point they don't have to answer a question

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Challenges and Ground Rules Activity (continued)

Part 2. Creating a Ground Rules List (see page 11 for Sample Ground Rules List)

Return to the small groups and tell each group that they should make a list of ground rules that will make it possible for people from different backgrounds to talk about their religious and spiritual beliefs.

One person writes their list and one is responsible for reporting to the larger group.

They should base their rules on the challenges and problems they came up with in their first list. Their rules may be about specific issues raised or they may be more general.

Whole Group Reporting

Go around and have the group reporter from each group report their ground rules list. The facilitator writes these up on the board, eliminating duplicates.

Debrief: Whole Group Discussion and Finalizing Ground Rules

Next the facilitator asks the group to agree to follow these rules for this and following What Do You Believe? activities.

If it seems necessary, check in with the group about what should happen if someone doesn't follow the rules. The group can come up with a couple of consequences, but they shouldn't be punitive.

Last have one group member write all the ground rules on a piece of flip chart paper and post them in the room for all to see and to refer to for the rest of the activities.

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SAMPLE GROUND RULES

We won't promote or put down any religion or spiritual belief

We will listen and respect everyone's viewpoint

We will be careful not to generalize or stereotype

We will respect those members who don't have a religion

We won't ask someone to an expert on their religion

We will remember that although two people might be from the same religion they may have different beliefs

We will remember that it is illegal for anyone including the teacher or group leader to make us believe what they believe in a public school or public setting

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LEARNING VOCABULARY BEFORE WATCHING THE DOCUMENTARY

Vocabulary Exercise Option A

Objective	To go over some of the vocabulary from the film before watching it so it is easier for viewers to follow.
Materials	Photocopy enough copies of the <i>Vocabulary Handout (A)</i> for each member of the group.
Time	15-20 minutes
Instructions	<p>The facilitator writes all the vocabulary words from <i>Vocabulary Handout (A)</i> on the board, and breaks the group up into small groups.</p> <p>Do not pass out the handout yet. Each group tries to come up with definitions without a dictionary. They can be directed either to write them down or to just talk about them.</p> <p>Next hand out the vocabulary sheets and each group checks their definitions to see how many they got right.</p>
Debrief	Check for comprehension by calling out some of the words and definitions, and see if there are any other ideas or words to review before watching the documentary.

Vocabulary Exercise Option B

Objective	To go over some of the vocabulary from the film before watching it so it is easier for viewers to follow
Materials	Photocopy enough copies of the <i>Vocabulary Handout (B)</i> for each member of the group
Time	15-20 minutes
Instructions	<p>Divide the group into pairs.</p> <p>Hand each pair two copies of the Vocabulary Handout (B)</p> <p>Each pair works on their sheets for ten minutes.</p>
Debrief	Next review the definitions, and make sure there aren't words within the definitions that students don't understand.

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Vocabulary Handout (A)

Bar-Mitzvah: A coming of age ceremony for Jewish boys when they are considered to become adults and must follow the all the commandments or laws of Judaism. Girls have a Bat-Mitzvah.

Buddha: The founder of Buddhism who lived in the 6th century BCE in India. Born into a royal family the Buddha gave up his life of wealth and privilege in order to dedicate his life to end suffering for all living beings. Buddhists believe Buddha reached enlightenment through meditation which enabled him to see the true nature of reality.

Buddhism: Buddhism originated in northern India over 2500 years ago. From there it spread into China, Japan and to Tibet. Today it is practiced throughout the world, attracting over 350 million followers. There are many types of Buddhism, and many say it is more of a philosophy than a way of life. Most Buddhists do not believe in a god, but they do believe that there is a truth to existence, a path of compassion and wisdom that people can follow to end suffering in the world.

Catholicism: a form of Christianity that originated in Rome. Catholics follow the Old and New Testaments and believe in the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. They believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he is the Messiah. The Catholic Church is lead by the Pope, and the priesthood.

Celibate: a person who does not have sex or marry for religious or spiritual reasons.

Christianity: The Christian religion, including the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches. All follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, but do so in different ways. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to earth to save people and bring peace to the world.

Deity: a god or a goddess, a divinity.

Goddess: A female deity.

Islam: Islam is the religion of Muslims. Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammed who lived in Arabia c.571-632 was told to read or recite the words of God that were communicated to him in a miraculous way by the archangel Gabriel in a cave near Mecca. The words he received he recorded in the Koran (Qu'ran) the holy book of Islam.. Muslims believe in the five pillars of Islam which include the confession of Faith, where they proclaim that there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet, Prayer five times a day, Charity, The Observance of Ramadan, the Holy Month of Islam, and Pilgrimage to Mecca where Mohammed is believed to have received Allah's revelation.

Judaism: For most Jews, Judaism means believing in one god and obeying the laws and rituals that are outlined in their bible. Judaism began in 1800 B.C. with Abraham, who was considered the father of the Jewish people in the Middle East, and with Moses who gave the Torah or Law in 1250 B.C.E. Among other writings, The Jewish Bible includes the story of Adam and Eve, the Ten Commandments and Exodus, and the 613 laws Jews are supposed to follow. Many Christians call this book the Old Testament. There are several different branches of Judaism including Orthodox, Conservative and Reform.

Koran (Qu'ran): Muslims believe that the Koran (Qur'an) their holy book expresses God's will for all humankind and is the final, perfect and complete word of God. Muslims believe in the revelations from the Old and New Testaments but they feel these revelations were incomplete and that the Koran is the last and final revelation.

Kosher: Jewish dietary laws that prohibit the eating of pork, shell fish, and milk and meat together.

Lakota: Members of the family of the Great Sioux Nation of North America. They have a very rich spirituality and a deep respect for all life, visible and invisible. The word Lakota means "considered friends" or "alliance of friends. Crazy Horse and Chief Red Cloud were famous Lakota leaders. Lakota traditions include the Sun Dance, the Vision Quest, and the Sweat Lodge.

Messiah: any expected deliverer or savior.

Mindfulness: a peaceful state of mind often achieved through meditation where one is aware of the interconnectedness of everything, and acts compassionately.

Muslim: A person who practices Islam.

Monotheism: A religion that believes in only one god.

Paganism: Since there is no central book or church in Paganism as there is in many other religions, it is hard to generalize about all Pagans. Many Pagans honor a supreme goddess instead of a male god. Some pagans, including Wiccans honor goddesses, gods and nature. People who practice witchcraft consider themselves pagans, although contrary to popular belief they do not worship the devil or Satan. Different kinds of Paganism are still practiced all over the world by indigenous people who practice earth-based religions. The ancient Greeks who had gods like Zeus and Venus were also considered to be Pagan.

Pentacle: a regular five pointed star shaped figure.

Peyote: the dried top of a mescal cactus that produces hallucinations when eaten.

Polytheism: A religion that believes in more than one god or goddess.

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Vocabulary Handout (B)

Match the word on the left with the corresponding definition on the right

1. Bar-Mitzvah	___ a god or a goddess, a divinity
2. Buddha	___ the religion of Muslims which was founded by the Prophet Mohammed who lived in Arabia c.571-632 was told to read or recite the words of God that were communicated to him in a miraculous way by the archangel Gabriel in a cave near Mecca.
3. Buddhism	___ a person who does not have sex or marry for religious or spiritual reasons
4. Catholicism	___ Muslims believe this holy book expresses God's will for all humankind and is the final, perfect and complete word of God. Muslims believe in the revelations from the Old and New Testaments but they feel these revelations were incomplete and that this book is the last and final revelation.
5. Celibate	___ a peaceful state of mind often achieved through meditation where one is aware of the interconnectedness of everything, and acts compassionately.
6. Christianity	___ a regular five pointed star shaped figure.
7. Deity	___ A female deity.
8. Goddess	___ Jewish dietary laws that prohibit the eating of pork, shell fish, and milk and meat together.
9. Islam	___ originated in northern India over 2500 years ago. From there it spread into China, Japan and to Tibet. Today it is practiced throughout the world, attracting over 350 million followers. There are many types of this belief and many say it is more of a philosophy than a way of life. Most do not believe in a god, but they do believe that there is a truth to existence, a path of compassion and wisdom that people can follow to end suffering in the world.
10. Judaism	___ A religion that believes in more than one god or goddess.
11. Koran (Qu'ran)	___ a religion including the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches. All follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, but do so in different ways. They believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who came to earth to save people and bring peace to the world.
12. Kosher	___ A person who practices Islam.
13. Lakota	___ any expected deliverer or savior.
14. Messiah	___ A coming of age ceremony for Jewish boys when they are considered to become adults and must follow the all the commandments or laws of Judaism.
15. Mindfulness	___ People who follow this religion believe in one god and obeying the laws and rituals that are outlined in the their bible. It began in 1800 B.C. with Abraham in the Middle East, and with Moses who gave the Torah or Law in 1250 B.C.E. Among other writings, their bible includes the story of Adam and Eve, the Ten Commandments Exodus, and the 613 laws Jews are supposed to follow. Many Christians call this book the Old Testament. There are several different sects including Orthodox, Conservative and Reform.
16. Muslim	___ the dried top of a mescal cactus that produces hallucinations when eaten.
17. Monotheism	___ a form of Christianity that originated in Rome. They follow the Old and New Testaments and believe in the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. They believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he is the Messiah. Their church is lead by the Pope, and the priesthood.
18. Paganism	___ Members of the family of the Great Sioux Nation of North America, have a very rich spirituality and a deep respect for all life, visible and invisible. The word means "considered friends" or "alliance of friends. Crazy Horse and Chief Red Cloud were famous leaders. Their traditions include the Sun Dance, the Vision Quest, and the Sweat Lodge.
19. Pentacle	___ The founder of this religion who lived in the 6th century BCE in India. Born into a royal family the he gave up his life of wealth and privilege in order to dedicate his life to end suffering for all living beings. Followers believe he reached enlightenment through meditation which enabled him to see the true nature of reality.
20. Peyote	___ Since there is no central book or church in this religion as there is in many other religions, it is hard to generalize about it. Many honor a supreme goddess instead of a male god. Some, including Wiccans honor goddesses, gods and nature. People who practice witchcraft consider themselves part of this religion, although contrary to popular belief they do not worship the devil or Satan. Different kinds of this religion are still practiced all over the world by indigenous people who practice earth-based religions. The ancient Greeks who had gods like Zeus and Venus were also considered to practice a form of this religion.
21. Polytheism	

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WATCHING THE VIDEO

The video is 50 minutes long.

Note: It is split into six 6-minute-sections, so it is possible to pause after each section and use the activity **Answering Specific Questions About Youth In The Video** to check for comprehension. Most students will want to watch it through without pausing.

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ANALYZING AND RESPONDING TO THE DOCUMENTARY

Answering Specific Questions About Youth In The Video

Objective To analyze the experiences of the young people presented in the documentary. To check for comprehension and be sure everyone understands the stories in the film.

Materials Photocopy enough of the *Answering Specific Questions About Youth In The Video Handout* for pairs or individuals.

Time 30-50 minutes

Note Remind The Group Of The Ground Rules.

Instructions

Looking at the Six Main Teens

1. Form six groups.
2. Pass out the handout and assign one cluster of questions about the six individual teens to each of the six groups.
3. Tell each group that they are responsible for reporting back to the whole group on their answers. They should take notes and choose a reporter.
4. Return to the big group. All the groups review the questions about the documentary with the facilitator, and the facilitator checks for comprehension. The facilitator can also focus on a few questions for the whole group to consider or add some more.

Discussing the Big Picture

1. Return to small groups and each group answers the last cluster of questions titled "The Big Picture" together.
2. The facilitator should circulate to ensure that all are participating and practicing the Ground Rules.

Debrief

1. Return to whole group.
2. The facilitator reviews some of the Big Picture questions with the whole group. For example ask "How many think there is freedom of religion?" Then ask members of the group if they have a convincing argument for or against this opinion, and have a couple members share their views.
3. Go around the group, and ask each person to share one thing that they learned or felt about the film as a way to summarize.

Alternative Activity

These questions can be used in any number of ways as writing assignments.

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Answering Specific Questions About Youth In The Video Handout

ANTHONY

1. What role does the Catholic Church play in Anthony's life?
2. What are the reasons that he disagrees with his religion?
3. What is the role of the priest in the Catholic religion?
4. Anthony says that most teenagers aren't really thinking about god. Do you agree?
5. How strong is Anthony's faith?
6. Is Anthony comfortable being a Catholic in America?

MAZOUZA

1. Why did Mazouza decide to wear the veil?
2. What is the Koran, and why is it important?
3. How does she feel about dating and premarital sex?
4. How does Mazouza feel about being Muslim in America?
5. How do you think she might feel after 9/11?
6. Do you think she represents all Muslims?

MORGAN

1. How did Morgan become a Pagan?
2. What does Morgan believe about nature?
3. What does she believe about love and sex?
4. What holidays does she celebrate?
5. Why does Morgan feel that there isn't freedom of religion in the United States?
6. Why does she like being a Pagan?

DAVID

1. In the film David says that he is not a typical Jew, what does he mean by that?
2. What are some of the beliefs that Jews have that David describes?
3. Why is Judaism so important to David?
4. Why did David stop believing in god?
5. What does it mean to be from an interfaith family?
6. Do you think David will believe in god someday?

CARINA

1. Why did Carina's family come to the United States?
2. What is Buddhism and who is the Buddha according to Carina?
3. In what ways is it difficult for her to practice Buddhism in the United States?
4. Why does Carina want to be like the Buddhist monks and nuns?
5. What does Carina mean when she talks about mindfulness?
6. Why do Buddhists practice non-violence?

JULIUS

1. What are some of the main values of the Lakota religion?
2. What is Julius's view of Mother Earth?
3. What does Julius say about god?
4. How does he feel about drugs and alcohol?
5. What happened to Julius's ancestors and why did it happen?
6. What is his purpose in life?

THE BIG PICTURE

1. Do these teens have anything in common?
2. Do you know anyone from their religions who are like them or different from them?
3. Do they represent everyone from their religion?
4. Is your school or community accepting of people from different backgrounds?
5. Do you think there is freedom of religion in the United States? Why or why not?
6. What struck you about this film? How does this film make you feel?
7. What reminded you of yourself? Of others you know?
8. What did you agree/ disagree with?
9. Do you face similar issues? Have you had any similar thoughts or challenges?
10. What stereotypes does this film challenge, create or reinforce, if any?
11. What are three new things you learned?

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SHARING PERSONAL BELIEFS AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Personal Belief Questions For Dialogue and Writing Assignments

Note	In some public high schools parts of this activity might be more or less appropriate so read through this exercise beforehand. You may want to use the <i>Answering Specific Questions About Youth In The Video</i> instead.
Objective	To guide interfaith dialogue. To give young people from different backgrounds a framework for analyzing the role religion plays in their personal lives, communities and in America.
Materials	Photocopy the ' <i>Personal Belief Questions Handout</i> for everyone in the group.
Time	Varies
Instructions	<p>Remind the group of the Ground Rules. Make sure all know they have a 'Right to Pass' which means if they are uncomfortable at any point they don't have to answer a question.</p> <p>Choose from the following options below to be used with the <i>Personal Belief Questions Handout</i>. There are exercises for pairs, groups and individuals. We recommend pair or small group discussions but the individual work options might be better for your group. The facilitator should circulate and make sure that group members are abiding by their ground rules.</p>

Pair Work

If you have a very diverse group try to match participants with a partner from a different background. Give each pair the *Personal Belief Questions Handout*.

Options for Pair Work:

- A) The questions are a guide for a discussion.
- B) The pairs interview each other and write a summary of their partner's beliefs.
- C) Written summaries can be shared with others by passing them around to other pairs to read, or by photocopying for the whole group.
- D) They can interview their partner using the questions, and then introduce their partner to the whole group by sharing three important things they learned about their partner's beliefs.
- E) The facilitator chooses 3-4 questions to focus on according to the group and the purpose of the gathering.

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SHARING PERSONAL BELIEFS AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE (continued)

Option for Small Group Work

If you have a less diverse group form groups of 3-5 and let the groups discuss the questions in the *Personal Belief Questions Handout*. Explain that it is O.K. to spend more time on certain questions.

Individual Work Options

Essays:

Each group member uses the *Personal Belief Questions Handout* to write an essay about their beliefs. They don't have to answer all the questions, just use them as a guide. The facilitator can choose or give members the freedom to do so. These essays can be shared with the rest of the group by passing them around, or the teacher can photocopy them to make a magazine.

Answering Questions:

They write the answers to each question if writing an essay is too difficult. Provide list of questions or ask each person to pick a few questions from the list to write about. Provide about 30 minutes for each person to write. Next form pairs and ask each person to interview their partner and write a brief summary of what they learned about them.

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Personal Belief Questions Handout

1. What do you believe?
2. Why do you believe what you believe?
3. Do you believe something different from your parents, and explain why or why not?
4. If you don't believe in any religion, why don't you?
5. What parts of you come from your religion and what parts don't?
6. Where do you get your beliefs from?
7. Do others in your religious group believe and behave the way you do?
8. Have you ever doubted your beliefs, or questioned them?
9. Have you ever changed your beliefs?
10. Do you pray?
11. If you pray what do you pray for, and where and when do you pray?
12. Do you believe in a god, gods/goddesses, or some kind of greater power? Why or why not?
13. How do you know there is a god or something greater than us?
14. How did we get here?
15. Why are you on this earth and what are you supposed to do while you are here?
16. Is there a purpose to your life?
17. Why do bad things happen?
18. Why is there suffering?
19. What do you believe happens to you when you die?
20. Are you part of an organized religion or do you have your own religious and spiritual ideas that are not part of any organized religion?
21. Do you go to a church, temple or mosque or some other spiritual place, why or why not?
22. Do you agree with all of the rules from your religion or spiritual practice, why or why not?
23. Do you feel comfortable and accepted at school for your beliefs, why or why not?
24. Are you from an inter-faith family? What is it like?
25. Have you ever dated someone from a different religious background?
26. Does it matter to you what religion your friends are?
27. Is there an afterlife?
28. Do you think there is freedom of religious expression in the United States, why or why not?
29. Do you think there should be prayer in schools or at sports games, why or why not?
30. Should everyone have the same religion?
31. What is religion for?

what do you believe?

Belief Self Portrait Art Projects

Objective For each participant to make a visual representation of their beliefs to share with group.

Materials Art supplies, magazines, scissors, glitter, colored construction paper, yarn, glue, colored pens, paints, *anything you can scrounge up!*

Time 30-50 minutes

Instructions Explain that there is no right or wrong way to do this. Tell group members that they can use symbols, color, diagrams or any of the materials to create a self-portrait about their religious and spiritual beliefs.

Write these suggestions to guide their portraits on the board:

Guiding Questions

1. What parts of your identity are connected to your spirituality or religion and what parts are not?
2. Where and when do you feel most spiritual?
3. How do you feel about the religion or beliefs you were raised with and the role they play in your life?
4. How do you define who you are?
5. Is there an experience, a person, or a book that influenced the beliefs you have?
6. How comfortable do you feel believing what you believe in America?

Wrap Up

Each member writes a couple of paragraphs explaining their portrait, or they prepare an oral presentation.

Post them for everyone to look at and share.

what do you believe?

LOOKING AT RELIGIOUS STEREOTYPES

Religions in America Stereotypes Activity

Important Note	This activity should be done with mature groups.
Objective	To give the group a chance to talk openly about the stereotypes To explore the way religious stereotypes hurt people and contribute to misunderstanding.
Materials	Pens for each participant, 25 Index Cards or Large Post-its for each participant, Black Board or Flip Chart Paper, and Tape.
Time	40 minutes
Instructions	

A) American Religions List

If you have a very heterogeneous group then you can ask the group members to go up to the black board or flip chart paper and write the name of each religion or spiritual perspective represented in the room to generate an AMERICAN RELIGIONS LIST.

The facilitator can then ask which religions and spiritual perspectives are missing, and the group can call out a bunch more to add to the list.

If you have a less diverse have small teams come up with a list of religions and spiritual perspectives in the United States and write them on a separate sheet, or on the black board, and then compare lists and develop a general AMERICAN RELIGIONS LIST from the groups, eliminating duplicates.

Variation This can be done as a competition to see which comes up with the most religions if the group needs energy.

Note It's best if you don't discuss definitions or answer questions about the lists at this time. You should explain to the group that there will be time later on to learn about each religion and spiritual perspective. Since the group is looking at stereotypes let them give their first impressions, even if they don't know anything about a particular group at all.

B) Word Associations

Each participant is given a bunch of large post-its or index cards with tape and a pen.

Using the list of religions and spiritual perspectives generated by the group, ask them to write the words that come to mind. This should be done individually and without discussion. For example, for Buddhism they might write the word "meditation" on one index card. The next card might be Atheists, and they might write, "no morals".

what do you believe?

LOOKING AT RELIGIOUS STEREOTYPES (continued)

C) Sharing Word Associations

Without speaking or sharing their associations individually with others in the group, have each participant tape their index card, or put their post-its next to each religion or spiritual perspective on the AMERICAN RELIGIONS LIST.

When everyone is finished, have a "gallery walk" where everyone gets up and walks over to the charts and reads the word associations on their own. The facilitator should then summarize the associations, pointing out themes.

D) Discussion

First check in with the group about stereotypes by asking what they think is the definition of a stereotype, and if there only bad stereotypes.

Next, discuss reactions. Have each participant who belongs to that religion or spiritual perspective talk about how they feel about the list of word associations that correspond to their belief.

Ask the group to point out "word-associations" they feel are stereotypes, both positive and negative, or that are correct or incorrect.

Debrief

The whole group answers the following questions together:

1. Where do these stereotypes about other religions and spiritual perspectives come from?
2. Why are some stereotypes dangerous and what can we do to stop them?
3. What approach do you need to take to learn about another religion or spiritual perspectives and make sure that we don't continue to stereotype? I.e. who should you talk to, what should you read, how would you go about learning about others?

what do you believe?

RESEARCHING RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

Research Questions Expanding On The Film

Objective To learn more about the issues and religions featured in the film and to look at other religions, spiritual views and religious controversies in America.

To practice group work, encourage students to pool their resources and teach each other.

Materials Photocopied *Research Questions Handout*, enough for each member of the group.

Time This activity will be a longer assignment, over a few weeks. Students will need to do research on the internet and in libraries. Some of the research and writing can be done as homework.

Instructions You can use the *Research Questions Handout* for individual writing assignments, or you can make this a group activity so they can practice working together.

For Group Work

Introduction: Tell the group that they will be doing research projects to learn more about the different beliefs and religious issues presented in the film or other beliefs and religious issues not presented in the film. Decide if they will be responsible for making presentations and sharing their findings with their classmates.

1. Reviewing questions and choosing a topic:

Pass out the Research Questions Handout, and have each group member read over the topics and the lists of questions.

Tell them they should choose their first, second and third choice of a topic that interests them. For example: 1) Islam, 2) Legal Issues, 3) Native American Religions

2. Creating groups:

Next call out the topics, and have the members raise their hands for the topic that most interests them. Have them sit with the other students that want to research that topic. If there are some students who want to work individually that's fine too.

The group size should be no larger than 4 members. If too many students choose one topic as their first choice ask some if they would move to a group of their second choice. You may choose to divide the group up another way. This is just a suggestion for how to do it.

what do you believe?

RESEARCHING RELIGIONS IN AMERICA (continued)

3. Deciding on specific questions, member's responsibilities, and type of presentation:

The groups are responsible for dividing up the questions among the members and presenting the plan to the teacher to make sure they are not taking on too much or too little. If the group is small, they may want to eliminate some of the questions.

The groups should also decide how to divide up the work, how they will combine their findings, and make their presentations.

They should have a written and oral presentation prepared. They will need to review these decisions a couple times throughout the process as they get closer to making their presentations.

4. Suggestions for Presentations:

Explain to the group that they should plan interesting presentations. Decide if the presentations will be made by the whole group or just one member of each group. Presentations can include music, photos, drawings, passages from texts, charts, etc.

They should present the highlights of their findings. Determine the time for the presentations (we suggest ten minutes) and give students time to practice before. You may also want to require that the other groups to ask questions of each group, and add time for that.

5. Class time and homework:

Next assign a certain amount of class time and homework time to do the research, and for the groups to meet to organize a presentation of their findings.

Make sure you give them time to check in with each other, review their process, help each other with possible problems, and check in with you.

For Individual Work

Tell the group that they will be doing individual research projects. Hand out the Research Questions and have each group member read over the topics and the lists of questions. Tell them they should pick a topic that interests them to research. You can have them write a 2-3 page paper and/or make a class presentation.

Next tell each student to write a one-paragraph proposal about which questions from their topic they will include in their research. They can add their own if they have questions not included in the topics. Review their proposals, and make sure they have not taken on too much or too little.

Assign class and homework time for them to do the work, and pick a date for the papers and/or presentations. Determine the time for each presentation and the parameters, and give other students an opportunity to ask questions about the findings.

what do you believe?

Research Questions Handout (2 pages)

CATHOLICISM & PROTESTANTISM

1. How many Catholics and how many different kinds of Protestants are there in the United States?
2. What are the main beliefs of Catholics?
3. What are the main beliefs of the Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Amish or of the Unitarians? Or any other Protestant Church)
4. What are some of the difference between Catholics and Protestants?
5. Why did Christians first come to the United States?
6. Which Christian churches were founded in the United States?
7. Why are there so many different Christian groups in the United States?
8. Compare two different Christian Churches in America, and their beliefs.
9. Which churches allow women to be leaders of the church?
10. Which church was the first church to allow blacks and whites to worship together?
11. Who have been some of the most important Christian leaders in America and what were/are their messages?

ISLAM

1. What are the main beliefs of Muslims?
2. How many Muslims are there in the United States?
3. How is Islam connected to Judaism and Christianity?
4. Are all Muslims Arabs?
5. Are Muslims accepted in America?
6. What kinds of Muslims are there in the U.S. and where have they come from?
7. Research the life of the Prophet Mohammed
8. What is the difference between Sunni, Shiite, and Sufi Muslims?
9. Why do some Muslim women wear the veil and some don't?
10. When did Muslims first come to the United States?

PAGANISM

1. Is Paganism recognized as a legal religion by the United States government?
2. What is Paganism, and where in the world and in history can you find it?
3. What are the differences between Pagans and Satanists?
4. How do Pagans celebrate Halloween?
5. What is the history of Paganism in the United States?
6. What is Wicca? What other Neo-Pagan groups are there in the United States and what do they believe?
7. What are some popular culture examples of Pagans and how close are they to the real practices of Pagans?

JUDAISM

1. What are some of the main beliefs of Judaism?
2. What are some of the important Jewish Holidays?
3. What are the different branches of Judaism, and how are they different?
4. How has Judaism influenced Christianity and Islam?
5. Is there anti-Semitism in the United States?
6. What is the connection of Jews to Israel?
7. What are the ethnicities of American Jews?
8. When and why did Jews come to the United States?

what do you believe?

Research Questions Handout (continued)

BUDDHISM

1. Describe the life story of the Buddha
2. What are the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path?
3. What is the Buddhist view of violence?
4. What do reincarnation and karma mean and why are they important in Buddhism?
5. How many American teenagers believe in reincarnation?
6. Who is the Dalai Lama, and why is he in exile?
7. What are some of the different sects of Buddhists and where are they practiced in the world?
8. Compare two different Buddhists groups in the United States

NATIVE AMERICAN

1. What is the creation story of the Lakota people?
2. How many Native Americans are there in the United States, and do they all believe the same thing?
3. Compare the beliefs of two different Native American tribes
4. How freely can Native Americans practice their religions today?
5. Are any Native Americans Christian?
6. What is Peyote, how do some Native Americans use it, and why is it controversial?
7. Explain the meaning the sweat lodge, the vision quest, the Sundance and the coming of age ceremony in the Lakota religion?
8. Research the life of Black Elk

LEGAL ISSUES

1. What does the constitution say about freedom of religion?
2. What have been the important constitutional decisions made about religion by the Supreme Court?
3. Explore the debate over prayer in public schools
4. Explore the debate about the pledge of allegiance in schools

OTHER RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS

1. Pick another religion or spiritual belief not well represented in the film, for example Hinduism, Atheism, or Santeria
2. What are the main beliefs of this group?
3. Who practices it and how many people from this belief system live in the United States?
4. Is there a founder? Is there a sacred text? Are there holidays?
5. What else is important to know about it?

YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Using polls, interviews, site-visits and other kinds of research design a project to learn about the different religious groups in your community or school.

For example:

1. Conduct interviews to find out whether all students at your school feel accepted for their beliefs
2. Do a poll about students attitudes towards school prayer or the pledge of allegiance
3. Find out when and why different religious groups came to your community

what do you believe?

INTERFAITH YOUTH ACTIVITIES/COMMUNITY ACTION

Where Do We Go From Here?

Objective To summarize the whole workshop. To generate ideas for next steps participants can take to increase interfaith cooperation and understanding in their communities.

Materials Pens, paper, flip chart and markers, or chalk and board.

Time Varies

Instructions

A) Sharing Final Thoughts

Each person writes 3 important things they learned from participating in this workshop and shares them with the group by going around in a circle and reading out loud

B) Where Do We Go From Here?

Whole group brainstorms about what kinds of ongoing projects and activities they can do to increase interfaith cooperation and understanding in their communities. Write the list on the board or flip chart paper. Depending on your group and your situation, the youth and adults can organize concrete steps to implement these activities.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES

Design Interfaith Community Service Projects

Set up Interfaith Youth Events with music, food, or social activities

Create an Interfaith Pen Pal Program with another community, and plan a meeting in the future when Pen Pals meet

Paint Interfaith Peace Murals in your school or in your community

Create an Interfaith Club at your school

Publish an Interfaith Magazine

Assemble an Interfaith Youth Task Force at your city or town hall, and get involved in political decisions in your community

Produce your own video about religious groups in your community and have a public screening

Teach younger kids in your community about religious diversity

Submit an essay and photo about what you believe to the What Do You Believe? Website to share with teens around the country (www.whatdoyoubelieve.org)

ANTIDEFAMATION LEAGUE GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Excerpts From The ADL On Religion In Public Schools
Go To www.adl.org For More Information

Religion may be presented as part of a secular educational program. Programs that "teach about religion" are geared toward teaching students about the role of religion in the historical, cultural, literary and social development of the United States and other nations. These programs should instill understanding, tolerance and respect for a pluralistic society. When discussing religion in this context, religion must be discussed in a neutral, objective, balanced and factual manner. Such programs should educate students about the principle of religious liberty as one of the fundamental elements of freedom and democracy in the United States.

"Teaching religion" amounts to religious indoctrination and practice and is clearly prohibited in public schools. A public school curriculum may not be devotional or doctrinal. Nor may it have the effect of promoting or inhibiting religion. A teacher must not promote or denigrate any particular religion, religion in general, or lack of religious belief. A teacher must not interject personal views or advocate those of certain students. Teachers must be extremely sensitive to respect, and not interfere with, a student's religious beliefs and practices. Students must not be encouraged to accept or conform to specific religious beliefs or practices. Students are extremely susceptible to peer and public pressure and coercion. Any discussion of religion in the classroom should be sensitive to the beliefs of the different students in the class. No student should be made to feel that his or her personal beliefs or practices are being questioned, infringed upon or compromised. A student should never feel ostracized on the basis of his or her religious beliefs.

If religion is discussed, great care must be taken to discuss minority as well as majority religions. The inclusion of only the major religions in a classroom discussion does not reflect the actual religious diversity within our society and the world. cursory discussions will subtly denigrate the validity of minority religious beliefs held by some individuals, regardless of whether adherents to minority beliefs are represented in the class. If they are present, these students may feel excluded or coerced.

Students should not be put on the spot to explain their religious (or, cultural) traditions. The student may feel uncomfortable and may not have enough information to be accurate. Moreover, by asking a student to be spokesperson for his/her religion, the teacher is sending a signal that the religion is too "exotic" for the teacher to understand. Finally, in certain cases, the teacher may be opening the door for proselytizing activity by the student, which must be avoided.

Every effort should be made to obtain accurate information about different religions. Special training may be required to prepare teachers to discuss religion in an appropriate manner.

Discussion of religion in the classroom may alienate those students who are being raised with no religious faith. While there is an obligation for even these students to learn what is being taught as part of a secular educational program, it is very important that teachers avoid discussions that seem to endorse religious belief over nonreligious belief. Otherwise, such students may feel pressure to conform to the majority, or be made to feel inferior about their own upbringing.

Discussion of religion in the classroom may alienate those who are being raised with orthodox religious faiths. It is equally important that teachers not appear to disapprove of faith, there- by alienating those who are raised with faith.

Students have a limited right to distribute religious material inside public schools. Student religious expression may be limited if it substantially interferes with or disrupts the school's activities or if it involves coercive proselytizing. Moreover, in order to avoid violating the Establishment Clause, it is essential that the school neither sponsor nor appear to sponsor the distribution of religious material by students.

what do you believe?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The Pluralism Project, Harvard University: www.pluralism.org

Religious Studies In Secondary Schools: www.rsiss.net

First Amendment Issues: www.freedomforum.org

Facing History and Ourselves: www.facinghistory.org

The Southern Poverty Law Project: www.splcenter.org, www.tolerance.org

North American Interfaith Alliance: www.nain.org

Pagan Site, Covenant Of The Goddess: www.cog.org

Interfaith Youth Core: www.ifyc.org

Lakota Site: www.elexion.com/lakota

United Religions Initiative: www.uri.org

www.religioustolerance.org

The Interfaith Alliance: www.interfaithalliance.org