

# Teaching Manual



# World Religions

A Voyage of Discovery

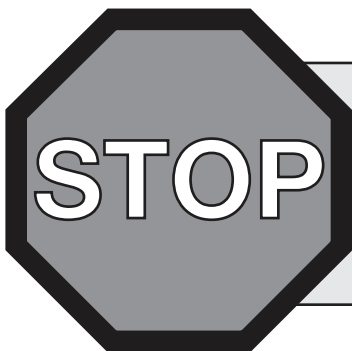
Third Edition

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# Teaching Manual for World Religions



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Teaching Manual for

**World Religions:  
A Voyage of Discovery**

Third Edition

Edited by Colleen Cichon-Mulcrone

Written by Jeffrey Brodd, Patrick Tiernan,  
Michael Wilt, and Jonathan Yu-Phelps



saint mary's press

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# An Introduction to *World Religions*

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## The Academic Study of Religions

*World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery* is an introductory survey of religious traditions. Along with chapters on the major religions of the world, the text includes a chapter describing some representative small-scale, or primal, traditions: those of the Aborigines of Australia, the Yoruba of West Africa, the Native Americans of the Northern Plains, and the Aztecs of Mesoamerica. Another chapter presents the religions of ancient Iran, Greece, and Rome, partly to provide the background for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

This comprehensiveness is intended to allow you ample flexibility in course planning. Not all the chapters need to be covered to provide a balanced introduction to world religions. For instance, Jainism could be omitted if time is short; while it is a fascinating example of religious asceticism and the ethic of nonviolence (*ahimsa*), it has a relatively small following and is similar to Buddhism. Zen Buddhism could be considered within the larger scope of Buddhism, although its specific aspects and great appeal in the West recommend it for a separate presentation. The chapters can be read independently of one another, with the following exceptions: Jainism should be preceded by Hinduism and Buddhism; Sikhism should be preceded by Hinduism; and Zen Buddhism should be preceded by Buddhism.

The textbook chapters explain the main aspects of each tradition in a clear and equitable manner. Peripheral aspects and overly sophisticated explanations are avoided. For students interested in further study, whether in college courses or through independent research, the text should be a helpful springboard. Appendix 3 of this manual, "For Further Reading," suggests additional reading materials for each chapter, most of which are suitable for high school students.

Two issues dealt with in chapter 1 of the text deserve some further comment here. The first has to do with each chapter's content. Chapter 1 charts the seven dimensions of religious traditions: experiential, mythic, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, social, and material. The text attempts to cover these basic dimensions evenly in its account of each religion. In some cases, however, such balance is not easily achieved, or even desirable. The chapter on Taoism, for example, focuses intentionally on philosophical aspects, and therefore emphasizes the experiential and doctrinal dimensions. The scheme of basic elements used in this course is similar to and much indebted to Ninian Smart's dimensional approach to the study of religions. For lucid and helpful discussions, see his *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* or see the introductory chapters of his *World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations and Religious Experience of Mankind*, third edition.

The second issue from chapter 1, dealt with briefly there, involves the perspective this course takes on the world's religions. In a word (mercifully left

out of chapter 1) it is *Religionswissenschaft*, literally the “science of religion.” *Religionswissenschaft* is the academic study of religion begun mainly in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. As of the last three or four decades, *Religionswissenschaft* is a significant field in most universities and colleges throughout North America, Europe, and Australia. The field is now usually referred to as history of religions, comparative religion, phenomenology of religion, or simply religious studies.

Whatever its name, the academic study of religion attempts to approach the subject matter scientifically, through empirical observation and objective consideration, thereby striving to arrive at value-free descriptions of religious phenomena. In other words, it sets out to explain the truth *about* religion rather than the truth *of* religion. It is therefore not theology, or any other religious activity. Unlike theology, religious studies is a *second-order* approach because it is one step removed from its subject matter. In this sense it is analogous to political science, which endeavors to explain the truth *about* political systems and viewpoints rather than the truth *of* those systems and viewpoints.

This is not to say that religious studies is not concerned with theology or other religious activities. Indeed together those activities make up the subject matter that the student of religion attempts to understand and interpret. But the process of understanding and interpreting theology differs qualitatively from actually *doing* theology. A biologist studies nonhuman life-forms but does not attempt to be one of those life-forms, at least not in the capacity of biologist.

Because it avoids the *doing* of religion, this course—a religious studies approach to world religions—is not about interfaith dialogue or understanding other religions from the vantage point of Christianity. Rather, it attempts to present each religion from a position of neutrality. It is hoped that this approach has not stifled a sense of enthusiasm for the religions. To describe the religions enthusiastically seems appropriate owing precisely to empirically observable data, namely the many enthusiastic adherents of these religions through their often long and colorful histories.

Although the study of religions is *nonreligious*, it is by no means *antireligious*. The scientific study of religions should not intentionally violate or alter its subject matter. On this point a word of caution is in order: Religion, by its very nature, tends to be a deeply personal aspect of life. The study of religion, no matter how scientific, can and does affect the religious perspectives of those who undertake it. For most people, the study of world religions is a positive opportunity, providing both a healthy challenge to their own understanding of reality and a new set of possibilities for enhancing that understanding. For some people, however, the challenge might prove difficult.

A few words about the methodology of religious studies might shed some further light on the field’s perspective. For one thing, religious studies is cross-cultural, or pluralist. The study of world religions is an especially helpful approach to understanding religion in general because it presents a rich array of religious phenomena from various cultures. For another thing, religious studies is polymethodic, drawing from several academic disciplines, especially history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology. The pluralist and polymethodic nature of religious studies helps account for its growing popularity as an academic field. Through the multiple lenses of the humanities and social sciences, religious studies explores, across cultures and through time, the central human phenomenon of being religious.

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## The Contents of This Course

### Course Goals

The goals of this course are as follows:

1. That the students strive to become knowledgeable about the answers each of the religions offers to the religious questions outlined in chapter 1 of the text
2. That the students become better acquainted with the basic dimensions of the world's major religions, through their study of abundant examples of each dimension
3. That the students emerge from this course with a greatly enhanced understanding of the people who adhere to the world's various religions

### Major Concepts

The following major concepts correspond largely to the major sections in the chapters of the student text. This teaching manual is also organized according to these major concepts. This list serves as an outline of the course contents.

#### Chapter 1

##### Studying the World's Religions

- A. The Nature of a Religious Tradition
- B. Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions

#### Chapter 2

##### Primal Religious Traditions

- A. Religion of the Australian Aborigines
- B. An African Tradition
- C. Religion of the North American Plains Indians
- D. A Mesoamerican Religion

#### Chapter 3

##### Hinduism

- A. Human Destiny
- B. Hindu Society
- C. Three Paths to Liberation
- D. Hinduism in the Modern World

#### Chapter 4

##### Buddhism

- A. The Life of Gautama
- B. The Dharma
- C. Three Rafts for Crossing the River

#### Chapter 5

##### Jainism

- A. Makers of the River Crossing
- B. Knowing the Universe
- C. The Religious Life

**Chapter 6****Sikhism**

- A. The Development of Sikhism
- B. Religious Teachings
- C. The Religious Life

**Chapter 7****Confucianism**

- A. Great Master K'ung
- B. Learning to Be Human
- C. Self, Family, Nation, Heaven

**Chapter 8****Taoism**

- A. Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu
- B. The Philosophy of Tao

**Chapter 9****Zen Buddhism**

- A. Transmission of Zen Teachings
- B. Zen Teachings
- C. Zen Life

**Chapter 10****Shinto**

- A. "Way of the *Kami*"
- B. Shinto in the Religious Life of Japan

**Chapter 11****Ancestors of the West**

- A. Religion in Ancient Iran
- B. Religion in Ancient Greece
- C. Religion in the Roman World

**Chapter 12****Judaism**

- A. Judaism's Central Teachings
- B. The History of the Chosen People
- C. The Sanctification of Life

**Chapter 13****Christianity**

- A. Christ
- B. Creed
- C. Church

**Chapter 14****Islam**

- A. The Foundations of Islam
- B. Basic Practices and Social Teachings
- C. The Expansion and Varieties of Islam

- Chapter 15**  
**Religion in the Modern World**  
A. Modern Influences  
B. New Religious Movements  
C. Religion and Science
- 

## Multiple Intelligences Theory and This Course

Most world religion classes are composed of students with varying academic abilities and backgrounds. Multiple intelligences theory is an excellent tool for teachers to use in shaping classroom activities that will touch a diversity of students. That theory centers on Howard Gardner's belief that each person has a unique cognitive profile. In *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books), his 1983 book about how we perceive and learn, Gardner, a Harvard psychologist, proposes that there are at least seven types of intelligence: linguistic and logical-mathematical (the two traditional ones found in schools), plus bodily-kinesthetic, visual, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Gardner has also added an eighth type, naturalist intelligence.

Moving Gardner's multiple intelligences theory into methodology and strategies for the classroom is a dynamic and exciting proposition. It seems to go hand in hand with Saint Paul's teaching in First Corinthians: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (12:4). It recognizes that students are gifted in different ways.

The activities suggested in this teaching manual—particularly those in each chapter under the heading "Additional Activities" (that is, additional to the activities provided in the student text)—appeal to the varied intelligences that students have. By using an assortment of activities, you will give your students the opportunity to learn in meaningful, interesting, and challenging ways. Most important, you will offer them each a better chance to learn in the ways that are most effective for them. This can affirm your students and build a positive and interactive classroom.

Many of the additional activities in this manual are student centered. They employ active learning strategies, which is another way of saying they engage students through a variety of intelligences. It has become solid educational practice to design lessons and assessments that challenge students in more than a lecture or "paper and pencil" format. Of course, lectures and writing have their place, and this manual also employs those methods where appropriate. By tapping into the widely varied ways that students learn and know things, this course attempts to involve the whole person.

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## Tools for Teaching

During the brief explanation given here, you may find it helpful periodically to glance at one of the chapters in the text and its corresponding chapter in this manual to see examples of the teaching tools described.

## Major Concepts

As mentioned earlier in this introduction, each chapter of the textbook and teaching manual is organized according to its major concepts. The major concepts for a given chapter of the text correspond to the thematic divisions within the chapter. Thus the major concepts are the organizing principle for teaching the material. Most chapters have two or three major concepts, and these can be helpful tools for scheduling and organizing your lessons.

At the beginning of each chapter in this manual, the major concepts for that chapter are listed and described, providing a summary of the chapter. Then each concept is treated in turn, with a major subhead accompanied by an icon identifying the related pages in the student text, followed by review questions and activities on the concept.

## Review Questions

In this manual the review questions that end each chapter in the student text are repeated, and a suggested answer is provided for each question. The intent of the review questions is simply to check whether the students have retained the basic information for the given concepts. It is hoped that by using other course tools, they will go beyond that level to analysis, reflection, and application.

## Student Text Activities

In the student text, lettered activities in the outside margins correspond with the accompanying text material. Those activities are repeated in this manual, and may be assigned as homework or as class work. Your students will not be able to do all the activities in a semester, the time normally allotted for this course, so you will need to select from those activities to fit the needs of your class. You might suggest that the students read all the text activities, even those that you do not assign for completion. Just reading a particular activity can help them see the accompanying text material in a new light—perhaps a more personalized light. The text activities should be viewed not as burdensome assignments but as intriguing reflection starters.

## Additional Activities

For each major concept, you will find one or more additional activities. These are most often classroom activities that suggest small-group or large-group discussion. They occasionally require handouts that must be photocopied and then distributed to the students. Those handouts appear at the end of the respective chapters in this manual.

## Appendices

Five appendices to this manual offer additional tools for teaching that can be used in many ways.

**Appendix 1: Sample Test Questions.** This appendix contains a bank of tests for each chapter of the student text. Objective and essay questions are included. You should pick questions from them to supplement tests of your own making. Test questions for this course and all other Saint Mary's Press high school courses are available online for downloading. Call 800-533-8095 for information about this resource.

**Appendix 2: Audiovisual Recommendations.** This appendix offers a chapter-by-chapter compilation of audiovisual resources. Most are nonfiction and documentary materials. You may wish to ask the students to write reports that highlight the religious traditions depicted in a video or film.

**Appendix 3: For Further Reading.** The resources recommended in this appendix can be of use for your own preparation as well as for student research projects.

**Appendix 4: The Comparative Study of Religions.** This appendix applies the comparative approach of studying religions to the traditions surveyed in the textbook. In doing so it exhibits the approach's usefulness for investigating and explaining the nature of a religious tradition and the phenomenon of religion itself.

**Appendix 5: Worldviews: Religions and Their Relatives.** It is commonly argued that modern worldviews such as nationalism and secular humanism have much in common with the traditional religions. Indeed scholars often categorize them with the world's religions. This article explores such modern worldviews, and points out how they answer questions that are similar to those addressed by religious traditions, and how they are composed generally of the same basic elements as established religions.

**Other Resources from Saint Mary's Press.** The student book and leader's guide for *Primary Source Readings in World Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009) offer foundational readings in various world religions as guidance for looking at the readings with the students. *Teaching About Other Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2006) offers ideas and strategies for teaching about Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in the classroom.

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## Strategies for Presenting the Course Material

Sometimes you may want to use a suggested lesson exactly as it appears in this manual. At other times you may want to skip, adapt, or even expand on a particular concept or activity. The following general ideas and suggestions may help you create meaningful experiences tailored specifically to your students' needs, abilities, and levels of interest:

**Journal writing.** A journal is a written record of a person's inner dialogue—the thoughts, feelings, questions, impressions, and connections that come to mind over a period of time. You may wish to direct the students to record their reactions in a journal as they study the world's religions. The text activities and ideas from the additional activities can provide starting points for reflection. Encourage the students to write in their journals not only what they understand about the course material but also what they think and feel about it. For example, does a particular religious practice or concept shed light on their own beliefs? Does it give them insight into the people of another tradition? Does it make them uneasy or cause them confusion?

Journal keeping is a deeply personal adventure. All of us are wonderfully unique, so journal entries, even about the same subject, will differ vastly from



one person to another. Some students will jump into keeping a journal; others will write only grudgingly. In either case, they will be remembering, reflecting, analyzing, and sometimes creating. *In the process of writing, students can discover much about what they think, feel, and believe that they might never have recognized before.*

If the students are to be accountable for their journal assignments, you will need to collect the journals periodically to review them. This brings up the necessity of emphasizing to the students that their disclosures in the journals will be confidential—that their reflections will not go beyond you, the teacher. Be sure to mention one exception to this confidentiality: if students write about situations in which they or others are in danger, you will have to involve other professionals or school officials as needed for their protection.

It is recommended that you take time at the beginning of the course to emphasize the importance of the journal. Encourage the students to design a cover; for example, they could draw symbols of themselves, their interests, their relationships, and their faith (or who God is to them). Perhaps at the beginning of the semester, you could dedicate or bless the journals, also calling God to bless the thoughts, imaginings, and reflections of the students.

**Discussion.** Many of the additional activities in this manual provide questions designed to prompt discussion. In addition, although most of the text activities and several of the additional activities ask the students to respond in writing, you may tell the students that they can accomplish those activities through conversation. Here are some techniques for generating discussions:

*Quiet collection of thoughts, followed by discussion.* Ask the students to spend a few minutes thinking about the question or task presented in the activity, rather than writing about it. Giving them time to collect their thoughts beforehand often yields a more fruitful class discussion than would inviting off-the-cuff remarks. The follow-up discussion to the quiet time could be done in pairs, in small groups, or with the whole class.

*Paired exchanges.* Allow the students to quietly collect their thoughts or have them write down their response to the question or task. Then help the students pair up and discuss their reflections. After this initial sharing, a whole-class discussion could draw further insights from those who volunteer their thoughts. Before starting the whole-class discussion, caution the students not to bring up what their partner said unless the partner gives permission.

*Thought museum.* Write four or five quotations from various scholars on sheets of newsprint and post them around the classroom. Give each student two sticky notes. Direct them to write a brief comment or question about two quotations they find interesting or confusing. Have them post their notes on the newsprint underneath the quotations. Ask for volunteers to be curators for one of the quotations and instruct them to arrange the comments or questions in some particular order. They may choose to group questions together or to separate the comments based on their level of understanding. This activity allows every student to critically evaluate an idea or thinker in an anonymous manner while enabling a few to demonstrate their critical reasoning skills by organizing questions and comments and providing a summative explanation of how the quotation fits within the religious viewpoint.

*Socratic seminar.* Pose an open-ended question to the class that relates to a primary source from a religious tradition. Divide the class into two groups: active participants and non-participant observers. Members of the first group can provide possible answers to the question and ask for clarification from one another. They are not allowed to critique one another but are encouraged to cite the text to support their points and to assist one another. Members of



the second group can monitor the activity of the other students by tracking what kinds of interactions occur. You might consider developing a guiding rubric to give the second group an idea of what to look for in the discussion and how to qualify the points being raised and the number of times individuals respond to one another. This type of class discussion encourages well-informed reasoning and rigorous critical thought. The teacher serves as a guide to redirect the focus to the reading and facilitate student-centered questions. The objective is not to present direct answers but to clarify the values and beliefs reflected in the writing. The students are given the opportunity to reflect on their course readings and written work during this seminar. A positive seminar environment is one geared toward creating meaning rather than mastering content. This type of discussion is more appropriate at the end of a unit, when the students will have more familiarity with the vocabulary and major themes of the tradition being studied.

**Skits or role-plays.** Activities that call for examples from the students' experiences might be extended into skits or role-plays. If those stagings are to be successful, you must have willing students who are comfortable with letting their experiences be the subject of dramatization. If you ask the students to portray their own responses to a dilemma, or a "what would you do?" incident, either the student who offered an example or another student could play the principal role and try to resolve the situation.

Some activities call the students to write imaginary dialogues between two persons. To heighten their impact, those dialogues could be composed in pairs and then read aloud by two students.

The students' dramatizations can be performed live; produced as radio or TV programs, documentary films, photo essays, and so on; presented on the Internet; or offered in some other format.

**Art.** Each chapter of the student text contains maps, photographs, and examples of art from the tradition being studied. Those selections are designed to invite the students into the material of the chapter. You might encourage the students to consider the graphic material and discuss its meaning before studying each chapter or upon completion of each chapter. You might also bring in your own visual examples.

Post images from a religious tradition around the classroom and allow the students to take notes on what they see and how the images reflect the particular religious and philosophical beliefs. Use a different part of the classroom for each type of visual you display. For example, you could have small groups in the class each examine a specific group of images, such as worship spaces, landscapes, deities, and ritual objects. When the groups are done taking notes, have someone from each group report to the rest of the class what the group observed and how the group sees the images within the context of the respective faith tradition. You may want to provide the students with a summary of the significance behind the images. You can then divide the class into another set of small groups where there is an informed leader from each category of images who teaches the small group the importance of the images. This jigsaw method allows the students to teach one another and allows the teacher to monitor discussions and answer questions.

**Music.** Music has a tremendous effect on human beings. Perhaps that is most evident during adolescence, when people feel that certain artists, groups, and songs can exactly express what they are experiencing. In this course, music can help the students further appreciate the religious traditions they explore. You may want to use a particular song or songs to introduce or conclude a chapter or concept. Or you might allow the students to bring in their

own songs to use as part of prayer or to emphasize a point discussed in the text. Musically talented students could be invited to use their gifts.

**Guest speakers.** If you invite speakers to visit your class, be sure to prepare your students with some background about them and their topics. It may be helpful to introduce the topic during the class period before a speaker visits, and to direct the students to prepare questions to ask the speaker. Collect those questions and use them if needed during a discussion following the presentation. After the presentation and discussion, make time for the students to process what they heard.

**Meditation.** This manual includes a few reflection experiences, which you may present as directed or adapt for your class. Those meditations allow the students to become more self-aware by quieting their minds and focusing inward. They may also help the students tap into their religious imagination. The following directions can help you lead a successful meditation:

- Know your group of students. Some groups are simply too rambunctious to sit quietly for more than a few minutes. On the other hand, most students appreciate the relaxed, stress-free time allowed by guided meditations.
- Choose the appropriate time for the reflection. Meditations are best done when the students have been talking about and have received some input about a particular topic—when they have reached a point at which they need time to reflect, ponder, and integrate all the ideas into their own experience.
- Before a meditation, inform the students of its purpose.
- Consider using soft music to aid in relaxation. Several recording companies (including Narada and Windham Hill) produce reflective, stress-reducing music.
- Begin the meditation with a period of physical relaxation. Instruct the students to close their eyes, relax their muscles (you might lead them through this: start with their toes, ankles, and calves, and work up through the neck and face), and breathe deeply throughout the process. Do not overlook this part of the experience. An additional benefit of guided meditations is that they teach the students a means of stress reduction.
- Open the reflection with a call to focus. For example:  
 Feel the warmth [or coolness] of the air moving around you. Listen to the sounds in the room. Listen to the even sound of [name the quiet, soothing sounds of the room, pausing after each and allowing the quiet to sink in]. Now listen to your own sounds, your even, relaxed breathing. Take a long, deep breath. Breathe in. . . . Breathe out. . . . Breathe in. . . . Breathe out. . . . [Repeat this breathing sequence until you sense that the students are at ease.]
- Read the meditation slowly and clearly, speaking in an even, restful tone of voice, pausing for a few moments after phrases or sentences as indicated. The flow of the meditation should be gentle so that the students can settle into a relaxed and reflective state.
- After the meditation allow some time for the students to write in their journals or discuss their insights. Ask questions related to the religious tradition you are studying, encouraging responses about feelings and other insights the students had during the meditation.

**Cross-curricular connections.** Often what is going on in one subject or class can have broader connections to another subject or class. You may want to speak to another teacher or other teachers about doing a cross-curricular lesson or unit. Because your students may not all take the same courses, and

because the course sequences might not match, this can be difficult to do. Still, it can be valuable for students to see how insights from one subject area can affect one's understanding in a different subject area. For example, you might ask students how an issue raised in a novel for English parallels a topic you have been discussing in religion.

You may want to introduce students to various genres of literature from major religions. Reading different types of narratives allows the students to practice empathy across the various disciplines they are studying. Indigenous myths and native books from China or India, for example, can teach profound lessons through images and elementary ideas while reflecting the ways indigenous people learn about their faith.

The ideas and themes discussed in this course can easily be applied to history, geography, literature, and science. Making connections across subjects also encourages the students to go beyond mere comprehension to synthesis and application.

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## A Method of Planning and Scheduling

One attractive but potentially frustrating feature of this teaching manual is that generally more classroom strategies are offered than you can use in your teaching. Each chapter of this manual is set up like a smorgasbord from which you will need to select those activities that best meet the needs of your class. The need to make such decisions is a major reason for presenting here a method of planning and scheduling your teaching of the entire course. It is wise to do the planning at the beginning of the course and to set realistic goals, but each school calendar is different and has its own set of variables.

### **1. Identify the total number of class periods available for this course.**

If you are teaching the course within one full semester, you might start with approximately eighteen weeks, and then exclude vacations, holidays, special school functions, test days, and so on. Identify the days that are not available for teaching, and estimate how many weeks you have left for the course. Then estimate the number of class periods you have to teach during the semester. For example, if your classes meet in 50-minute periods, five times a week for sixteen weeks, you have eighty class periods to work with. With some schools using block scheduling, this may be altered because the classes typically last between 75 and 90 minutes and meet less often.

### **2. Assess for the entire course the approximate number of class periods needed for each major concept.**

To assist you in this step, the major concepts are listed and described at the beginning of each chapter of this manual. It may be immediately clear that some concepts will have to be treated briefly, perhaps in one class period or less. Other concepts may require several class periods.

If your school uses block scheduling, you will need to plan for 75- to 90-minute periods. When introducing new content in a block-schedule format, focus on depth as opposed to breadth. The additional activities in the teaching manual can help you plan meaningful and interesting lessons for your students.

You may decide to skip certain major concepts or even whole chapters. Such choices should be made at this preliminary stage of planning. The primary objective is to take a broad view of the course to ensure that you will cover all that you intend to cover. Consciously planning to omit parts of the student text is one thing; simply running out of time at the end of the course is another. This step of the planning should help you avoid such surprises.

**3. Divide the course into approximately two-week blocks of time. In advance of each two-week block, make more specific decisions regarding which major concepts to present during that block. Determine how many and which class periods will be devoted to each of those concepts.**

Right before each two-week block begins, you will be ready to make more immediate plans for your teaching. Attempting to look ahead more than two weeks in your selection of specific concepts and teaching strategies could reduce necessary flexibility. Your choices of what and how to teach a month from now will be based on your students' responses to material in the interim. One exception to this guideline applies to audiovisuals. A number of additional activities in the manual suggest video and sound recordings as teaching tools. You will need to order those materials well ahead of time if you are relying on national distributors or a diocesan resource office.

**4. For each major concept to be taught during a given two-week block, select the pages of the student text that you will cover and the teaching strategies from this manual that you will use, keeping in mind the number of class periods devoted to that concept.**

You may have two class periods available for teaching a major concept, but this manual and the student text offer enough material and strategies to fill several periods. How do you decide what to do?

Begin by considering these questions: What approaches have the students responded well to in the past? What kinds of strategies seem ineffective with them? How can you touch on all the different intelligences in the activities for this chapter? What are you comfortable doing in class? Which strategies feel right to you? How much time do you have? How much time is required by each available strategy?

**5. After each class period, briefly evaluate for future reference your experience with the strategies selected.** Ongoing evaluation may be one of the most talked about and least practiced virtues of effective teaching. We are usually so caught up with preparing for our next task that we simply do not take the time to look back on classes we have successfully completed—or maybe only survived! The task of ongoing evaluation can seem so tedious and time-consuming that we feel oppressed by it before even attempting it.

In this planning process, the step of evaluation is so simple that it can quickly and consistently be included in your teaching. For further explanation see point 6 of the next section.

## A Lesson Planning Chart

On pages 22 and 23, you will find two copies of the lesson planning chart for this course: one includes examples of how the chart can be filled out, the other is blank and can be photocopied for use in your planning. You may want to complete the chart in pencil rather than pen, knowing that you will have to

make at least minor adjustments, given the students' responses to the material, missed class periods, and so on.

This is how to use the chart:

1. In the first column, write the number or date of the class period. That is, identify the class periods in the semester from say 1 to 80, or specify each session by the date on which you will teach it.

2. In the second column, state the major concept that you will teach during the class period. Use an abbreviation of the concept title listed in this manual.

3. In the third column, list the pages of the student text that you will cover in class or that you will have assigned in advance as homework reading. If you are covering one complete concept in a class, simply copy the page numbers from the icon beside that concept in this manual. If you are teaching one concept for several class periods, identify the specific pages of the student text for each of those periods. (This point may become clearer when you read point 5, below.)

4. In the fourth column, specify the teaching strategies, or activities, that you will use during the class. Note that all the activities in this manual are either lettered (for example, activity A) or titled (for example, "Speculating on Religious Questions"). Use these letters and titles along with page references from this manual to complete the column. Also describe briefly any modifications or additions you make to a text activity. For instance, write, "Activity B as brainstormed with whole class" or "Activity C descriptions in paired exchange, with whole-class discussion following."

5. In the fifth column, specify the student text pages to be read, the text activities to be completed, or any other task that you want to assign as homework for the next class period.

6. In the last column, after teaching a class, jot down your evaluation of it, concentrating on the strategies you identified in the fourth column. You will likely develop a shorthand of your own for this. You might simply state, "Effective as described in manual; repeat next time." Or you might write, "Too much material; drop activity D." Statements such as these, brief as they are, may be all you need to refresh your memory when teaching the course in the future.

### Sample Lesson Planning Chart

Date, Class	Major Concept	Text Pages	Activities	Homework Assignment	Evaluation
Mon. 9/7	Chap. 2: Intro	21–22	Provide basic overview of primal religious traditions.	Read pp. 23–26. Do text activities A and D in notebook.	Students seem to have lots of interest in this chapter after seeing film.
Tues. 9/8	Chap 2: A Religion of the Australian Aborigines	23–26	Go over review questions on p. 38 of text. Do activity “Understanding Taboo” (tm p. 37) to check understanding of concept.	Read pp. 26–28. Do text activity E in notebook.	Discussion of taboo went longer than expected; spend less time on review questions.
Wed. 9/9	Chap 2: B An African Tradition	26–28	Discuss text activity E in small groups; move to large-group sharing. Go over review questions on p. 38 of text.	Read pp. 28–32. Do text activities F and G in notebook.	Good discussion about worship of ancestors. Could be a good setup for “Día de los Muertos” activity.
Thurs. 9/10	Chap 2: C Religion of the North American Plains Indians	28–32	Go over review questions on p. 38 of text. Read handout 2–A (tm p. 47) together. Assign questions in activity “Outlawing the Sun Dance” (tm pp. 43) for written reflection and allow students to begin them in class.	Read pp. 32–38. Finish Sun Dance essay to turn in.	Some difficulty with concept of <i>axis mundi</i> ; review in next session. Strong opinions about Sun Dance.
Fri. 9/11	Chap. 2: D A Mesoamerican Religion	32–38	Collect reflections on Sun Dance. Go over review questions on p. 38 of text. Discuss text activity I as large group. Begin activity “A New Aztec Ritual for the Head and Heart” (tm pp. 45–46). Plan to present rituals next Tues.–Wed.	Bring in items needed for rituals.	Reflection question difficult in large group—assign as homework? One session is not enough time for groups to settle into activity.

## Lesson Planning Chart

Date, Class	Major Concept	Text Pages	Activities	Homework Assignment	Evaluation







# Teaching Strategies



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## CHAPTER 1

# Studying the World's Religions

### Major Concepts

- A. **The Nature of a Religious Tradition.** All human beings have the capacity for self-reflection. The world's various religions offer answers to life's fundamental questions about the human condition, spiritual perfection, human destiny, the nature of the world, and the nature of ultimate reality, or God. Some religions contend that spiritual perfection can be attained in this life, whereas other religions teach that perfection must await an afterlife. Nontheistic religions do not hold a belief in a relevant god or gods, but they do, like most other religions, teach that the ultimate reality is somehow revealed to human beings. Most religions share some basic elements, including experiential, mythic, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, social, and material dimensions.
- B. **Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions.** Religion is grounded in mystery and presents many challenging questions about the nature of ultimate reality. To better understand the world's religions, we can compare the dimensions that the different traditions manifest and approach each tradition with empathy.



### Concept A: The Nature of a Religious Tradition



### Review Questions: The Nature of a Religious Tradition

**Question 1.** What issues do people usually address when they ask questions about the human condition?

*Answer.* What is our essential nature? Are we merely what we appear to be—physical bodies somehow equipped with the capacity to think and to feel? Or are we endowed with a deeper spiritual essence, some form of soul? Are we by nature good, or evil, or somewhere in-between, perhaps originally good but now flawed in some way? Why do we suffer?

**Question 2.** How does spiritual maturity or perfection relate to the quest for salvation?

*Answer.* Most religions teach that spiritual maturity or perfection is closely related to some form of salvation from the ultimate limitation that is imposed by the human condition: death.

**Question 3.** Briefly explain how religions differ over the question of destiny.

*Answer.* According to some religions, human beings face two possible destinies: eternal life in paradise, or condemnation. Individual destiny is linked to spiritual maturation: the degree to which one has achieved perfection corresponds to one's prospects for reward in the afterlife. For religions that teach that human beings live more than one lifetime, the immediate destiny after this life is generally not the final destiny, but another step toward it. Nevertheless, the need to seek spiritual maturity in this life remains vital, because the level of one's maturity tends to determine the nature of one's future life.

**Question 4.** Name some ways religions perceive the nature of the world.

*Answer.* The world may be real, or a cosmic illusion; living and sacred, or merely matter; a help or a hindrance to the religious quest.

**Question 5.** Describe the difference between theistic and nontheistic religions.

*Answer.* Theistic religions hold a belief in God or in multiple gods; nontheistic religions do not.

**Question 6.** How do most religions teach that the ultimate reality is usually revealed?

*Answer.* Through sacred stories or myths, or through various types of religious experience.

**Question 7.** Describe in general terms the religious experience of the theistic religions. Then briefly compare it with the religious experience of the nontheistic religions.

*Answer.* Generally speaking, in theistic religions God is experienced as a holy presence who is other. This presence evokes both fear and fascination. In nontheistic religions, religious experience usually takes the form of mysticism.

**Question 8.** Briefly explain the concept of myth.

*Answer.* Myths are nonhistorical and nonrational sources of sacred truth. Myths are also powerful, for they give meaning to life. Passed along from one generation to the next, myths set forth fundamental knowledge regarding the nature of things and the proper way to live.

**Question 9.** Identify at least two dimensions of religion, in addition to the mythic, doctrinal, and experiential.

*Answer.* [Any two of the following answers are correct:] Ethical, ritual, social, and material.



## Text Activities: The Nature of a Religious Tradition

### Activity A

Search newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and other sources for at least three stories that mention religion. Answer this question: How does religion affect people's daily lives in each example?

### Activity B

The terms *spiritual* and *religious* often mean different things to different people. What does each term mean to you?

### Activity C

Contemplate the human condition by comparing the situation of humans with that of a favorite animal (it could be a pet). Does the animal think or feel, like people do? Does it seem to have a spiritual essence or soul? Does it seem to be by nature good, or evil, or somewhere in-between?

### Activity D

Summarize your personal cosmology—your own understanding of the nature of the world. Focus especially on the following questions: Where did the world come from? Is the world somehow a living, organic entity, or is it merely inorganic matter?

### Activity E

Like the terms *religious* and *spiritual*, *faith* tends to mean different things to different people. What does *faith* mean to you?

### Activity F

Myth is not as strong an element in the modern, scientific world as it was in earlier ages. Still, as the Creation story in Genesis suggests, some of our basic perspectives about life are derived from mythic sources. What other mythic truths—truths that are based on neither history nor science, but that give life meaning and direction—are prevalent in your society?

### Activity G

Identify at least two examples of sacred entities, art, or architecture in your community. Compare the examples in terms of how they express religious ideas and provoke emotions.



## Additional Activity: The Nature of a Religious Tradition

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### Speculating on Religious Questions

1. After the students have read the section of chapter 1 entitled “The Nature of a Religious Tradition,” direct them to focus on the religious questions outlined in the text. Write those questions on the board, and direct the students to copy them into their notebooks:

- What is the human condition?
- What is spiritual perfection?
- What is our destiny?
- What is the nature of the world?
- What is ultimate reality, and how is it revealed?

2. Review the material that the student text presents on each question. Then give the students the following homework assignment:

- Choose two photographs or illustrations of artifacts, pieces of art, or architectural structures related to two of the world’s religions. Your selections can come from the student text, library books, the Internet, or any other resources available to you. One of your choices should pertain to your own religion or the religion you know the most about. The other should pertain to a religion you know little about.
- Study the photographs or illustrations you have selected and then go through the list of religious questions and jot down what, if anything, the subject of each photo or illustration implies about that religion’s answers to the questions. For example, a Catholic cathedral might imply a majestic view of God, which might lead to further insights on the Christian understanding of ultimate reality and human nature; a Japanese Zen landscape painting could imply great respect for nature and lead to additional insights on the Zen view of the world and human nature.
- After you have made some notes about the images, write a two-page essay explaining what you have inferred about each religion just by looking at its artifacts, art, or buildings. Observe your images actively and creatively.

3. Collect the essays, and evaluate them on the basis of the students’ observations, not on whether their inferences are right or wrong.

4. When you return the essays, tell the students to keep them and to review them when the class studies the particular religions they worked with. The students may be interested to note the accuracy of their original observations after learning more about the religions.

**Variation.** Lead a class discussion about one particular piece of art. Examine an image of Paul Gauguin’s painting *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (The same three questions are written, in French, in the upper left-hand corner of the artwork.) Allow the students time to observe the painting. Instruct them to write down the symbols they observe, how those symbols are used, and how the painting affects them personally. After an adequate amount of time, ask the class to share their observations and reactions. Point out that interpreting symbols and using one’s imagination are powerful ways of communicating truths that are often larger than the

words we have to explain them. Tell the students that this is a type of knowing that will be used throughout the course.



## Concept B: Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions



### Review Questions: Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions

**Question 10.** What is one benefit of using a comparative approach to study the world's religions?

*Answer.* Studying many religions of the world should enable us to know each one, including our own, more precisely.

**Question 11.** What is empathy, and how is it applied to the study of world religions?

*Answer.* Empathy is the capacity for seeing things from another's perspective.



### Text Activity: Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions

#### Activity H

It is important to cultivate empathy—the capacity for seeing things from another's perspective when studying the religions of others. Try applying the saying about empathy, that we need to walk in another person's shoes, to a family member or close friend. What do you think life looks like from that person's perspective?



### Additional Activities: Some Challenges and Rewards of Studying the World's Religions

The challenging issues and questions raised in this section of the chapter often inspire strong emotions, and sometimes those emotions impede productive discussion. In the following activities, the students explore two approaches to understanding religions. It is hoped that these exercises will help the students enter into the following chapters in a spirit of inquiry and openness.

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#### The Comparative Model

1. Ask the students to select a random category with which they are reasonably familiar—such as food, cars, music, or clothes. Then issue the following instructions:

- Write your category at the top of a piece of paper or in your notebook. Just below it create three columns, writing the name of one item from your category at the top of column 1, writing “Both” at the top of column 2, and writing the name of a second item from your category at the top of column 3. In the first and third columns, list what is distinct about the item. In the middle column, list what both items have in common.

You might present this example:

### **Cars**

<i>Volkswagen New Beetle</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Ford Explorer</i>
German engineering	Internal combustion engine	American engineering
Compact styling	Manual or automatic transmission	Large SUV styling
Two doors	Four wheels	Four doors

2. After the students have spent a few minutes working on their lists, have them pair up and share their answers. Then lead the group in a discussion about the strengths and limitations of the comparison model of learning, using the following questions as a guide:

- What observations are easily made through this exercise?
- What knowledge about your items does not surface from this exercise?
- How might this model be helpful in learning about religions?
- What might be limitations of this model?

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## **Learning Through Empathy**

1. Direct the students to think of a person they know well—perhaps a family member, a friend, or a coworker. Tell the students to imagine that they have to describe this person to a stranger. Instruct them to make a list of statements that sums up this person. Encourage them to include not only physical characteristics and general personality traits, but revelations about who this person truly is.

2. After the young people have had some time to work on their statements, invite them to review their lists while they ponder the following questions. You may wish to discuss these reflection questions in class, if time permits, or you may ask the students to complete them for homework.

- With just this information, what kind of impression would a stranger have of this person?
- Would that impression be accurate? Why or why not?
- Is this information sufficient for knowing your person?
- How is being told about someone different from actually meeting and interacting with them?
- How effectively can we “walk in someone else’s shoes”? Why might we try?



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## CHAPTER 2

# Primal Religious Traditions

### Major Concepts

- A. **Religion of the Australian Aborigines.** All religions are rooted in the primal traditions of early peoples. The foundation of Australian Aboriginal religion is the concept of the Dreaming, when supernatural beings called Ancestors roamed the earth, shaping the landscape and creating various forms of life, including the first humans. The spiritual essence of the Ancestors remains in the various symbols they left behind and also within individuals. Totemism is common to many primal traditions, including the religion of the Australian Aborigines. Aboriginal religion is a process of re-creating the mythic past of the Dreaming in order to tap into its sacred power, primarily through rituals re-enacting myths. Aboriginal society is carefully structured on a foundation of taboos. Initiation rituals bring about the symbolic death of childhood to pave the way for spiritual re-birth.
- B. **An African Tradition.** The Yoruba religion of Africa tries to maintain a balance between the human beings of earth and the gods and ancestors of heaven, while guarding against evil sorcerers and witches. The Yoruba believe that their supreme god, Olorun, is the original source of power in the universe, but the lesser gods—the *orishas*—are most significant in Yoruba religious life. Both the *orishas* and the ancestors (deceased humans with supernatural status) possess sacred power that can help or harm the living, and are worshiped through rituals at shrines. Esu, a trickster figure who is both good and evil, mediates between heaven and earth and is universally worshiped among the Yoruba. Trickster figures are common to many primal traditions. A number of Yoruba ritual specialists facilitate communication with a particular deity or ancestor. The Yoruba consider divination, through which one's future can be learned, essential for determining how to proceed in life.
- C. **Religion of the North American Plains Indians.** The religion of the Plains is somewhat representative of Native American religion in general. The members of one large Plains tribe, the Lakota, call the supreme reality Wakan Tanka, whose name refers to sixteen separate deities. A trickster figure, Inkтоми, mediates between the supernatural and human worlds. Inkтоми taught the first humans their ways. The Lakota believe that four souls depart from a person at death, some of which may be reborn in new bodies. The vision quest is common to many primal traditions, and helps people purify themselves and access spiritual power. Another ritual common

to all Plains tribes is the Sun Dance. The tribal members prepare for this ceremony by constructing a lodge around a tree—the *axis mundi*—which is the link between the earth and the heavens and represents the supreme being. The dancers tear their flesh as a sacrifice to the supreme being.

- D. A Mesoamerican Religion.** Aztec religion emphasizes the interrelationship between myth and ritual. The Aztecs built their civilization on the foundation of cultures that had come before them. They believed that the Toltec god Quetzalcoatl had presided over an age of prosperity and cultural brilliance, which his earthly devotee, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, had ruled as priest-king. The Toltecs provided the Aztecs with a mythic pattern for civilization. Aztecs identified the city of Teotihuacan as the origin of the cosmos. Aztec cosmology featured a close correspondence between time and space, and the Aztecs understood the universe to be built around four cardinal directions plus an *axis mundi*. The Aztecs also regarded the human being as an *axis mundi*, with two divine forces—one in the head and one in the heart—nurturing basic needs. Human sacrifice and mastery of language were two ways of fulfilling religious needs. Though the Aztec empire ended with the fall of Tenochtitlan to the Spanish army, aspects of Aztec culture survive today. In most primal religions, including those of Mesoamerica, the boundaries between the supernatural and the human worlds are easily crossed. The sacred and the secular are intertwined. Primal religions are constantly changing to adapt to modern life while retaining their ancient foundations.



## Concept A: Religion of the Australian Aborigines



### Review Questions: Religion of the Australian Aborigines

**Question 1.** Why are some forms of religion called primal? Describe some of the characteristics of primal religions.

*Answer.* Primal religions tended to come before other religious traditions. They do not depend on scriptures or written teachings; they pass down myths and stories orally from generation to generation; they tend to be the traditions of tribal peoples who dwell in villages, as opposed to large cities, although there are some exceptions; and they are diverse.

**Question 2.** What elements of the natural and human world did the Ancestors create or establish in the period of the Dreaming?

*Answer.* The Ancestors gave shape to the landscape and created the various forms of life, including the first human beings. They specified the territory each human tribe was to occupy, and determined each tribe's languages, social rules, and customs. They also left behind symbols of their presence in the form of natural landmarks, rock paintings, and so on.

**Question 3.** What survives in the symbols left behind by the Ancestors?

*Answer.* The spiritual essence of the Ancestors. The sites where the symbols are found are thought to be charged with sacred power.

**Question 4.** Explain the terms *totem* and *taboo*.

*Answer.* The term *totem* refers to the natural form in which the Ancestor appeared in the Dreaming. A totem may be an animal or a rock formation or other feature of the landscape. The term *taboo* refers to the system of social ordering that dictates that certain things and activities, owing to their sacred nature, are set aside for specific members of the group and are forbidden to others.

**Question 5.** Why is ritual essential if Aboriginal life is to have meaning?

*Answer.* It is only through ritual that the sacred power of the Dreaming can be accessed and experienced.

**Question 6.** How did Aboriginal rituals originate?

*Answer.* Aborigines believe that the rituals were taught to the first humans by the Ancestors in the Dreaming.

**Question 7.** What purposes are served by Aboriginal initiation rituals?

*Answer.* Aboriginal initiation rituals awaken young people to their spiritual identity with their totemic Ancestors, and at the same time redefine their social identity within the tribe. The rituals prepare the way for the spiritual rebirth that is a necessary step toward adulthood. Also, during the rituals, young people learn the essential truths about their world and how they are to act within it.

**Question 8.** Identify two acts of Dieri initiation rituals that symbolize death.

*Answer.* [Any two of the following answers are correct:] Circumcision, knocking out a boy's two lower middle teeth and burying them in the ground, and inflicting wounds intended to leave scars on a boy's neck and back.



## Text Activities: Religion of the Australian Aborigines

### Activity A

Empathy—seeing something from another's perspective—helps us gain the insight we need to understand and appreciate the diversity of world religions. Striving to understand the Aboriginal concept of a mythic geography offers a good opportunity for practicing empathy. Think of a favorite outdoor area, such as a place in the wilderness, a beach, a park, or your backyard. Imagine that every notable landmark has great religious significance and that your every move within the area is undertaken as if it were a religious ritual. Now describe the area and your experience of being there.

### Activity B

Every society has rituals that re-enact origins, just as the Aborigines do. Some contemporary rituals are religious in nature, whereas others involve patriotism and other aspects of society. List as many such rituals as you can, briefly explaining how each is a re-enactment of an original event.

**Activity C**

To what extent does your society apply restrictions similar to those of the Aboriginal concept of taboo?

**Activity D**

What experiences have served as rituals of initiation for you, marking your passage from childhood to adulthood?



## **Additional Activities: Religion of the Australian Aborigines**

**Primary Source Reading**

See *Primary Source Readings in World Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009) for the selection titled "The Birth of the Butterflies," as well as the accompanying leader's guide for suggestions about how to use this reading in your study of Australian aborigines.

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**Choosing a Totem**

1. Engage the students in a discussion of totems and totemism. Cover the following points in your own words:

- Think of ways that people in families or in society are seen as representatives of a predecessor. For example, a girl might be referred to as the spitting image of her great-grandmother, an environmentalist might be called a contemporary Thoreau, and a civil rights activist could be identified as a modern Martin Luther King Jr.
- Think of ways that your family members identify with an earlier generation. For instance, some families pass a wedding ring, Christmas ornaments, or recipes from one generation to the next, and American Protestants began a tradition of passing on Bibles with pages for recording births, deaths, and marriages.
- Maintaining such connections, which we often take for granted, has much in common with the ideas of totems and totemism (though it is by no means identical with those concepts).

2. Direct the students to complete the following tasks in class:

- Choose a relative or friend you know well, preferably someone at least ten years older than you. Spend some time thinking about that person and then list his or her qualities—for example, hot tempered, patient, wise, and silly. Next, think of an animal, plant, inanimate object, or feature of the landscape that seems to strongly represent the character of the person you chose. This will be that person's "totem." Write a detailed description of this totem next to your list of the person's qualities, taking care not to use any of the words from that list. In your description take into consideration the totem's behavior and surroundings—anything about it that gives it a clear identity—as well as its outward appearance.

3. Instruct the students to choose a partner and to decide which person in the pair will go first. Then tell the first partner to read her or his description of the totem aloud to the second partner. Explain that after listening to the totem description, the second partner is to list the qualities she or he believes might be part of the character of the person for whom such a totem was chosen. Ask the partners to compare their lists of qualities and discuss the similarities and differences noted. Then tell them to repeat the task with the second partner's totem description.

4. Emphasize that this exercise merely approximates the concept of totemism, but it may also make it clear that such a concept is not so far removed from the way we think about people, and their characteristics, in our everyday life.

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## Understanding Taboo

At first glance the students may consider the concept of taboo to be controlling or elitist. By using analogies of childhood, social, and religious restrictions the students have experienced, the following discussion can help them understand taboo as being protective and beneficial rather than restrictive and detrimental.

1. Ask the students to recall restrictions from their early childhood, such as rules about the use of scissors or sharp knives, limits on the hours spent viewing television, and orders that they not leave the backyard. Raise questions like the following ones:

- If you were a young child, how might you describe these restrictions? Would these regulations seem reasonable?
- From the perspective of your current age, how do you describe these restrictions?
- If you were a parent, would you place similar restrictions on your young children?

2. Broaden the discussion by encouraging the students to identify restrictions in social and religious contexts. Examples could range from regulations specifying roles that only an ordained clergy member can perform in some worship rituals, to rules identifying who can enter the stage door after a concert or play. Invite the students to evaluate these other restrictions using the insights gained from the discussion of childhood restrictions. Focus on two or three restrictions that have been experienced by many of the students, and pose questions like the ones that follow:

- How do you describe these restrictions? [Possible answers: elitist, protective, and respectful]
- Who, if anyone, directly benefits from these restrictions?
- If one benefits, should all?
- Do those who do not directly benefit from the restrictions receive any benefit at all? [For example, restrictions on who can enter the stage door after a rock concert benefit the audience indirectly, because they help prevent the stars from being mobbed and injured, thus enabling them to entertain fans at future performances. Also for example, though a clergy member may be the only one who can perform a particular act in worship, the entire worshiping community benefits directly by observing and responding to that act.]

## Concept B: An African Tradition



### Review Questions: An African Tradition

**Question 9.** In what part of Africa do the Yoruba live?

*Answer.* The western regions of central Africa—Nigeria, Benin, and Togo—mostly in cities.

**Question 10.** Why has the city of Ife always been the center of Yoruba religion?

*Answer.* The Yoruba believe it was there that the god Orisha-nla first began to create the world.

**Question 11.** Briefly describe the Yoruba understanding of the cosmos.

*Answer.* The Yoruba regard the cosmos as being divided into two separate worlds: heaven (the invisible home of the gods and the ancestors) and earth (the visible home of human beings, who are descended from the gods). Earth is also populated by a perverted form of humans, witches and sorcerers, who can cause disastrous harm if not controlled.

**Question 12.** Who is Olorun, and what is his role in Yoruba religion?

*Answer.* He is the supreme god of the Yoruba, the primary, original source of power in the universe, to whom all other life-forms ultimately owe their existence. He is distant and not involved in human affairs, so he is hardly worshiped at all, except in prayer.

**Question 13.** What are the *orishas*? Explain their significance in the religious life of the Yoruba.

*Answer.* The *orishas* are lesser deities who are sources of sacred power that can help or harm humans, depending on how well the rituals designed to appease them are carried out.

**Question 14.** Name and briefly describe at least two of the *orishas*.

*Answer.* [Any two of the following answers are correct:] Orisha-nla is the supreme deity who most Yoruba believe created earth. Ogun, the god of iron and war, was the first king of Ife. He occupies the borderline between the ancestors and the rest of the *orishas*. Esu, who is both good and evil, mediates between heaven and earth.

**Question 15.** What is a trickster figure?

*Answer.* A sort of mischievous supernatural being.

**Question 16.** Describe the two types of Yoruba ancestors.

*Answer.* (1) Family ancestors, who gained their supernatural status through having earned a good reputation and having lived to an old age, and (2) deified ancestors, who were once important human figures known throughout Yoruba society.

**Question 17.** Describe the role of Yoruba ritual practitioners.

*Answer.* They mediate between the gods and ancestors in heaven and human beings on earth.

**Question 18.** What is divination, and why do the Yoruba regard it as essential?

*Answer.* Divination is learning or interpreting someone's future. It is considered essential for one to determine how to proceed with life.



## Text Activity: An African Tradition

### Activity E

Deceased ancestors are worshiped in many religious traditions. Are they worshiped in any way in your society? Explain your answer.



## Additional Activity: An African Tradition

### Primary Source Reading

See *Primary Source Readings in World Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009) for the selection titled "Creation Myth," as well as the accompanying leader's guide for suggestions about how to use this reading in your study of the Yoruba.

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## The Art of Divination

1. Divination is an important aspect of Yoruba religion as well as of many other primal traditions. Explain that although divination takes different forms in different cultures, in most cases it is far removed from what we usually refer to as fortune-telling.

Ask the students what comes to mind when they think of fortune-telling. They are likely to respond with some negative impressions—it is inaccurate, performed by charlatans, not to be taken seriously. Then point out what the text says about Yoruba divination: "The procedure involves an intricate system of hundreds of wisdom stories, which the diviner knows by memory. The diviner determines which of those stories are relevant for an individual, and from those stories interprets the individual's future" (p. 28).

2. Give the students the following directions for an essay to be written as homework:

- Take some time to think about stories you have heard or read recently or as long ago as early childhood. Consider all kinds of stories—such as fiction, nonfiction, news, and family memories. Pick two or three accounts that you consider particularly relevant to you as an individual, and from which you might interpret something about your future. Your interpretation should include events you think might occur, the type of person you would like to become, the kind of life you would like to lead, and so on.

In writing, briefly summarize the stories you have chosen. Then write a paragraph about each story, explaining why you believe it is relevant to you. Finally, write another paragraph about each story, describing how it relates to your future.



3. Evaluate the completed assignments, then return them to the students and engage the young people in a brief discussion of questions like these:

- Is the way you predicted your future the same as the way you might expect a typical fortune-teller to do so? In what respects are the two methods of prediction the same or different?
- What type of prediction would you be more likely to trust: that of a typical fortune-teller or that of a person who interprets life stories?

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## Concept C: Religion of the North American Plains Indians



### Review Questions: Religion of the North American Plains Indians

**Question 19.** According to the interpretation of the latest evidence, when and how do scholars think human beings first came to America?

*Answer.* Scholars believe humans first came to North America some twenty thousand to thirty thousand years ago. They migrated from Asia by crossing over the Bering Strait (between Russia and Alaska), which at that time was dry land.

**Question 20.** Why is the religion of the Plains Indians of vital interest among native peoples throughout North America?

*Answer.* It serves as the model for pan-Indian religion, a recent and popular movement uniting many tribes from across North America.

**Question 21.** What is Wakan Tanka?

*Answer.* The Lakota name for the supreme reality, sometimes translated as Great Spirit or the Great Mysterious, but literally meaning “most sacred.” It actually refers to sixteen separate deities.

**Question 22.** Who is Inktomi?

*Answer.* The Lakota trickster figure who mediates between the supernatural and human worlds. He taught the first humans their ways and customs, and he also serves as an example of how not to behave.

**Question 23.** Briefly describe Lakota beliefs regarding death and the afterlife.

*Answer.* The Lakota believe that four souls depart from a person at death, one of which journeys along the “spirit path” of the Milky Way. The soul meets an old woman who judges it and either allows it to continue on to the other world of the ancestors, or sends it back to earth as a ghost. Meanwhile parts of the other souls enter unborn children and are reborn in new bodies.

**Question 24.** What do individuals try to gain access to by going on a vision quest?

*Answer.* Spiritual power that will ensure greater success in activities such as hunting, warfare, and curing the ill.



**Question 25.** Briefly describe the structure and function of the sweat lodge.

*Answer.* The structure of the lodge, a sapling hut covered with animal skins to make it dark and airtight, represents the universe. Heated stones placed in the center and sprinkled with water give off hot steam, causing the participant to sweat profusely, which leads to both physical and spiritual purification.

**Question 26.** Describe a typical vision experienced by a person who undertakes a vision quest.

*Answer.* The vision arrives in the form of an animal or some other object or force of nature, and is often accompanied by a message.

**Question 27.** Among the Blackfeet tribe, who presides over the Sun Dance?

*Answer.* A woman of outstanding moral character.

**Question 28.** What is the *axis mundi* in general? What is the *axis mundi* in the Sun Dance?

*Answer.* In general, it is the center of the universe. In the Sun Dance, it is a cottonwood tree around which a lodge is constructed so that it represents the universe with its four directions.

**Question 29.** Why do some participants in the Sun Dance skewer their chests and dance until their flesh tears?

*Answer.* Because they believe that their bodies are the only things they truly own, the dancers regard bodily mutilation as the only suitable sacrifice to offer to the supreme being.



## **Text Activities: Religion of the North American Plains Indians**

### **Activity F**

Imagine yourself living in the open wilderness of the North American Plains. Why, do you suppose, did the Lakota understand their supreme reality as being closely related to the four compass directions?

### **Activity G**

The Indians of the Northern Plains traditionally lived off the land, depending on hunting and fishing to feed themselves. What elements of the vision quest and Sun Dance rituals are related to that lifestyle?



## **Additional Activities: Religion of the North American Plains Indians**

### **Primary Source Reading**

See *Primary Source Readings in World Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009) for the selection titled "On the Ghost Dance," as well as the accompanying leader's guide for suggestions about how to use this reading in your study of the Lakota.

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## The Vision Quest

1. Engage the students in a discussion of the Lakota vision quest. Be sure they have read, from the student text, the section on the vision quest as well as Lane Deer's account of his own vision. Focus the discussion on this part of the student text's description:

A vision comes to the quester eventually, usually near the end of the stay. It arrives in the form of an animal or some other object or force of nature. A message is often communicated along with the vision. When the individual returns to camp, the vision and the message are interpreted by the medicine man. (Pp. 31–32)

2. When you feel that the students have a basic understanding of the vision quest, instruct them as follows:

- In this activity we will attempt to experience an event analogous to the vision quest. Because we can't spend days fasting on a mountaintop, we need to create another situation in which we receive a vision.
- Choose an animal or some other object or force of nature. This will become the vision of one of your classmates, so select something you know well enough to describe thoroughly. Provide a written description that contains a setting for the arrival of the vision, actions and movements of the vision, and the way the vision communicates.

3. When the students have finished writing, collect all the vision descriptions and distribute them randomly. If a student receives his or her own description, he or she should keep it and continue the activity with it. Next, give the class the following instructions:

- You are approaching a turning point in your life. It won't be long before you are no longer a high school student, but have moved on to higher education or the working world. In view of this turning point, what message might the vision you have received communicate to you? In answering this question, be sure to consider the vision's meaning as a symbol. Think about what sort of analogy it might provide about your future. Write a page-long essay interpreting your vision.

4. You can end the activity here and instruct the students to hand in their essays to be evaluated. Or you might extend the activity by inviting the students to choose partners. It may be best if the partners know each other fairly well, but that is not absolutely necessary.

Tell the partners to sit together and read to each other the vision descriptions they received, imagining that the other person's description is a second vision that is coming to them during a vision quest. Then direct the students to verbally interpret their second vision in the same light that they interpreted their first—as a message about the turning point that is approaching in their life. Next, instruct the pairs to read each other's interpretive essays and to discuss the differences and similarities between them. Finally, invite the whole class to discuss the experience, using questions such as these:

- In what ways was the activity helpful? not helpful?
- Did you learn anything new about your own desires and expectations for the future?
- Although this experience was merely an analogy for the actual experience of a vision quest, do you now have a stronger understanding of the goal of the quest? Describe your understanding.

**Variation.** In step 2, invite the students to draw the setting and the vision, instead of writing about them.

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## Outlawing the Sun Dance



Handout 2–A

The student text points out that the Lakota Sun Dance was outlawed for some time by the government in the United States. It was suppressed in Canada as well. Handout 2–A, “What Harm Is in Our Sun Dance?” contains the thoughts of an anonymous Blackfoot Indian in Canada, early in the twentieth century, regarding the restrictions against the Sun Dance. Distribute the handout and instruct the students to read it. Base a discussion or writing assignment on questions such as these:

- Do you believe that it was right for the U.S. and Canadian governments to outlaw the Sun Dance? Why or why not?
- Under what circumstances do you think a government might be justified in restricting a religious practice?
- How might you react if your government considered an aspect of your religion illegal?




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## Concept D: A Mesoamerican Religion



### Review Questions: A Mesoamerican Religion

**Question 30.** In what two ways does the Aztec tradition defy the description of a primal religious tradition? In what ways is the Aztec tradition like other primal religious traditions?

*Answer.* The Aztec tradition differs from the typical primal tradition in that its people built a highly developed civilization with a population of about fifteen million people, and many Aztecs were urban. However, like other primal traditions, Aztec religion emphasized the interrelationship between myth and ritual, as its practice of human sacrifice makes vividly clear.

**Question 31.** What geographical area did Mesoamerica include?

*Answer.* Most of present-day Mexico, extending southward to present-day Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

**Question 32.** According to Aztec cosmology, what god created and ordered the world? What ancient city is the origin of the cosmos?

*Answer.* The creation and ordering of the world are attributed to Quetzalcoatl. Teotihuacan is the origin of the cosmos, in terms of both space and time.

**Question 33.** Who was Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl? What was his significance for the Aztecs?

*Answer.* He was the earthly devotee of Quetzalcoatl, and ruled as priest-king. He provided Aztecs with the perfect role model for their authority figures.

**Question 34.** What did the Aztecs call their present age? What did they anticipate its fate to be?

*Answer.* The Age of the Fifth Sun. They believed that four previous suns and their ages had already been destroyed, and a similar fate was anticipated for this one.

**Question 35.** How did the Aztecs understand the spatial world?

*Answer.* They understood the world as having four quadrants extending outward from the center of the universe (the *axis mundi*), which connected the earthly realm to the many-layered heavenly realm above and the many-layered underworld below.

**Question 36.** Why did the Aztecs regard each human being as a sort of *axis mundi*?

*Answer.* Two divine forces, one concentrated in the head, the other in the heart, were believed to nurture the human being with basic needs. The potency of these forces connected the earthly realm to the divine.

**Question 37.** What were the special religious capabilities of the Aztec knowers of things?

*Answer.* The knowers of things could communicate with the gods and make offerings through language, thus providing an alternative to sacrifice.

**Question 38.** What historical coincidence contributed to the fall of Tenochtitlan to the Spaniards?

*Answer.* Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, who had disappeared from earth long ago, was expected to return, possibly in 1519. By an amazing coincidence, Cortés—wearing a feathered helmet—arrived in Mesoamerica that year. The Aztec King Moctezuma thought Cortés was the returning Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, and welcomed him with gifts.

**Question 39.** How does the popular Day of the Dead show the survival of Aztec religious culture?

*Answer.* The celebration, held at the end of October and beginning of November, joins the living and the dead through rituals that are both festive and spiritually meaningful. The Aztecs also set aside a certain time each year to perform similar rituals devoted to the same basic purpose.

**Question 40.** What three themes are shared by the primal religions studied in this chapter?

*Answer.* (1) The boundaries between the supernatural and the human worlds are very thin, and easily crossed. (2) The secular and the sacred are not separate; rather, the universe is full of religious significance, and humans constantly draw on its sacred and life-giving powers. (3) The traditions themselves are constantly changing.



## Text Activities: A Mesoamerican Religion

### Activity H

The Aztecs looked back to the Toltec tradition as a kind of golden age, providing them with a mythic pattern for the ideal civilization. In what ways do you and your society look to past traditions for cultural ideals?

### Activity I

The Aztec cosmology is marked by a deep pessimism regarding the future. How does your society view the future? What can human beings offer to “nourish” the present so as to ensure a sound future?

### Activity J

Considering the Aztec ritual of human sacrifice offers a challenging opportunity to see things from another's perspective. Explain how human sacrifice is part of the Aztecs' ordered and sophisticated religious worldview, given their cosmology and understanding of the human condition.

### Activity K

In your experience how has the mastery of language helped to convey religious power? How does the significance of speech in the Aztec tradition compare with the significance of speech in another religious tradition with which you are familiar?

### Activity L

In general, primal religions understand the boundaries between the human and the supernatural realms to be thin and easily crossed. Drawing from the religious traditions of the Aborigines, the Yoruba, the Indians of the Northern Plains, and the Aztecs, identify as many examples as you can that illustrate this understanding.



## Additional Activities: A Mesoamerican Religion

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### A New Aztec Ritual for the Head and Heart

In this exercise the students design a modern ritual (without human sacrifice) in which they symbolically offer their heads and their hearts for the betterment of the world.

1. Make the following points in your own words:

- The ancient Aztec ritual of human sacrifice demonstrated a belief in a powerful, inextricable connection between people and the universe. In the act of sacrificing their lives to nourish the sun, the Aztecs believed they were helping sustain the sun, ensuring that the current age would progress and life would continue to flourish.
- Today we are increasingly aware of the interdependence between human beings and nature. Unfortunately our modern world often harms nature through pollution, overconsumption of resources, and ever-increasing human population. And despite a growing awareness of the relationship between human beings and nature, individuals, communities, and nations still engage in practices that are harmful, wasteful, or even life destroying. It sometimes seems that modern society would rather sacrifice nature to feed its own desires, than sacrifice its desires for the good of the natural world.

2. Break the class into groups of two or three and tell the groups each to appoint a recorder. Instruct the recorders each to make two columns on a sheet of paper, one titled "Head" and the other titled "Heart." Direct the groups to brainstorm a list of ideas for the head, and attitudes for the heart, that are necessary for humans to enjoy a beneficial and interdependent relationship with the natural world. For example, under the title "Head," they might list, "Developing alternative fuels that preserve resources and reduce

pollution”; under the title “Heart,” they might write, “Looking at my own transportation needs as an opportunity to respect the environment (by car-pooling, walking, biking, and so on).”

After a sufficient amount of time, tell the groups to now think of symbols that may evoke those ideas and attitudes, and to write them down.

3. When the groups have had enough time to think of symbols, give them the following directions:

- Using the ideas, attitudes, and symbols you just discussed, design a modern ritual that symbolically offers your heads and your hearts for the betterment of the world. The ritual does not have to be long, but it does have to include the following elements:
  - Appropriate objects and symbols (for example, photographs, illustrations, a globe, objects from nature, incense, candles, and music)
  - Appropriate readings and symbolic movements or gestures (for instance, poems, prayers, and vows to avoid certain actions or to embrace a certain lifestyle)
  - Participation of the assembly (for example, through responses to readings, singing, movement, sharing of thoughts, and bringing in of a symbol)

You may wish to collect the rituals in written form, or schedule class time for each group to enact its ritual and explain the ceremony’s meaning.




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### Día de los Muertos

To expand the students’ understanding of Aztec rituals as they have influenced present-day religion in Mexico, you may wish to invite someone from your school’s foreign language department or a guest speaker to come to class and discuss the celebration of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). To extend the activity, encourage the students to create altars honoring the dead in their families, following the Mexican custom. You can find links to resources about Día de los Muertos at the World Religions course page on the Internet, which can be accessed from the Saint Mary’s Press home page, [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org).

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# What Harm Is in Our Sun Dance?

During the late 1800s, when many Native Americans were initially being placed on reservations, many of their rituals and customs were restricted by law. The Sun Dance was one such ritual, outlawed because Sun Dancers fasted for extended periods and cut their own flesh with sharp skewers. The dance was also thought to be politically dangerous, with the potential of encouraging Native Americans to rebel against the reservation system.

The Sun Dance became legal again in the 1930s. During the time it was outlawed, a Blackfoot Indian from the Canadian Plains offered the following argument in favor of the ritual:

You have been among us for many years, and have attended many of our ceremonials. Have you ever seen a disturbance, or anything harmful, that has been caused by our Sun-dance?

We know that there is nothing injurious to our people in the Sun-dance. On the other hand, we have seen much that is bad at the dances of the white people. It has been our custom, during many years, to assemble once every summer for this festival, in honour of the Sun God. We fast and pray, that we may be able to lead good lives and to act more kindly towards each other. I do not understand why the white men desire to put an end to our religious ceremonials. What harm can they do to our people? If they deprive us of our religion, we will have nothing left, for we know of no other that can take its place. We do not understand the white man's religion. The Black Robes (Catholic Priests) teach us one thing and the Men-with-white-neckties (Protestant Missionaries) teach us another; so we are confused. We believe that the Sun God is all powerful, for every spring he makes the trees to bud and the grass to grow. We see these things with our own eyes, and, therefore, know that all life comes from him. (Walter McClintock, *The Old North Trail, or Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians* [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1968], page 508. Copyright © in the United States. Used with permission of the University of Nebraska Press.)



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## CHAPTER 3

# Hinduism

### Major Concepts

- A. **Human Destiny.** Liberation, or *moksha*, is the ultimate goal for Hindus. *Moksha* is characterized by infinite being, awareness, and bliss. Hindus generally believe in monism, the doctrine that all reality is ultimately one. The essence of reality is called Brahman, and the ultimate reality within human beings is called Atman, the eternal Self. Hinduism is polytheistic; its many deities are all points of contact with the divine. Hindu cosmology is cyclical: the universe undergoes long periods of creation and destruction. Individuals are repeatedly reincarnated until *moksha* is achieved. *Karma*, the moral law of cause and effect, determines the particular circumstances of one's life. *Dharma*, or ethical duty based on the divine order of reality, is the complete rule of life.
- B. **Hindu Society.** The Hindu social order significantly affects individual identity and *dharma*. Hindu society is traditionally divided into four main classes. A person's caste identity is determined by the *karma* of past lives, and caste determines the *dharma* that governs a person's actions. Hindu society distinguishes four stages of life, and those stages also help determine a person's *dharma*. In addition, Hindu society recognizes four legitimate goals in life, each of which helps determine a person's identity. The ultimate goal of Hinduism is *moksha*.
- C. **Three Paths to Liberation.** Hinduism embraces three great paths to *moksha*, each based on particular human tendencies. For those who prefer an active life, *karma marga*, "the path of works," involves performing actions in accordance with *dharma*—doing the right thing simply because it is right. For those who are philosophical, *jnana marga*, "the path of knowledge," emphasizes attaining knowledge of the true nature of reality. *Bhakti marga*, "the path of devotion," is most suitable for those to whom emotional attachment comes naturally. Spiritual energy is directed outward, in worship of the deity through gods, goddesses, or *avatars*. Hindu devotional life includes household and village rituals, pilgrimages to holy places, and veneration of cows.
- D. **Hinduism in the Modern World.** Today significant religious leaders nourish Hinduism. Decades after his death, Mahatma Gandhi continues to be revered as a great religious figure. His influence has caused the caste system to change in modern times; discrimination against outcastes is now



officially forbidden. The role of women continues to evolve. Hindus and Muslims have long lived side by side in South Asia, but tensions persist between the two groups. Although Hinduism is most prevalent in India and Nepal, it has expanded beyond South Asia, owing in large part to the teachers Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Vivekananda established the Hindu Vedanta Society in the United States in the late nineteenth century.

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## Concept A: Human Destiny



### Review Questions: Human Destiny

**Question 1.** Explain the meaning of the term *moksha*.

*Answer.* *Moksha* is a Hindu term that means “liberation” or “release.”

**Question 2.** What doctrine says all reality is ultimately one? Give an analogy that describes it.

*Answer.* *Monism.* All rivers, lakes, and even drops of water share a common essence, originating from the ocean and eventually returning to it.

**Question 3.** Define Brahman and Atman. How are the two related?

*Answer.* Brahman is the ground of existence and the source of the universe. Atman is the eternal Self. They are one and the same.

**Question 4.** What is the general function of Hinduism’s many deities?

*Answer.* They provide accessible points of contact with the divine.

**Question 5.** Give a brief explanation of the doctrine of *samsara*.

*Answer.* *Samsara* is the wheel of rebirth; the individual soul is reincarnated from one life-form to another until *moksha* is eventually achieved.

**Question 6.** What is the name of Hinduism’s most popular sacred text?

*Answer.* The Bhagavad-Gita.

**Question 7.** According to Hinduism, what are the two principles that connect the divine to this world? Briefly explain each.

*Answer.* *Karma*, the moral law of cause and effect, which says that every action produces a justified effect; and *dharma*, or ethical duty, which provides a standard by which to judge the rightness or wrongness of actions.



### Text Activities: Human Destiny

#### Activity A

Imagine you are Svetaketu’s father. Create another analogy that might answer the boy’s question about the Self.

### Activity B

Many religions and philosophers, including Plato, have believed in reincarnation, considering it to provide a logical view of human destiny. How might reincarnation explain who we are, what we know, what we look like, and how we act?

### Activity C

In the right-hand column of a sheet of paper, write the main actions you have taken during the last twenty-four hours. In the left-hand column, write what caused you to take each action. Then answer these questions: Is it possible for an action to lack a cause? Why or why not?



## Additional Activities: Human Destiny

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### Tell Me More About This Self

This activity should be done in conjunction with text activity A.

1. After the students have composed answers to text activity A, invite several volunteers to share their answers aloud. Allow discussion after each answer is read. Encourage the students to ask questions and make comments that help clarify the volunteers' responses to the activity. Then discuss how effectively their answers helped them understand the Hindu concepts of Brahman and Atman.



Handout 3-A

2. Distribute handout 3-A, "Tell Me More About This Self." Explain that the handout contains a passage from the Chandogya Upanishad, in which Svetaketu receives from his father several answers to his question about the Self. Direct the students to read the handout, either silently or aloud. Ask them to identify other analogies that are used to help explain difficult concepts, such as those used by teachers to illustrate a concept in a physics or math class, by coaches to teach a physical skill or sport, and by Jesus to tell his disciples about the Reign of God.

3. Give the students the following homework assignment:

- Between now and our next class, read the handout again. Then rewrite your own response to Svetaketu's question about the Self so that it satisfies Svetaketu's question even further. Bring your revised answer to our next class.

In grading this assignment, look for creativity as well as an understanding of the concept.

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### The Game of *Samsara*

In this activity the students develop board games based on Hindu cosmology. This task requires the students to understand the concepts of Hinduism. Knowledge of Indian history and geography also can be incorporated. These games can be based on material studied in the student text, or they can be the end result of a research project on Hindu deities, epics, stages of life, or yogas.

Before you introduce the game assignment to your students, review the required elements and evaluation criteria listed in the procedure steps and handouts. You may wish to modify those items to fit the needs of your students and situation.

1. Divide the class into pairs and give the students the following or similar instructions, perhaps in written form:

- With your partner, design a board game based on the concepts of Hinduism. The game should include reincarnation, *karma*, *dharma*, castes, *moksha*, and the various deities, and should demonstrate your understanding of those ideas.
- Your classmates will evaluate the game for how well it “plays.” I will evaluate it for how well it incorporates Hindu concepts.
- Your game can be as complex as Life or as simple as Chutes and Ladders. Its objective must be clear. To be considered complete, your project must include the following elements:
  - Typed directions that can be understood without assistance
  - An appropriately decorated game board
  - Tokens or game pieces
  - A method for moving the game pieces around the board (such as rolling dice, drawing cards, or spinning a wheel)
  - A beginning
  - An end



Handout 3–B

In addition, it may be helpful to give specific requirements (for example, “Include at least four Hindu deities in the game”).

2. Give each pair one copy of handout 3–B, “Teacher Evaluation: The Game of *Samsara*,” which explains the criteria for your evaluation. Emphasize these points in your own words:

- Games with the following features will get the best evaluations:
  - Originality
  - Accurate portrayals of Hindu concepts
  - Creativity in the incorporation of Hindu concepts and game board decorations
  - Clear directions
- Be sure to complete the first two lines of the handout, naming your game and listing your own names, and to submit the evaluation form with your game on the date assigned.



Handout 3–C

3. Devote a full class period to evaluation of the completed games. For each game, assign a pair of students (or more if needed) to spend 10 minutes or so following the directions (ensure that the students are not assigned to play the game they developed). When time is up, distribute handout 3–C, “Peer Evaluation: The Game of *Samsara*,” and ask each pair to evaluate the game it played. Then invite the students to rotate to a new game (also not their own). Meanwhile, move around the room and complete a teacher evaluation for each game.



Handout 3–D

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### Understanding *Dharma*

The Bhagavad-Gita is an excellent source for understanding the Hindu concept of *dharma*. Distribute handout 3–D, “The Fruits of Action.” After allowing the students time to complete the handout questions individually or in pairs or small groups, lead the class through a discussion of their responses. As a

homework assignment, you may wish to have them construct their own *dharma* scenarios involving the executive and the doctor.

If you will be incorporating a more detailed study of the Bhagavad-Gita into your curriculum, this activity may be used to introduce the philosophical nature of the work. The students could complete the handout before reading the sacred text. Or this activity could help to focus discussion on the second and third chapters of the Bhagavad-Gita after the students have read them.



## Concept B: Hindu Society



### Review Questions: Hindu Society

**Question 8.** Name the four classes of the caste system and describe the people who belong to each.

*Answer.* *Brahmin:* priests; *kshatriya:* warriors and administrators; *vaishya:* producers, such as farmers, merchants, and artisans; and *shudra:* servants and laborers.

**Question 9.** In the Bhagavad-Gita, why does Krishna encourage Arjuna to engage in war?

*Answer.* Krishna reminds Arjuna that his sacred duty as a *kshatriya* is to engage in battle.

**Question 10.** Identify and briefly explain the four stages of life.

*Answer.* (1) Student: characterized by study of the Vedas and other sacred literature; (2) householder: marked by pursuing a career and raising a family; (3) forest dweller: requiring retreat from worldly bonds to engage fully in the spiritual quest; (4) wandering ascetic (*sannyasin*): involving returning to society but remaining detached from social life.

**Question 11.** Name and briefly describe the four goals of life.

*Answer.* (1) *Kama:* pleasure is sought, but within the limits of *dharma*; (2) *artha:* material success is sought, along with social power and prestige; (3) *dharma:* harmony with *dharma* is the primary concern; (4) *moksha:* the goal is to achieve the infinite being, awareness, and bliss of liberation.



### Text Activities: Hindu Society

#### Activity D

Hindu society is separated by caste identity. Is Western society separated in any ways that are similar to the caste system? Explain your answer.

#### Activity E

Who do you think should choose a person's marriage partner? How does your perspective on this issue compare with Vimla's? What aspects of Hinduism might help account for any differences in perspective?

### Activity F

Describe the four Hindu stages of life, comparing each stage to a similar stage in Western society.

### Activity G

Reflect on a major goal you have had and have achieved. Was the satisfaction of accomplishing the goal permanent? Did it cause you to desire to achieve new goals? From the experience, what did you learn about desire?



## Additional Activities: Hindu Society

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Handout 3–E

### Supplemental Reading: The Caste System

When assigning the section “Doing One’s Job: The Caste System” in the student text, distribute copies of handout 3–E, “The Master and the Untouchable.” Direct the students to read both the textbook section and the handout, and to then write responses to the handout questions, using a separate piece of paper if necessary.

On the day the assignment is due, discuss the handout questions as a class. Focus first on the students’ intellectual understanding of the material, then shift to their interpretations and personal responses.

If you wish, allow the students to revise their answers to the handout questions before turning them in for evaluation.

**Variation.** Encourage the students to read and discuss *The Death of Vishnu: A Novel*, by Manil Suri (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2001). This book about a man who lives and dies on the landing of an apartment house in Bombay vividly illustrates the tension between classes in modern India. The subject matter is most appropriate for adults and older teens. Before assigning the book, review it and determine if it is suitable for your students.

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### Character Sketch: The Four Stages of Life

Issue the following instructions in your own words:

- You are each to write a four-page character sketch of a person going through the four stages of life: student, householder, forest dweller, and wandering ascetic (*sannyasin*). Devote one page to each stage. Write the sketch as if the character lives in your own community. By doing this you will adapt your understanding of the four stages of Hindu life to your own time.
- The adaptation need not be a literal parallel to the Hindu understanding. For example, at the wandering ascetic stage, the person might be a retiree who pays little attention to his own needs, possessions, and so on, and who spends each day “wandering” the local hospital, comforting sick or dying children.

- The character may be you or someone you know, or a completely fictional person. The sketch should provide a look at a day in the life of the person at each stage, highlighting the activities particular to that stage.
- The character sketch is to be handed in and will be graded.

**Variations.** Offer the students the option of performing their sketches as monologues or even dances. Or allow the students to portray the four stages in a visual art medium.

Pages  
53–  
61

## Concept C: Three Paths to Liberation



### Review Questions: Three Paths to Liberation

**Question 12.** Identify the three paths to liberation. Which type of person is best suited for each path?

*Answer.* (1) *Karma marga*, “the path of works,” for those who prefer an active life; (2) *jnana marga*, “the path of knowledge,” for those who enjoy philosophy, learning, and meditation; (3) *bhakti marga*, “the path of devotion,” for those to whom emotional attachment comes naturally.

**Question 13.** What are the three most important schools of Hindu philosophy? What is the basic task that concerns all three?

*Answer.* Vedanta, Yoga, and Sankhya. Their basic task is the attainment of knowledge over the ignorance that binds the self to *samsara*.

**Question 14.** Identify three important gods or goddesses of Hinduism.

*Answer.* Vishnu, Shiva, and Kali.

**Question 15.** What is an *avatar*? Name two important Hindu figures identified as *avatars*.

*Answer.* An *avatar* is an incarnation, or living embodiment, of a deity. Krishna and Rama are *avatars*.

**Question 16.** What Hindu text is most closely associated with the *bhakti marga*?

*Answer.* The Bhagavad-Gita.

**Question 17.** Identify three aspects of Hindu devotional life.

*Answer.* Household and village rituals, pilgrimages to holy places, and veneration of cows.



### Text Activities: Three Paths to Liberation

#### Activity H

“Do the right thing only because it is right.” Must right actions be rewarded for people to want to do them, or should they be their own reward?

### Activity I

What might be some differences between the knowledge sought by a Hindu on *jnana marga* and the knowledge sought by a student working on a college degree?

### Activity J

Discuss the differences between your own experience of worship and the worship of a Hindu on *bhakti marga*, “the path of devotion.”



## Additional Activities: Three Paths to Liberation

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### *Bhakti Marga and Puja*

In this activity the students design their own prayer experiences using the format of a Hindu *puja*.

1. Offer the following introduction in your own words:

- The worship of Hindu deities is typically called *puja*. During *puja* a deity or some aspect of the deity is honored through a combination of images, objects, and actions. Bells are rung to invite the deity’s attention. Lamps are lit and waved in front of the deity’s image. Prayers are chanted. Water and food are offered to the deity for blessing, and consumed by the worshiper. Images of the deity may be symbolically bathed or clothed. Incense is usually burned, or flowers are used to perfume the air and decorate the display. In these rituals the worshiper nourishes a relationship with the chosen deity through all five senses.

2. If possible, show the film *Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion* (20 minutes, 1996), which explains how the senses are used in *puja*. After the film use these or similar questions to discuss the students’ observations:

- Where does *puja* occur?
- What are the components of *puja*?
- What symbols are part of *puja*? How are they used?

The film and a corresponding teacher’s guide are available from the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (see appendix 2). If you cannot obtain the film, you may wish to use information from the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Web site, which is rich in material about Hinduism.

3. Tell the students that they will now have an opportunity to design their own ceremonies using the *puja* concept of engaging all the senses. Assign this project to be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Make the following points, using your own words:

- You are *not* to simply reproduce a Hindu *puja*. You are to adapt the idea of a *puja* and create a unique ceremony that honors something that is sacred to you because of your own belief system.
- The ceremony should reflect your own beliefs, values, and experiences. It may focus on experiences you have shared with your classmates, or it may focus on a personal quality or virtue that you would like to honor. It may be religious, or it may reflect your ideals without any religious references.



Be sure that the students understand that this ceremony should not be a real Hindu *puja* unless the student developing it is Hindu.

You might require written outlines of the ceremonies, or complete performances of them. Another option is to require outlines, and ask for volunteers to present their ceremonies, perhaps for extra credit. If the ceremonies are to be enacted, consider assigning one or two a day for the coming weeks, perhaps to open and close your class sessions.

The outlines or ceremonies should demonstrate all the components of *puja* that the students noted in the film or in their research. However you decide to evaluate the *puja* rituals, be sure that the students understand the criteria you will be using. You might design a rubric, such as the one used for “The Game of *Samsara*” on handout 3–B.

(This activity is adapted from one developed by John Reine, Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Newton, Massachusetts.)

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### ***Jnana Marga* and Meditation**

This activity gives the students an experience of the kind of meditation found in the Hindu tradition. Some general guidelines for meditation can be found in the introduction to this manual, on page 18.

If you have no experience with meditating, it might be helpful to invite someone who does to visit the class for this activity. The students are likely to have questions and even some misunderstandings as to the purpose of meditation. Your own confidence that this is a worthwhile activity, or the confidence of your guest, can encourage the students to make the effort to meditate.

You may want to shorten or adapt this meditation, to better suit the needs of your class. This particular activity may be too long for those who have never experienced silent meditation.

This exercise will be most effective in a setting that is conducive to quiet reflection and that allows the students adequate distance from one another, such as your school’s chapel.

Note: This activity is similar to the chapter 4 exercise “Sitting,” on pages 73–74 of this manual.

1. In a calm voice, read the following meditation, which is reprinted from Fr. Anthony de Mello’s guide to meditation, *Sadhana, a Way to God*, pages 13–15:

- **“The Riches of Silence**

“*Silence is the great revelation,*” said Lao-tse. We are accustomed to think of Scripture as the revelation of God. And so it is. I want you now to discover the revelation that silence brings. To take in the revelation that Scripture offers, you must expose yourself to Scripture. To take in the revelation that silence offers you must first attain silence. And this is not easy. . . .

“I want each of you to take a comfortable posture. Close your eyes.

“I am now going to invite you to keep silence for a period of ten minutes. First you will try to attain silence, as total a silence as possible of heart and mind. Having attained it, you will expose yourself to whatever revelation it brings.

“At the end of ten minutes I shall invite you to open your eyes and share with us, if you wish, what you did and what you experienced in these ten minutes. [Allow 10 minutes of silence.]



“In sharing with the rest of us what you did and what happened to you, tell us what attempts you made to attain silence and how successful your attempts were. Describe this silence if you can. Tell us what you experienced in this silence. Tell us anything you thought and felt during this exercise. [Allow time for the students to respond.]

“The experience of people who attempt this exercise is infinitely varied. Most people discover, to their surprise, that silence is something they are simply not accustomed to. That no matter what they do they cannot still the constant wandering of their mind or [quiet] an emotional turmoil they feel within their heart. Others feel themselves approaching the frontiers of silence. Then they panic and withdraw. Silence can be a frightening experience.

“No reason to be discouraged. Even those wandering thoughts of yours are a great revelation, aren’t they? The fact that your mind wanders, isn’t that a revelation about yourself? It is not enough to know this. You must take time to *experience* this wandering mind. And the *type* of wandering it indulges in—how revealing that is too!

“And here’s something encouraging for you: The fact that you were aware of your mental wanderings or of your inner turmoil or of your inability to be still shows that you have some small degree of silence within you, at least a sufficient amount of silence to be aware of all of this.

“Close your eyes again and become aware of your wandering mind . . . for just two minutes . . . [Allow 2 minutes of silence.]

“Now sense the silence that makes it possible for you to be aware of the wanderings of your mind . . .

“It is this minimal silence that you have within you that we [can] build on. . . . As it grows it will reveal to you more and more about yourself. Or, more accurately, silence will reveal yourself to you. That is the first revelation: your *self*. And in and through this revelation you will attain things that money cannot buy, things like wisdom and serenity and joy and God.

“To attain these priceless things it is not enough for you to reflect, talk, discuss. What you will need is work. Get to work right now.

“Close your eyes. Seek silence for another five minutes. [Allow 5 minutes of silence.]

“At the end of the exercise note whether your attempts this time were more successful or less.

“Note whether silence revealed something to you this time that you failed to notice last time.

“Don’t seek for anything sensational in the revelation that silence brings—lights, inspirations, insights. In fact, don’t *seek* at all. Limit yourself to *observing*. Just take in everything that comes to your awareness. Everything, no matter how trite and ordinary, that is thus *revealed* to you. All your revelation may consist of is the fact that your hands are clammy or that you have an urge to change your posture or that you are worried about your health. No matter. The important thing is that you have become aware of this. The content of your awareness is less important than the quality of the awareness. As the quality improves, your silence will deepen. And as your silence deepens, you will experience change. And you will discover, to your delight, that revelation is not knowledge. Revelation is power; a mysterious power that brings transformation.”

2. Allow the students to share their reactions to the experience, and to ask questions of you or your guest.



Handout 3–F

### ***Karma Marga*: “The Path of Works”**

Distribute handout 3–F, “*Karma Marga*: “The Path of Works.”” Read the introductory paragraph with the students. Address any questions the students have, and allow the young people time to write their responses to the handout questions. After the students have completed the handout, lead them in a discussion about the subtleties of personal motivations, using these or similar questions:

- What motivates our actions?
- To what extent do we control our motivations?
- How (or when) do we recognize selfish motivations for our actions?
- How can we cultivate selfless motivations for our actions?

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### **Krishna and the Love of God**

The student text points out that the *avatar* Krishna is sometimes depicted as an amorous cowherd, often accompanied by adoring female cowherds, or *gopis*. The relationship between the women and Krishna is a symbol of human love for God.



Handout 3–G

1. Handout 3–G, ““The Dance of Love,”” contains a Hindu folktale about Krishna and the female cowherds. Distribute the handout and give the students time to read it. You may also wish to read it aloud, or recruit a student to rehearse it ahead of time and read it aloud.

2. Engage the students in a discussion based on questions such as the ones that follow. Or assign the questions as written homework, to give the students a better opportunity to delve more deeply into the story and its meanings.

- What is represented by the relationship between Krishna and the *gopis*? [Human love for God]
- Plot out the significant moments in the relationship of Krishna and the *gopis*. [Krishna’s promise; Krishna’s call of the *gopis*; the *gopis*’ response; Krishna’s first test—telling the *gopis* to go home; the *gopis*’ firm declaration of love; Krishna’s acceptance; the development of pride, leading to the second test, the loss of Krishna; the *gopis*’ repentance, revealed through their exhausting search; Krishna’s return and his instructions about how to keep him always with them.]
- Using the scheme that has been plotted out from the story of Krishna and the *gopis*, present a similar scenario in terms of the faith tradition in which you have been raised or with which you are most familiar. [This scenario need not conform perfectly to the story’s scheme, as long as it echoes the dynamic of the story. You may need to guide the students if they get stuck. Here is an example of how the scenario might unfold: A young woman hears about God and God’s promise of love. She responds by entering a relationship with God and giving her love in return. Her commitment is tested and shaken by the sudden death of a friend. However, the woman looks deep within and senses that God is still with her, and she recommits herself to the relationship. As time passes, her understanding of her faith becomes rigid and formal to the degree that she believes her way of being with God is the right way and the only way. Her intolerance is manifested when she opposes her

church's inclusion of several people with AIDS. This experience leaves her feeling empty; she believes that God has left her. She knows that she wants to feel God's presence again, but it takes months of prayer and soul-searching before she can finally say that her relationship with God is back on track. Through this experience she learns that her relationships with her fellow humans must be just and loving if she is to stay in a good relationship with God.]

- In the story about Krishna, notice the importance of pride. Krishna makes an example first of the *gopis'* pride, then of Radha's individual pride. What do you think the storyteller is trying to teach? [Perhaps the storyteller is criticizing the pride of the community that believes it has an exclusive hold on the love of God, and the pride of the individual who similarly places himself above others because of a faulty perception of his own importance to God. Perhaps Radha and the other *gopis* have forgotten that if God loves all humanity, then God loves all individuals equally.]
- Share any other insights, reflections, or observations brought to mind by "The Dance of Love."



## Concept D: Hinduism in the Modern World



### Review Questions: Hinduism in the Modern World

**Question 18.** How did Mahatma Gandhi influence Hinduism?

*Answer.* Gandhi's steadfast efforts to stand up to oppression through non-violence and civil disobedience forever changed the nature of India, and of Hinduism. His work won Indian independence from British rule. His insights continue to fuel Hinduism's tendency to accept all wisdom as lighting the way to the divine.

**Question 19.** What significant changes in the caste system took place in the twentieth century?

*Answer.* The Indian government in 1948 officially forbade discrimination against outcastes. Governmental programs since that time, similar to affirmative action programs in the United States, have sought to further promote the economic and social rights of those people.

**Question 20.** What is *sati*? What is its status today?

*Answer.* *Sati*, the burning of a widow, is now forbidden.

**Question 21.** What significant development occurred in relations between Hindus and Muslims in 1947?

*Answer.* The Muslim community forced the partitioning of India to form the divided nation of Pakistan (the eastern part of which is now Bangladesh), thus providing a Muslim homeland. This turned into a bloody ordeal in which many followers of both religions were killed.



## Text Activity: Hinduism in the Modern World

### Activity K

The secular state of India and the traditional religion Hinduism tend to disagree over some important issues. How does religion relate to the secular state in your country?



## Additional Activities: Hinduism in the Modern World



### Issues in Hinduism Today

Assign the students individually or in groups to research issues facing Hindu society today. Some timely topics are the tensions between Hindus and Muslims, relations between India and Pakistan, disputes over sacred sites (such as the temple at Ayodhya), the evolving role of women, and changes in the caste system. Encourage the students to search both print and electronic sources for current articles on the issues they select. Suggest that they share their research with the class using a presentation graphics program or other means.

### A Life of Poverty, but Not Impoverishment

This activity uses the movie *City of Joy* (132 minutes, Columbia Tristar, VHS 1992, DVD 2006, rated PG-13). Note that this film contains some offensive language. It is advisable to view the film in advance to determine if it will be suitable for your students.

1. Introduce the movie *City of Joy* by noting that it depicts life in India today. Encourage the students to take notes during the film, keeping in mind discussion questions like these:

- What is the City of Joy? Describe the living conditions there.
- Point out any evidence of the caste system in the film.
- How are women treated? How is Kamla Pal both a traditional and a nontraditional woman?
- In what way is Dr. Max Lowe “twisted around” when he first arrives in India? What is he seeking?
- What are the three choices in life, according to nurse Joan Bethel?
- What does Dr. Max Lowe say he believes in at first, and why? What does he believe in by the film’s conclusion?
- Which of the three choices does he make?

2. After viewing the movie, engage the students in a discussion of the questions listed in step 1. The conversation can be done in small groups, with a member of each group responsible for reporting the group’s answers to the whole class. End the discussion with questions like these:

- Hasari Pal, an Indian farmer, is quoted at the end of the movie as saying, “All that is not given is lost.” Using the events and characters in the movie as examples, explain what might be meant by the quotation.
- Why, do you think, was the neighborhood called the City of Joy?
- In what way did this movie inspire you? In what way did it disturb you? What did you learn from it?

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## Gandhi: The Peaceful Fighter

1. Show the movie *Gandhi* (188 minutes, Sony Pictures, VHS 1982, DVD 2008, rated PG). Ask the students to take notes while watching and to keep in mind discussion questions such as these:

- What moved Gandhi to dedicate his life to fighting for India's independence?
- What steps did Gandhi take to gain freedom for India? What did he always insist on? Why?
- What sort of power did Gandhi's simple campaign for freedom bring to bear on the British Empire?
- Why, do you think, was Gandhi's fasting to end violence so effective?
- What did Gandhi think of other faiths? What did Gandhi's character in the film mean when he said, "I am a Muslim and a Hindu and a Christian and a Jew, and so are all of you"?
- What similarities and differences do you see between Gandhi and Jesus?
- What did Gandhi recommend to the Hindu man who confessed that after Muslims killed his son, he brutally killed a Muslim child? Do you think the man will follow what Gandhi called a way out of hell? How would you react in a similar situation?

2. After the class has viewed the entire film, lead the students to discuss the questions from step 1 in small groups and to then share their answers with the whole class. Then assign as homework a one- or two-page answer to the following essay question:

- Mahatma Gandhi said, "When I despair, I remember that, all through history, the way of truth and love has always won." Do you think this is true? Back up your answer with at least two examples from history and one example from your own experience.

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## Additional Resources from Saint Mary's Press

See *Primary Source Readings in World Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009) for selections from *The Bhagavad-Gita*, stories of Vendanta Sages, and an excerpt from *All Men Are Brothers*, by Mahatma Gandhi, as well as the accompanying leader's guide for suggestions about how to use these readings in your study of Hinduism.

*Teaching About Other Religions* (Saint Mary's Press, 2006) offers guidelines and suggestions for creating a respectful and intellectually stimulating environment when studying world religions in the classroom. For ideas and strategies on teaching Hinduism, see chapter 4.

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# Tell Me More About This Self

In this selection from the Chandogya Upanishad, a young man named Svetaketu has asked his father to teach him about the nature of the Self. His father, Uddalaka, gives him several answers.

“As the bees make honey by gathering juices from many flowering plants and trees, and as these juices reduced to one honey do not know from what flowers they severally come, similarly, my son, all creatures, when they are merged in that one Existence, whether in dreamless sleep or in death, know nothing of their past or present state, because of the ignorance enveloping them—know not that they are merged in him and that from him they came.

“Whatever these creatures are, whether a lion, or a tiger, or a boar, or a worm, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they remain after they come back from dreamless sleep.

“All these have their self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so, my son:

“The rivers in the east flow eastward, the rivers in the west flow westward, and all enter into the sea. From sea to sea they pass, the clouds lifting them to the sky as vapor and sending them down as rain. And as these rivers, when they are united with the sea, do not know whether they are this or that river, likewise all those creatures that I have named, when they have come back from Brahman, know not whence they came.

“All those beings have their self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so, my child:

“If someone were to strike once at the root of this large tree, it would bleed, but

live. If he were to strike at its stem, it would bleed, but live. If he were to strike at the top, it would bleed, but live. Pervaded by the living Self, this tree stands firm, and takes its food; but if the Self were to depart from one of its branches, that branch would wither; if it were to depart from a second, that would wither; if it were to depart from a third, that would wither. If it were to depart from the whole tree, the whole tree would wither.

“Likewise, my son, know this: The body dies when the Self leaves it—but the Self dies not.

“All that is has its self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so. Bring a fruit of that Nyagrodha tree.”

“Here it is, sir.”

“Break it.”

“It is broken, sir.”

“What do you see?”

“Some seeds, extremely small, sir.”

“Break one of them.”

“It is broken, sir.”

“What do you see?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“The subtle essence you do not see, and in that is the whole of the Nyagrodha tree. Believe, my son, that that which is the subtle essence—in that have all things their existence. That is the truth. That is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.” (Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, selectors and translators from the original Sanskrit, *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal* [Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Society of Southern California, 1948; reprint, New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1957], pages 69–70. Copyright © 1948, 1957 by the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Used with permission of Vedanta Press.)

# Teacher Evaluation: The Game of *Samsara*

Name of the game: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of the student designers: \_\_\_\_\_

In the following chart, each circled number indicates your game's score for the corresponding category.

	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>
<b>Organization</b>	Game is extremely well organized; directions are easy to follow; game play flows smoothly; organization enhances effectiveness of game	Game is thoughtfully designed; organization is apparent, and most directions are easy to follow	Game is somewhat organized; ideas are not clearly presented, and transitions are not all smooth; faults in organization are distracting to play of game	Game is messy or confusing, or both; format is difficult to follow; flow of play is abrupt and seriously distracts players from enjoyment of game
	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Content accuracy</b>	Content is completely accurate; all facts are precise and explicit	Content is mostly accurate, with few inconsistencies or errors	Content is somewhat accurate, with more than a few inconsistencies or errors	Content includes many inaccuracies; facts are presented in a way that misleads players
	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Creativity</b>	Game is extremely clever and original, with a unique approach that enhances player enjoyment	Game is clever at times; design is well thought out and unique	Game includes a few original touches, but they are not incorporated throughout	Game lacks creative energy, is bland, and does not engage players
	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Incorporation of Hindu Concepts</b>	Concept is strongly incorporated, and is used correctly as an integral part of game	Concept is used adequately and correctly, and fits in naturally with game	Concept is weakly incorporated, and is used incorrectly or seems not to fit game	Concept is not included
<b>Caste</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Deities</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Dharma</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Reincarnation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Total number of points: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:



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# Peer Evaluation: The Game of *Samsara*

Name of the game: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of the student designers: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of the peer evaluators: \_\_\_\_\_

In each of the categories below, evaluate the game on a scale of **1** to **4**, as follows:

**1** = not at all

**2** = somewhat

**3** = mostly

**4** = yes; no problems!

In the space provided for comments, explain the reason for a mark, give praise, or suggest improvements.

**Instructions:** The instructions and the objective of the game were clear.

**1   2   3   4**

Comments:

**Ease of play:** Play progressed smoothly and fairly.

**1   2   3   4**

Comments:

**Game design:** The playing board and the game pieces reflect the Hindu tradition creatively and originally.

**1   2   3   4**

Comments:

**Fun:** This game is fun! It held my interest.

**1   2   3   4**

Comments:



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# The Fruits of Action

Read the displayed passages from The Bhagavad-Gita, and use their teachings to answer the questions.

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Be intent on action,  
not on the fruits of action;  
avoid attraction to the fruits  
and attachment to inaction!  
(Bhagavad-Gita 2:47)

1. What fruits might each of the professionals in the following situations hope that their actions will yield?
  - a. A business executive promoting an employee to a managerial position
  - b. A police officer arresting a youth for selling drugs
  - c. A doctor attending a patient who is ill
2. If their actions do *not* attain the desired fruits, how might these people feel?
3. How might remaining unattached to the fruits of action help these professionals follow their *dharma*?

---

Your own duty done imperfectly  
is better than another [person]'s done well.  
It is better to die in one's own duty;  
another [person]'s duty is perilous.  
(Bhagavad-Gita 3:35)

4. Imagine that one of the professionals in question 1 sees a need for an action that is not appropriate to her or his particular role. For example, suppose the police officer recognizes that the young person dealing drugs needs to be taught job skills if he is to earn an honest wage. It might seem to the officer that the need for that action (providing the youth with job training) is greater or more important than the completion of her own task (getting the youth off the street immediately). According to Bhagavad-Gita 3:35, why should the officer stay faithful to her own *dharma* in this situation, which would mean arresting the youth? Why is it important to remain true to yourself even when that means another need might go unmet?

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(The excerpts on this handout are quoted from *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller [New York: Bantam Books, 1986], pages 36 and 46. English translation copyright © 1986 by Barbara Stoler Miller.)

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# The Master and the Untouchable

Read the following information along with the material on the caste system in your textbook. Then answer the questions at the end of this handout, using a separate sheet of paper if needed.

It is well known that Mahatma Gandhi was not enthusiastic about the caste system in India. In fact people excluded by the caste system, referred to as outcastes and including the Untouchables, were given a new name by Gandhi. That name was *Harijan*, “God’s children.” Because of Gandhi’s efforts, the Indian government outlawed discrimination against Harijan in 1948.

Much earlier in Hindu history, another revered master made a strong point in favor of the Untouchables. His name was Shankara. He was born in the year 788 and is renowned for his contributions to the school of knowledge known as Vedanta.

One morning Shankara was walking to the Ganges to bathe. Along the way he met an Untouchable. This man had four dogs with him, and the dogs and the man together blocked Shankara’s path. Prejudice against the lower castes and Untouchables was so strong in Indian society that even Shankara, a *brahmin* and a spiritual master, responded with hateful anger. He ordered the Untouchable to get out of his way. Rather than move, the Untouchable asked a question: “You teach that there is only one God. If that is so, why are there so many kinds of human beings? Why are there distinctions of religion or caste at all?” Hearing the question, Shankara felt ashamed. But even stronger than his shame was his feeling of reverence. He prostrated himself at the Untouchable’s feet. Later, he expressed his reverence in a poem that has this refrain:

Anyone who has learned to see the  
Oneness of all,  
That person is my master—whether  
brahmin or Untouchable.

(Adapted from Swami Prabhavananda with the assistance of Frederick Manchester, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* [Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1969], pages 281–282. Copyright © under the Berne Convention.)

1. Summarize the structure of the caste system. Include the names of the four major classes.
2. Does any structure similar to the caste system exist in your society? in your community? in your school? Explain.
3. What reasons might be behind the development of the caste system?
4. In contemporary world history, what civic or religious leaders might be compared to Mahatma Gandhi? Name at least one and explain the comparison.
5. Shankara experienced both shame and reverence when he faced the wisdom of a person considered an Untouchable. Have you ever learned an important lesson from an unexpected source? If so, describe the experience. If not, write a paragraph about what you imagine Shankara might have thought in the moments just after hearing the Untouchable’s words.