

LESSON PLAN, TURKEY STUDY TOUR, 2014

LESSON TITLE: SUNNI, SHII'A, SUFI and ALEVI; DIFFERENT WAYS OF "SEEING" ISLAM

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INTRODUCTION: This lesson will become part of my comparative religions portion of my 10th grade world history classes. These classes are composed of students who are mixed in ability and interest ranges; I do not have an AP class, but the lesson could be adapted for AP classes.

I always teach the major world religions in my classes, but after my trip to Turkey in July of 2014, I have become even more interested in the different sects of Islam, especially those we saw in Turkey such as the Sufi and Alevi groups. Therefore I am adding this lesson to my world religions lessons. By the time we study Islam, my students will have already studied several world religions, especially the ancient and Eastern religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as Christianity, so they will be familiar with the way I teach these religions. Their study of Judaism and Christianity will have prepared them for the concepts of monotheism and will help them in their understanding of how Islam is in many ways a "child" of those other two monotheistic religions and uses many of the same precepts, prophets and important people in its own religious structure, holy book and beliefs. I will teach them about the basic principles and beliefs of Islam before we begin this part of the lesson, so they will already know the core ideas when they begin their research on the different sects.

OBJECTIVES: The main goals/objectives of this particular lesson will be for the students to learn some of the main ideas/beliefs of Islam, its history, its important people, and its ways of worship and then to learn about and discuss the similarities and differences in the different sects/groups of Islam. The students will also, hopefully, gain a better understanding of how these differences have affected and continue to affect Islam and the world, especially the Middle East (Iran and Iraq in particular) today.

CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS: This Lesson will tie in to several of the ten Thematic Strands that form the basis of the NCSS standards. It will of course fit into the Culture strand in several ways, especially tying into letter C, which is to, "apply an understanding of culture as an integrated whole that explains the functions...of... the arts, traditions, beliefs and values... The lesson also fits into Strand II, Time, Continuity and Change; Strand IV, Individual Development and Identity; Strand V, Individuals, Groups and Institutions; Strand VI, Power, Authority and Governance, and Strand IX, Global Connections. I won't go into all the ways in which the lesson fits into these areas, but if one reads the NCSS Standards, it

becomes quite obvious. Our Montana Social Studies Standards have similar thematic areas, and the lesson will fit into those areas in similar ways.

TIME: This lesson will probably take 4-6 class periods to complete, including my lesson on Islam. My class periods are approximately 50 minutes long.

MATERIALS: The students will use their text books (see bibliography), computer/internet sources, and several books/sources I have in my classroom on world religions. They will probably mostly use internet sources for the information on Sufism and the Alevis, as there is not much information available in my books on those topics. Students will also need something with which to take notes, and will be using a chart/form to follow. They will be working in groups and presenting to the class, so they will also be required to make some kind of visual; a poster, power point, timeline, etc.

PROCEDURES: #1: I will give an introductory lesson/notes on Islam in general; where it began, the founder, the holy book, the 5 Pillars, etc. I will not go into as much detail as usual, since the students will be doing their own research and would be duplicating much of this. I will take Islam up to the place where the Sunni's and Shi'as split and then divide the class into groups.

#2: The class will be randomly divided into groups. In most of my classes the groups will consist of 4-6 students. Each group will be assigned to research one of these groups of Islam; Sunni, Shi'a, Sufi or Alevi.

#3. The groups will be given a chart/form on which is the format they should follow when doing their research. I usually allow the groups to decide how they will approach their work, but I suggest that each person in the group takes a topic, such as "founder", or "main beliefs" and do their research that way. Then they can come back together to make their class presentation and visual.

#4: Students are given 2-3 class periods to do their research and put together a short class presentation on their sect. If each student is doing only one or two of the topics on the form, it doesn't usually take them that long to do the research. I also don't expect great depth; I will add to the information as needed.

#5: Students present their sect to the rest of the class, and the other students fill out a form/chart for each sect as it is presented. I also have power points and notes that I use to add to and complete the students' presentations – as valuable as I think this kind of activity is, I find that with average 10th graders, they often do not do a super good job of researching and/or presenting. (That's why we get paid the big bucks, right?) Some groups will do an outstanding job; others not so much. To ensure that all students get the information that I want them to get, I follow up with my own presentation as a "summary" to theirs. Many students will do computer/power point-type presentations, but others will make great posters or other visuals, and much can be learned from this. Because of my trip to Turkey, I

will be showing pictures of the dervishes, Rumi's tomb, Veli's tomb, and adding the knowledge I gained on my trip to the class discussion.

#6: A general class discussion of comparison/contrast between the different sects/groups of Islam will be held after the presentations are given, and one of the big questions will be, "How do these divisions affect the world of Islam, and the world, today?" I will assume that a good discussion will be had on the situation in Iraq due to the Sunni/Shi'a issue.

EVALULATION: I will evaluate/grade the students on their presentations according to a rubric/grade sheet (see attached). I will also have questions about Islam and about the different Islamic sects on the test which will cover this chapter – Chapter 6, "The World of Islam" in my text.

BACKGROUND ESSAY

This topic is an especially interesting, and I believe, important one in today's world. I feel strongly about teaching world religions in my world history classes, even though I live in an extremely conservative, almost-exclusively Christian small town. I am often faced with students and parents who do not want to learn, or have their children learn, about different ways of believing, especially if I teach that each religion is valid and must be respected. However, I continue to do so, and I have managed to keep teaching for over 30 years, so I believe that it is the right thing to do and that we must open our students' eyes to other belief systems and other ways of thinking – not to try to change anyone's beliefs; but rather to help them realize that there simply are many different ways to look at the world and at God.

I think that Islam is an especially important religion for my students to understand, for probably obvious reasons, and it is also the religion that most of them approach with the most prejudice and preconceptions. Therefore, I do think that an introductory lesson by the teacher is important in presenting this lesson plan. To just turn the students loose and expect them to make sense of what they will find online or in books is probably not realistic. I have good notes/power points and use YouTube and other video sources to bring Islam alive for my students, and I make a special effort to place it in its time and place, because I believe the historical and geographical context is especially important with Islam. So that initial lesson is important and may take a couple or even 3 class periods; although again, I would shorten my lesson because the students will be doing their own research, and the group doing Sunni Islam especially will basically be repeating much of what I would say about the beliefs etc. of Islam.

I have used the chart/form idea before in my classes, and it works quite well with classes of mixed ability ranges. When groups are random, they usually contain some different ability levels, and the students will generally assign themselves to the topic or area of the chart

that they know they can handle (the “Founder” part is quite easy, for example, as is the “holy book”.) This also gives students a guide to follow so that they aren’t just going off in multiple directions when doing the research. I would certainly suggest that each teacher adjust, add to, delete from, or change the chart so that it fits your own teaching style or objectives. It also makes it fairly easy to evaluate how well the students cover the material in their class presentations – you can see whether they have missed any of the main points or areas on the chart.

As always with students doing research, it is hard to get them to use sources other than Wikipedia, and I will have laptops in my room if possible so that I can more closely monitor their research. But it is probably most important that they find the information, and that they put it into a presentation that can be shared with the class. The process of doing those things is very useful in making information stick in students’ heads!

SOURCES: My test book is Glencoe’s World History, 2010 edition. I also have a video and outline with activity sheets from Knowledge Unlimited, Inc. called “Faith and Belief: Five Major World Religions” which has information on Islam. The Time/Life books also have a volume on Islam. Other information is available online in multiple sources.

I actually have my form in a chart format, but I will just put it here as a form with the categories I have on the chart for the students. I do this with other world religions as well sometimes. So, for each group; Sunni, Sufi, Alevi, and Shi'a, I would have the students find:

Time and place of foundation of religion – give the historical & geographical context.

Founder(s): Tell at least 4 things about this person(s) If there are other important people in the religion, tell who 2-3 of them are.

Major beliefs: Mono- or polytheistic? Afterlife? Moral code/sins? Peaceful or warlike? What are their main ideas about their god(s)? Where does/do god(s) live? Judgment Day? Etc.

Worship/Ritual: Holy day? Place of worship? Main rituals? (Example; 7 sacraments for Catholics), priests/religious leaders?

Holy Book: Is there one? Name? Was it written by someone? When written? Is a certain language important? Structure?

Place in Modern World: How many followers? Where do they live? Does this religion affect the world & if so, how and how much?

Other Info: Any other interesting, unusual info your group found out that you want to add.

Evaluation:

In addition to the test questions over this chapter, some of which I would no doubt take from the students' presentations, I will evaluate their group work and presentations. I usually give a group grade on this and tell them that every person in the group is therefore responsible for part of their grade. My rubric/evaluation form would include items such as:

Did all group members participate equally in the presentation?

Is the material on the chart/form covered completely and accurately?

Is the research accurate/correct?

Is/are the visual(s) appropriate, neatly done, creative/artistic in some way?

Presentation: All members participate, organized, complete, students spoke loudly and clearly

I am not going to include my power point presentation on Islam – I assume teachers would want to make their own presentation. If anyone wants to look at mine, however, just email me and I will send it to you.

