

Seeking Religious Literacy Group Study Guide

This resource is designed to help you understand the key concepts of this course, supporting your learning journey whether you are a facilitator or a student.

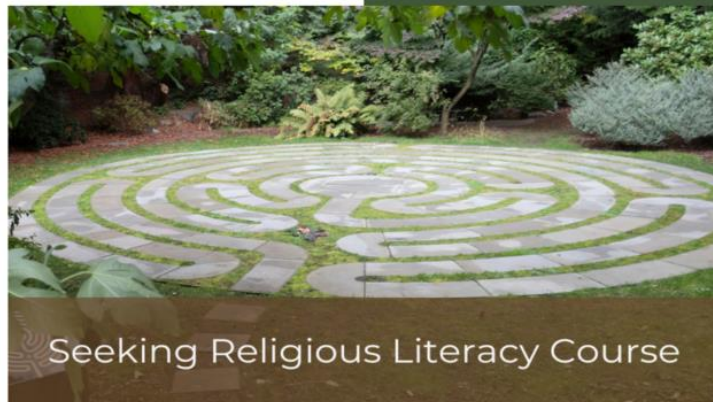


TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME	3
GATHERING FRAMEWORKS	4
MAINTAINING A SAFE & ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT	5
TOWARD A GLOBAL ETHIC	6
MODULE 1: Religion - A Worldview and a Way of Life	8
MODULE 2: The Transcendent and the Human	11
MODULE 3: Religion and World – Boundaries, Violence, Response	15
MODULE 4: Religion and Truth	17
MODULE 5: Religious Literacy Today	19
LEAVE-TAKING & CLOSING	21
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	22
CENTERING PRAYERS & READINGS	24
PARTICIPANT RESOURCES	26
LINKS TO ONLINE RESOURCE	27
REPRODUCABLE NOTES & REFLECTIONS PAGE	31
ADDITIONAL CEIE OFFERINGS	32

Gathering Frameworks

There are several ways you can structure your gatherings through the course. Each facilitator will have to decide the best approach for their context.

Some suggestions include:

- 60 minutes (5 weekly sessions)

Begin with a brief prayer/centering/grounding (available in the “FILES” tab on Canvas)

Share or review norms

Identify short clips from each lecture to highlight and facilitate discussion

Ask participants to read/watch supportive materials and reflect in their journal

- 60 minutes (10 weekly sessions)

Begin with a brief prayer/centering/grounding

Share or review norms

Watch one lecture together and facilitate discussion

Utilize small groups to watch, read or listen to supportive materials and share them with the class

- 90 minutes (5 weekly sessions)

Begin with a time of prayer/centering/grounding

Develop group norms/discuss and review in subsequent sessions as needed

Watch both lectures and facilitate discussion

Small group discussion of supporting materials

- 90 minutes (10 weekly or monthly sessions)

Engage in a spiritual practice/centering/grounding

Develop group norms/discuss and review in subsequent sessions as needed

Watch one lecture and facilitate discussion

Small group discussion of supporting materials

There are many creative ways to stay connected and engaged in between in-person sessions and to encourage conversation beyond the confines of your gathering time. You can also utilize these tools to support ongoing engagement and skill development.

- Create a private Facebook or Discord group and prompt conversation. We recommend regular monitoring.
- Use email prompts to remind participants to engage with extra podcasts, blogs, and stories.
- Schedule unstructured conversation time via an online platform for more open-ended conversations.
- Schedule visits to local religious communities and time for conversation afterward.
- Share ideas in the **Facilitator Forum** on the Canvas Resource page.

Module 2: The Transcendent and the Human

In this Module we will delve into what connects a religious community and look at the journey individuals take across their lifespan in various traditions. In doing so, we will ask key questions that guide us to a greater understanding of the nature of religion at its core.

Lesson 2.1 Lecture: *The Sacred, the Cosmic, and Reverence* (15:44)

Summary: "Religion" as a general category of human phenomena is a modern concept and is still evolving every day. But even as the definition of religion is debated, somehow the idea of "religion" is familiar to each of us, carrying with it a sense of inner recognition that is identified intuitively. In this lecture we touch on aspects of religion that help define how we experience "religion" in our lives.

Key Terms: Practice, Ritual, Transcendent, Immanent, Mythic, Narrative, Deity, Confirmation Bias, Theism

Story: Chochmah – the Blueprint of Creation

<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2016/11/22/chochmah-the-blueprint-of-creation>

Story: The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, and what I learned from them

<https://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2022/12/1/the-chinese-kaifeng-jews>

Interview: Wisdom Literature and Creative Responses to Challenge (15.25)

<https://soundcloud.com/religica/diane-jacobson-wisdom-literature-and-creative-responses-to-challenge>

Reflect

Read the four passages from different religious texts found on this page and answer the following questions.

1. What features do you notice about references to an ultimate source or deity?
2. Is there a relationship to the universe that each passage assumes of the reader or listener?
3. Where do you recognize reverence and how does reverence appear in your ritual practices and/or in your beliefs?

Passage 1 - Torah/Bible

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. And God said "Let there be light"; and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3, NRSV)

Additional Resources

The resources listed here are for further exploration of the material presented in the modules. Some are general resources and others are mentioned in the modules. It is **not** necessary that you procure these materials to complete the course.

General Resource

AAR Religious Literacy Guidelines

<https://aarweb.org/AARMBR/AARMBR/Publications-and-News-/Guides-and-Best-Practices-/Teaching-and-Learning-/AAR-Religious-Literacy-Guidelines.aspx>

González, Justo L. *Essential Theological Terms*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Smith, Huston. *The Illustrated World's Religions : A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions*. First Harper Collins paperback edition. New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 1995.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*. Ed. by William Scott Green and Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley. First edition. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995.

Module 1

Ahmed, Shahab. *What Is Islam? : The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton ; Princeton University Press, 2016.

Earhart, H. Byron, ed. *Religious Traditions of the World : A Journey through Africa, Mesoamerica, North America, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, China, and Japan*. First edition. San Francisco, California: Harper San Francisco, 1993.

Smart, Ninian. *Dimensions of the Sacred : An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Module 2

Haught, John F. *What Is Religion? : An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Module 3

Appleby, R. Scott. *Religious Fundamentalisms and Global Conflict*. Ithaca, N.Y: Foreign Policy Association, 1994.

Hedges, Paul Michael. *Understanding Religion: Theories and Methods for Studying Religiously Diverse Societies*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021.

LINKS TO ONLINE RESOURCES

These pages may be copied and/or sent to participants. You can choose which links to share with participants.

Module 1 Lessons

Story: Am I a Bad Muslim? <http://religica.org/am-i-a-bad-muslim/>

Podcast: A Life Dedication to Global Interfaith Work & Impact (13:50)
<https://soundcloud.com/religica/swami-chidanand-saraswati-a-life-dedication-to-global-interfaith-work-impact>

Story: Starting with Moksha and Karma Yoga
<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2012/1/13/starting-with-moksha-and-karma-yoga.html>

Story: My Dad Didn't Like Religion, but He Prepared Me for Religious Diversity
<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2019/1/8/my-dad-didnt-like-religion-but-he-prepared-me-for-religious-diversity>

Podcast: Finding a Way: 30 Years of Buddhist Nuns Stepping Up in the World (17:55)
<https://soundcloud.com/religica/karma-lekshe-tsono-finding-a-way-30-years-of-buddhist-nuns-stepping-up-in-the-world>

Supplemental Resources

Video: What are you Seeking? (6:53)
https://seattleu.instructure.com/courses/1592222/pages/what-are-you-seeking?module_item_id=16983257

Article: Storytelling – It's Not Just for Grown-Ups
<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2015/9/3/storytelling-its-not-just-for-grown-ups.html>

Podcast: Melting the Ice in Our Hearts and Understanding Our Inner Depth (15:36)
<https://soundcloud.com/religica/angaangaq-uncle-angakkorsuaq-melting-the-ice-in-our-hearts-understanding-our-inner-depth>

Module 2 Lessons

Story: Chochmach – the Blueprint of Creation
<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2016/11/22/chochmah-the-blueprint-of-creation>

Story: The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, and what I learned from them
<https://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2022/12/1/the-chinese-kaifeng-jews>

What is Religious Literacy?

Throughout the course your understanding of religious literacy may grow and shift. Use the grid below – individually and collectively - to explore your growing understanding of the facets of religious literacy.

Religious literacy is the ability to discern and analyze the role of religion in personal, social, political, professional, and cultural life. Nurturing this capacity helps us to understand our neighbors with more empathy and engage one another with intelligence and insightfulness.

<i>personal</i>	
<i>social</i>	
<i>political</i>	
<i>professional</i>	
<i>cultural</i>	