Teaching About Spiritual Affiliation Resource Guide



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Acknowledgements

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Contributions & External References

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Seth Brady	Naperville Central High School
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Marcia Hermansen	Loyola University Chicago

Their expertise and commitment help ensure this guide remains rooted in community and educational practice.

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Introduction

Resource Guide Overview

This resource guide acknowledges the rich diversity, contributions, and profound influence of religious, spiritual, and non-religious traditions throughout history and in contemporary life. Religion and belief systems have shaped cultures, communities, and social movements worldwide — while also being sites of conflict, misunderstanding, and exclusion when not approached with care and respect.

This guide is aligned with our commitment to inclusive education and provides curated resources to support educators, administrators, and community members in creating learning spaces that foster religious literacy, respect for diverse worldviews, and constitutional guidelines for teaching about religion in public schools. It offers foundational background, curricular frameworks, lesson plans, multimedia materials, and community resources to support thoughtful and balanced instruction.

Background

Throughout history, understanding religion and belief systems has been critical for interpreting global events, cultural practices, social justice movements, and the everyday lives of communities. Despite this importance, religious literacy remains limited in mainstream education, sometimes resulting in stereotypes, bias, or missed opportunities for civic dialogue.

Illinois supports the teaching of religion in ways that are academically sound and constitutionally appropriate — ensuring that instruction neither promotes nor denigrates any particular faith or worldview. This guide provides resources to help educators meet those standards and to equip students with the knowledge to navigate a religiously and spiritually diverse society.

Goal

This guide was developed to provide, advocate for, and support an inclusive educational approach that recognizes and affirms the diverse beliefs, histories, practices, and lived experiences of people across religious, spiritual, and non-religious traditions. It aims to equip educators with the tools and understanding needed to foster classrooms that model respect, inquiry, and constitutional protections for freedom of religion and belief.

Mission

The Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with scholars, community organizations, and educators, created this guide to help schools move beyond incomplete or biased narratives. Centering accuracy, multiple perspectives, and students' constitutional rights enables the promotion of curricula and practices that build students' understanding of the complex role religion and belief play in history and contemporary society.

Principles for Teaching About Religion

1. Teach About, Not Promote

Instruction about religion must be academic, not devotional. Educators should neither encourage nor discourage belief but instead foster understanding.

2. Respect Constitutional Guidelines

Ensure compliance with the First Amendment and relevant state policies when teaching about religion in public schools. Avoid activities that endorse or disapprove of any belief system.

3. Highlight Diversity and Complexity

Recognize the internal diversity within religious and non-religious communities, avoiding simplistic or monolithic portrayals.

4. Use Credible, Balanced Sources

Draw on reputable, scholarly resources and perspectives from people within the traditions being studied, when appropriate.

5. Cultivate Respectful Dialogue

Create classroom environments that encourage civil discourse, inquiry, and respect for students' rights to hold differing beliefs.

6. Connect to Civic Life and Global Citizenship

Help students understand how religion and belief systems shape history, politics, culture, and social movements locally and globally.

7. Engage Families and Communities

Build partnerships with families and community organizations to support understanding and respectful teaching about religion and belief in diverse school communities.

GENERAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS			
Publications	**Curriculum & Background Info**	**Organization & Speakers**	**ISBE Standards Addressed**
Teaching Religion as Anti-Racism Education American Academy of Religion Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools American Academy of Religion Teaching About Religion Freedom Forum Religion for Breakfast (You Tube/Podcast) Religion in Public Schools Pew Research Center The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide Freedom Forum "Six Guidelines for Teaching About Religion" Edweek, Benjamin Pietro Marcus; April 4, 2016 Teaching About Religion: How to Find the Best Resources Edweek; Marisa Fasciano; June 6, 2019	Teaching About Religion in the Social Studies Classroom, National Council for Social Studies Five Faiths Project Curriculum Materials Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina World History for Us All UCLA Department of History, National Center for History in the Schools Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Introduction to World Religion Website Interfaith America Religions in My Neighborhood (Grades 3-5 and 6-8) Tanenbaum Center The Rich Tapestry of Religion in the United States (Grades 3-5) Learning for Justice	The Pluralism Project Harvard University Religion and Public Life Harvard Divinity School Tanenbaum Center for Religious Understanding Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education PEW Research Center on Religion and Public Life Wabash Center	**SS.9-12.H.1.** Evaluate the context of time and place as well as structural factors that influence historical developments.

GENERAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS			
Publications	**Curriculum & Background Info**	**Organization & Speakers**	**ISBE Standards Addressed**
California Three Rs Project Constitutional Rights Foundation, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, and Religious Freedom Education Project "10 Tips on How to Teach About World Religions in Schools" Time, Linda K. Wertheimer; Sept. 30, 2016 Faith Ed.: Teaching About Religion in an Age of Intolerance Linda K. Wertheimer, 2015 Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know and Doesn't Mary Pope Osborne, 2008 One World, Many Religions Mary Pope Osborne, 1996 A Faith Like Mine Laura Buller, 2005	Religion, Culture, and Diversity PBS: Religion & Ethics Newsweekly Educator Toolkit Islamic Networks Group National Geographic Education National Geographic		

GENERAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS			
Publications	**Curriculum & Background Info**	**Organization & Speakers**	**ISBE Standards Addressed**
Interfaith Center of New York Recommended Reading for Preschool & Elementary Students Tanenbaum Combating Extremism Tanenbaum World Religions Through Their Scriptures Harvard University X Series Program through EdX (Requires Fee)			
BUDDHISM			
Becoming Buddha in LA (1993, Film) Keeping Faith: World Religion in America with Dianna Eck Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road Johan Elverskog, 2013 Buddha in Your Backpack: Everyday Lessons for Teens Franz Metcalf, 2002	Buddha.net Buddha Dharma Education Association Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Introduction to World Religion Website BBC: My Life, My Religion (Short Film)	The Buddhist Temple of Chicago Bodhi Path Buddhist Center of Chicago Midwest Buddhist Temple	**SS.5.H.1.** Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to identify cause and effects of relationships in history and the impacts of underrepresented groups. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

Publications	Curriculum & Background Info	Organization & Speakers	ISBE Standards Addressed
BUDDHISM			
Buddha for Beginners Stephen Azma, 2015 Introduction to Buddhism Asian Art Museum, Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture Buddha Karen Armstrong, 2004 The Foundation of Buddhism Rupert Gethin, 1998 Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction Damien Keown, 2013 Buddhism for Busy People: Finding Happiness in a Hurried World David Michie, 2017 Introducing the Buddhist Experience Donald Mitchell, 2013 The Life of the Buddha Chogel Tenzin, 2015 An Introduction to Buddhism The Dalai Lama	Considering Tibet The Germanicos Foundation Manitoba: Supplemental Resource for Grade 12 World of Religions: A Canadian Perspective Introduction to Buddhism The Pluralism Project at Harvard University		

Publications	Curriculum & Background Info	Organization & Speakers	ISBE Standards Addressed
BUDDHISM			
Black and Buddhist: What Buddhism Can Teach Us About Race, Resilience, Transformation and Freedom Pamela Ayo Yetunde, Pamela Ayo and Cheryl A. Giles, eds. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism Buddhism in Korea Short Guide to Tibetan Buddhism Himalayan Art Resources Buddhism and Buddhist Art Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York			
CHRISTIANITY			
The Bible and Its Influence: The Bible Literacy Project National Geographic - History 101: Protestant Reformation A History of Christianity Owen Chadwick, 1998	BBC: My Life, My Religion (Short Film) Crash Course: Christianity National Geographic: Christianity 101		**S.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.1.** Evaluate the context of time and place as well as structural factors that influence historical developments.

Publications	Curriculum & Background Info	Organization & Speakers	ISBE Standards Addressed
CHRISTIANITY			
Christianity: A Very Short Introduction Linda Woodhead, 2014 History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam Karen Armstrong, 1994 BBC: Christianity	From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians Frontline Crash Course: Christianity Series Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website Christianity, Harvard University Pluralism Project		**SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
CONFUCIANISM/TAOISM/TRADITIONAL CHINESE RELIGION			
The Texts of Taoism James Legge (Translator), 1962 Complete Idiot's Guide to Taoism Brandon Toropov and Chadwick Hansen The Essential Tao Thomas Cleary, 1992 Taoism: An Essential Guide Eva and Iva Wong, 2011	Religions and Philosophies in China: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism Stanford University Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education Compare and Contrast Buddhism/Confucianism/Taoism, Spencer Lanoue; Feb. 1, 2024; Of One Tree	Asia Society Center for Traditional Taoist Studies	**SS.9-12.H.1.** Evaluate the context of time and place as well as structural factors that influence historical developments. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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CONFUCIANISM/TAOISM/TRADITIONAL CHINESE RELIGION			
Confucianism (World Religions) Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler, 1993 Confucianism: A Short Introduction John H. Berthrong and Evelyn Nagai Berthrong, 2000 Confucianism: An Introduction Ronnie Littlejohn, 2010 Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website National Geographic: Confucianism	Taoism and the Arts of China Teacher Workshop (materials) February 2001, Ancient China: The Legacy of Confucius and Laozi Philosophies of China Smithsonian, National Museum of Asian Art Elementary Resources China Columbia University, Weatherhead East Asian Institute Confucius: His Life, Times, and Legacy Tish King, Girls Preparatory School, Chattanooga, TN Khan Academy: Taoism The Ohio State University East Asian Studies Center National Geographic: Chinese Religions and Philosophies		

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HINDUISM			
Am I a Hindu? Ed Viswanathan The Hindus: An Alternative History Wendy Doniger, 2010 Learn About Hinduism and Karma/Have a Little Faith (Video) Soul Pancake Introduction to Hinduism (Video) Belief, Oprah Winfrey Network Katha Sagar: An Ocean of Hindu Wisdom for Every Age Sarah Conover, 2017 Hinduism Today Confronting Orientalism: A Self-Study of Educating Through Hindu Dance Sabrina D. MisirHiralall, 2017 Hinduism Through Dance (Videos) Sabrina D. MisirHiralall	Hinduism Smithsonian Museum Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion (Video) BBC: My Life, My Religion (Short Film) Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website Sanjay Superteam (Video) Sanjay Patel, 1995	Balvihar Hindi Pathshala (Chicago) Vivekananda House, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Hindu Society of America	**SS.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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ISLAM			
"Teaching Beyond Stereotypes: Ways to teach the Middle East and Islam in Schools" Larry Ferlazzo, Ed Weekly; Sept. 29, 2020 "How Schools Can Support Arab and Muslim Students" Larry Ferlazzo, Ed Week "Social Media and Islamophobia: Fighting Hate in the Digital Age" Disruptor Magazine Media Representations, Negative Stereotypes, and Islamophobia Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World Carl W. Ernst, 2004 Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road Johan Elverskog, 2013	Council on Islamic Education: Legacy Teaching Resources (Institute on Religious and Civic Values) Pew Research Center on Muslim Americans The Five Pillars of Islam The Islam Project Resources on the Five Pillars The Met K-12 Teaching Resources Stanford University, Sohaib and Sara Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies K-14 Resources on Islam Duke University, Islamic Studies Center Resources, Duke University and University of North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies	Muslim Civic Coalition (Chicago) Muslim American Society (MAS) Chicago Arab American Institute MuslimARC Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative	**SS.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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ISLAM			
Muhammad Karen Armstrong, 2007 Islam: A Short History Karen Armstrong, 2002 Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism (Islam in the Twenty-First Century) Omar Safi, 2003 Teaching about Islam & Muslims in the Public School Classroom Council on Islamic Relations, 1995 Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Muslims Islamic Networks Group (ING) A Closer Look at Sharia in the United State Islamic Network Group (ING) "The Black Muslim Experience in K-12 Education" Rodaina El-Haj-Ibrahim; Muslim Matters, May 23, 2022	Teaching Resources Duke University and University of North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies K-12 Teaching Resources University of Arizona, Center for Middle East Studies Teaching About Religion in the Social Studies Classroom National Council for Social Studies Inside Isam (Video) Unity Productions Foundation, PBS Inside the Qur'an (Video) PBS Islam, the Quran, and the Five Pillars (Video) PBS Inside Mecca (Video) PBS Access Islam PBS Thirteen, WNET, New York		

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ISLAM			
Black Muslim Experiences: Research and Resources on Americans who are Black and Muslim Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) "The Role of Blackness in the Hamline Islamic Art Controversy" Kayla Renee Wheeler and Edward E. Curtis IV; Religious News Service; Jan. 12, 2023 "How Teachers Can Support Students During Ramadan" Rusul Alrubail; PBS News; March 8, 2024 "9 Ways to Support Students During Ramadan" Kristen Kelley; We Are Teachers;Feb. 3, 2025 5 Things Everyone Should Know About Ramadan Calvin Lawrence Jr.; ABC News; June 28, 2014	BBC: My Life, My Religion (Video) Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website Resources For Teaching About Ramadan and Eid Sadaf Siddiq and Guari Manglik; Learning for Justice; May 16, 2017 Countering Islamophobia Learning for Justice Educator Resources for K-12, College, and Universities Islamic Network Group (ING) Crash Course: Islam, Quran, and the Five Pillars (Video) National Geographic: Mecca (Video) Unity Productions Foundation (Various Films) Classroom Resources Teaching While Muslim		

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ISLAM			
"Inclusion of Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans Within Secondary U.S. History Textbooks" Monica M. Eraqi, International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies, 2018 Towards MusCrit: Counter-Narratives of Muslim American Students Noor Ali, High School Journal, 2021 5 Things Everyone Should Know About Ramadan Calvin Lawrence Jr.; ABC News; June 28, 2014 "Inclusion of Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans Within Secondary U.S. History Textbooks" Monica M. Eraqi, International Assembly Journal of International Social Studies, 2018	#BlackIslamSyllabus Dr. Kayla Renée Wheeler Islam in Asia: Diversity in Past and Present Exhibition: The Silk Road & Islam Spread Cornell University, Division of Asia Collections at Kroch Library "The Rise of Islamic Geography in the Middle Ages" Matt Rosenberg; Thought Co.; Sept. 8, 2019 "Trade, Geography, and the Unifying Force of Islam" Alireza Naghavi, Giovanni Prarolo, and Stelios Michopoulos; VOX EU; Dec. 8, 2012 "Where is the Middle East?" University of North Carolina, Center for Middle East & Islamic Studies		

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ISLAM			
Towards MusCrit: Counter-Narratives of Muslim American Students Noor Ali, High School Journal, 2021	Infographic: The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society Pew Research Center Black Muslim Experiences: Research and Resources on Americans Who Are Black and Muslim Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)		

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JUDAISM			
My Jewish Learning Judaism 101 Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs George Robinson, 2008 A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood Raymond Scheindlin, 2000 The "Shabbes Goy" Jacob Katz, 1989 The Holocaust: A Concise History Doris Bergen, 2009 War Against the Jews 1933-1945 Lucy Davidowicz, 1986 My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wandering Jew Abigail Pogrebin, 2018	BBC: My Life, My Religion (Video) Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website Teaching Materials on Racism & Antisemitism U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum Illinois Jewish Communities Oral History Project University of Illinois Manitoba: Judaism: A Supplemental Resource for Grade 12 World of Religions: A Canadian Perspective Jewish-American Heritage Month Resources Anti-Defamation League	Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center (Skokie, IL) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum	**SS.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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JUDAISM			
Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition and Practice Wayne Dosick, 2010 Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History Joseph Telushkin, 2008 Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today's Families Anita Diamant, 2007 The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State Shlomo Avineri, 1981 The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays Irving Greenberg, 1993 A History of the Jewish People H. H. Ben-Sasson (editor), 1985			

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JUDAISM			
To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking Harold Kushner, 1994 A Social and Religious History of the Jews Salo Wittmayer Baron, 1983 History of the Jews: From the Earliest Period to the Modern Times and Emancipation in Central Europe Heinrich Hirsch Graetz, translated by Bella Lowy Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia Paula Hyman, 1998 Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter Arthur Hertzberg, 1989			

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SIKHISM			
Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction Eleanor Nesbit, 2016 Religion in Focus: Sikhism Geoff Teece, 2011 Who are the Sikhs? Gian Singh Sandhu, 2023 Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in American Gurinder Singh Mann, Paul Nimrich, and Raymond Williams The History of Sikhs Captivating History, 2024 Who are Sikhs? Ashish Dhyani, 2024	BBC: My Life, My Religion (Video) Dr. Brian Hoffert North Central College Religion 100 Website Sikhism: An Educator's Guide, Sikh Coalition The Sikh Encyclopedia BBC Bitesize: Sikhism	The Sikh Coalition Kaur Foundation	**SS.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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NATIVE AMERICAN, INDIGENOUS, AND FIRST PEOPLES			
Introduction to Native Peoples Traditions The Pluralism Project, Harvard University Night Flying Woman: An Ojibwe Narrative Ignatia Broker, 1983 The Soul of the Indian Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), 1911 Embers: One Ojibwe's Meditations Richard Wagamese, 2017 Onigamiising: Seasons of an Ojibwe Year Linda LeGarde Grover, 2017 One Drum: Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet Richard Wagamese, 2020 Kenekuk the Kickapoo Prophet Joseph B. Herring, 2021	Four Directions Teachings Smudge (Video) 2005 Citizen Potawatomi Center (Lesson Plans) Potawatomi Creation Story (Citizen Potawatomi Nation) Anishinaabe Ojibwe Ways The Pluralism Project, Harvard University Sacred Pipe of the Lakota, The Pluralism Project, Harvard University	American Indian Center of Chicago Trickster Cultural Center, Native Connections (Schaumburg, IL) Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Peoria Tribe Sac and Fox Nation	**SS.2.H1.** Identify main ideas and changes that have occurred in the local community over time and retell how these changes impacted diverse groups in the community. **SS.9-12.H.5.** Analyze factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

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NON-RELIGION, SECULAR HUMANISM, ATHEISM, AGNOSTICISM			
"The Exploration of Atheist Values and Morals" Unbelievable	Exploring Diversity Through Religion: Atheism Learning for Justice, Grades 3-5 Understanding Humanism Humanist UK	American Humanist Association: AHA British Humanist Association	**SS.9-12.H.1.** Evaluate the context of time and place as well as structural factors that influence historical developments.