

Brigitta Bergquist

Social Studies Department

World Religions Course

- Preparation – I emphasize the importance of learning ABOUT religions, not promoting or choosing a “best” religion.
- Spend a lot of time at beginning of term getting comfortable with each other (community building) and the importance of understanding multiple perspectives. (Can there be more than one “truth”?)
- As an elective, I let students choose religions to study. (They always choose Islam).
- For each religion, they receive a set of vocabulary terms and concepts that come from readings, speakers, articles and videos.
- We start discussing Islam with the Five Powerful Questions Strategy.
- For Islam, we read our textbook and newspaper articles using specific reading strategies practicing effective article analysis skills.
- We prep for speakers by creating leveled questions.
- The IRG speaker is usually the highlight of the unit. They love the ability to hear info from a person, not a teacher or textbook, and the opportunity to ask them questions without offending.
- We then have a Socratic seminar or structured discussion, where students refer back to the speaker’s points or their reading to guide the discussion.
- Students go on a field trip to several metro religious locations, including a mosque. Our IRG speaker usually meets us to give the tour.
- Students demonstrate their learning by creating blogs. They choose from a variety of blog prompts but in each they need to include a specific number of vocabulary terms or information from the speaker or Socratic seminar.

We are going to start a new unit about the Middle East. To help us get a better understanding of this unique culture region we are going to have speakers come in and teach us about the theology of the three major religions in this area. What you will learn may be **different than what you are used to, different but not better or worse.** Please try and keep an open mind about what we learn.

Define the following words. Your definitions should be in your own words!

Theology:	
Religion:	
Faith:	
Monotheistic:	
Polytheistic:	
Deity:	
Sacred:	

	Before the Presentation:
Question #1:	
Questions#2:	
	During the presentation:
Name for god	
Founder	
Sacred text	
Important places	
	After the presentation:
Reflect on each speaker: (1 warm, 1 cold)	
What did you learn? (List at least 2)	
What do you still have questions about?	

Dear Families,

Hello! And welcome to Quarter 3 of your 8th graders final year at LMAP! I wanted to touch base with you for a couple of reasons:

- I returned from my leave and am back full time in the classroom
- We are starting a new unit
- We will be tacking some pretty big topics that I want you to be in the know about them!

As Quarter 3 begins we will be finishing up our unit on Europe and moving on to our unit on the Middle East. Traditionally I have focused on the collective history of this culture region and how conflict affects it. Due to some geopolitical changes recently I want to shift my focus to finding the similarities and commonalities as well as differences.

To that end, we will be having guest speakers come in to educate about Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. In showing how these three major religions all sprang from the same region and the overlaps they have in ideology I hope to foster understanding for both the sources of conflict and also emphasize the commonalities that these religions and their followers share.

All guest speakers will stick to theology and ideology about the religion they are presenting about. These presentations are meant to educate students about the fundamentals of each faith not to persuade or pressure students into belief of any of the three. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss what they have learned in class.

After we wrap up our unit on the Middle East we will spend the rest of the year learning about Africa and Asia, ending on Oceania. We will be completing a variety of projects to show our understanding of key concepts.

If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at Cassandra.karp@spps.org

I look forward to meeting you at conferences in March.

-Cassie Karp