

Chapter 9- Judaism Teaching Tips

Approach to Teaching

Judaism might be one of the most well-known religions in the world. In spite of its notoriety there are many misunderstandings about Judaism. This class could start with a pictorial collage of the attire of the various sects of Judaism; such as the Conservatives, Sephardic, Orthodox etc. Students could be asked to name the Jewish sect that wears or dresses like the picture highlighted.

This exercise could lead to a discussion on religious diversity. Many times we tend to group religions generally without thinking about the differences represented by the various sects.

Another approach might be to start with the Middle Eastern conflict. Today many people tend to think of it as a political and an economic conflict. Yet in both Judaism and Islam the root is religious. It goes back to the sibling rivalry between Abraham's supposing sons; Isaac and Ishmael. It captures the entitlement sentiments of promises that Yahweh made to Abraham that were passed on to his son, Isaac and the historical loyalty generated by land rites and posterity claims of the Muslim people, who are seen as descendants of Ishmael. The teacher could start off with a discussion on the link between Judaism and Islam. From this a further question could be explored having to do with the roots of the conflict in the Middle East. This question might bring out surface knowledge about the conflict. This might then be a good time to move into the actual religion.

The video on Monotheism can be used for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is divided into three segments. The section on Jewish beliefs could be introduced using this video. The thought, especially in the monotheistic religious traditions, is that concept of God is so divine and "holy other" that it stands above evolution. This video makes the claim that human being's understanding of God grew as cultures modernize. It demystifies the notion of the sacred.

Videos

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V4ldosXaSA>

Judaism is often thought of as the mother to Christianity, meaning Christianity arose out of Judaism. From this perspective one would expect that both should have some similarities. *In this video* Rabbi Michael Skobac explores some of the main differences between Christianity and Judaism. He further identifies essential differentiating impetuses that allowed Christianity to break off from Judaism. Some motifs that gave rise to Christianity as a splinter group to Judaism are, difference in understanding of the Law, the role of Jesus (or Messiah as Christians claim), and the concept of old covenant versus new.

Sullivan, *Religions of the World* (Fortress Press, 2013)

<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/a-history-of-god/>

A History of God is an excellent resource on the development of monotheism. It is based on Karen Armstrong's acclaimed book. The film makes the argument that the concept of monotheism was a logical progression from an agrarian and primitive concept of polytheism present in most indigenous religions to a refining of the concept of God that parallels the movement of societies from pre-modern to a modern advancement. The film focuses on monotheism in three major religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The case is made that Judaism was the first real organized religion to give voice to the concept of monotheism.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S58ivjU9PeE>

The resource *Faith and Fate* is a documentary that chronicles the Jewish story in the 20th century. It focuses on the Jewish Diaspora in Europe, the idiosyncratic biases that were directed at them, to the mass persecutions that they endured, through the stigma of the black plague, the Spanish Inquisition, to the Holocaust. It is a story of survival and triumph. The video also addresses the question of Jewish identity in the 20th Century. While a Jewish state was established on the efforts of the United Nations in 1948, this by no means solves the identity issue for Jews.

Bill Moyer's Genesis: A Living Conversation

This series as produced by PBS. It is ten parts and provides information on the impact of the Genesis accounts on Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other literary works. The student can begin to examine Judaism's influence as more than a mere religious movement, but rather as the shaper of cultures and global conversations.

The Jewish Americans

This presentation is also from PBS. It focuses on major Jewish personalities influence on American culture. Some such personalities are: Psychology – Sigmund Freud, Abraham Moslow, Victor Fankl; Science – Albert Einstein; Philosophy – Martin Burber – “I thou”; and Film – Film industry was built up largely by men of Ashkenazic Background

Articles

http://judaism.about.com/library/weekly/mpreviss_judaism.htm

This site is a wealth of information about ancient religions. Among the many religions featured is Judaism. The student will be enriched with articles giving information on various aspects of Judaism. Everything from its history, rituals, celebration and historical struggles can be found. From this site the student can find related links to other sites focusing on Jewish issues.

Sullivan, *Religions of the World* (Fortress Press, 2013)

<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/>

Simple to Remember is a resource that is explicitly Jewish. The student will find information on major differentiating points between the great monotheistic traditions in religion; Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The articles listed give both general overview and in depth readings on various aspects of Judaism. Judaism, like many other religions, has a number of sects. The reader will be informed about the different sects of Judaism.

<http://www.world-newspapers.com/jewish-magazines.html>

This is a valuable resource that gives a listing and links to various Jewish publications. Some of the publications featured are; Beis Moshich,- focuses more on the philosophical aspects of Judaism, Chabad Lubavitch, - gives information on the devotional aspects of Judaism, Eretz – gives information on the Holy Land. Please note that there are over 50 resources magazines and publications on this site. For research, this is a vital resource.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

This is a very comprehensive resource, providing information articles, maps and pictures. The site covers subjects such as Jewish history, gender roles, beliefs, the holocaust, politics and even biography.