



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

The Middle East As Net Exporter of Religion

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Lesson Plan 1:

Exercise in Conflict Resolution

General Description of Lesson Plan: This lesson is designed to tap into the conflict that arises from the expansion of new ideas and interactions between powerful systems of faith. As such students will examine the relationship between religious faith, state political power, and social control in order to better understand the complexity of national and international politics and conflict resolution. In teams of three, students will create one written position statement from an assigned perspective on several topics on the role of religion in the political sphere. In their statements, students should consider but are not required to cite Islamic Shira, Jewish Halakai, Christian doctrine and the concept of separation of church and state.

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Subject Area(s): World History, Political Science.

For Grade Level(s): Grades 11-12, or Honors AP Grades 9-10

Time Needed: 4-5 flexible days total = three class periods, plus homework

Outcomes/Objectives: Students should examine the relationship between religious faith and the Middle Eastern religious paradigm, state political power, and social control in order to better understand the complexity of national and international politics and conflict resolution.

To accomplish the set tasks students will develop a framework to help them approach various religious faiths. Students will work with their peers to clarify their positions regarding topical political problems involving one or all of the religions of the Middle Eastern religious paradigm in both the national or international sphere. Additionally, student must learn to resolve their own positions with those of their team to complete the task/common goal. Students will also need to exercise clarity and brevity in their writing.

Materials: Position statement handout (attached) and module handout

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Suggested Procedure(s):

Overview: Each student will be responsible for creating a position statement on the topics assigned (see below) from their assigned religious perspectives. Once these perspectives are completed (for homework) each student group will be responsible for creating a common/single position statement (in class) and will document the concessions made by each individual within your religious group. Students will present this statement to the class (at an assigned time) and field questions explaining how they resolved the issue within their group. Select groups will then present a summary of their position statements and state what concessions each individual perspective made.

Student grades will be determined by the two written products: individual position statements (50%), team position (30%), and individual participation/contribution (10% team determined; 10% teacher determined). The select presentations do not need to be graded, though a teacher can offer the team extra credit for their work.

Suggested Procedure(s):

- 1) Divide students into groups of 3.
 - a) Each group will be assigned single perspective. The first will be a faith particular to the Middle Eastern religious paradigm: Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. To ensure groups are working on as unique perspectives as possible you may add Zoroastrianism to the first set of perspectives.
 - b) Each individual within the religious group will be assigned a second perspective as mentioned in the Framing the Issues readings.
 - i. Advocates for the application of *human reason*
 - ii. Advocates for the application *literal revelation*
 - iii. Advocates for *Economic growth*
- 2) For homework, each individual must compose a one paragraph position statement on each of the following topics:

What is your perspective on...?

- a) the role of individual freedoms within society
- b) the importance of politically satisfying the greater good – to ensure social well-being.
- c) the definition of morality, or an explanation of a moral society
- d) multicultural society—society with a multiplicity of (at times competing) perspectives
- e) the importance of religious artifacts or sites

[The classroom teacher has the freedom to change these topics to make them more suitable for your particular class. Also, to determine the other qualities of the assignment: format, typed, etc.]

- 3) In class and as a group/team, students must discuss their perspectives on each topic and compose a single position statement for their religious perspective using the *position statements* worksheet. Each individual must identify any concessions they made to create the common position statement. These concessions will be the subject of class discussion following the informal presentations.

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4) Informal presentations (non graded): As the teacher circulates around the room, identify one group from each religious affiliation to briefly summarize their position statements for the whole class and identify the concessions made by each perspective. (approx. 5 min each, including questions)

5) Use these presentations to lead into a class discussion. Below are some questions to spur discussion (see *guiding questions*, below)

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:

- 1) Individual written position statements (50%)
- 2) Team position statement (30%)
- 3) Individual peer evaluation-participation (10%)
- 4) Teacher evaluation-participation (10%)

Position Statements Worksheet

Religious Affiliation: _____

Student Names: _____

a) *human reason*: _____

b) *literal revelation*: _____

c) *Economic growth*: _____

Topic 1: <i>the role of individual freedoms...</i>		
Position Statement:		
Concessions:		
application of <i>human reason</i>	application <i>literal revelation</i>	<i>Economic growth</i>

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Topic 2: the importance of politically satisfying the greater good – to ensure social well-being.		
Position Statement:		
Concessions:		
application of <i>human reason</i>	application <i>literal revelation</i>	<i>Economic growth</i>

Topic 3: the definition of morality, or an explanation of a moral society		
Position Statement:		
Concessions:		
application of <i>human reason</i>	application <i>literal revelation</i>	<i>Economic growth</i>

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Topic 4: multicultural society—society with a multiplicity of (at times competing) perspectives		
Position Statement:		
Concessions:		
<i>application of human reason</i>	<i>application literal revelation</i>	<i>Economic growth</i>

Topic 5: the importance of religious artifacts or sites		
Position Statement:		
Concessions:		
<i>application of human reason</i>	<i>application literal revelation</i>	<i>Economic growth</i>

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Evaluation Rubric:

Position Statements: The Middle East as Net Exporter of Religion

Teacher Name: **Mr. Shea**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards	Score
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.	
Support for Position	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences).	
Sentence Structure	All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.	Most sentences are well constructed, but there is no variation in structure.	Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied.	
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	

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Peer Evaluation Rubric:

Collaborative Work Skills: Peer Evaluation

Teacher Name: **Mr. Shea**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Contributions	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.
Focus on the task	Consistently stays focused on the task and what needs to be done. Very self-directed.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Other group members can count on this person.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time. Other group members must sometimes nag, prod, and remind to keep this person on-task.	Rarely focuses on the task and what needs to be done. Lets others do the work.
Working with Others	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares, with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.

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Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

These whole class discussion questions can follow the assignment and presentation:

1. What role is there for religion in a multicultural society? With regard to the individual perspectives above?
2. Where will conflict most often arise? What methods could be used to resolve the conflict for the greater good of society?
3. What role, if any, should the commonality play in resolving political differences?
4. What element/characteristic/quality is, in your opinion most relevant in establishing conflict resolution policy?
 - a) What role can the Middle Eastern religious paradigm play in this policy?
 - b) How has your perspective of the political conflict in the Middle East shifted in the course of this assignment? What caused that shift?
more accurate image of Islam and Islamic civilization?