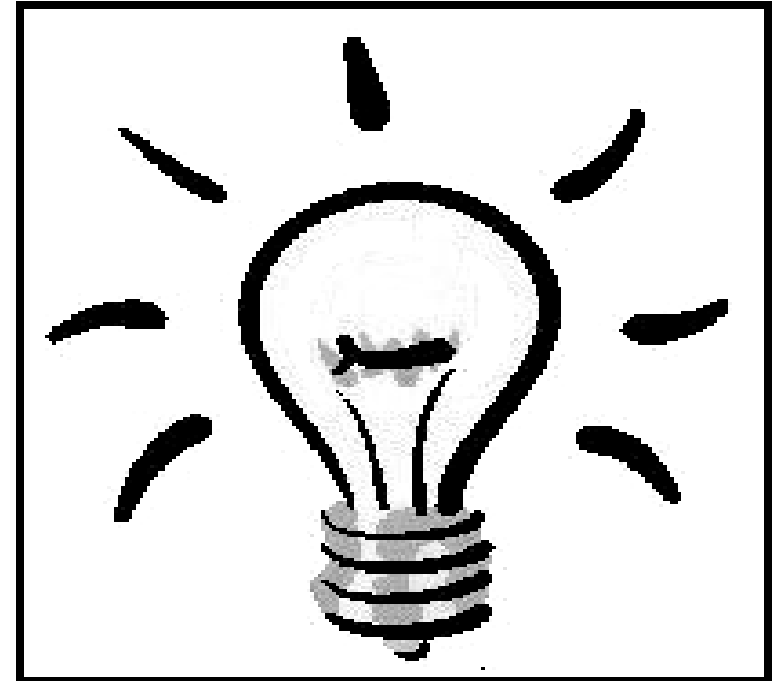


Portland Community College Sylvania

Illumination Project

Spring 2006



An Ally's Guide to Religion

Welcome to the Illumination Project

The Illumination Project of PCC Sylvania is an innovative social justice theater project. This is a student leadership and education program designed to address issues of oppression through classroom and community presentations utilizing interactive theater. The Illumination Project has the dual purpose of providing participating students with an opportunity to develop skills as educators, activists, and leaders and to educate student, staff, faculty, and community audiences on social justice issues. The Illumination Project, a program of the Sylvania Women's Resource Center, is also sponsored through the Sylvania Multicultural Center and the Sociology and Theater departments.

The Illumination Project is also made possible through the generous support of The Equity foundation, The Hoover Family Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Spirit Mountain Community Fund, and the Sylvania Women's Resource Center's Vagina Monologues.

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How will we make it to that day, my friend? How can we reach the finish line... when we sit in the bleachers?

Let me take a moment of your time. I want to suggest to you a plan that will offer some tools for the future.

First off, I can't tell you enough how much it contradicts coexistence when you let your fears of difference obstruct your ability to ask questions.

Don't be afraid to be unsure about an issue. Gather information and settle it by gifting yourself with solid and supported knowledge.

Before you deny your sense of justice and your responsibility to act, learn about me from me. A tendency among the uninformed is assuming that I represent all others that are affiliated with my religion. You may know how difficult it is for you to speak for each citizen in your nation, or to describe to me the lifestyle of everyone with your skin color, or anyone who speaks your native language. This is how tricky it is for me to be cornered into defending my whole religion or spiritual course. I am an individual, one you have yet to meet.

The race is on and people are pushing each other down on the track. Are you going to sprint by and "see no evil"; or are you going to leave your lane, meet me at my level and offer your assistance?

We are the referees in this match, so let's recognize the fouls, call the shots, and get the penalties on the bench. You are a player, we are a team. Know your position, develop your skills and step up to the plate.

Letter to an Ally

Dear Ally,

I am not sure if you already know this, but you did not have to “stay out of it” the other day. You know, when I was completely humiliated by being accused of killing Christ, being a terrorist, or even worshipping the devil!

You were not obligated to keep walking. I don't believe you agreed with the statements, the yelling, and the accusing. Did you hope I didn't notice your presence? I saw you. I've even seen you before, the one that sits quietly on the bus, pretending to be oblivious to their pointing, stares, and whispers. Do you hope I can't hear them? Do you just ignore the uneasiness you feel and continue in silence?

You saw what they did. Yes, they decided to form an unbalanced opinion based on the minimal information they have received. Let's check their sources: I'm thinking they “found out” I am a terrorist from the media, wait... the history books, maybe their peers? Each one of these sources has the tendency to associate and connect individuals who look a certain way, dress in a particular fashion, or practice a belief, to a preconceived motive.

I've also seen you in the crowd of faces that expects me to refute every myth and stereotype they've ever heard. They want me to translate the fears they have conjured up and justify their worry. I notice that it is hard for you to participate in the debates, arguments, and controversy. Do you tell yourself that it's better to let me “handle it on my own” so as to not fuel the flame, and eventually “it will all die down”?

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Personal Stories

I grew up the only Buddhist kid in my neighborhood. I was always treated like an alien and like Buddhism isn't a real religion.

A few months back, while working at the Multicultural Center, a friend (or at least I thought he was) asked me a very shocking question. He asked me, "Aren't you scared that one of these days these Muslims are going to blow us up?" I'm Muslim.

I was in choir in high school, and for the winter performance we sang only Christmas songs. As I am Jewish, this made me uncomfortable, but I did not have a choice about performing, and we were not given the option of singing Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, or even winter songs.

I went to see a fascinating speaker talk about the Wiccan (Pagan) religion at U of O. Several people, their bibles in hand, shouted at the speaker and his supporters, calling them names and threatening them with bible verses. Afterwards, they waited outside and threw things at those audience members who didn't leave early. The campus police were called to escort the troublemakers away.

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

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Hinduism.

<http://www.buddhanet.net/>

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Buddhism.

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

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

<http://www.catholic.com/>

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Catholicism.

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

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Seventh Day Adventists.

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

This website provides information on the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, an association of 17 Christian denominations.

<http://www.pagan.com/>

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Paganism.

<http://home.teleport.com/~sistersp/>

This website provides information on SisterSpirit, a local women's spirituality organization.

Resources

There are many resources available to the public through the internet. With such a variety of religious culture in the world it is essential to learn about spiritual beliefs other than our own. Here are a few resources to help you deepen and expand your knowledge.

http://www.adherents.com/loc/loc_oregon.html

Adherents provides information on the various religions or spiritual beliefs practiced world wide as well as locally.

www.judaism101.com

Judaism101 provides information on the beliefs and practices of Judaism.

www.oregonjcc.org

This website provides information about the Mittleman Jewish Community Center located in Portland OR.

www.unitarian.com

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Unitarian Universalists.

<http://www.pdx-bahai.org/html/index.html>

This website provides information on the Portland Vancouver Metro Bahai Community.

<http://www.islam101.com/>

This website provides information on the beliefs and practices of Islam.

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

This website provides information on the Muslim Educational Trust, serving the interest of the Muslim Community in the Portland Metropolitan Area through education.

I was in a church and was talking to someone about the fact that I identify as a lesbian. She told me to pray to God to take my “unhealthy desire” away and she said that God would fix me if I worked hard enough. She told me I would go to hell if I didn’t change.

My Mom ’s parents have friends that are strongly Christian and believe that it is a sin to have premarital sex. My Mom had me at 19, before she was even married. These “friends ” stopped associating with my grandparents because of the situation.

Almost every Pagan I know has had a moment of revelation among their peers that has gone badly. After the initial shock of finding out about our religion there are responses like “You ’ re evil” or “Will you cast a spell for me? ” .

Statistics

Religious adherents and their percentages of the population

In the World:

Christianity: 33%	Chinese Traditional: 6%
Islam: 21%	Buddhism: 6%
Non religious: 16%	Primal Indigenous: 6%
Hinduism: 14%	Sikhism .36%
	Judaism .22%

In the US:

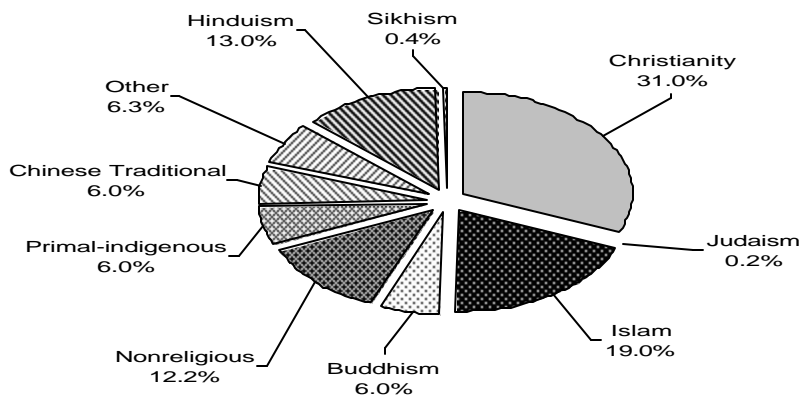
Christianity: 76.5%	Hinduism: .4%
Buddhism: .5%	Sikhism .36%
Non religious: 14.1%	Unitarian : .3%
Judaism 1.3%	Pagan: .1%
Islam: .5%	

In Oregon:

Christianity: 77%	Judaism 1%
Non religious: 18.2%	Unitarian : 1%
Buddhism: 1%	Pagan: .5%
Islam: 1%	

“Nonreligious” includes agnostics and atheists.

Religions in the World



Definitions

These definitions are just introductions. Please see the resources page for further information.

Agnostic: A person who believes that, at our present level of knowledge, we cannot know whether or not a God exists. Some Agnostics believe that we can never know whether a deity exists.

Allah: This is an Arabic word which means "*the One True God.*" Most Muslims in the West use *Allah* and *God* interchangeably.

Atheism: Having no belief about a deity.

Bhagavad-Gita: "*Song of the Lord*" :a holy text revered by followers of Hinduism

Bible: The holy text used by Christians. It includes Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament), Christian Scripture (New Testament).

Buddhism: A world religion, founded by a Hindu: Siddhartha Gautama. His followers called him "the Buddha" or "the enlightened one."

Christian: Professing belief in Jesus as Christ or following the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus. One of the Abrahamic religions.

Henotheistic: believing in one god without denying the existence of others

Hinduism: The third largest religion in the world, after Christianity and Islam. It is a henotheistic faith which exists in many hundreds of variations.

Islam: A monotheistic religion characterized by the acceptance of the doctrine of submission to God and to Muhammad as the chief and last prophet of God. One of the Abrahamic religions.

Judaism: This is often regarded as the earliest monotheistic religion and is the original Abrahamic religion.

Monotheist: believing that there is only one god

Pagan: A broad set of spiritual or religious beliefs and practices of natural or polytheistic religions.

Polytheist: One who believes in the existence of more than one deity.

Quran: The sacred text of Islam, considered by Muslims to contain the revelations of Allah to Muhammed.

Religious Pluralism: The belief that multiple religions or secular world views are all legitimate and valid.

Torah: The whole body of the Jewish sacred writings and tradition including the oral tradition.