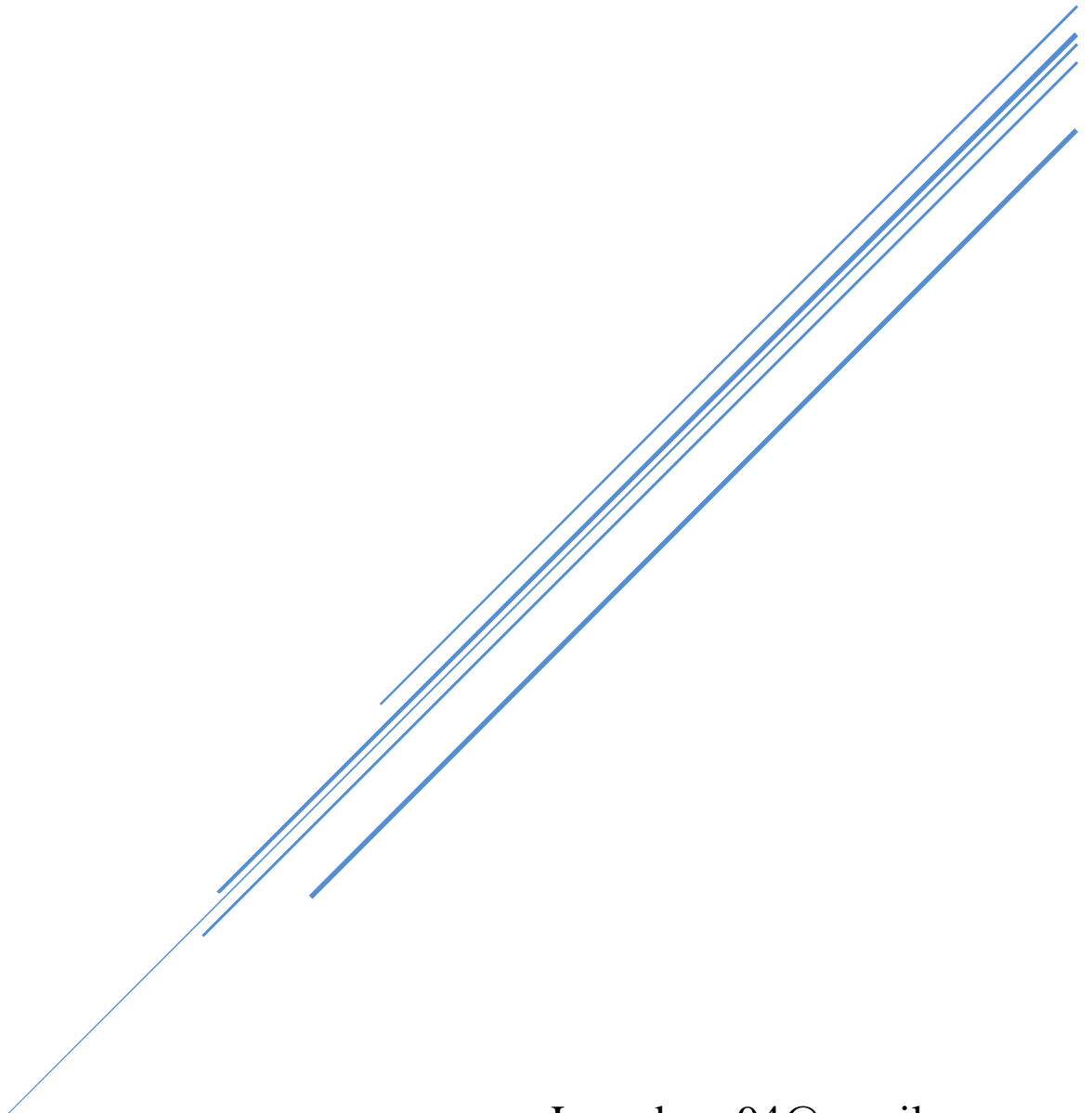# ISLAMOPHOBIA

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Lesson: Islamophobia

Rationale for the Lesson:

Islamophobia describes the ideological perspective centered around the fear or hatred of Muslims and Islam. While scholars continue to debate its cause, most would turn to stereotyping as the root. As an instinctive aspect of human nature, stereotyping describes the act of making false assumptions and over-generalizations of others based solely on subjective thought. Through a stereotypical lens, Islam is vilified, Muslims are viewed as terrorists, and 1.8 billion people are believed to be different than anyone else. Since 9/11, anti-Muslim hate crimes have arisen, negative sentiment has heightened, and Muslims in and out of the United States have fallen victim to unfair rhetoric, treatment, and perception. This lesson seeks to educate students on the role in which stereotypes play in fueling Islamophobia, enable students to become more aware of their own intuitive stereotyping, and challenge students to view Muslims through an unbiased lens.

Standards: Grades 6-8 History / Social Studies

RH. 6-8.3 Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to a history / social studies
RH. 6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history / social studies
RH. 6-8.7 Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts

Essential Question/Guiding Question: Who is a Muslim, what do they believe in, and how are they negatively impacted by the stereotypes formed against them?

Objectives: Students will become familiar with terms such as Muslim, Islam, Islamophobia, stereotype, bias, prejudice, and discrimination as derived from their conventional definitions. They will become aware of their own instinctive stereotyping, recognize stereotyping in practice, understand how Muslims are viewed/treated differently based on the stereotypes formed against them, and be able to construct positive ways in which to combat stereotyping.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now: Instructor should loosely introduce himself/herself, and subsequently ask the class to guess various things about them such as his/her age, nationality, faith, origin of birth, and languages spoken based solely on his/her appearance. Activity works best when students are called upon to record their responses on the whiteboard. Instructor should call upon 2-3 students per question. After enough guesses have been made, instructor should acknowledge all statements made about him/her, and inform the class that what they see in front of them on the whiteboard are called 'stereotypes'. Instructor can then entertain any false answers and recognize any correct ones.

Step-By-Step Procedures with Time Allocations:

Step 1: Instructor should loosely introduce himself / herself, and then have students guess various information about him / her. Students should be provided with chalk or markers as they are expected to record their responses on the whiteboard. After enough guesses have been prompted, instructor will inform the class that the guesses they made are called 'stereotypes'. Instructor will then solidify the concept of instinctive stereotyping by advising students that the

answers they recorded were a series of guesses and assumptions, based only on what they saw in front of them and nothing else. (7-10 minutes)

Step 2: Now that the class has become aware of their own instinctive stereotyping, instructor will distribute the handout on stereotyping. Instructor should read each definition aloud, providing real-life examples for each definition. For example, instructor can describe a scenario where the class would befriend or un-friend someone based on a rumor they heard, or based on something that cannot be changed such as one's skin color. (5 minutes)

Step 3: Instructor should split the class into groups. Depending on the class size, each group can contain four to six students, but there should not exceed more than five groups in total. Each group will be assigned one of the categories of people as listed on the chart, and be asked to provide stereotypical answers based on things each category stereotypically eats, wears, and look likes. Instructor must emphasize that the statements made about each category of people are not necessarily true, but reflect common answers based on news outlets, social media, etc. Throughout the activity, instructor should participate in each groups' discussion, provide insight and encourage thought provoking answers. (5-7 minutes)

Step 4. Instructor must call upon each group to discuss the stereotypical answers they recorded for the category they were assigned. After each group shares their responses, instructor must provide examples of how individuals within each category break the very stereotypes commonly assigned to them. For example, under the Asian category, instructor can inform the class that Asians can be dark skinned, Muslim, and tall. Instructor must emphasize that individuals do not always ascribe to how the world perceives them despite belonging to a particular group. Activity works best with imagery and pictures. (5-7 minutes)

Step 5: Instructor will then ask the questions listed on the bottom half of the stereotype handout and will facilitate a class discussion around them. (5 minutes)

Step 6. Instructor will now present the PowerPoint on Muslims, Islam, and Islamophobia. Students should be asked to jot down new pieces of information they did not know prior, and will be asked to compare with their previous knowledge. (10 minutes)

Lesson Closure: Instructor will portray a picture of the KKK, and ask the class whether they would associate the group with Christians. Assuming that most of the class would not, the instructor will then portray a picture of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and ask the class whether or not they would associate such terrorist groups with Muslims. Instructor should emphasize this powerful comparison by asking the class why they would or why they would not make such associations / disassociations. (5-7 minutes)

Materials and Equipment Needed: Paper, pens, white board, handouts, projector and projector screen, internet connection

Assignment: Students will be asked to share new information they learned about Muslims, Islam, and Islamophobia, and compare it with their previous knowledge base amid the subject.

Assessment: Instructor will know whether he/ she achieved his/ her goal based on the comparative responses shared by the students. Students should correctly refer to terms such as Muslim and Islam, understand the difference between terrorist groups and ordinary Muslims, and realize that Muslims are in fact just like anyone else.

Modifications for diverse learners: This lesson assumes that the class knows little to nothing about Muslims and Islam. This lesson does not take into consideration the ratio of Muslims / Non-Muslims in classroom, so it is imperative that instructor remains sensitive to Muslim students as to not make them feel ostracized or attacked. Instructor MUST emphasize that stereotypes being discussed do not reflect their own beliefs, but are based on external outlets.

Annotated Bibliography

Alsayegh, Majid. "Muslims In America." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51.2 (2016): 271-274.
    Religion and Philosophy Collection. Web. 19 Feb. 2017.

This article is helpful for educators wishing to teach students about the diversity of Muslims within America. Most often, Muslims are believed to be a homogeneous ethnic group, however, this source suggests otherwise. As Alsayegh writes, Muslims in America come from a variety of backgrounds, with varying ethnicities, professions, and identities. His article even includes a few statistics derived from the Pew Foundation. It is important for students to understand that there is no clear indicator of being Muslim, and that assuming one's identity is offensive and can have harmful effects on one's psyche. Furthermore, this source emphasizes that Muslims should not solely be characterized based on their religion, and that they have other defining qualities as well.

"Debunking Misconceptions About Muslims and Islam." *Teaching Tolerance* (n.d.): n. pag.
    Web. 24 Feb. 2017.
<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt_debunking_misconceptions_0.pdf>.
(Links to an external site.)

Teaching Tolerance is a great resource for educators who wish to emphasize the importance of "respect, acceptance, and appreciation" in and out of the classroom setting. This handout is essential for lesson plans centered around the impact of stereotypes and misconceptions. It provides both educators and students with a common definition of a stereotype, discusses the harmful effects fueled by stereotypes and misconceptions, connects the terms specifically to the topic of Muslims and Islam, and attempts to dispel the many misconstrued views held against 1.6 billion people and their faith. Many common stereotypes and misconceptions against Muslims / Islam pertaining to violence, terrorism, oppression, the Hijab, and 'Allah' are addressed within the handout. These sensitive phrases seem to be at the root of discourse lately when talking about Muslims and Islam. This source will allow students to understand how stereotypes negatively impact an entire group of people, and will also challenge some of their own stereotypes by presenting the truth about practices and beliefs of Muslims and the Islamic faith. This source can be utilized as a starting point of the lesson, or can even be distributed to students as a take-away message.

Donnan, Hastings. *Interpreting Islam*. London: SAGE, 2001. Print.

Hastings' book on Islam offers a variety of information on the faith across interdisciplinary contexts of politics, media, education and interpretations. For the lesson at hand, educators will find that chapters one, four, and five are most valuable. As Hastings describes, Islam is one of the most misunderstood concepts across the Western world, with many myths surrounding it. This source can help both educators and students make sense of Islam. Chapter five discusses Islam and its place in the American education system. Most often, curriculum around Islam is shaped by current events, and in the past, has even been influenced by the teachers teaching it. Students are thus exposed to the way Islam is expressed in the light of media, and taught through

a series of 'opinions' as opposed to a factual and historic basis. This resource will help educators teach about Islam absent of media portrayals and opinion.

Duguid, Michelle M., and Melissa C. Thomas-Hunt. "Condoning Stereotyping? How Awareness Of Stereotyping Prevalence Impacts Expression of Stereotypes." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 100.2 (2015): 343-359. *PsycARTICLES. Web. 19 Feb. 2017.*

Duguid and Thomas-Hunt's article on stereotyping was published to the Journal of Applied Psychology. It suggests that stereotyping is an unconscious, instinctive aspect of human nature, and while in the past only bigots were thought to have stereotyped, recent studies claim that everyone stereotypes without even realizing it. Thus, to combat unconscious and instinctive stereotyping, educators should perhaps steer away from conventional approaches in which the authors claim can actually promote bias as a social norm. It is important to understand the psychological implications of stereotyping, because all too often we assume that those who stereotype are driven by hatred and intolerance, however this source suggests that instead of deeming those who stereotype as hateful and bigoted, educators should help individuals become aware of their unconscious stereotyping without condemning them for their views. This is a great source for educators to rely on when teaching students to become more aware of their unintentional stereotypes, without making them feel attacked or singled-out for their instinctive behavior.

Ernst, Carl W. *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. *Google Books*. Springer, 2013. Web. 19 Feb. 2017.

Carl Ernst's book *Islamophobia in America* offers an alternative perspective on the way we view Muslims in America. This book is a great resource for educators wishing to track the history of anti-Muslim sentiment, especially within the scope of American culture and society. Ernst suggests that throughout the past decade, Muslim bias, intolerance, discrimination and Islamophobic attitudes have become 'institutionalized', and that we as a society have normalized negative attitudes against Muslims and Islam. Chapters two and five prove particularly helpful for the lesson at hand. Whereas chapter two addresses religion as the source of Islamophobic views, chapter five attempts to help educators understand the mind of those who Islamophobic views, and the reasoning behind the fear and hatred they hold against Muslims. This source can be easily accessed through Google Books as an eBook.

"FULL SPEECH: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism." TheHill. Capitol Hill Publishing Corp., 15 Aug. 2016. Web. 18 Feb. 2017   .<http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/291498-full-transcript-donald-trump-addresses-radical (Links to an external site.)>.

Donald Trump's speech on 'radical Islamic terrorism' serves as prime example of how and where Islamophobia stands atop the American political sphere. Throughout his speech, President Trump lists various case studies in which terrorists committed atrocious acts of violence within their community. He associates such terrorists acts as being Islamic. While some can distinguish between Islam and radical terrorism, others will base an entire religion and its adherents on a handful of terrorists. Trump's rhetoric behind Muslims and Islam has only fueled the latter sentiment. As an educator of Islamophobia and Muslim bias, it is important to help students disassociate groups such as ISIS from Muslims, just as they can disassociate groups such as the

KKK from Christians. This is a great source because it ties in the issue of Islamophobia with current political policy, and highlights the President's impact on Islamophobic views across the country.

Ghobash, Omar Saif. *"Advice for Young Muslims."* Foreign Affairs 96.1 (2017): 96-103.
    MasterFILE Elite. Web. 19 Feb. 2017.

Omar Saif is an Arab-Russian diplomat and author. His letter, which is addressed to his own children, provides a sober tone of advice for all young Muslims across America today on how to survive in an era of extremism and Islamophobia. Omar Saif describes the 'new sense' of responsibility he felt toward his children directly after 9/11 in wanting to teach them what is right and wrong about Islam, especially in an age where Muslims are put under much scrutiny over terrorism. He discusses his worry that eventually, true principles of Islam will be shadowed by Jihadist terrorism. He emphasizes the need to demand a different understanding of Islam, one that embraces and coincides with liberal AND Islamic views. In his letter, he forewarns his sons about the struggles they will face as a Muslim, and gives advice on how to cope with such pressures today. This source is great because it will give students an understanding of the struggles Muslims face over their faith, culture, and tradition. Educators can read an excerpt of this letter to their students.

I'm Muslim but I'm Not... Buzz Feed, 15 Sept. 2015. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

    <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMQjyRc7eiY>.

Buzz Feed is an accredited social news outlet. This short video addresses many common stereotypes and misconceptions that are held against Muslims, which are then combated by individual Muslims within the video. It will allow students to understand that Muslims are diverse, and have many identities, beliefs, characteristics, and traits. Most importantly, this source will allow students to realize that Muslims are no different from anyone else.

Khan, Arshad. *Islam, Muslims, and America: Understanding the Basis of Their Conflict*. New
    York: Algora Pub., 2003. Print.

While Arshad Khan's book provides an extensive and historical account of the origins of Islam, it also provides an amazing analysis on the origins of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim bias and discusses the impact of 9/11. The latter contents are most valuable for this lesson plan. As the root cause of heightened Islamophobic views, 9/11 was a defining and devastating event which shaped both American policy, and sentiment against Muslims. This source is useful in terms of relaying to students how the many negative perspectives of Muslims have resulted throughout the post 9/11 era. Author Khan also presents an action-plan on how to address Islamophobic views, and what we as Americans can do to combat anti-Muslim bias. One method which Khan believes can address Islamophobia is having "serious and constructive dialogue" with our Muslim communities. By building on common values, and by engaging with our Muslim community, Islamophobic views can be met with tolerance, understanding, and acceptance. This

source can help students disassociate certain events such as 9/11 and other terrorist acts with Islam and Muslims, and can help them build acceptance, tolerance, and a broader understanding.

Lipka, Michael. "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World." *Pew Research. Pew Research Center, 22 July 2016. Web. 19 Feb. 2017* <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/ (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)>.

Pew Research is an accredited 'fact tank' based in D.C which conducts public opinion polling and generates demographic research across the globe. This source compiles a series of studies centered around the perspectives of Muslims and Islam within and outside of the U.S. Despite being the second largest religion across the globe, and despite having over 1.6 billion adherents, many people know little to nothing about Islam, its basic principles, and the beliefs of those who practice it. This source presents students with some basic facts, including information on which part of the world Islam is most widely practiced, how many Muslims live in the U.S, exactly why is Islam growing as fast as it is, what exactly it is that Muslims practice / believe, how they feel about terrorism, and what the different sects of Islam mean. The facts listed within this source prove crucial in educating students on Islam and its adherents. It will dispel many misconceptions, and provide students with substantial facts that will challenge their pre-determined assumptions.

Understanding Stereotypes

A *stereotype* is a fixed idea, belief, or oversimplified generalization that leads to negative perceptions about a person, or a group of people. Stereotyping assigns a person or group with a set of characteristics, without any basis.

Prejudice refers to pre-judging something or having an unreasonable dislike of an individual / group.

Bias means having a preference or an impartial judgement about something.

Discrimination is to treat a person or group specifically different from any one or thing else.

For each group below, list common stereotypical answers regarding the type of food they eat, what religion they adhere to, and what they typically look like.

	Asian	Christian	Gay	Muslim
Food				
Religion				
Physical Appearance				

Answer the questions below

1. Can you name a typical stereotype about your country? Is it true?

2. What kind of people usually stereotype, and why do you think they do it?

3. How do stereotypes form? What influences them?

4. Are there any groups / individuals that you think are often stereotyped unfairly?

5. Is there anything you can do to prevent stereotyping? Describe.