

Pascack Valley Regional High School District

Pascack Hills High School, Montvale, New Jersey

Pascack Valley High School, Hillsdale, New Jersey

Course Name: Religion in America

Born on: August, 2020
Current Revision: July, 2026
Board Approval: 8/24/2026

Religion in America: Course Description

The role and function of Religion in America has changed with its history and as a result of globalization. Religious literacy is increasingly imperative in order to understand American culture. It has become increasingly important to understand the role of religion in global relationships and politics as well. As we begin to understand the function of religion in the American Experience we can also begin to understand the impact religion has on the Global Experience.

There are four units in the course:

1. Introduction – What is Religion/Why study Religion?
2. Study of Myth and Religion/American Myths
3. Elements of Religious Tradition
4. Religion in America Today

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Know the important role that religion has played in the development of the United States;
2. Understand the role of myth in the establishment of traditional religion as found in the U.S.;
3. Explain the major similarities and differences between various religious beliefs in this country;
4. Identify and explain the primary elements found in the many questions facing the practice of religion in the U.S.;
5. Practice critical thinking and inquiry skills without viewing others holding different beliefs that could lead to prejudice and rejection.

Skills Objectives:

1. Demonstrate the ability to locate and use information sources as required in Social Studies including:
 - A. Library sources using Internet
 - B. Websites

- C. The New York Times Index
- D. Facts on File
- E. Interview

2. Demonstrate the ability to combine concepts, principles, and generalizations by using varied resource materials to develop a research paper and/or project in which the student presents a hypothesis related to a problem or topic related to this course.

3. Written assignments (position papers, research papers, essays, etc.) will follow approved forms as drawn up by the Social Studies Department.

Each Unit will take about 2-4 weeks to complete for the semester course

Interdisciplinary Connections

Teachers will combine, integrate and infuse disciplines as needed. ELA reading, writing, speaking and listening assignments are infused throughout the curriculum to develop basic reading and comprehension skills. Other suggestions for interdisciplinary connections:

- Career Transition
- Mathematics and Business can be combined with economic units
- Science can be combined with discussion of climate change
- Art, music and literature will be called upon to supplement what is learned in history and develop cross curricular development
- The teacher will work with the library media specialist on various research units

Accommodations and Modifications: Each unit has examples of possible accommodations/modifications. Charts of accommodations/modifications are found at the end of the document.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES & EXPERIENCES	EVALUATION	NJSLS	Time
I. INTRODUCTION Students will be able to: I. Explain their own experiences in religion; II. Explain their own feelings on those questions such as: • What is the good life? • What is a good person? • What is a good society? • What is the relationship between the individual and the society? • What are justice, truth, and virtue? • What must I be ready to die for? • What are my obligations to society?	The impact of personal beliefs and traditions from childhood until adolescence. (theism, atheism, agnosticism) Changes and trends in American Religious Life (as reflected in contemporary Pew Surveys) The study and analysis of American religious affiliations from childhood to adulthood. The role of faith (belief) and reason in revealing truth – the growth of fundamentalism Islamic Fundamentalism in the world and Christian Fundamentalism in America) – the result and reaction to this in elections and policy	Methods of Assessment <i>Student Assessment</i> Homework F Class discussion F Group projects and reports F Alternate assessments F Research papers S Tests and quizzes S Document-based essays and free-response essays S Class participation F Debates/Socratic Seminars F Project Based Assessments S	6.1.12.HistoryCC.3.a 6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.e 6.3.12.HistoryCA.1 ELA RI.CR.11-12.1 RI.CI.11-12.2 RI.PP.11-12.5 RI.MF.11-12.6 RI.CT.11-12.8 RI.AA.11-12.7 W.AW.11-12.1 W.WR.11-12.5 W.SE.11-12.6 W.IW.11-12.2 Mathematics MP.2 MP.3	3 Weeks

	The impact of written documents, books, and documentaries (Pope's Encyclicals, Jesus Camp, Sam Harris books on Faith and Reason and Atheism) – the impact of 9/11 and its influence on the study of and the role of religion in the world. Differentiation for Diverse Learners/ Accommodations Special Ed/504: Provide copies of notes and presentation Provide excerpts of primary source documents instead of full documents. Provide students with essential vocabulary Re-teaching and review Graphic organizers Scaffolding of assignments Guided questions and note taking Provide an Outline for writing assessments Multilingual Learners: Use simplified text and summaries of content.		MP.6 Science HS-LS2-6 HS-LS2-7 HS-ESS3-1 Art 1.2.12acc.Re7a 1.2.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Re7a 1.5.12acc.Re7b 1.5.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Cn11a Technology and 21st Century Themes & Skills 9.4.12.IML.2 9.4.12.IML.8: Computer Science 8.1.12.DA.5	
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	Use art visuals for students to respond to instead of text. Provide copies of notes At Risk Students: Provide copies of presentations and notes Extended time on assignments Gifted and Talented: Vary level of reading and primary source documents			
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OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES & EXPERIENCES	EVALUATION	NJSLS	Time
II. STUDY OF MYTH AND RELIGION Students will be able to: - Understand the concept of myth and that its existence serves as a vehicle of expressing truth as envisioned by that culture; - Explain the conversion of myth to religion as seen in the religious texts of Genesis, Job, Gospel of John and others as believers seek to find perennial truths. - Explain the work of Joseph Campbell in The Power of Myth and Hero With a Thousand Faces (ideas reflected in George Lucas's Star Wars)	The influence of the work of Joseph Campbell as reflected in Star Wars The impact of the Space Age on faith-based explanations of the world. The interpretation of the Bible (literal vs. metaphorical interpretation) and the	Methods of Assessment <i>Student Assessment</i> Homework F Class discussion F Group projects and reports F Alternate assessments F Research papers S Tests and quizzes S Document-based essays and	6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.e: ELA RI.CR.11-12.1 RI.CI.11-12.2 RI.PP.11-12.5 RI.MF.11-12.6 RI.CT.11-12.8 RI.AA.11-12.7 W.AW.11-12.1 W.WR.11-12.5 W.SE.11-12.6	5 weeks

4. Explain the Chief American Myths: The Chosen People Myth, The Myth of Mission, The Myth of Individualism, The Myth of Frontier, The Lone Ranger Myth, The Myth of Innocence, The Myth of Progress, The Myth of the Changing Self	importance of symbols in religion Understanding Perennial Truths revealed in literature: Siddhartha, Black Elk Speaks, The Kin of Ata, Tuesdays With Morrie, A River Runs Through It Differentiation for Diverse Learners/ Accommodations Special Ed/504: Provide copies of notes and presentation Provide excerpts of primary source documents instead of full documents. Provide students with essential vocabulary Re-teaching and review Graphic organizers Scaffolding of assignments Guided questions and note taking Provide an Outline for writing assessments Multilingual Learners:	free-response essays S Class participation F Debates/Socratic Seminars F Project Based Assessments S	W.IW.11-12.2 Mathematics MP.2 MP.3 MP.6 Science HS-LS2-6 HS-LS2-7 HS-ESS3-1 Art 1.2.12acc.Re7a 1.2.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Re7a 1.5.12acc.Re7b 1.5.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Cn11a Technology and 21st Century Themes & Skills 9.4.12.IML.2 9.4.12.IML.8: Computer Science 8.1.12.DA.5	
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III. ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS TRADITION Students will be able to: 1. Identify the major traits of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Eastern religions as practiced in America today; 2. Explain the religions from the viewpoint of the truths they are attempting to discover. 3. Explain the importance of rituals and religious experience. 4. Evaluate the sacred texts of each major religion.	The historical and cultural connection among the major monotheistic faiths of the world and a comparison of these to Eastern Rites. The significance of the belief in an afterlife (heaven and hell, God, reincarnation) and the impact of the beliefs on the practices of the faith. The Protestant Reformation, Vatican II, The Jewish Reform Movement, The Sunni/Shiite Split, The Caste System, The Buddha – The Enlightened One. Differentiation for Diverse Learners/ Accommodations Special Ed/504: Provide copies of notes and presentation	Sacred text analysis: The Torah Old/New Testament The Koran The Vedas Oral and written explanations of the beliefs and practices of world religions. Methods of Assessment <i>Student Assessment</i> Homework F Class discussion F Group projects and reports F Alternate assessments F Research papers S Tests and quizzes S Document-based essays and free-response essays S Class participation F	6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.e 6.3.12.HistoryCA.1 ELA RI.CR.11-12.1 RI.CI.11-12.2 RI.PP.11-12.5 RI.MF.11-12.6 RI.CT.11-12.8 RI.AA.11-12.7 W.AW.11-12.1 W.WR.11-12.5 W.SE.11-12.6 W.IW.11-12.2 Mathematics MP.2 MP.3 MP.6 Science HS-LS2-6 HS-LS2-7 HS-ESS3-1 Art 1.2.12acc.Re7a	4 weeks
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	Provide excerpts of primary source documents instead of full documents. Provide students with essential vocabulary Re-teaching and review Graphic organizers Scaffolding of assignments Guided questions and note taking Provide an Outline for writing assessments Multilingual Learners: Use simplified text and summaries of content. Use art visuals for students to respond to instead of text. Provide copies of notes At Risk Students: Provide copies of presentations and notes Extended time on assignments Gifted and Talented: Vary level of reading and primary source documents	Debates/Socratic Seminars F Project Based Assessments S	1.2.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Re7a 1.5.12acc.Re7b 1.5.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Cn11a Technology and 21st Century Themes & Skills 9.4.12.IML.2 9.4.12.IML.8: Computer Science 8.1.12.DA.5	
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IV. THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION IN AMERICA				8 weeks
Students will be able to: 1. Explain many of the changes made by the more traditional religions in their attempt to remain relevant and important in the life of the individual; 2. Define the concepts of Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox as they reflect factional ideas within a church; 3. Explain the growth of liberalism in many main-line churches; 4. Understand the roles played by certain evangelical churches and “religious alternatives” in today’s America as exemplified by Jews for Jesus, Hare Krishna, the Mormons, Christian Science, Unitarianism, Pentecostals, and TV Evangelicalism.	Understanding religion from those who practice - experiences from guest speakers of various faiths: Roman Catholic Priest Buddhist Hindu Messianic Jew Reform Rabbi Conservative Rabbi Mormons Scientologist Christian Scientist Imam Jehovah’s Witnesses Differentiation for Diverse Learners/ Accommodations Special Ed/504: Provide copies of notes and presentation Provide excerpts of primary source documents instead of full documents. Provide students with essential vocabulary Re-teaching and review Graphic organizers	Speaker Evaluation forms Service Visitation/analysis Discussion before guest speaker and debriefing after each speaker Methods of Assessment <i>Student Assessment</i> Homework F Class discussion F Group projects and reports F Alternate assessments F Research papers S Tests and quizzes S Document-based essays and free-response essays S Class participation F Debates/Socratic Seminars F Project Based Assessments S	6.3.12.HistoryCA.1 6.2.12.GeoPP.2.a ELA RI.CR.11-12.1 RI.CI.11-12.2 RI.PP.11-12.5 RI.MF.11-12.6 RI.CT.11-12.8 RI.AA.11-12.7 W.AW.11-12.1 W.WR.11-12.5 W.SE.11-12.6 W.IW.11-12.2 Mathematics MP.2 MP.3 MP.6 Science HS-LS2-6 HS-LS2-7 HS-ESS3-1 Art 1.2.12acc.Re7a 1.2.12acc.Re8a	

	Scaffolding of assignments Guided questions and note taking Provide an Outline for writing assessments Multilingual Learners: Use simplified text and summaries of content. Use art visuals for students to respond to instead of text. Provide copies of notes At Risk Students: Provide copies of presentations and notes Extended time on assignments Gifted and Talented: Vary level of reading and primary source documents		1.5.12prof.Re7a 1.5.12acc.Re7b 1.5.12acc.Re8a 1.5.12prof.Cn11a Technology and 21st Century Themes & Skills 9.4.12.IML.2 9.4.12.IML.8: Computer Science 8.1.12.DA.5	
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Interdisciplinary Connections	<u>Connections to NJSL – English Language Arts:</u> W.IW.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. W.SE.11-12.6: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA or APA Style Manuals). RI.CR.11-12.1: Accurately cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations of the text. <u>Connections to NJSL – Mathematics</u> MP.4: Model with mathematics. SL.PE.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL.II.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
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Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills	● 9.1.12.CFR.1: Compare and contrast the role of philanthropy, volunteer service, and charities in community development and quality of life in a variety of cultures. ● 9.1.12.CFR.2: Summarize causes important to you and compare organizations you seek to support to other organizations with similar missions. ● 9.1.12.CFR.3: Research companies with corporate governance policies supporting the common good and human rights. ● 9.4.12.IML.3: Analyze data using tools and models to make valid and reliable claims, or to determine optimal design solutions (e.g., S-ID.B.6a., 8.1.12.DA.5, 7.1.IH.IPRET.8) ● 9.4.12.IML.4: Assess and critique the appropriateness and impact of existing data visualizations for an intended audience (e.g., S-ID.B.6b, HS-LS2-4). ● 9.4.12.TL.3: Analyze the effectiveness of the process and quality of collaborative environments. ● 9.4.12.TL.4: Collaborate in online learning communities or social networks or virtual worlds to analyze and propose a resolution to a real-world problem (e.g., 7.1.AL.IPERS.6). ● 9.4.12.IML.8: Evaluate media sources for point of view, bias, and motivations (e.g., RI.PP.11-12.5, 7.1.AL.IPRET.6). ● 9.4.12.IML.9: Analyze the decisions creators make to reveal explicit and implicit messages within information and media (e.g., 1.5.12acc.C2a, 7.1.IL.IPRET.4).
Computer Science and Design Thinking	● 8.2.12.ETW.2: Synthesize and analyze data collected to monitor the effects of a technological product or system on the environment. ● 8.2.12.ETW.3: Identify a complex, global environmental or climate change issue, develop a systemic plan of investigation, and propose an innovative sustainable solution. ● 8.2.12.EC.1: Analyze controversial technological issues and determine the degree to which individuals, businesses, and governments have an ethical role in decisions that are made. ● 8.2.12.EC.2: Assess the positive and negative impacts of emerging technologies on developing countries and evaluate how individuals, non-profit organizations, and governments have responded.

	● 8.2.12.EC.3: Synthesize data, analyze trends, and draw conclusions regarding the effect of a technology on the individual, culture, society, and environment and share this information with the appropriate audience. ● 8.2.12.ETW.4: Research historical tensions between environmental and economic considerations as driven by human needs and wants in the development of a technological product and present the competing viewpoints.
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Career Options for Jobs that Involve Social Studies

Social studies focus on society, and social studies professionals may concentrate on understanding how people are shaped and influenced by peer groups, their culture, or other societal factors. While some social studies professionals primarily conduct research to determine how people are affected by social variables, others may focus on how these social variables can be used to predict people's behavior. A handful of these social studies career options are profiled below:

a. Career Information for Jobs that Involve Social Studies

Sociologists

Sociologists are professionals with a master's or doctoral degree in their field. They focus on understanding social groupings and behavior, and may be involved in research or make recommendations about how to address specific issues in society. Since their work focuses on understanding how society can influence behavior, they work within the field of social studies.

Historians

Historians research the past and educate people about historic events, artifacts or developments. Their work focuses on civilizations and incidents involving people in the past, which is why it falls within the social studies field. They might use the data from their research to form conclusions about why a society relocated or how cultural beliefs in a particular group evolved. They may need a doctoral degree, although it is possible to enter this field with a master's degree in history.

Postsecondary Teachers

Postsecondary teachers instruct college and university students in a specific subject they've specialized in. They typically need a doctoral degree, although entry-level positions may be obtained with a master's degree in some cases. Postsecondary teachers who instruct students in subjects such as criminology or history spend their career focused on social studies. As part of their work, postsecondary teachers usually also participate in research related to their specialty.

Anthropologists and Archeologists

Anthropologists and archeologists must have a master's or doctoral degree to work in their field. While archeologists may be involved in recovering historic artifacts from dig sites around the world, anthropologists focus on how humans have developed over time. Archeologists and anthropologists help discover evidence that relates to how cultures have evolved, how significant events have impacted people's behavior, and how social constructs, such as politics, have developed. Since they focus on issues related to society and behavior, they work within the field of social studies.

Political Scientists

Political scientists focus on the history and development of political systems. They may research political ideologies or study how political trends have evolved over time. They are social science professionals because understanding how politics shape society and impact individual and group behavior is part of what political scientists focus on. They are professionals with master's or doctoral degrees who perform research, analyze the information gained from their research, and use that data to develop predictions about the effects of political policies or structures.

Market Research Analysts

With a bachelor's degree, it's possible to become a market research analyst. Market research analysts examine consumer demographics, along with data collected from opinion polls and surveys, and then use what they learn to make recommendations about actions companies should or should not take. For example, they may recommend that a new product be developed and provide pertinent information about the customers they expect would be interested in that product. Market research analysts are professionals who focus on understanding what influences the purchasing decisions people make and the economic variables that should be considered when making business decisions. Since they focus on determining financial and societal factors that can affect consumer choices, their work involves the use of social studies.