

LEAVING CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE  
 Draft Sample Lesson Plan for Teaching Elements of the Syllabus  
**Unit Two SECTION C: WORLD RELIGIONS**

**PART ONE: THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGION**

Syllabus Objectives	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• differentiate between different types of religion</li> <li>• have a knowledge of the distribution of the major religions traditions and of trends within those traditions.</li> </ul> <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand that religious belief is ancient, diverse and dynamic.</li> </ul> <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise the traces of religious belief in ancient historical evidence.</li> </ul> <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect for the religious beliefs of others and of other cultures.</li> </ul>
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**Topic: 1.1 Religion as a world-wide phenomenon**

Procedure

*Description of content: - types of religion*

Brainstorm: Name all the religions people practise in the world?  
 Take feedback and note all suggestions on the chalkboard.

Discuss: Is everything named on the chalkboard a religion? Why? Why not?  
 What criteria are we using to identify a religion?  
 Take feedback from the students placing a symbol such as ũ (yes), X (no), ? (not sure) to reflect the students answer beside each religion named on the chalkboard.

Or Review poster / overhead:

- Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopaedia* (2001 edition) identifies 10,000 distinct religions, of which 150 have 1 million or more followers.
- The 'Major Religions of the World' web page lists only 22 'major world religions' but only includes those religions with a significant presence beyond a single country ([www.adherents.com/Religions\\_By\\_Adherents.html](http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html)).

Discuss: What do these religions have in common?  
 Are there different types of religions?  
 Which of these religions are monotheistic?  
 Which of these religions are polytheistic?  
 Which of these religions are non-theistic?

Take feedback from the students and if necessary explain how the variety of religions indicates the ways that people have responded religiously to the experience of their sense of mystery in life.

*Description of content: - world-wide distribution of religion*  
 - the religion of Europe  
 - religious traditions in Ireland  
 - religious trends in Ireland

Review course content covered in relation to patterns of religious belief and practice in Ireland and elsewhere i.e.

- Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section A Part 3.1 & Section I Part 1.1
- Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section D Part 1

*Research assignment:* The Central Statistics Office has statistics dating from 1881.  
(<http://www.cso.ie/text/principalstats/cenrel.html>)

Review the results of Question 12 on the 2002 census form deals with the religious affiliation  
Compare the 2002 results to the information from the 1991 census.

Discuss: What trends do you notice developing in Ireland?

Review maps and charts indicating the global distribution of religions e.g.

- [http://www.wadsworth.com/religion\\_d/special\\_features/popups/maps/maps\\_f.html](http://www.wadsworth.com/religion_d/special_features/popups/maps/maps_f.html).
- [http://www.adherents.com/adh\\_predom.html](http://www.adherents.com/adh_predom.html).
- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week446/cover.html>

Discuss: What does the distribution of religions tell us about the religion?

*Written Assignment:*

A recent international survey on religious practices concluded that the Irish continue to believe in God, in life after death and attend weekly worship at the highest rates in Europe.

- In your experience, are these finding accurate for young people today. Say why or why not.
- Name another religious trend in Ireland today.

*Outcomes:*

- list different types of religion
- give an account of the global distribution of religion
- give examples of religious traditions in Ireland
- describe, with relevant evidence, three major trends in religion in contemporary Ireland.

## **Topic: 1.2 Primal religion**

Procedure

*Description of content: the nature of primal religion and its importance for the study of religion*

Brainstorm: What does the word primal mean?  
Take feedback and if necessary explain that primal means original or first.

Buzz: Name a primal religion?  
Take feedback and if necessary explain that all religions are rooted in the primal traditions of early peoples. Primal religion dates back as far as 50,000 BCE, and emerges from the traditions of tribal people who depended on the land and on the forces of nature.

Buzz: What are the main features that primal religions have in common?  
Take feedback and if necessary making reference to some of the following:

- a pre-technological worldview,
- a lack of rigid boundaries between the spiritual and secular dimensions of life,
- the use of an oral rather than a written canon,
- the enactment of myth in ritual.
- Etc.

*Group work:*

Each group selects a primal religion to research its myths, rituals, art, music, and traditions.  
When each group has completed the research they present their findings to the class.

Discuss: What do these primal religions have in common?  
 What elements of the religion you have studied can be seen in contemporary religions?  
 What is the influence of primal religion on all religions?

Take feedback and conclude by emphasising the importance of primal religion for the study of all religions.

**Description of content: the concepts and phenomena of mana; tabu; totem; shaman.**

Brainstorm: Give an example of a taboo?  
 What is a taboo?  
 Why are these activities, places or objects forbidden?

Take feedback and if necessary explain that taboo, meaning marked off, relates to the power of particular people, places or objects.

Buzz: Are people today influenced by taboos? Why? Why not?

Read the following handout / overhead: Primal Religion

<i>Mana</i>	This refers to power that is not simply the cause, but the reason why particular things happen. It is the production of effects in the world by words or actions which are often ritualised but whose source of power is not open to observation. Mana comes from kinship with gods and famous ancestors. Tribal chiefs embody the mana of their people and land, as do all who are strong, wise or skilful.
<i>Tabu</i>	Anything possessing mana is tabu or taboo (meaning marked off). Rules of tabu preserve the power and holiness of mana. A breach of tabu means a release of uncontrolled mana dangerous to life and social order. The rules of taboo dictate that certain things and activities due to their sacred nature are set-aside for specific members of the group and are forbidden to others.
<i>Totem</i>	This is from the Ojibwa of Canada dotem / oteman meaning 'the person is a relative of mine'. The term refers to a natural being (usually an animal, plant or some natural phenomenon) that symbolises the spiritual essence of an individual or a group. Clans are often named after animal species so the totem express membership of the same clan and the members of the clan will always be identified with the particular totem which connects the individual with their spiritual ancestry.
<i>Shaman</i>	This comes for the Evinki people of Siberia and may be found in many primal traditions. Shamans are important to many primal religions as the religious and spiritual leaders of their peoples, healers, and interpreters of natural phenomena. They have committed to memory the tradition of their peoples and handed it down through songs, tales, and drama. The shaman was a man or a woman who inherited the gift of the shaman from his or her ancestors with the purpose of being a living mediator between humanity and the spirits inhabiting the cosmos.

Discuss: What evidence is there of any of the above in the primal religion you researched?  
 Can any of the above to be seen in world religions today?

Take feedback and conclude by emphasising the importance of primal religion for the study of all religions.

Outcomes:

- present a portrait of primal religion, and give an account of its important influence on all religion
- write a brief paragraph on each of the following: mana; tabu; totem; shaman.

**Topic: 1.3 The holy\* (\*Higher level only)**

Procedure

*Description of content: - the concept of the holy*

Review course content covered in relation to worship, prayer and ritual in Ireland and elsewhere i.e.

- Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section G
- Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus Section E

Reflection exercise: Write the word HOLY on the chalkboard.

Invite students to reflect on: What does this word bring to mind?

Invite students to describe in words or drawings what the concept of the holy brings to mind.

Take feedback on the students' reflection by placing the words or drawings on display for all to see.

Discuss: What do we have in common in our understanding of the word "holy"?  
How do we differ in our understanding of the word "holy"?

Take feedback and conclude by explaining that the holy can be described as the non-rational or emotional aspects of a religion. It is what we experience or feel as a mystery, the sense of Otherness, the acceptance that there is a reality that transcends the level of ordinary experience.

*Description of content: - the relationship between the sacred and the profane in religion*

*- the mediation of that relationship in objects*

*- the mediation of that relationship in individuals*

*Visual Verbal Square Assignment: Complete the following -*

1. Write a definition of the word *missionary*

The word 'sacred' means to consecrate and refers to experiences that draw out attitudes of respect and reverence in people.

2. Write a sentence using the word ...

ō      ö  
**SACRED**

÷      ø

3. Give a word that is connected to this word...

4. Draw a sketch of the word or something connected to it ...

Take feedback on the students' assignment and if necessary explain that something can be described as sacred if it invokes in the person or community a sense of awe / mystery. The sacred is encountered in certain places or at certain times. It can be experienced in nature or objects and in particular people whom we may refer to as holy. The response to this becomes formalised in a variety of rituals, practices and observances.

Write the word PROFANE on the chalkboard and brainstorm students as to its meaning.

Or

Complete the following assignment:

Tick  the correct box

	True	False
The word “profane” refers to the ordinary experiences of life that draw out attitudes of respect and reverence in people or communities.		
The word “profane” refers to the ordinary experiences of life do not that draw out attitudes of respect and reverence in people or communities.		

Take feedback from the students and conclude that the word profane refers to the ordinary experiences of life that do not invoke in the person or community a sense of awe / mystery.

*Group work* - Divide students into groups to research the following:

1. Research how particular objects such as beads, etc. are used in the religious rituals of different traditions e.g. Prayer beads in Islam, Rosary beads in Catholicism and Mala beads in Buddhism etc.
2. Research how natural elements such as water, fire, light etc. are used in the religious rituals of different traditions e.g. ritual washing before worship, the lighting of candles in worship etc.
3. Research how particular places such as churches, temples etc. are venerated as sacred in different religious traditions e.g. Mecca etc.
4. Research the life of someone who is considered to be a holy person in a religious tradition.

When students have completed their research give each group time to present their findings to the rest of the class.

Discuss: How do ordinary objects communicate the holy?

What do objects reveal about the holy?

In what way does the use of this object reveal a relationship between the sacred and the profane?

How does the person researched reveal the holy?

In what way does this individual reveal a relationship between the sacred and the profane?

*Outcomes:*

- explain what is meant by ‘the holy’
- outline what is meant by ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ and discuss briefly their relationship
- using examples of objects, discuss the relationship of the ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ in religion
- using examples of people, discuss the relationship of the ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ in religion.

*Resources which teachers have suggested include:*

- <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/> - offers a way of categorise a number of religions under ‘families of religions’
- [http://religion.rutgers.edu/vri/comp\\_rel.html](http://religion.rutgers.edu/vri/comp_rel.html)
- Chief Seattle’s speech indicates how primal religions have adapted to modern issues <http://www.webcom.com/duane/seattle.html>.
- Exhibition about shamanism <http://www.tampere.fi/vapriikki/nayttely/samaanit/shaman.htm>
- The veneration of places as sacred: <http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredplacesintro.html>