






Introduction to World Religions


The Study of Religion

- Not simply about faith or belief
 - Involves politics, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, art, and literature
- Use *humanities* to fully understand a religion
 - vs. study of science, with factual data

Why Study Religion?

- To read to learn, to think critically, and to express yourself persuasively
- Liberal Arts degrees are highly valued by employers
 - Useful in fields like law, medicine, politics, international affairs, and journalism























Components of Religion



Symbol


- Symbol: something used to represent something else
 - Intended to lift us out of daily life and point us to something else
 - Revered by followers as something powerful

				- Islam
				- Peace
				- Male/Female
				- Judaism
				- Wicca/Pagan/ also The Bab/Bah'ai
				- Taoism/ Confucianism
				- Christianity

Myth

- Myth: story told & retold about the past to express certain values
 - NOT the opposite of fact
 - Often contain *symbols* to make the stories relevant to life, or they explain the *symbols*



Ritual

- Ritual: prescribed, formalized actions that dramatize religious symbols
 - Make religion relevant to daily life
 - Repeated in order to establish or keep a connection to the religion
 - Usually performed in a sacred space
 - Often explained or reenacted in *myths*
 - Often use *symbols*
- *Magic* attempts to manipulate spiritual forces
 - *Rituals* worship spiritual forces



Example


Each Sunday (___), Roman Catholics attend Mass (___) in a church (___). Just before the priest gives a small wafer (___) to devout participants, he retells the story (___) of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. This explains the origin of the ritual and the importance of the symbol: the bread represents the body of Christ.

Doctrine

- Doctrine: statements about the deity/ies (God/s), sin, salvation, afterlife, etc.
 - Cannot be "proven" but is taken as right by followers

God or Gods?


- *Deity*: from the Latin "deus"
- Monotheism
- Polytheism
- Animism: spirits are in everything
- Atheism: no deities exist
- Agnosticism: God's existence is not provable, we should doubt, can never know for sure



Sorry you're an atheist and have no one to thank its Friday.




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The Nature of God

- Omnipresent: present everywhere at the same time
- Omniscient: all knowing; capable of having infinite awareness, understanding, and insight
- Worship: reverent love and devotion towards a deity, an idol, or a sacred object




Sacred

- That which is holy, ultimately relevant, more significant than reality, purer, deserving proper handling
- Opposite is *profane*
- *Secular* is the opposite of religious

Scripture




- Sacred writings
- Each modern religion has a *canon*: official list of scriptures



A Few More Helpful Terms...


- Metaphysics: branch of philosophy that studies the ultimate structure and constitution of reality
 - Does God exist?
 - Do we have free will?
 - What is the meaning of life?
 - Good vs. Evil



METAPHYSICS
Ultimate Beliefs
Religion & Philosophy

Intuition ↑ Faith ↑ Reason

PHYSICS
Theories & Laws
Observations & Experiments
Science



Continued

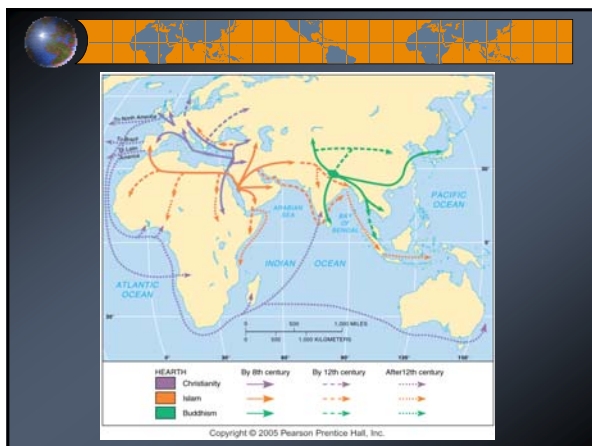
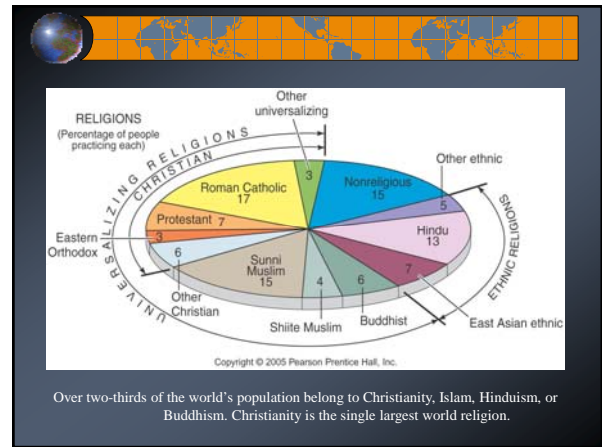
- Ascetic: describes a lifestyle characterized by self-denial, abstinence from various worldly pleasures in order to pursue religious and spiritual goals
 - Denial of sensual pleasures and the accumulation of material wealth
 - Not a rejection of the enjoyment of life, but to pursue physical and metaphysical health

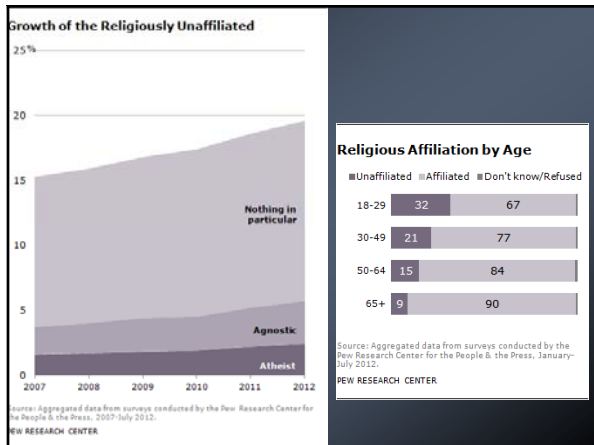
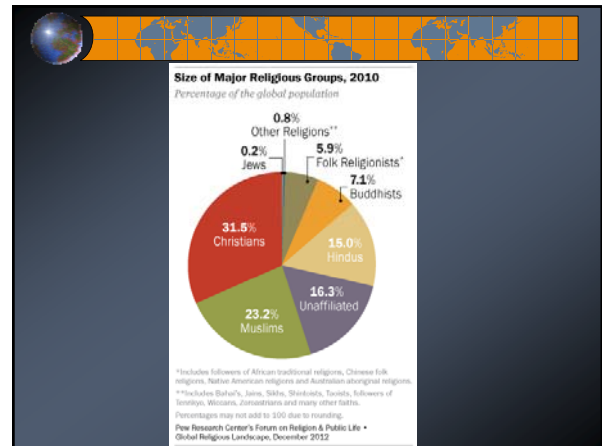
BC vs. BCE

- BCE/CE: Before Common Era/Common Era
- Replaces BC/AD

Religions of the World

- Middle Eastern Religions:
 - Christianity
 - Roman Catholicism
 - Protestantism
 - Eastern Orthodox Church
 - Islam
 - Shi'ite
 - Sunni
 - Judaism
 - Zoroastrianism
- Far Eastern Religions:
 - Confucianism
 - Taoism
 - Shinto
 - Mahayana Buddhism
- Indian Religions:
 - Hinduism
 - Sikhism
 - Jainism
 - Theravada Buddhism
- African Religions:
 - Tribal Religions of Sub-Saharan Africa
- American Religions:
 - Religions of Indigenous American Indians
- Oceanic Religions:
 - The religions of the Pacific Islanders
 - The beliefs of the Aborigines of Australia
 - The beliefs of the Maoris of New Zealand





Trends in Religious Affiliation, 2007-2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	07-12 Change
Christian	78	77	77	76	75	73	-5
Protestant	53	52	51	51	50	48	-5
White evangelical	21	19	20	19	18	19	-2
White mainline	18	18	17	17	17	15	-3
Black-Protestant	8	8	9	9	9	8	-1
Other minority Prot.	6	6	6	6	6	6	0
Catholic	23	22	23	23	23	22	-1
Mormon	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
Orthodox	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Other faith	4	5	5	5	5	6	+2
Unaffiliated	15.3	16.0	16.8	17.4	18.6	19.6	+4.3
Atheist	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.4	+0.8
Agnostic	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.6	3.0	3.3	+1.2
Nothing in particular	11.6	11.9	12.4	12.9	13.4	13.9	+2.3
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1	2	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	0

N = 9,443; 20,035; 22,159; 24,764; 10,377; 17,010

Source: Aggregated data from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2007-2012. In the change column, figures that are statistically significant are shown in bold. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Question wording: What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular?

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