

Hinduism World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

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Humanities Discipline: Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion, Ethics

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World Religion: Hinduism

Teaching Module Title: Hindus and the Celebration of Diwali in the United States

Teaching Module Goals: The aim of this module is to familiarize American students with the celebration of Diwali in America and also to increase general knowledge of Hinduism.

Assigned Readings and/or Websites:

1. <http://hinduism.about.com/cs/diwali/a/aa102003a.htm>
2. <http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/faith-diwali-celebrations-hindus-assimilate-america>
3. <http://time.com/3817133/india-muslim-assimilation-islam-us/>
4. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/hinduism-in-america/> [Scroll down and click on **A Diwali Reflection: The Exchange of Lamps** by Vineet Chander | Posted 12.23.2014 | **Religion**]
5. <http://time.com/3679945/barack-obama-india-narendra-modi-5-things/>
6. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/us-lawmakers-celebrate-diwali-on-twitter-facebook/articleshow/55152549.cms>
7. <http://www.spiritualresearchfoundation.org/spiritual-living/how-should-we-greet/define-namaskar-namaste-meaning/>
8. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Obama-smacks-down-India-for-religious-intolerance-says-Gandhi-would-have-been-shocked/articleshow/46141742.cms>

Study Questions and/or Discussions Prompts for Students:

1. What is Diwali and how did it get started?
2. What is the significance of compassion for Hindus?
3. What is the Hindu notion of making your heart a temple and its relation to light in general and Diwali in particular?
4. What holiday in America is Diwali often compared to?
5. What was the aim of President Obama and the First Lady for advancing the Festival of Lights celebration in America?
6. Define Namaste (namaskar) and explain the Hindu articulation of the spiritual benefits of its practice.
7. In your opinion, what is the significance of members of the US Senate shouting out "Happy Diwali!" and other related sentiments on Twitter and Facebook this year?

Written Assignments and/or other Assessment Instruments:

1. Students will keep a journal that expresses their thoughts on the readings and above questions that will also be addressed in class discussions.
2. President Obama has visited India several times during his presidency. Discussing Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, Obama has pointed out that India claims to extend freedom of religion to its constituents. He has been strongly criticized for saying Mahatma Gandhi would be shocked at the acts of religious intolerance in India.
3. Do you think Obama's criticism diminishes, counters, or outweighs his efforts to include Hindus as part of the American tapestry of faiths? Why or why not?
 - a. Students will write a 3-4 page essay reflecting their view of President Obama's statement.