

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

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Humanities Discipline: Philosophy (Ethics)

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World Religion: Islam

Teaching Module Title: On what Basis Do Islamic Extremists react so violently against satires featuring illustrations of Mohammed?

Teaching Module Goals:

I agree with all right-thinking people that violence and senseless killing at the hands of terrorist groups of any faith is unacceptable for any reason. I also believe that many people know very little about Islam and only see it as a violent, hate mongering religion due to various terrorist attacks that have been perpetrated by fundamentalist extremists who happen to be Muslim.

In this teaching module, I am particularly concerned with the carnage that extremists claim is vengeance that appears to stem from their notion of ridiculing Mohammed. In the interest of peace and religious tolerance, my primary goal is to discuss where this idea originates. A further goal is to open minds to the assertion that we are each responsible not only for what we actually do, but also accountable for what we cause and or allow to happen.

Assigned Readings and Websites:

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html (SEE First Amendment to the US Constitution

Bowker, John. *World Religions: The great faiths explored and explained* ISLAM pages 176-195 (SEE *REVERENCE FOR THE PROPHET* and *A Perfect Example of Living*) (SEE commentary under a featureless depiction of Muhammad) page 181

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/07/living/islam-prophet-images/> Why Islam forbids Images of Mohammed By Daniel Burke CNN Religious editor January 8, 2015

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237> Charlie Hebdo Attack: 3 Days of Terror January 14, 2015 BBC News

<http://www.amren.com/news/2015/01/muslims-stage-angry-protests-over-charlie-hebdos-mohammed-cartoon/> Muslims Stage Angry Protests Over Charlie Hebdo's Muhammad Cartoon by Simon Tomlinson, Daily Mail, January 15, 2015

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/shooting-outside-draw-muhammad-contest-texas-n352996> 'Draw Mohammed' Contest Shooting: Two Suspects Dead, Guard Shot in Texas by William J. Gorta and NBC News May 4, 2015

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/29/us/mohammed-cartoon-contest/index.html> Mohammed cartoon contest: Protest held outside Phoenix mosque by Sara Sidner and Ed Payne, CNN May 30 2015

The Moral Philosophy of Bernard Williams Edited by Alexandra Perry and Chris Herrera, Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2013 (SEE "*Jim and the Indians*")

<http://homepage.westmont.edu/hoeckley/PHI006SP12/documents/Williams.pdf> Bernard Williams' Critique of Utilitarianism

Study Questions and/or Class Discussion Prompts for Students:

1. Do you think that unflattering depictions of Muhammad are permissible based on the concept of free speech? Why or Why not?
2. Since critical depictions of Muhammad are often seen as disrespectful and appears to incite violence at the hands of extremists, should people refrain from doing so? Why or why not?
3. Do you think there should be a limit on what is considered 'Free Speech'? Why or Why not?
4. Since the magazine had been firebombed in 2011 based on previously published satires featuring Muhammad, in the case of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, do you agree or disagree that those who continued to create such illustrations are at least partially responsible for what happened in 2015?

Written Assignments and/or other Assessment Instruments:

At the point where the following discussion board or blog will be assigned in my Ethics course, we will already have discussed Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics (Deontology) and Egoism. Students will be expected to apply either theory (or all in comparison) to the following Discussion Boards or Blogs but they will also express their own view:

1. On 7 January 2015 Corrine Rey, a cartoonist at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, returned from picking up her daughter from day care. She was confronted by two Jihadists who threatened to shoot her daughter unless she keyed in the entry code at the door for the magazine. She complied and the gunmen entered and murdered twelve people, including two policemen, as well as shooting eleven others. During the attack, the shooters said that they did not kill women, but that they needed to convert to Islam and wear a veil.

For this assignment, students will contemplate the following questions:

- Should Corrine Rey have been willing to sacrifice her daughter and herself rather than to allow obvious murderers to enter the magazine and possibly kill everyone? It is worth noting that in the aftermath, Rey has expressed regret over cowering under a desk with her child as she watched the gunmen gun down her coworkers.
 - Since the workers at Charlie Hebdo had been long aware that they were in danger, is there something to be said about Corrine Rey's decision to take her daughter to the magazine?
2. Based on the readings about Islam, do you believe it is a religion that promotes and sanctions violence in the name of God or is it more the case that how individuals interpret Islam (or any other religion) determines how one practices it?