**Module 1**

**Developing a Context for A Conversation About “Belief”**

Why is it necessary to address “belief” in a place of learning like CSUSM? What has prompted this conversation on our campus?

“For San Marcos students, synagogue shooting hit close to home;” read a news outlet headline describing the Poway synagogue shooting (Retrieved from:

<https://fox5sandiego.com/news/for-san-marcos-students-synagogue-shooting-hit-close-to-home/>). What made this tragedy particularly shocking, in addition to the fact that it happened close to Cal State San Marcos—home to approximately a 17,000 student body from diverse backgrounds—was the fact that it was perpetrated by one of the students attending the university. “There’s no place for hatred on our campus,” student Sophie Nadler said. Targeting people because of their faith is clearly unacceptable. The students’ initial response to the Poway shooting and others around the country and around the world (African American Southern Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina; Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand) prompted the need for a wider and more sustained, curriculum-driven conversation.

**Purpose of Campaign**

The purpose of this campaign is twofold: (a) to increase the level of awareness about religion, spiritualty, and diverse ways in which people’s beliefs play a part in their daily lives by developing a basic knowledge base; CSUSM students may be in a better position (b) to address stereotypes surrounding common beliefs, especially those represented on our campus. This campaign is undertaken in the spirit of social justice, which will increase opportunities to value, appreciate, and affirm the diverse nature of our university family—home to multiple beliefs.

The need to learn more about religion is clear. For example, it is important to note the ways in which religion has been used to shape our ideas and practices of social justice as well as ways in which it has been used to control and oppress people. Thus, our analysis necessitates moving from individual experiences to collective responsibility, critique, and action.

**Outline**

In outlining a curriculum plan, we believe is fundamental to establish a common definition by addressing the following questions:

* What is “belief”?
* What role does belief have in our lives?
* Why do we need a conversation about God, soul, morality, and politics on our CSUSM campus?
* What is a belief system?
* Why are belief systems so significant?
* How do beliefs control religion and politics and all ways of thinking from a scientific worldview to conspiracy theories?

A set of tenets or convictions appear to support each other, and, in the process, such system governs individual beliefs. The “how” we practice our beliefs may be more significant than “what” we believe. (this should be placed on the Reference page: Retrieved from <https://www.closertotruth.com/series/how-belief-systems-work>)

The Poway synagogue shooting targeted people because of their beliefs. By engaging in this campaign, we may be in a better position to avert future belief-motivated tragedies.

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| **Learning Unit on Religious Diversity**  **Learning Outcomes**   1. Articulate own personal faith-based beliefs, or non-faith-based beliefs, of our campus community as a basis for a more socially just environment. 2. Demonstrate a deeper understanding and appreciation of people’s beliefs or convictions on our campus community.   **Learning Activities**   1. Through a series of storytelling activities (written or visual), invite students to share examples of faith-based beliefs or non-belief trends on our campus.   (Potential) Storytelling prompts:  I believe …  My faith helps me …  I left my faith because …  I oppose faith-based …  I do not approve of …   1. Activity: Compare and contrast the good use and abuse of at least two dominant religions.   As prep for PP presentation, organize students in small group, equipped with newspaper print, markers to they produce a poster (include visuals)   1. Connect this activity to Dino’s existing PP presentations.   **Rationale**  By promoting knowledge about diversity of beliefs on our campus, we position students, faculty, and staff to develop an appreciation of all who work and learn on this religiously diverse campus community.  Ernest Boyer, a renown American educator, used to share with his audiences that a good teacher begins a lesson with a good question. Thus, taking a cue from this educator, we invite you to consider the following:   1. Why do some people search for answers in religion? Why do others do not? Why do we need a conversation about faith, beliefs, or religion on our CSUSM campus? 2. How does the American religious diversity look like in 2020 across the country and, in particular, on our campus? What are some of the most representative faith-based groups? Why do people abandon their religious beliefs? What percentage identify as non-believers, agnostic, or atheist? 3. Is religion a tool of the dominant class or a refuge of poor? Identify some notable examples. 4. When has religion become central to a social conflict? Hostility? War? 5. What are some of the most common misconceptions about religions? 6. What might be some common ties between and among religions of the world? 7. What might be some outcomes of learning directly from people of a given religion as opposed to learning about the same religion from non-affiliated individuals? 8. What is the value of learning about religions through an ethnographic approach versus learning directly from the experts?   The above and other questions could guide our conversation about faith, belief, or religion. More specifically, we will invite audiences across campus to brainstorm with presenters about other questions that may offer in-depth and meaningful conversation about what influences peoples’ lives on a daily basis. As a practical pedagogical tool, we guide our presentation utilizing Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. When applied to religious or faith influences, the concentric circles look as follows:  What is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory? - The ... |