

**THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE  
FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER**

**TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

**YES BUT HOW? TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN HISTORY**

**SPEAKER:**

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**MODERATOR:**

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**PANELISTS:**

MYNGA FUTRELL, OBJECTIVITY, ACCURACY, AND BALANCE IN TEACHING  
ABOUT RELIGION

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**MARCIA BEAUCHAMP:** I am Marcia Beauchamp. For about five years I was the religious freedom programs coordinator for the First Amendment Center and worked closely with Charles, Buzz and others that you've heard from today on these issues. I'm very happy to be here.

I'm excited to get into this session. We've been hearing this morning a lot about the history of this issue and the challenges to teaching more about religion in the public schools. We've also heard arguments for why we should be doing that, which also have a considerable history. I think it's appropriate now that we turn to the question, How do we do it? We seem to agree that we ought to be doing more of it, but what should it look like? We're beginning with religion in social studies or history, because it's long been the conventional wisdom that history and social studies are the places for natural inclusion of religion in the curriculum. You'll notice, California has a large representation on the panel for the reasons that Charles mentioned in the last session. California has a significant track record on trying to address these issues ever since the history/social science was adopted in 1988, and the more recent social studies standards have been explicit about teaching about religion. You'll see that we have a lot of representation from California to help us talk and think about how to do this in a deep and substantial way.

The First Amendment Center and the Council on Islamic Education [<http://www.cie.org/default.asp>] a few years ago published a report that you'll see the executive summary of on the table outside called *Teaching About Religion in National and State Social Studies Standards* [<http://www.cie.org/teachers/standards.asp>]. This report was researched and written by our speaker for this session, Susan Douglass. I won't rehearse Susan's biography for you, but I do want to tell you that over the course of the years that I worked with the First Amendment Center and had many opportunities to work directly with Susan, and she is one of the most intellectually precise, committed and caring people I've ever worked with on these issues. So I'm looking forward to welcoming her to the podium, and I hope you will join me in welcoming Susan Douglass. (Applause.)

**SUSAN DOUGLASS:** The study of religion in the state educational standards became a topic of mine because I often heard people say that we don't teach about religion in public schools; we can't teach about religion in public schools. It's kind of a taboo topic. Working with textbooks, as I've done, and having taught social studies, world history in particular, that did not seem to me to be the case. Since working with Dr. Charles Haynes in training teachers, I began to understand that religion is all over the place in school curriculums, and that there is an extraordinary consensus about it.

The standards gave us an opportunity to see a couple of things that had developed in the 1990s. Looking at the issue of teaching across the curriculum, and having looked at the standards for many other reasons throughout the '90s, I decided in this study to look in great detail at exactly what is in the standards across the states, firstly, and, secondly, at whether the content in the standards meets the guidelines for teaching about

religion that have been so successfully and widely disseminated by the work of the First Amendment Center.

The reason for doing this study was not to determine if the standards are good or bad. The study was meant as a snapshot of the country, to see what is agreed upon. A lot of deliberation went into these standards. First, there were legislative mandates by all the states that did develop standards. There was input from educators, from officials, from politicians and from the public before these standards documents were adopted. So it is very clear that you could make a snapshot on the issue and say, “Okay, there must be consensus if this is found across the country.”

In terms of the parameters of the study, our method, briefly, was to tally citations on a number of keywords regarding religion, both very general ones and very specific ones, on the main religions that are covered. So you would have terms like “belief” and “religion” and so on and so forth, about 10 terms were traced throughout, and in some cases those were subsumed under something called “tradition” or “culture.” The study looked at the standards and program frameworks in seven national curriculum documents. It also looked at the standards adopted or being adopted by all the states that have content-specific standards.

The very clear conclusion from the study is that, in fact, religion is present in all of the states that have content-specific standards documents. Furthermore, religion is mainly found in the social studies curriculums, but it is also found in other areas. It is found across the levels in the social studies. At the primary or elementary levels, it is found in diversity studies, civics, U.S. history and in selected world cultures. In middle school, it is found in world history, world geography, and world cultures and in U.S. history. In high school, it is found in world and U.S. history. U.S. history is a very big topic in fifth grade to eighth grade studies, but in high school, world and U.S. history have much less religion content, because in many cases high schools cover the post-Civil War period of U.S. history with more intensity, and coverage of religion does drop off for that era. In modern world history it also drops off considerably after 1750, or so, when religion is thought to have disappeared. Finally, language arts and fine arts standards were, surprisingly, found to contain a considerable number of references to religion, relating to literature and art appreciation. There were, of course, some very surprising findings. I invite you to read the study [<http://www.cie.org/teachers/standards.asp>], because there are some amazingly creative openings there.

Much of this is good news, but the bad news presentation will begin soon. The good news is that standards include teaching about religion, and, even better news, content and skills mandates give us tools for advancing the quality of instruction. The states have spoken on what they want; it’s no longer a matter of mushy consensus. They have said, among other things, we want this content to be taught, and they have deliberated and put it together in outlines. Not every state has content-specific ones; many of them have general mandates.

But two particular things have been happening. One is that all of the states, in all of the disciplines, have included skills and critical thinking mandates that they want incorporated into instruction. This gives us a very good handle in terms of saying when the quality of the content is delivered up to its ability to help students acquire skills, like analytical thinking, map-reading and many things of this sort. The second thing is that, on the way to making standards, scholars and teachers sat down and did some serious thinking about what you can teach, at what level and how can you structure the disciplines better for meaning. Now many of you who have worked on state standards committees, and many of the forums where people are confused and upset, might not feel that that is the most important thing that came out, particularly when the testing and accountability issues are factored into it. But I think that, at the end of the day, what will remain from standards is this restructuring of the disciplines for greater meaning, and it gives us a much better tool for integration.

The bad news, of course, is that teaching about religion may be treated very superficially. The time factor was brought up. World history and U.S. history are very large and demanding topics and one might spend a week or two on each. Regarding teacher training, Gene Carter from the Association of Supervision in Curriculum Development called it almost a crime if not just a travesty that teachers are not trained to do what they're now being asked to do. There is very little training on teaching about religion.

Another good news/bad news issue has to do with the references to religion in the national curriculum models that are out there. It is my contention in the study that almost all of the state standards that have been developed are based on one or more of the history, social science or social studies models. The National Standards for History [<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards/>] and the Bradley report, *Building a History Curriculum*, from the National Council for History Education [<http://www.history.org/nche/>], both have a great number of references to religion. They are direct in terms of specific religions, in terms of ideas, philosophies, morals and values, and they have many general references to religion. The National Geography Standards' [<http://www.ncge.org/publications/tutorial/standards/>] secondary, explanatory materials are somewhat less, but still amazingly, rich, have possibly as many references as the history standards. But I only used the main content outlines for the references. National standards for civics and government have some remarkably creative ones. Curriculum standards for social studies by the NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies [<http://www.ncss.org/>]) are, in general, much less specific; therefore, there are fewer references, because they are mostly references of a very general nature, such as tradition and culture and so on. Economics have almost no references, not even in terms of charity and things of that sort.

I'd like to show you briefly the distribution of references, which is another one of the possible bad news/possible good news stories. When you look across the grade levels, where the content has been distributed, you find that the huge majority of references to teaching about religion are in grades five through eight. We've already raised the question today of whether students are ready for these deep discussions and

ready to differentiate at that age. There are still a significant number of references to religion in grades nine through 12, but it does drop off severely. The reason for this is that world cultures and world history are taught in those younger grades, along with the first half of U.S. history, and that's where most of the religious references are.

I think the most important conclusions that came out of this study, in terms of social studies curriculum, are that world studies models are used for teaching about religions, which includes U.S. history, because the frameworks are similar in how they are structuring the study of history, but they are not at all equal. You have to have a good vehicle to carry this kind of complex world-embracing content, and some of these models come up very much wanting. Multi-year courses that extend from middle to high school ensure better teaching about religion, because they give the teachers the time to deal with it. Teachers are able to get students to do some primary source readings, and taking a multi-disciplinary approach, they can touch on art and literature and history as well as geography.

The bad news, I think, is that traditional Western civilizations-based models of history offer poor study of world religions. There's a great deal of content there, but the courses are organized around a "parade of civilizations" that misses many of the most important aspects of religion. Most of us in this room learned world history as a series of bubbles. I call it the "parade-float model" of teaching history. You stand your class on the curbside, and then you let beautiful floats go by. As the students look at each one and are entranced with its beauty, its culture and its accomplishments. Then it goes around the corner and, for the students, it is largely forgotten. Then along comes another one and as that one gone around the corner, we see another one coming on. For me, as a student who later taught this, the idea that these existed side by side at the same time, was remarkable. It was also remarkable that these bubbles were actually more like holes in Swiss cheese; if you looked at the map or the globe, they were only covering a very small part of geography, and they were not covering the great interactions between these cultures.

Another model that is another little good news/bad news story comes from the National Geography Standards. They are excellent and remarkable, moving beyond the flags, populations and resources model to creating meaning about studying the contemporary world and going into its history. But stand-alone geography surveys cannot do a good job of teaching about religion when they are expected to teach both ancient history and contemporary studies with very little in between, with a quick survey of physical geography. The best example I can give on this is the content for a sixth and seventh grade textbook, where one paragraph talked about Mohammed and the origins of Islam, and the very next one was the modern Saudi Arabian state, with nothing in between. You can imagine how this would wreak havoc. Their content overload is remarkable, and the way in which they put a very basic, small, thumbnail sketch of religions is detrimental to understanding anything but the bare outlines, a kind of bulleted list.

What we're doing is asking the students to go region by region through history, but history didn't necessarily move according to those sorts of regions, and the regions we cover in the modern era were not necessarily important regions or interacting regions 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. So we ask the students to peer down tunnels into the past, but they can't see into any of the other tunnels. It becomes a very fragmented type of world history, apart from the fact that it often leaves out significant areas of geography as well.

The good news story is that there is a new world history model afoot, and there is also some fairly broad emerging agreement about it. It takes religion very seriously, and its discussion of religious traditions goes beyond major civilization boundaries, since not one of the world faiths was bounded by a single culture or civilization. They became world religions precisely because they jumped the boundaries.

In this model, students learn about historical eras across the globe. The currency of the new world history model is not a civilization, what some historians like to call billiard balls bumping against one another on a table, but rather an historical era. It seems a strange thing to have to say, but it's global world history. World history, as we thought of it before, was not particularly global. It didn't cover all of the world. This is global world history, and I submit to you that it is also a very neutral way that we can study, in our very diverse society, a human-centered history, one that belongs to all of us and doesn't go on lists of little achievements that we have categorized and put on yet another bulleted list at the end of the study of parade-float A, B or C.

This is something where we learn as students together in the classroom how many of the world's most important collective achievements passed from one to the other. It's not mine or yours, it's ours. Arabic numerals are a very good example of this. They may have begun in India, or they may have begun even deeper into the past than that. The important thing is we know when they emerged in India, and we also know they moved into the Persian room. They then moved with the rise of Islam into Muslim civilization where they were worked and reworked. They entered Europe twice, once from the scholars, where they sifted off into the elite world. But when did they really hit? When the accountants got hold of them. When the Italian traders got hold of them, then Arabic numerals really came into their own. This complex story takes us into geography and across the map. It makes us understand that we as culture groups living in the United States do not need to fight over it. We need to embrace the story rather than the achievement of these things.

This is an example of the way I think world history will be taught in the future. It's slow and it's grinding, but I think that this is the way it will go. It's kind of like a graph, where we study geography as the format, kind of like a landscape, and we observe this landscape through time, the chronology, all the way to the present era. It doesn't really matter what you call the eras, or what theme you assign to them, what's important is that you're studying the whole. What happens when you study religions in the old model? You study them for a very short period of time, and then that religion is either gone or dropped off or we're finished with that one, the parade float went around the corner. In the newer model, when a religion emerges in a specific era, it is followed

through that era, and not just in the one specific culture associated with it, but whatever culture and geographic space it inhabited. This is surely true for all of the world faiths. Most people don't realize that Islam and Christianity were spreading at the same time. They think, First there was this, then there was that. Why? Because we studied it in that sequence. And you look at many other things, like technology, agriculture and trade. It allows you to study primary sources, cultural interactions as a topic of study, as in the example of the numerals, and to incorporate a geographic understanding of history that is very rich, as well as literature and art and so on.

There is agreement in the social studies standards about how we can do this. A plurality of states in their curriculum or in their standards have history as the dominant discipline in the social studies program. They call it history/social science, and they have many multi-year draped history courses, both in U.S. and world history. California was quite clearly the pioneer in that. They spend three years on world history, as a number of other states do on world studies, but these other states use them for these Western hemisphere/Eastern hemisphere courses that are less than optimal. They're draped sequentially across the years giving students enough time. The importance of teaching geography and analytical and research skills is universal, across the standards. Teaching multi-disciplinary history is also universal across the standards.

Where do we go with teacher training? We have pre-service and in-service programs that must fit the content of religion in schools, not necessarily what one would get from specialists in religion, but it must follow what we have. The guidelines and their implications are basic. Scholars of history should participate, but must gear courses towards teachers' needs, not specialization. They must be tailored, and can be tailored, to national and state standards. A standards-based framework for teacher training about religion would include accurate discussion of basic beliefs of each faith using the First Amendment Center guidelines, not academic secularism. (Teaching as the only view of religion a scholarly view that assumes religion is a creation of humanity and does not admit the possibility that it has divine origins, even though it professes to be a revealed religion, is not constitutionally viable.) The framework would show that intellectual traditions and institutions and societies change over time and would not present an image of a religion as frozen in some distant time in the medieval period or even before that. Western Christianity, for example, is often covered in standards in a way that shows how intellectual traditions are woven into the account of history. It's differentiated. It's interesting. Things change. They don't stay the same. We have a Reformation, we have an Enlightenment, we have many things going on. These currents are absent in terms of talking about the other world religions. Instead, people imagine they've stayed frozen in time.

That is what I mean when I say that the standards-based framework gives us a tool to say, "Now we must improve coverage until it is balanced across the way in which we speak about these things." I venture to say that we cannot understand those world religions, we cannot understand the religions that are practiced by those in this country, unless we are willing to say, "Yes, they also have intellectual traditions that change. They also had institutions that may not look exactly like the institutions that we in the

Western world had, but they were institutions that often fulfilled a very similar function. I could go on, but I won't in this timeframe, about the tradition of *ulema* in Islam, in terms of the separation of the religion and government. That might sound very surprising to you, but it has a lot of truth to it. The current distribution of religion is something that's often found when kids get a map slapped at them that says, "Where are these religions?" Minorities are very seldom represented; religions in early modern history are almost absent, as is contemporary religious expression, beyond what people call fundamentalism, a term that is not often used critically.

I feel we must concentrate on middle school and high school because that, and not graduate school history studies, is where most citizens, future voters and future professionals, get all the education about the world that they're going to get. Increasingly, students go to computer studies or other technical or specialized studies, and they don't see these topics any more.

And then there is the framework that the Council on Islamic Education uses, that the First Amendment Center has put together and courageously disseminated to the point that I believe the study shows they have achieved a great deal of consensus across the United States over it. This is the constitutional framework for teaching about religion that I don't think any country in the world would have produced, that is the hope of humanity, and provides a great possibility for us to use as a beacon of educational reform all over the world, not just here. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** If our panelists would please come up to the table. The panelists we have today to talk about "Teaching About Religion and History, But How?" include Bruce Grelle, who is a religious studies professor at the California State University at Chico; Kim Plummer, who is longtime teacher in the San Diego school district and has been consulting with a textbook publisher recently; Mynga Futrell, who represents Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in Teaching About Religion and is herself a curriculum developer as well; and Rebecca Hayes, who is a teacher-educator and has some thoughts also on the way history is taught.

I'd like to start out by asking some questions to bring the panelists into the discussion. Rebecca, I think I'd like to start with you, because Susan ended with some suggestions about where we might go from here and what teacher-education might look like. I know we're going to spend a whole session at the end of the conference on preparing teachers to teach about religion in particular, but I wonder what your thoughts are on both the approach to teaching about history that Susan has lifted up, and what you think the challenges are, especially in regard to teacher education.

**REBECCA HAYES:** Thank you. First of all I'd just like to thank Susan publicly for her careful work and her interesting evaluation of what's going on. I'll just say a word, because several of my loves come together in this topic that we're talking about. My own background is in history. I've been a school administrator, an associate superintendent for instruction, and I currently teach teachers and future administrators. So I can see the difficulties with what we're trying to accomplish here from a number of

perspectives, but I want to start very briefly by saying that I think the last panel probably dealt with some of the most fundamental issues, and that is the liberal education of our teacher population.

Right now, we're in a time when there seem to be people in the business and the government community who think that you can jettison anyone into the role of a teacher, and we have a long history in this country of believing more in credentializing people than educating people. So we have the problem that even when people have the technical credentials which states and localities deem to be the precursors of good teaching, those may not include at all what people need to know in terms of the ability to intellectually move children from early grades through high school. One of the things I want to say here is that, to have a foundation for fairness in dealing with religion, we've got to have a broader foundation of the kind of liberal education that brings teachers, whether they're in the elementary, middle, or high school grades, to the place where they can deal with a multiplex set of issues a confidence and comfort level in approaching subjects which they may not have had lots of formal education about. I'm not saying this to say that we don't have excellent teachers. We do. We, I think, have far more excellent teachers than we deserve in this country, but what we don't necessarily have in this area of religion, or in other areas, is a systemic excellence. I think that's what we're trying to talk about here, in terms of how we can work together.

A couple of suggestions. In teacher-education itself, I think one of the places that we need to maintain an emphasis is in a requirement called foundations of education, or American foundations of education, which may be the only place in the credentialing process where people are asked to look broadly at the philosophical-historical underpinnings of American education. Without understanding that it's very hard for anyone to understand how religion fits into what we should be teaching in schools. In many places this course can be made into a catch-all that's taught by the least interested professor because that person's new in the pecking order. In some really well known scholarly universities these kinds of doctoral programs are being phased out in favor of what are considered more practical educational programs. I think national groups like this can look at teacher education and look at the vehicles through which these goals of liberal education can be achieved.

I also have a couple of suggestions related to curriculum development, and these go along the same line in terms of what national organizations can do, in part, underwriting the scholarly endeavors which attempt to integrate and synthesize knowledge in ways that make knowledge in religion, as well as other areas, accessible and useful for teachers. I think textbook people have a lot to do with that, but also organizations like those you represent can do much to support that scholarly effort.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Thank you, Rebecca.

Bruce Grelle, we've been talking a lot about teacher preparation. I want to ask you about how far we have to go in some ways in preparing for actually doing a good job of teaching about religion in history, and I'd like to ask you two questions. One is: Can

you tell us about your efforts at the University of California at Chico to help do that? And then can you tell us about the relationship between a religious studies professor like yourself and that effort?

**BRUCE GRELE:** Well, it's California State University at Chico.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Sorry.

**MR. GRELE:** And I don't just correct you to correct you. It's California State University, and one of its main charges is to prepare future teachers in the state, whereas that's not a central agenda for the University of California. It's the relationship between the research universities and the comprehensive universities, and I think one's institutional location has a lot to do with how, and whether, one is inclined to engage in this kind of work.

At Chico State, in response to these changes that happened with the frameworks initially and now with the standards, we had school people coming to us saying, "We're now being expected to teach about these things that we had not been expected to teach about previously. Can you help us do that?" We began to offer some in-service opportunities as well as developed a new course that we now teach for future teachers, liberal studies majors, who will be going for an elementary school multiple-subject credential, and social science majors, who will be going for a high school or single-subject credential. This course is called "Teaching about Religions in American Public Schools."

I'll start with a description of the pre-service education. That course devotes about one-third of the 15-week semester to a discussion of First Amendment principles. Even when we do our in-service work, I think that's the place to start. Riding up on the elevator to this session with Charles after lunch, we were talking about how this is an interesting conference so far because the doors have opened and the opportunities are there that haven't been there in the past to deal with these issues, and there's a lot of momentum and a lot of commitment. On the other hand, we're hearing a lot about how difficult this is and how there are so many other things that teachers and schools have to do, and there are all of these other kinds of pressures both on schools and on teacher-education programs. So it's a real mixed bag. I think if we always bring it back to this business about education for democracy, that's where it has to start, both with our future teachers and with our in-service teachers, to help them understand that with all this other stuff that they're being expected to do, and as hard as this education about religion is, that is why we should be talking about this.

It goes back to the phrase I like to use with these people, "the American experiment with pluralistic democracy," and I ask my future-teacher students to think about what is meant by the term democracy. That's sometimes an interesting exercise, because we take that thing for granted. We talk, and we finally get around to the idea: Democracy is something like government of the people, by the people and for the people, for the benefit of all, the common good, participation by everybody. And then we get

people saying, “Well yeah, but that’s not what we have. What we have is a plutocracy, where power is distributed in the hands of a few rather than distributed in the hands of many.” And we address that, but we say that whether or not it’s the reality of America, it’s the ideal of America that we have a democracy where power and influence is distributed among the many, and we talk about pluralism and diversity.

Then we talk about this idea of an experiment, and I ask them to think about that. Pretty soon we say, “We’re testing something out, we’re trying something out,” and they come to realize an experiment can succeed or an experiment can fail. What sets the stage for this discussion is that this experiment in democracy that we’re engaged in can succeed, and by and large it has succeeded so far in our history, but there are no guarantees that it will continue to succeed. So what we need to think about is what we have to do as citizens, and as educators, in order to ensure the conditions that will enable the ongoing success of this experiment. Whatever else it involves, it’s going to involve learning to live with our deepest differences, and religion is a huge part of those differences. Then they realize this is relevant, this is not just one more thing they have to learn, this is not just more content. It’s from there that we then launch into a discussion and a little introduction of the major world religions.

If I may take just one more minute on university professors and how they relate to this: Susan’s report helped me to understand, much better than I had previously, a set of frustrations and even a degree of guilt that I had felt from working with future teachers on trying to prepare them to teach about the things that the standards were now expecting them to teach about, yet not necessarily feeling that that’s what we should spend all of our time on, because there are other important things than what were just covered in the standards. It wasn’t for me, as I think it is for a lot of university professors, primarily a conflict between my own research agenda, or my own academic specialization, and what the teachers are supposed to be teaching about. It was a conflict between some things that you identified in your report, between the kind of specific details, historical details, that are included in the standards on the one hand, and the kind of larger contextual issues that are necessary to make sense of those specific details on the other hand. Without attending to those larger issues that are not covered in the standards, I didn’t feel like they would really be able to understand, let alone get excited about, the specific details that they’re going to have to be teaching about. So I really wrestled in trying to strike a balance between standards-education preparation, focused on the standards, and the broader background and context.

This comes up in several areas that you identify in your report, and that have come up today: the tension between presenting static versus dynamic versions of religious traditions. The standards are often guilty, as are textbooks, of presenting static versions of these traditions, of presenting a little snapshot in time, usually a long time ago, and not looking at them in the present. They tend to view these traditions as not undergoing change at the level of institution, belief and practice. For example, Chana Schoenberger, in a *Newsweek* article that was reprinted in an earlier edition of *Finding Common Ground*, talked about her dismay as a Jewish student at one of her classmates coming to her and asking her, “Why do you guys sacrifice animals as part of your

religion?” The information that this other student had about what the Jews do was based upon this little introduction to the practice of the ancient Hebrews thousands and thousands of years ago, and she assumed that modern Jews still have a religion based upon the sacrifice of animals. It was introduced a long time ago, that’s what it was, and there was no mention of how the tradition has changed in terms of its practice and its institutions.

You know the difference between a tradition that’s viewed as outmoded versus a tradition that’s viewed as living. You mentioned the inattention to the spread and the development of traditions. Students have this idea, less now since September 11<sup>th</sup>, that Islam is a religion of the Middle East, and still it comes as a surprise to many of them when they realize that the vast majority of Muslims around the world do not live in the Middle East. They don’t realize the tremendous geographical-cultural diversity in terms of customs, beliefs, practices, et cetera.

In addition to this tension between static versus dynamic presentations of religions, there is a tension between presentations of ideals versus presentation of realities. This came up this afternoon: Do we gloss over the crimes that have been committed in the name of all the world’s religions? I think the answer is no, but the answer is that crimes have been committed in the names of all the world’s religions, not just some of the world’s religions. One of the problems that you identify is that in some cases, in the standards and in the textbooks, the ideals of one religion may be focused upon while the realities of another religion are focused upon, and the realities never look as good as the ideals. The problem is that there’s a gap between ideals and realities in all religious traditions, not just some rather than others.

Another tension is between unity and diversity. This idea that all Muslims, all Jews, all Christians are somehow the same without giving adequate attention to the diversity, varieties of Judaism, varieties of Islam, varieties of Christianity, varieties of Buddhism, et cetera.

And finally, I felt a tension between preparing teachers to deal with religion as it appears in the curriculum and dealing with religious diversity as it is likely to appear in their students in their classrooms. For example, in Northern California we have a large population of Sikhs. I’ve been told that it’s the largest population of Sikhs outside of the Punjab in northwestern India. Sikhism doesn’t get covered very much in the standards, as far as I’ve been able to tell. There’s a little bit of attention to Sikhism in discussions of immigration, but my students are going to have Sikhs in their classrooms, they’re going to need to know just a little bit about what the Sikhs believe, what they wear and why they wear it. Even though that’s not covered in the standard, it’s something that I’ve felt obligated to deal with. So these are conflicts and tensions that I’ve felt, and your report helped me to understand the source of some of those a lot better.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Thank you, Bruce.

Kim Plummer is a veteran teacher of upper elementary school students and middle school students in California and has recently been working as a consultant with a textbook company. So Kim has a unique view from two different perspectives on some of these questions. I have two questions for you. One is: How prepared do you think textbook companies or textbook publishers are to hear and respond to this vision that we're all discussing here? And what, in your view, are the greatest challenges to redesigning textbooks or to addressing the issues with textbook publishers? And then the second question is: I think most of us who have been teachers for any time know that good teachers have to go beyond the textbooks, and I know that you've done that in your own teaching experience, so I'm wondering if you could give us an example of a way that you've gone beyond the textbook to do a better job of teaching about religion in history.

**KIMBERLY PLUMMER:** I'd like to start off by saying that I feel vindicated when I come here and hear about a liberal arts education, because I was on the medical track when I left for school and decided that it was a little too focused for me, and I switched to diversified liberal arts, and everyone seemed to think that I switched because I didn't have a focus in life. (Laughter.) Anyway, I feel vindicated, because I am very grateful that that was the path that I chose.

I went to the University of San Diego, which is a private Catholic university, and we had 15 units of required religion that we had to take. It didn't necessarily have to be Catholicism, but that put me on the road to equipping me as a teacher, even though that's not exactly what we taught at that time when I first started teaching 20 years ago. It gave me a sense of competence that I'd had exposure to some of these religions where my other colleagues had not. Because of that, I did feel a little bit more equipped when our framework did change.

I'm here today speaking primarily as a classroom teacher, but I can tell you that it has been eye-opening consulting with a publishing company, because I have learned several things which I think we all pretty much know. I guess I was naïve in the classroom about the bigger corporate world. I think one of the challenges of a textbook company, and the bottom line for any textbook company, is that it is about dollars and cents. I think we all do realize that, and I think that in a state like California, which is what we call a state-adoption state, textbook publishers as a whole are more willing to do what that state requires and do specialized textbooks. North Carolina and Florida are also both state-adoption states.

The good news for state-adoption states is that publishers are willing to meet state standards, and they have to be, because one of the criteria for your textbook to even make the list is that the textbook has to be 100 percent aligned to the content standards. That's the number one criteria; everything else comes from there; that's the good news, for state-adoption states but maybe not so good for what we call open-territory states which tend to not have a lot of guidelines.

I think the biggest challenges are finding out how to give the teachers everything we need in the classroom. I have to say as a teacher, everything we need is not always content, even though that is what we need. Let me clarify that. I think teachers need content, but I'm a content person; I'm a history teacher, always have been. But textbook publishers have to look at a bigger picture. One of the challenges is that universal access is another one of the criteria. How do we make the textbook accessible to all students? They also have – and this obviously falls under universal access – language issues. There are issues of students who read below grade level. The jury really is still out – and maybe this speaks to what makes a good teacher, and having to step out of the book as well – as to what motivates students in the first place to learn what they typically think is a boring, uneventful subject. A lot of emphasis is placed in that area, and unfortunately, I think, with that, there's a lot of talk about things like pictures and charts and graphs, which lead to, in my mind, the superficial treatment of religion, because the focus is the design. I'll say it again: The design of the textbook seems to be the focus.

I think one of the other challenges for textbook companies is being able to speak with a variety of teachers from around the country. I don't know that they get an awful lot of time to do that. They focus in when it's an adoption year. When they know, for example, 2005 in California is the next year for the social studies adoption, everybody is suddenly interested in what is the content and what should the history book have in it. But when those years are gone, the diligence with that seems to go by way of the adoption, and that's because they're working on the next adoption, whatever that may be: health, foreign language, or what have you. So that's one of the challenges as well, keeping up with the movements. It changes from state to state; in California our adoption cycle is every six years. Seeing what's going on with our budget, I would argue that it could be six, seven, eight, nine years before we get to choose social studies books again.

But there is a lack when it comes to keeping up with current scholarship, to keeping up with current needs, the trends, how the faces in our classroom are changing. I'll give you an interesting example. I was in a district in San Diego, which is where I live, and one of the requirements is that publishers have material in at least five to six languages. I think the number in California is five languages. How do we determine which languages? From a survey that's been done that lists the top 12 languages spoken in the United States and then, because its five, publishers choose the top five. Well, this community in San Diego has a very large Iraqi population, and for the first time I was asked whether Arabic is one of the languages for the textbooks. I could see that as a need in this community, but then we're talking dollars and cents again. So what are the five languages in California that are required? Spanish, and then the rest are all Asian languages: Cantonese, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. That illustrates some of the challenges we encounter. Those are the faces we see in our classroom, and we don't always have that support to help us with those faces and those cultures, and I don't know that that support is going to come very quickly.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Thanks, Kim.

Mynga, I know that you have concerns about semantics when it comes to teaching about religion in the curriculum. We've talked about that a little bit already. So I have two questions for you: What do you think are the greatest challenges generally to teaching about religion? And, then, what do you think are the biggest curricular challenges as a curriculum developer?

**MYNGA FUTRELL:** Okay, I should give a little background, because I'm wearing two hats here. I work for Instructional Systems; I'm a curriculum developer. We do things in medical, education and law enforcement and computer manuals, different things. And then we have a client called Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance in Teaching About Religion [<http://www.teachingaboutreligion.org/AboutThisSite/aboutsite.htm>]. That's a big mouthful of ideals, and it's called OBITAR for short. I do want to say that I'm really grateful to be at this colloquium because before I came, I looked at the agenda items and I was starting to think about how to speak to OBITAR's positions on these various agenda items. I decided the best way to put these forward initially would be to just write them out, which I did. People can pick the clipped material up out there on the table with some of the Freedom Forum literature. It's interesting in coming to a colloquium: I find myself so interested in what other people are saying, and it kind of shapes my own ideas, until much of what I wanted to say when I came, to transmit, has shifted based on what people have said since I've been here. So I will try to talk about ORBITAR's perspective, and then later, if we have time, I will address the curriculum issues. I don't want to take away too much from other people, but I do have some curriculum concerns, and you've addressed a couple of them already.

I get enthused when I hear people talking about this, and when we started with Justice Tom Clark's opinion in *Schempp* this morning that said there is nothing wrong with teaching about religion in public schools if we can do it objectively in a secular program of study. ORBITAR was formed by non-religious organizations after the California framework came out in 1987, when there was this big move to deal with teaching about religion and to put it in the textbooks. There was a sense of injustice that was felt by the people who are non-religious, and I think Mary Ellen Sikes, this morning, said it very well, that it's not a sense that you want to do something with the schools, you just want to have a level playing field. You want to make sure that this subject matter is treated fairly. You want to be a part of the conversation, and there was the feeling that that was not the case.

When Charles was talking this morning, he mentioned fairness, sitting together, finding common ground, getting beyond stereotypes and listening to one another. For that to happen, you have to be in on the conversation, and I think it's great that we have a small percentage of people here who can be in on the conversation from a non-religious perspective, but keep looking at those squares up there. There are two squares that are part of the civic conversation that don't really feel involved in it. And yet, when you look at *USA Today* and look at the maps and then the ARIS (Academic Research Information System) study that came out in October 2001, and you look at the Catholics, and you look at the Baptists, and then you look at the western half of the United States,

you see the diversity that Bruce is describing. It's phenomenal; it's absolutely overwhelming diversity, and this is part of the civic conversation. These are the people we have in our classrooms, they and their parents are very diverse in religious perspective. You cannot understand the non-religious through religion's perspective; you have to bring those people to the table.

We can't have the sacred public school where there's one religion, and we can't have the naked public school that's cleaned out of religion. We've got to have the civic framework – I love Charles' perspective. We have to have that for everybody, and this project began from a sense that, Wow, we're not in on this, and the curriculum is moving forward now. By the way, I'm very enthused by this new "human story worldwide" model that Susan talked about, because it is a human story. However, we cannot write out a significant fraction of humans because we're not getting their input, and we're not, actually. When we talk about finding common ground and dealing with deepest differences, I would say we educators are not immune from our cultural biases at all. Just have non-religious people walk up and join a conversation and you will find that you are not immune from any of the cultural biases, but we're learning better to talk with one another that way. We still have this deepest difference of all that is not being addressed.

So I guess the biggest challenge of all is linguistics. How do we get this liberal concept broad enough and inclusive enough, over that cultural and linguistic abyss that we have, that these people are non-religious? Now what about those two squares up there, those secular folks? Some of them are apatheists, a new word that I had never heard before, but a bunch of them are atheist, rationalists or agnostics. They have categories, worldviews, organizations and a lot of the same kind of stuff. They don't necessarily worship, but they do have values. The non-religious have perspectives on good and bad, and right and wrong, and morality and so forth. So how do we get them into this kind of human story? Is it okay to just write them out? You might say they don't really have a history, but ever since there's been history, there has been skepticism, criticism, nonconformity and so forth.

The Enlightenment swept in a bunch of deists into our American picture. That's why we have a secular government today, because some of those deists were very active as Founding Fathers. If you look at the textbooks today and hunt for deism, in one textbook I looked at, I can't remember the publisher now, it was actually mentioned that George Washington was influenced by deism, and then, of course, we had the hot deist, Thomas Jefferson. But what is deism? To the teacher who might be interested there is a little footnote, "Deism was very common among the Founding Fathers". So you go to the index, and look in the back, and try to find out what deism is; it's not even there. Most people in the public at large think it's just watered-down Christianity, really that's kind of what it is. Whoa, not accurate history!

As we search for religion in curriculum, are we searching for skepticism, agnosticism, nonconformity and dissent? Or are we just looking for labels that fit religion? We've got to look at the whole picture and how the interplay is. We have to look at the history of non-religion, skepticism, and agnosticism. We have to look at how

this interplay over this deep divide has happened, and the only way we're going to present accurate history that's civically fair, that meets our ideals, is to get everybody involved and get over that. We need to get over that, and we can do it. It can be done, and the reason it can be done is because we can concentrate on what's important, which is our ideals and how best to address them, and to make this country really truly representative of America and its best ideals and get them into motion. I'll save the curricular aspects if there's time.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Thanks, Mynga. I would like to give Susan an opportunity to respond in any way she'd like to the panelists' comments, and then I think we should open it up to the audience for just a couple of questions.

**MS. DOUGLASS:** I'd like to open it up to questions, because our time is a little short.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Immediately? Okay, fine. Do we have some questions from the audience? Okay, Marvin.

**MARVIN BERKOWITZ:** I'm interested in your thoughts on the neglect in our discourse of the distinction between morality and other aspects of religion. Religions cover a broad array of human experience: partly they talk about issues of ethics and morality; partly they talk about social customs, and you can go on and on. As someone who works in the area of character education and moral development – I'm a moral psychologist – I worry about that. What I'm hearing here harkens back to me the old days of values clarification in my field. Romanticism, as Larry Colberg used to talk about it, is sort of blind acceptance of everything; let's just let people all express who they are, where they are, what their worldview is and what their culture is. Certainly there has been talk here about diversity within religious traditions, and a spectrum within religious traditions, but there are great traditions in religion that are oppressive of women and oppressive of others that disagree with them. Do we not need to somehow parcel out the moral issues, when people's moral rights are being trampled upon, and have a different kind of rhetoric and a different type of education for issues of morality than for other issues? I raise that for folks.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Thank you.

**MS. HAYES:** I'd like to comment on that, and I'd like to echo a theme I think Bruce started on. The answer to this lies in establishing the civic dialogue, and agreeing to the core principles that we could say are a part of affirming your stand as an American. To be a citizen here, you have to choose to be a citizen in some way. We have a lot of people who apathetically pretend they don't have to choose until some issue comes up. Basically, we are agreeing that we will be Americans, and there are a set of fundamental values that set the underpinnings for what you're talking about in terms of ethics and morality. They also open up the appropriate venue through which to study religions from a historical perspective and from a contemporary perspective. I think that's in harmony with a couple of things that you were saying, Bruce.

**MR. GRELE:** The civic values become the moral foundation for this approach. It's not pitting one culture or one religion against another one, as moral versus immoral, but it's taking this civic set of principles and using that as the moral foundation. Part of what that involves is a commitment to listen, a commitment to respect, but also recognition that when you begin to listen and begin to respect, you'll find that within all the world's major religious and cultural traditions, you find a conversation going on within those traditions about the kind of issues you identify, whether it be women or war and peace, as Warren referred to earlier. All kinds of moral issues are being debated within each of these great religious traditions, and they don't speak with a single voice. What I think is useful to do is to help teachers and students understand that there is not a Jewish point of view on a moral issue, or a Muslim point of view on a moral issue. There tend to be varieties of points of view among all of these adherents to different religions on all of these different issues. Part of the goal of liberal education is to understand, as Warren was saying, this idea of a conversation, and that there are resources from both religious and non-religious traditions that can be drawn upon by people in this larger moral conversation that we're engaged in. The civic principles make the space for that moral conversation possible.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Susan.

**MS. DOUGLASS:** I heartily agree with both Rebecca and Bruce on that. But I just want to bring us crashing down on the floor, in that for most of the world's faiths that are covered in these basic courses, the students don't learn what the moral standards and moral values are, what the ethical conversations are within these faiths. I confronted once in a textbook review a proposal to have the students compare the Ten Commandments with the Five Pillars of Islam.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Ten to five.

**MS. DOUGLASS:** And the only answer I could come up with was remainder five. (Laughter.) You're talking apples and oranges. The Five Pillars are acts of worship that do indeed have moral implications, and you can go on and on with that, which I won't here. But they do not elucidate for students the moral principles and ethical positions of Muslims, whether an ideal set of normative ones by a specific group, or one that one can see a broader representation of within the faith. They're just not there. Students are not learning about them. They're learning the unintelligible, and the bulleted list is what they're getting. They're not learning to differentiate across social class, cultural regions where that religion spread, differentiate among people of education levels or time periods. I would like, when I discuss these issues with teachers, if they were to start such a conversation with their students that they could come to the conclusion, "We can't really make a lot of generalizations," when they're done with the study, but they will have been exposed to a whole range of points of view.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** We have two more questions, so let's go over here first. Thank you.

**PAT ZAPOR:** I'm Pat Zapor. I'm a reporter with Catholic News Service. And like all Pew Forum and Freedom Forum panels and programs, this is a very welcome assortment of voices and backgrounds. But I've been noticing that, primarily, the people here, the panelists and the participants, are academics, attorneys, administrators, even the few religiously affiliated people on the program seem to be here, like Susan was, more on the basis of some specific research that's very broad as opposed to as an Islamic educator. Could this conversation be held with religion educators here, and would that be a way of dealing with some of the difficulties you've been raising about how we don't have the time, we don't have the resources? Or is this whole separationist, litigious country we're in too difficult a place for that to happen?

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** Would someone on the panel like to respond to that?

**MR. GRELE:** Could I just ask for a clarification? What exactly do you mean by religious educators?

**MS. ZAPOR:** People who are specifically more denominationally religion educators. For instance, Susan or somebody from her organization speaking as an Islamic educator or a Catholic speaking as a Catholic educator, saying, "Here's what you need to be teaching about us."

**MR. GRELE:** So representatives of a variety of religious traditions.

**MS. ZAPOR:** Right. Is there a way that these two types of groups of people could be solving the problem that the public school educators have?

**MS. HAYES:** I think in my earlier remarks I mentioned a synthesis. I think it is not that long ago that scholars tackled again trying to write world history. I don't mean textbook scholars, I mean, well-known, celebrated university scholars. Who can write that? Some brave souls took that on, and I think that you have a point there, if you could bring together some of the best minds academically with a variety of people from different religious traditions that need to be incorporated, and those folks could work on a synthesis that a group like this could then debate and perhaps, at some future point, endorse. To get to the next level beyond the frameworks kind of thing, where you have materials that have a level of dependability, I think that would be extremely helpful to people who are trying to do this in a real world situation.

**MS. FUTRELL:** She always steals my statements. I think of it in terms of history. We want to make sure that we are providing, as best we can, academic history that has been thought through by the best. What do we have in academia to offer? Typically any elementary, secondary curriculum derives its authenticity from what the university academics have said is the best of our thinking. There are a lot of flaws in the way that gets back into the curriculum, as far as matching it with youngsters and how child development takes place, and what is appropriate. Basically, we need that kind of thinking, and it does need to be a synthesis because, for one thing, we can only do so

much. We're already doing too much. Teachers need this; if teachers can be given a framework to work from conceptually, that is the civic aspect of it. Then get the good, sound structure not for a buckshot curriculum, but a real something. Teachers are curriculum; they work with their curriculum. This is their thing. They have to be comfortable with it. I think what we have right now is kind a mush that's complex. We need the synthesis to help us get it together, simplify it, set it in a civic framework that teachers do understand. They know the playing field that they're trying to maintain. They have the goals of our nation and they want to be fair to all. I think that's where they have the best input, but the academics haven't done a good job with the synthesis, and I think we do know more. It's not enough to just bring together believers and non-believers. This is not a good way to get a history curriculum.

**MS. PLUMMER:** I want to make a comment about that, because when we first adopted, back in '89, the social studies program that we're using currently in California for world history, my district did it differently than other districts. (San Diego Unified School District) We had a very powerful instructional leader in history-social science, and so one of the things that we did, that other districts did not do, was there was a panel that was created of people from specific denominations to come in and talk to us, because the curriculum had changed so dramatically. I was literally going from teaching about Canada and Latin America, to the beginning of time to the fall of Rome, and there were many of my colleagues who switched grade levels. They left upper elementary and went to first, second or third grade, and they were so frightened to teach this topic. I did enjoy the panel being there, but I caution because of the lack of information that many teachers have with this subject, that we have to be careful, that teachers might take this panel, this representative Muslim, this representative person of the Jewish faith, and go back and say, "I've got it, I've got this packet. I'm ready to teach."

I would hope that if it's conducted in a way – and certainly not that I'm on the level of Socrates – but I certainly also recognize what I don't know, and it cues me into the more learning. Some people just stop there. I don't know this. I say hmm, I know a little bit about this, I better do a little bit more research so I can do right by my students. That would be my caution with that, because there are teachers grappling with information, that packet ready. One of the things that we say as teachers, when you go to any conference or anything, "The key to a successful session is you leave with a packet that you can use in the classroom tomorrow." That would be my hesitancy for that, but certainly after that conversation, if the stage is set, the teachers understand this is one voice, and it gives them the impetus to go forth, find out, educate themselves and get the correct staff development.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** We've got a lot more questions now, but I think we only have time for two more. If we can ask them in succession, and then we'll get a response, then we need to break so that we're not too far behind today. Yes.

**SHABBIR MANSURI:** I think that was a wonderful question. I'm Shabbir Mansuri, founding director of the Council on Islamic Education. I wanted to make a comment about the question. Initially, when I founded the organization, the issue on the

table was, “Why do you want to call yourself a Council on Islamic Education when you are dealing with public schools? Separation of church and state will not allow you to bring religion into the equation.” My issue that I want to discuss is that the American civic framework that we’re going to use in order to enter our public square does not force me to leave my tradition at the door. I can bring it with me as long as I do not use my own faith-tradition framework as a primary framework. I need to work within the civic framework, then add my, if you will, heritage-framework issues to it, not the other way around.

Second, for clarification, if you will, the report is not known as the Susan Douglass report. She is an author and researcher. That is an institutional report. It should be referred to as CIE-First Amendment Center report.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** One more. In the back there.

**LINDA MCKAY:** Thank you. Linda McKay. I have a comment in answer to your question, “Could representatives from the religious schools join with the public schools to develop a course?” I’m with the U.S. Department of Education now, but prior to that I was out in the field for 15 years developing character education with schools, and my role was the facilitator. One time, this was about eight years ago, one of our inner-city high schools in St. Louis had been named a magnet school in science and technology. Two teachers called me because they wanted to develop a course on ethics in science and technology, and they definitely wanted religion – the study about religion – to be a part of it. So I thought, okay, how are we going to do this? And I brought together a think-tank from our private schools and our Catholic schools and in fact someone said, “Go find a Jesuit. You’ve got to go find a Jesuit to do this.” So we came together as a think-tank, and we absolutely struggled, over about two years, getting this course in place. It’s now a college-accredited course. It’s still taught at this school. I always look back at that as such a special time for me to watch this evolve. It’s the only school that did it, so it didn’t take off across America, but still it really worked and people were willing to struggle for that quality curriculum that you talked about, Kimberly. So there’s one tiny example in America I can share with you where that is the road that we chose, and that’s how we did it, and it turned out we worked together for quite a few years.

**MS. BEAUCHAMP:** I guess that will be our last comment. Would you please join me in thanking our panelists and Susan. (Applause.)