

FIGHTING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Portraits of Hate, Lessons of Hope



Lesson Plan Overview: Un-American Theme

Objectives:

- That the student will recognize characteristics of un-American charges in imagery.
- That the student will be able to identify the reasoning behind said imagery.
- That the student will be able to relate the images to his or her experiences.
- The student will be able to articulate a thoughtful response to the imagery.

Activities:

- Introductory Lecture on un-Americanism as a criticism (notes provided)
- Website Use in Class – Students should select 3-4 Images charging Un-Americanism from the website, and answer each of the questions accompanying their images in 2-3 sentences.

OR

- Worksheet Use – Print Out Copies of the provided worksheets, discuss a basic description of each worksheet briefly as a class, identify the image components and primary criticisms of the targeted group, then have students answer the questions accompanying the image in 2-3 sentences (per question).
- Concluding Class Discussion Questions – What groups were targeted with this theme? Why would opponents of these groups use this theme to criticize them? and How does the historic use of un-Americanism compare with students' perceptions of what it means to be un-American today?

Assessment:

- In class short responses to the images, 2-3 sentences per image
- Participation in Class Discussion about Images

And /Or

- Personal Response Essay, to be done as homework or with set aside in class time. 1-2 Pages, double spaced or hand written. (Possible Rubric Provided)

Background Information on Un-Americanism: The Myth of Americanism in the United States

The Charge: Un-American

- The charge of un-Americanism relies on a specific narrative of what an American is and does.
- Primary assumptions that define “Americans” include:
 - Individuals should be loyal to the state over other institutions.
 - Necessary belief in the separation of Church and State.
- Both these assumptions originate in the creation narrative of the United States.

Challenging the Dominant Narrative

- Americanism depends on the idealization of the Pilgrims as the proto-typical Americans. The myth depends on elements like the following:
 - The Pilgrims severed pre-existing national ties when they immigrated.
 - The congregational brand of Protestantism the Pilgrims practiced was democratic and gave power to individual Congregations.
 - The interaction with the Native Americans led to Thanksgiving.
- But the colonies were far more religiously diverse, and included religious separatists such as the Baptists founded in Rhode Island after Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts, as well as Quakers in Pennsylvania, Catholics in Maryland, and non-Puritan Protestants throughout the colonies.

How these ideas influenced Americanism

- Deism of many of the American founders evident in the Declaration of Independence.
 - Idyllic statements such as ““We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness,” proclaim the equality of all men as endowed by God.
- The Constitution does not rely on the authority of God, but on human reason.
- The tension between the documents evidences the idea that government should not be controlled by religious leaders, but that the citizens hold religious beliefs.

Modern Charges of Un-Americanism

- Un-Americanism leveled against anti-war activists, as well as non-Protestant citizens including Muslims, Mormons, and Catholics.
- Differences between these targets: Opposition to war seen as a criticism of American policies, and opposed to the country’s interests, while the organizational structure and history of various non-Protestants religions are seen as evidence of religious leaders’ desire for political power.
- But how does that reflect on individuals, how should it reflect on individuals?