What Is Religion, and What Role Does It Play in Culture?

- **Religion**: “A system of beliefs and practices that attempts to order life in terms of culturally perceived ultimate priorities”
  - Stoddard and Prorak

- “Perceived ultimate priorities” often
  - Things a follower “should” do
  - Ways a follower “should” behave
Manifestations of Religion

- Worship
- Belief that certain people possess special divinely granted abilities
- Belief in one or more deities
- Practices
  - Ritual and prayer
  - Marking life events
  - Rituals at regular intervals
- Secularism: Decline in organized religious observances
Where Did the Major Religions of the World Originate, and How Do Religions Diffuse?

Concepts of divinity

- **Monotheistic religions**: Worship a single deity
- **Polytheistic religions**: Worship more than one deity, even thousands
- **Animistic religions**: Belief that inanimate objects posses spirits and should be revered
Classification of Religions

• **Universalizing religions:** Religions that actively seek converts because members believe they offer belief systems of universal appropriateness and appeal

• **Ethnic religions:** Religions whose adherents are born into the faith and whose members do not actively seek converts
Hearths of Religion and Philosophy

HEARTHS OF RELIGION

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1000 B.C.E.
Diffusion of Religions

DIFFUSION OF FOUR MAJOR RELIGIONS

C → Christianity  H → Hinduism
I → Islam  B → Buddhism
From the Hearth of South Asia

- Hinduism
  - Originated in Indus River Valley over 4000 years ago
  - Practices and beliefs: Ritual bathing, karma, reincarnation
  - Sacred text: *Vedas*
  - Sacred site: Ganges River
  - Social manifestation: Caste system
  - Diffusion
    - South Asia
    - Southeast Asia
Diffusion of Religions

Diffusion of Four Major Religions

C → Christianity    H → Hinduism
I → Islam           B → Buddhism
From the Hearth of South Asia

• Buddhism –
  – Splintered from Hinduism 2500 years ago
  – Originated in a region from Nepal south to the Ganges River area
  – Beliefs: Anyone can achieve salvation, reach enlightenment
  – Founder: Siddartha (the Buddha)
  – Sacred sites: Stupas
  – Diffusion
    • Tibet in the north
    • East Asia
Diffusion of Religions

DIFFUSION OF FOUR MAJOR RELIGIONS

C → Christianity    H → Hinduism
I → Islam          B → Buddhism
Buddhist stupas in Indonesia

In Japan, Buddhism has mixed with Shinto, which originated in Japan. A Shinto shrine in Kyoto
From the Hearth of Huang He (Yellow) River Valley

• Taoism
  – Originated in China more than 2500 years ago
  – Belief in oneness of humanity and nature
  – Founder: Lao-Tsu (Laozi)
  – Sacred text: *Book of the Way* (*Daode Jing*)
  – Social manifestation: Feng shui
  – Diffusion: East Asia
From the Hearth of Huang He (Yellow) River Valley

- Confucianism
  - Originated in China about 2500 years ago
  - Belief that the real meaning of life lies in the present
  - Founder: Confucius (Kong Fuzi)
  - Sacred text: Confucian Classics
  - Diffusion:
    - East Asia
    - Southeast Asia
From the Hearth of the Eastern Mediterranean

- Judaism
  - Originated in Southwest Asia about 4000 years ago
  - Beliefs
    - First major monotheistic religion,
    - Covenant between God (one God) and Abraham (the chosen people)
  - Sacred text: *Torah*
  - First patriarch, or leader: Abraham
Judaism (continued)

• Sacred sites
  – Jerusalem (Western Wall)
  – Land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River

• Social manifestation: Zionism

• Diffusion
  – European cities during the diaspora
    • Ashkenazim: Central Europe
    • Sephardim: North Africa and Iberian Peninsula
  – North America
  – Return to Israel over last 100 years
From the Hearth of the Eastern Mediterranean

• Christianity
  – Originated in Southwest Asia about 2000 years ago
  – Beliefs
    • Monotheistic religion
    • Follow teachings of Jesus to achieve eternal life
  – Sacred text: Bible
  – Founder: Jesus Christ
Christianity (continued)

- Sacred sites
  - Bethlehem
  - Jerusalem

- Divisions
  - 1054: Split into
    - Eastern Orthodox
    - Roman Catholic
  - 1400s–1500s: Protestants

- Diffusion:
  - Western Europe
  - World wide during colonialism and after
Divisions in Christianity

First division (1054)
Western Roman Empire: Roman Catholic
Eastern Roman Empire: Orthodox
Divisions in Christianity

Catholic and Protestant concentrations in Switzerland
Diffusion of Religions

DIFFUSION OF FOUR MAJOR RELIGIONS

C → Christianity  H → Hinduism
I → Islam  B → Buddhism
From the Hearth of the Eastern Mediterranean

• Islam
  – Originated on Arabian Peninsula about 1500 years ago
  – Beliefs
    • Monotheistic religion
    • Revelations Muhammad received from Allah (God)
    • Five Pillars
  – Sacred text: Qu’ran
  – Founder: Muhammad
Islam (continued)

– Sacred sites
  • Mecca
  • Medina
  • Jerusalem
– Divisions: Shortly after Muhammad’s death
  • Sunni Muslims (great majority)
  • Shi’ite Muslims (concentrated in Iran)
– Diffusion
  • Arabian peninsula
  • Across North Africa, into Spain
  • East to South and Southeast Asia
Indigenous Religions

- Local in scope
- Passed down in families
- Under pressure from global religions
Shamanism

• A community faith tradition

**Shaman**: A religious leader, teacher, healer, and visionary

• Have appeared in
  – Africa
  – Native America
  – Southeast Asia
  – East Asia

• Lack elaborate organization
Secularism

- Indifference to or rejection of organized religious affiliations and ideas
- The case of the Soviet Union
  - Had an official policy of atheism
  - Discouraged religious practice
  - Drew boundaries for political control that separated ethnic groups in small areas (Armenia and Azerbaijan)
  - Revival of religion after fall of communism
How Is Religion Seen in the Cultural Landscape?

• **Sacred sites**: Places or spaces people infuse with religious meaning

• **Pilgrimage**: Purposeful travel to a religious site to pay respects or participate in a ritual
Sacred Sites of Jerusalem
Sacred to three major religions

- Judaism (Western Wall)
- Christianity (Church of the Holy Sepulchre)
- Islam (Dome of the Rock)
Sacred Landscapes of Hinduism

Pilgrimages along prescribed routes, and rituals by millions

Varanasi, India on the Ganges River where Hindus perform morning rituals
Sacred Landscapes of Buddhism

Swedogon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar

Eight hairs of the Buddha are preserved under the dome (chedi)
Sacred Landscapes of Christianity

Catholic churches are often located in the center of European cities, with spires reaching far above other buildings.
Sacred Landscapes of Christianity

Protestant Churches

This church in Singapore is a Church of England church in a city surrounded by Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims.
Religious Distribution in the United States

MAJOR RELIGIOUS REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

After Zelinsky

- New England (Catholic)
- Pennsylvania German (Lutheran)
- Midland (Mixed)
- Upper Midwest (Lutheran)
- Southern (Baptist)
- Peninsular Florida (Mixed)
- French Catholic
- Southwest (Spanish Catholic)
- Mormon
- Western (Mixed)
- Catholic Concentrations
Sacred Landscapes of Islam

Muslim Mosques

Dome of this mosque in Isfahan, Iran, demonstrates the importance of geometric art evident in Muslim architecture.
What Role Does Religion Play in Political Conflicts?

- **Interfaith boundaries**: Boundaries between the world’s major faiths

- **Intrafaith boundaries**: Boundaries within a single major faith
Interfaith Boundary in Africa
Israel and Palestine

• British mandate of Palestine
• Partition of Palestine by United Nations
  – Israeli state
  – Palestinian state
• 1967: Israeli control over West Bank, Gaza
• 2005: Withdrawal from Gaza
• Control over movement
• Multitude of interfaith boundaries
The Horn of Africa

- Amharic (Coptic) Christianity in central Ethiopia
- Islam in the Horn of Africa by diffusion
- Indigenous religions in pockets
The Former Yugoslavia

- Genocide
- Ethnic Cleansing
The Former Yugoslavia

[Map of the Former Yugoslavia showing various territories and communities, including Serb-dominated areas, Muslim-dominated areas, and Muslim Kosovo.]
Northern Ireland

Identities tied to religion deepened by
- Economics
- Colonial experiences
- Activity spaces (segregation)
Religious Fundamentalism and Extremism

• Religious fundamentalism
  – A return to the basics of a faith
  – Found worldwide
• Religious extremism: Fundamentalism carried to the point of violence.
• Impact of globalization
  – Increased conservative reaction
  – Increased liberalism and accommodation
Fundamentalism in Christianity

• Catholicism
  – Birth control, abortion, and family planning
  – Role of women
  – Sects that continue to use Latin in services

• Protestantism
  – Literal interpretation of the Bible
  – Opposition to abortion
  – Opposition to gay marriage
  – Political influence
Fundamentalism in Judaism

• **Orthodox Judaism**
  – Most conservative
  – Includes several varieties

• **Kach and Kahane Chai**
  – Followers of Rabbi Meir Kahane
  – Anti-Arabism
Fundamentalism in Islam

• Shari’a law
• Rule by ayatollahs in Iran
• Rule by Taliban in Afghanistan
• Jihad
  – Wahhabi Islam (hearth in Saudi Arabia)
  – Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda