

Undergraduate Religion Lesson Plan

Religious Texts and Communication during the Ebola Epidemic

Time: 75 minutes

Overview

Students will explore the faith-based methods of communication about the Ebola epidemic in West Africa from 2013 to 2016, especially the involvement of religious and spiritual texts and leaders in the containment of the West Africa Ebola virus outbreak, and their impact on the communication of the dangers of the virus.

Objectives

At the end of this module, students should be able to

- List the two major religious texts used to support safe practices in Sierra Leone;
- Give examples of the measures for which the texts were used as a means of support;
- Analyze at least one interview or multimedia work about communications regarding the Ebola virus;
- Compare and contrast the work of traditional healers and community leaders with that of faith leaders in the containment of the Ebola virus in West Africa; within the various cultures of the region.

Competencies

- Critical thinking
- Global awareness
- Knowledge

Condition

In-person best, but online also possible.

Criteria for Success

identification of texts, measures; analysis of multimedia or interview; comparison of the work done by healers and faith leaders

Materials

devices with Internet access; Ebola digital exhibit, module 4 (“Communication and Participation”); headphones/earbuds for audiovisual learning; Bible and Quran, already marked with the pages and verses examined in the module. (If online, links to those passages should be used instead.)

Procedure

11:00-11:10: Ease students into discussion of faith and health in terms of religious texts: how they’re used to support and defend arguments, as well as demolish them.

11:10-11:20: Ask students what they know about Ebola during 2014 and 2015 with regard to religion in general; and the issues of safe and dignified burial practices, fear and stigma, and religious texts used as a common understanding, in particular. Discuss as needed.

11:20-11:30: Bring out and pass around the Bible and Quran; continue the discussion with the students as necessary. Discuss the implications of those certain passages and why and how they might have been chosen. Collect the texts. (If online, link students to the passages and give them time to read said passages.)

11:30-11:35: Direct students to the Ebola digital exhibit around the communication and participation in fighting the epidemic, with special emphasis around the matters regarding faith and religion.

11:35-11:50: Allow students time to digest and understand the content. Help as needed but give them time to read and comprehend the texts and interviews featured.

11:50-12:10: Discuss with students the implications and the effects of using those religious texts, and the certain passages; and how they relate to the work done by faith leaders in the community. Examine the communication done with those passages: effective or not? What changes might one make, if any? Why? Ask about the use of faith/traditional healers, and how the two might be differentiated, or otherwise differ, from each other. Explore the interviews, too: and how the interviewed people act and react.

12:10-12:15: Wrap-up discussion if necessary. Discuss assignment.

Assignment

Create a mock part of a multimedia or social media campaign around the communication of health matters in religious terms. In particular, this might include, say, the chapter of Leviticus (Lev 13), but acted out as a skit, for instance. This, however, should not be seen as a major project — only one part of the campaign is needed: one video, one social media post, and so on.

[CANNOT BE MOCK INTERVIEW, unless the person being interviewed was in the area during that time; if so, the interview transcript is also needed.]