CHAPTER 13: EDUCATION AND RELIGION

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom)  SAT Scores

Annotation: College Board scores are seen as one of the best indicators of academic ability. Math scores are improving, particularly girls' math scores. This reflects the fact that girls are taking more math and science courses. Average verbal scores remain well below the scores of 25 years ago, however. A smaller number of students take four years of high school English today which may contribute to these lower scores. In addition, the 300,000 students who take advanced placement exams perform better in grades, honors, and leadership

Learning Objective: To develop awareness of the changes in educational achievement (as measured by SAT scores) over the last 30 years, and the societal changes associated with these changes.

Faculty Note: The exercise below adds important details to this pattern of changing SAT scores. It focuses on the changes in scores of male and female students, and the factors that may have influenced these changes. It is also noteworthy that SAT scores were recalibrated several years ago to reflect higher scores for the same level of ability.

Activity: Have students watch the video, "SAT Scores." Then have them research SAT scores in several states using "College Board SAT Scores" as the key words in a search engine and the article SAT Math Scores Reach 30 Year High found in the CNN Student News at http://www.cnn.com/2002/fyi/teachers.ednews/08/27/sat.scores/.

Based on the information found, what conclusions can be reached regarding SAT scores today compared to the SAT scores prior to the mid-90s?

Additional Resources: The Department of Education for the state of Delaware has a press release regarding their SAT scores at http://www.doe.state.de.us/aab/Del_SAT_release_1999.pdf There is also useful information to consider in a Fairtest press release found at http://www.fairtest.org/pr/satact98.htm The National Education Association also has a considerable amount of information on SAT scores and the progress states have made to improve them.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom)  Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Annotation: Nicki, a seventh grader with a learning disability, is shown in this video. Nicki is enrolled in regular and special education classes, a practice called "inclusion." It is important to include children with disabilities in regular school classes, both to help them learn social skills and independence and to encourage children without disabilities to shed their stereotypes of disabled people.

Learning Objective: To reflect on personal experiences in school with classmates who have disabilities, attitudes toward those classmates, and advantages and disadvantages of including children with disabilities in regular classes.

Faculty Note: Most college students will have had some classmates with disabilities. The exercise below asks them to reflect on the meaning of these experiences to the disabled classmates and themselves. This exercise extends the text's application of the symbolic interactionist perspective to education. This video clip is a part of the "Premium Resource CD Rom" provided to instructors upon request.

Activity: Have students watch the video, "Inclusion of Children with Disabilities." Lead a discussion of students' experiences with disabled children in their own classes. Encourage them to talk about their contacts with these classmates and the way these contacts have shaped their attitudes toward people with disabilities.

Additional Resources: EdTherapy.com http://www.edtherapy.com/ is an Internet resource for anyone involved with the diagnosis and educational planning of students with learning disabilities.
Web Link  Education World

Annotation: Education World's Diversity Center aggregates the latest content, articles and resources to help educators understand diversity issues in their schools and lives.

Learning Objective: To develop an appreciation of the complex consequences of changing educational policies.

Faculty Note: "Social promotion" is universally lamented because this practice results in graduating poorly educated students. The exercise below presents students with the complex results of a large-scale effort to eliminate social promotion in Chicago schools. It should sensitize them to the possibility of unanticipated consequences of such policy changes.

Activity: Have students click on the web link, "Education World." Then have them click on "Diversity in Ed" which is at the bottom of the page under “Article Archives” and then on "Ending Social Promotion--Does it Work in Chicago?--9/29/2000" which is under "Assessment and Promotion”. Have students read the article and write a paper summarizing the advantages and disadvantages of ending social promotion that were found in Chicago.


The Video Professor  October Sky

Annotation: October Sky is a 1999 film based on the true story of NASA engineer Homer Hickam Jr. The film traces Hickam’s inspiration to become a rocket engineer after he experienced the Soviet’s launching of Sputnik in 1957. It demonstrates a student’s passion for science and how he overcame numerous challenges to realize his boyhood dreams and career aspirations.

Learning Objective: To examine how dreams can come true through hard academic effort and overcoming the challenges that are presented in achieving them.

Faculty Note: October Sky is available for rental at movie houses and may also be available at the university library or a local public library. The instructor should advise the class that at the same time this film is set (the late 50’s and early 60’s) there was a common fascination among students in junior and senior high schools about the space race, launching rockets, and becoming an astronaut. The author of this Teaching Tool did his share of experimentation with homemade rockets using various “fuels” that included zinc dust and match heads. There were also experiments conducted with hot air balloons and the viewing and photographing of the stars and planets with a homemade telescope.

Activity: Have the students write an essay that examines the following questions: (1) Are there similar inspirations that Hickam experienced in 1957 motivating students today? If so, elaborate on one. If you feel there are no such motivators, explain why. (2) What motivates college students more today, a desire for a top quality education or a desire to be awarded a degree? Defend your answer.

Additional Resources: There is a review of October Sky from the Chicago Sun Times at http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1999/02/021902.html and additional information on the movie can be found at http://movieweb.com/movie/octobersky/ Homer Hickam Jr. has his own web site at http://www.homerhickam.com/new1.htm

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD ROM)  School Prayer

Annotation: The separation of church and state was one of the fundamental issues addressed by the fledgling government of the United States as it drafted its Constitution in 1787. Today, some Americans believe this
distinction between church and state justifies forbidding school prayer and even a private moment of silence before classes begin in which students can use the quiet moments for any purpose they please.

Learning Objective: To examine the school prayer issue from a number of perspectives.

Faculty Note: There are several sides to the issue of school prayer. One is that it infringes upon the rights of citizens who fail to embrace religion. Another is that the absence of school prayer is associated with the breakdown in discipline in schools. The debate over the phrase “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance is at the forefront of the same controversy.

Activity: Begin by examining the Constitution of the United States, specifically the first amendment. A copy of the Constitution can be found at [http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitutionoverview.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitutionoverview.html). Then specifically address the issues addressed in the video clip regarding school prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the other issues raised by the speakers. Are the arguments made by the speakers in the video clip consistent with the content of the first amendment? To what degree does the emotion of the speakers influence their effectiveness? Do you think starting the school day with a silent prayer would help improve discipline and reduce violence? Why or why not?


Interactive Map

Annotation: Refer to Henslin’s site at [http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_henslin_sociology_6/0.5241.210302-00.html](http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_henslin_sociology_6/0.5241.210302-00.html) then click on Interactive Maps in the left column. Pick *Religions of the World*. This color-coded world map indicates the majority religion (Christianity, Shinto, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or no religion) of each continent. Clicking on a continent brings up a window with the number of adherents of the major religions residing on that continent. Two questions are asked about the distribution of religions.

Learning Objective: To explore one’s own religious beliefs in relation to the belief systems of the world’s major religions.

Faculty Note: The exercise below engages students in an examination of their own religious beliefs in relation to the belief systems of the world’s major religions. They take an on-line quiz about their beliefs, and receive a score on which their beliefs are compared to the belief systems of each of the world’s major religions.

Activity: Have students click on the Interactive Map, "Religions of the World," and explore the distribution of religions around the world. Then have them go to "Select Smart.com Religion Selector" and take the on-line quiz found at [http://www.selectsmart.com/RELIGION/](http://www.selectsmart.com/RELIGION/) They will immediately receive a score (0-100) reflecting the degree to which their beliefs conform to the belief systems of 26 of the major religions. By clicking on the name of each religion, they can learn more about it. Lead a class discussion about students’ beliefs in relation to beliefs of other religions.

Additional Resources: The "First Electronic Church of America” web site offers a view of an interesting, alternative set of religious beliefs [http://www.webstationone.com/fecha/default.htm](http://www.webstationone.com/fecha/default.htm)

Web Link

Annotation: According to Arlen Wolpert, throughout history most religions have been generated by a single individual who has had a peak experience. Over the years and centuries those religions were then gradually conditioned and tamed by social forces, were compromised, and then degenerated into their present form that poorly represents the greatness of their originators. The “general theory of religion” focuses on the generative, not degenerative, aspect of religion by examining Wolpert’s specific religious experience.

Learning Objective: To develop an understanding of the experiences that urges some people to adopt specific religious beliefs.
Faculty Note: Arlen Wolpert, the author of this article, identifies himself as an "independent scholar." He asserts that accepting any set of religious beliefs involves a metaphorical journey that consists of four predictable steps: a crisis period, a test by God, knowledge of God, and return to a life of faith.

Activity: Have students click on the Web Link, "A Meditation on Mystical Union Using System Dynamics," and read Arlen Wolpert's article. Have them write a paper in which they summarize the steps in the journey Wolpert describes. If your students are sufficiently mature in their religious beliefs, lead a discussion about whether Wolpert's description of the journey to a religious life conforms to their own experiences.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom) Return to Religion

Annotation: Only one-quarter of Americans assert that religion plays an important part in their lives. Pastor McDonald of Grace Chapel in Lexington asserts that families are returning to religion because they need help. Churches that were once aloof refocused their efforts to help people in need. A married couple says they joined the church to get help with their marriages and child rearing. Other people join the church for help with other problems. Churches provide positive, adult role models for children involved in church-based scouting programs and after school childcare for other children. The video is followed by two questions about the needs that churches meet.

Learning Objective: To distinguish between the religious and secular functions met by religious organizations.

Faculty Note: People look to religious organizations to fulfill a variety of needs. Some of those needs can only be met by religion; others could be met by secular institutions. The exercise below will help students understand these different needs, and how religious organizations fulfill secular needs. This video clip is a part of the “Premium Resource CD Rom” provided to instructors upon request.

Activity: Have students view the video "Returning to Religion," and make a list of the personal needs that church membership fulfills. Then have them analyze their lists of needs, identifying those needs that could be met by secular organizations. Lead a discussion of the reasons why religious organizations have come to fill essentially secular needs in our society.

Additional Resources: The Council for Secular Humanism http://www.secularhumanism.org/intro/index.htm provides an alternative to fulfilling some of the needs met by traditional religious beliefs and organizations.

The Video Professor The Apostle

Annotation: The Apostle is a movie about a Pentecostal minister who goes on the lam after committing a violent crime. He settles in a small southern town where he brings the word of Jesus to a flock of poor local residents isolated from the mainstream of society.

Learning Objective: To illustrate how religion can include both a sacred and secular component and the importance religion plays in the daily lives of many people.

Faculty Note: The Apostle was written, produced, and directed by Robert Duvall. The movie should be available from most movie houses, or may be available from the university library, or a local public library.

Activity: After viewing the film, have the students write an essay that examines the secular role religion played in the lives of the congregation. In addition, have them answer the following questions about the film: How did Duvall’s church fulfill the functionalist perspective of religion? Which type of religious group does his organization qualify for the most (cult, sect, church. ecclesia)?