

New Global Learning



Identity, Culture, Religion, and
Border Crossings

Identity, Culture, Religion, and Border Crossings

Building an appreciation for diversity and the capacity for solidarity, creating the space for young peoples to see how their own identities are related to currents of power and privilege.

Introduction:

In a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, it is important for young people to develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, religions, and identities. This module explores the complex interplay between these concepts and the ways in which they intersect with power and privilege. By engaging with these issues, students will develop the capacity for solidarity with others who may have different backgrounds and perspectives.

The module is structured around three key themes: identity, culture, and religion. Each theme will be explored through the lens of border crossings, which can take many different forms, including physical borders, cultural boundaries, and social hierarchies. Through a series of interactive activities, discussions, and reflective exercises, students will explore questions such as:

- What factors shape our identities, and how do these identities intersect with power and privilege?
- What is culture, and how do different cultural practices shape our experiences of the world?
- What role does religion play in shaping individual and collective identities, and how does it intersect with other forms of power and privilege?
- How do border crossings, both physical and symbolic, impact our identities, cultures, and religions?
- How can we develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of diversity, and use this understanding to promote social justice and solidarity?

Throughout the module, students will be encouraged to reflect on their own identities and experiences, and to consider how these are shaped by the world around them. By engaging with these complex issues in a thoughtful and empathetic way, students will develop a deeper understanding of the world, and a greater capacity for solidarity and social justice.

KEY ISSUES and CONCEPTS:

a. Key issues: (The main questions addressed in this module include)

- How do different factors, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, shape our identities, and how do these identities intersect with power and privilege?
- How do cultural practices and beliefs shape our experiences of the world, and how can we develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity?
- How does religion intersect with other forms of power and privilege, and how can we create spaces for interfaith dialogue and understanding?
- How do border crossings, both physical and symbolic, impact our identities, cultures, and religions, and how can we promote social justice and solidarity across these boundaries?
- How can we build a more inclusive and equitable society, and what role do young people play in this process?

b. Key concepts: (The following concepts are central to the module)

- Identity: the characteristics, beliefs, and values that define an individual or group of individuals.
- Culture: the shared practices, beliefs, and values of a community, including its language, art, and traditions.
- Religion: a system of beliefs and practices that provide individuals with a sense of purpose and connection to a higher power.
- Power: the ability to influence others and shape the world around us.
- Privilege: unearned advantages or benefits that are granted to some individuals or groups based on their social identities.
- Intersectionality: the idea that social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, intersect and interact with each other to shape individuals' experiences and opportunities.
- Solidarity: a sense of shared purpose and commitment to promoting social justice and equality.
- Border crossings: the movement of individuals across physical or symbolic boundaries, which can have profound effects on identity, culture, and religion.
- Diversity: the presence of a range of different social identities, perspectives, and experiences.
- Inclusion: the active and intentional process of creating spaces that welcome and value diversity, and that promote equity and social justice.

CONTENT BLOCKS:

a. POVERTY

1. Definition

Poverty is a condition characterized by a lack of basic resources, including food, shelter, clothing, and access to education and healthcare. Poverty can be caused by a range of factors, including economic inequality, political instability, and social exclusion. Poverty is often measured in terms of income or consumption, and the threshold for poverty varies by country and region.

2. Evolution/historical background

Poverty has been a persistent problem throughout human history, but its causes and solutions have evolved over time. In the early modern period, poverty was often attributed to personal moral failings or divine punishment, and charity was seen as the primary solution. In the 19th century, the rise of industrial capitalism and urbanization led to new forms of poverty, and social reformers began to advocate for government intervention and social safety nets. In the mid-20th century, the concept of development emerged as a key strategy for addressing poverty, and aid programs and international organizations were created to support economic growth and social progress in the global South.

3. Empirical evidence:

There are many examples of poverty around the world, but some of the most severe cases are found in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line, and access to basic services such as healthcare and education is often limited. In India, despite rapid economic growth in recent years, millions of people still live in extreme poverty, and inequality remains a major challenge. In Latin America, poverty is often linked to social exclusion and discrimination against indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

To address poverty, a range of approaches have been developed, including social safety nets, microfinance programs, and targeted aid initiatives. One notable example is the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight global development targets adopted by the United Nations in 2000, which included reducing extreme poverty and hunger, improving education and healthcare, and promoting gender equality. While progress has been made in some areas, many of these goals remain unmet, and poverty and inequality continue to be major challenges in many parts of the world.

4. Development Definition

Development refers to the process of economic and social progress, including improvements in living standards, healthcare, education, and other key indicators. Development is often seen as a means of

addressing poverty and inequality, and is typically measured in terms of economic growth and human development indicators such as the Human Development Index.

5. Evolution/historical background

The concept of development emerged in the mid-20th century as a key strategy for addressing poverty and promoting social progress in the global South. This was driven in part by the decolonization movement, which highlighted the economic and social inequalities that had been perpetuated by colonialism. International aid programs and development organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were created to support economic growth and social progress in developing countries.

However, the development model has been criticized for its emphasis on economic growth at the expense of social and environmental concerns, as well as its reliance on top-down approaches and external actors. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of local knowledge, participation, and empowerment in the development process, and a shift toward more community-driven and sustainable approaches.

6. Empirical evidence:

There are many examples of development initiatives and projects around the world, ranging from large-scale infrastructure projects to community-led initiatives. One notable example is the UN Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, which aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and promote prosperity and well-being for all. These goals include targets

b. AID

1. Definition:

Aid refers to the provision of resources, such as money, food, or equipment, to countries or communities in need, usually by wealthier countries, international organizations, or non-governmental organizations. Aid can be provided for various purposes, including disaster relief, development projects, or poverty reduction.

2. Evolution/historical background:

The provision of aid has a long history, dating back to ancient civilizations. However, modern aid programs emerged after World War II, with the creation of organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank. During the Cold War, aid became an important tool of foreign policy for Western countries, who used it to promote their interests and values in developing countries. Since the 1990s,

there has been a growing focus on aid effectiveness, with a shift towards more targeted and results-oriented aid programs.

3. Empirical evidence:

The effectiveness of aid has been a subject of debate and controversy. While aid can provide important resources to countries in need, it can also have negative effects, such as creating dependency and distorting local economies. Case studies have shown that aid can be successful in achieving its objectives when it is well-targeted, aligned with recipient country priorities, and accompanied by strong institutional support. However, there have also been instances of aid being misused or wasted, highlighting the importance of accountability and transparency in aid programs.

Overall, aid has the potential to be an important tool for promoting development and reducing poverty, but it needs to be carefully designed and implemented to achieve its intended goals.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The topic of identity, culture, religion, and border crossings is constantly evolving, with new developments and challenges arising all the time. Here are a few recent news stories that illustrate some of the current issues and debates in this area:

1. Global Refugee Crisis:

The world is currently experiencing a massive refugee crisis, with millions of people displaced from their homes due to war, conflict, and persecution. This has led to debates around immigration policy and the responsibilities of host countries towards refugees.

The global refugee crisis is a complex and pressing issue that continues to receive international attention. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide has steadily increased over the past decade, reaching a new record of 82.4 million in 2020. Of these, 26.4 million were refugees, while the rest were asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons.

The causes of forced displacement vary, but often include conflicts, persecution, and human rights violations. Many of those who are forced to flee their homes face significant challenges and dangers, including discrimination, exploitation, and violence. They often require urgent assistance, including shelter, food, water, and medical care.

Addressing the global refugee crisis requires a collaborative and coordinated response from the international community. This includes providing adequate resources for humanitarian aid, supporting efforts to resolve conflicts and prevent further displacement, and promoting policies that protect the rights and well-being of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

Despite these efforts, the global refugee crisis remains a significant challenge. Ongoing conflicts and political instability continue to drive displacement, while the COVID-19

pandemic has further compounded the challenges faced by refugees and other displaced persons. As such, the need for continued attention and action on this issue remains urgent.

2. Islamophobia and the War on Terror:

The events of 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks have led to a rise in Islamophobia and a targeting of Muslim communities. This has been exacerbated by the War on Terror and the actions of some Western governments.

Islamophobia is a term used to describe prejudice and discrimination against Muslims and Islam. This form of prejudice has become particularly prominent in the context of the "War on Terror," a global conflict that began after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Following the attacks, the US and its allies launched military operations in Afghanistan and later Iraq, citing the need to combat terrorism and protect national security. However, these actions have also been criticized for contributing to the stigmatization of Muslims and perpetuating Islamophobia.

Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim have often been subjected to discrimination, harassment, and violence in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. For example, hate crimes against Muslims in the US rose sharply following the attacks, and Muslims have also faced discriminatory policies, including travel bans and surveillance.

Critics argue that the "War on Terror" has been used to justify actions that violate human rights and perpetuate prejudice, particularly against Muslims. They argue that the focus on combating terrorism has often been used to target Muslim communities, both in the US and abroad, without adequate consideration for the broader societal implications.

Addressing Islamophobia and its roots requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, advocacy, and policy change. This includes efforts to challenge stereotypes and misinformation about Islam and Muslims, promote interfaith dialogue and understanding, and advocate for policies that promote diversity and inclusion. It also requires holding governments accountable for their actions and policies, particularly in the context of the "War on Terror."

3. Indigenous Rights:

The ongoing struggle for indigenous rights and recognition continues around the world, with issues such as land rights, cultural preservation, and environmental protection at the forefront.

Indigenous rights refer to the rights of Indigenous peoples, who are often the original inhabitants of a particular geographic region. These rights include the right to self-determination, cultural preservation, and participation in decision-making processes that affect their communities.

Indigenous peoples have historically faced significant challenges and injustices, including colonization, forced displacement, and cultural assimilation. These experiences have contributed to ongoing struggles for recognition and respect of Indigenous rights.

Efforts to address Indigenous rights have taken place at both national and international levels. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, is a key international instrument that outlines the rights of Indigenous peoples and provides a framework for their protection and promotion.

However, the implementation of Indigenous rights remains a significant challenge in many countries. Indigenous communities continue to face discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion from political processes and decision-making. They also often lack access to basic services and resources, including health care, education, and clean water.

Addressing Indigenous rights requires a concerted effort to recognize and respect the unique identities and cultures of Indigenous peoples, and to work collaboratively to address historical and ongoing injustices. This includes engaging in meaningful dialogue and consultation with Indigenous communities, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes, and taking concrete steps to address the social and economic disparities they face.

4. LGBTQ+ Rights:

While progress has been made in some countries towards LGBTQ+ equality, there are still many places where discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity are prevalent.

LGBTQ+ rights refer to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender and sexual minorities. These rights include the right to equality, non-discrimination, and freedom from violence and persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Historically, LGBTQ+ individuals have faced significant challenges and injustices, including legal discrimination, social stigma, and violence. These experiences have contributed to ongoing struggles for recognition and respect of LGBTQ+ rights, also these takes from the official statistics of Human rights watch (<https://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights>).

Efforts to address LGBTQ+ rights have taken place at both national and international levels. Many countries have enacted laws and policies to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, including laws prohibiting discrimination and hate crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, in many parts of the world, LGBTQ+ individuals still face significant legal, social, and cultural barriers to full equality.

Addressing LGBTQ+ rights requires a concerted effort to recognize and respect the unique identities and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, and to work collaboratively to address discrimination and injustice. This includes engaging in meaningful dialogue and education about LGBTQ+ issues, advocating for legal and policy changes to protect LGBTQ+ rights, and promoting cultural acceptance and celebration of diversity.

5. Cultural Appropriation:

The issue of cultural appropriation has been in the spotlight recently, with debates around the use of indigenous cultural symbols and practices in mainstream culture.

Cultural appropriation refers to the act of taking elements from one culture and using them inappropriately or without proper understanding or respect for the culture they come from.

Cultural appropriation is a contentious issue, as it can involve the misuse of cultural elements that have deep significance and meaning to a particular community. For example, wearing a Native American headdress as a fashion accessory, without any understanding of its cultural significance or permission from the community, is often considered an act of cultural appropriation.

Cultural appropriation can also have broader implications, such as perpetuating harmful stereotypes or contributing to the erasure of marginalized cultures. It can also be seen as a symptom of larger power imbalances, where dominant cultures take from minority cultures without giving proper credit or recognition.

Addressing cultural appropriation requires a concerted effort to understand and respect the cultural significance of different elements, and to work collaboratively to promote cultural exchange that is grounded in mutual understanding and respect. This includes engaging in meaningful dialogue and education about different cultures, recognizing and acknowledging cultural ownership and intellectual property rights, and promoting cultural exchange that is grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

6. Border Policies:

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to new border policies and restrictions around the world, highlighting issues around freedom of movement, immigration policy, and border control. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on border policies around the world. Many countries have closed their borders or imposed strict travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus. While these policies may have been necessary from a public health perspective, they have also highlighted larger issues around freedom of movement, immigration policy, and border control.

One of the most significant issues has been the impact of these policies on migrants and refugees. Many individuals who were in the process of seeking asylum or resettlement have been left stranded or denied entry due to border closures. This has led to a humanitarian crisis as many of these individuals are stuck in precarious situations with limited access to resources and support.

Another issue has been the impact on international trade and supply chains. As countries have closed their borders and restricted travel, it has become more difficult to move goods and services across borders. This has had significant economic implications, with many businesses and industries experiencing disruptions and losses.

The pandemic has also highlighted the uneven distribution of power and privilege in border policies. Some countries have been able to implement strict border control measures while others have been more lax. This has raised questions about who has the power to control borders and who is impacted by these policies.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to the complex issues around border policies and the need for a more nuanced and equitable approach to border control and immigration policy.

These current affairs demonstrate the ongoing importance and relevance of the topic of identity, culture, religion, and border crossings, and the need for continued engagement and discussion around these issues

SUMMARY:

Based on the exploration of identity, culture, religion, and border crossings, as well as the examination of key issues and concepts, the following are the main findings and lessons learned:

1. Diversity is an essential aspect of human experience and should be celebrated and respected. Differences in identity, culture, and religion can enrich societies and provide opportunities for growth and learning. It is important to recognize that everyone has a unique identity, shaped by their cultural and religious backgrounds, and that this diversity should be valued and celebrated. Promoting cross-cultural understanding and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect can help break down barriers and promote social harmony.
2. Power and privilege play a significant role in shaping border policies and practices. It is essential to recognize these dynamics and work towards a more equitable and just approach to border control and immigration policy. This involves acknowledging the impact of historical and ongoing colonization, racism, and discrimination, and working to address these issues through policy reform and education. It also requires a commitment to upholding human rights and treating all individuals with dignity and respect.
3. Prejudices and stereotypes about individuals or groups can have a detrimental impact on their lives and experiences. Education and awareness-raising efforts are crucial in combating these prejudices and promoting understanding and empathy. This involves challenging stereotypes and biases, and promoting intercultural exchange and dialogue. It also requires a willingness to listen to and learn from diverse perspectives, and to reflect on one's own assumptions and biases.
4. The global refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in addressing complex issues related to border crossings and migration. This involves working together to provide safe and humane conditions for refugees and migrants, supporting the integration of newcomers into their host communities, and addressing the root causes of displacement, such as conflict, poverty, and climate change. It also requires a recognition of the shared humanity of all individuals, regardless of their national or ethnic background.

5. The rights of marginalized and oppressed communities, such as Indigenous peoples and LGBTQ+ individuals, must be recognized and protected in border policies and practices. This includes upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and land sovereignty, and recognizing the unique cultural and spiritual connections they have to their ancestral lands. It also involves promoting the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to live free from discrimination and violence, and creating safe and inclusive spaces for all individuals.
6. Cultural appropriation is a form of exploitation and erasure that perpetuates harmful stereotypes and undermines the contributions of marginalized communities. Efforts must be made to understand and respect cultural differences and promote cultural exchange in a way that is ethical and respectful. This involves acknowledging the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism and cultural genocide, and working to support the cultural revitalization and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. It also requires a commitment to promoting cross-cultural understanding and respectful engagement, and to recognizing the unique contributions of diverse cultures to the human experience.

Overall, the exploration of identity, culture, religion, and border crossings highlights the importance of recognizing and celebrating diversity, promoting social justice and equity, and working towards a more inclusive and compassionate world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Use these questions as jumping off points for discussions and debates with your students. You can use the Lower Parliament Model (see Globalisation and Wealth for a description), or a roundtable debate.

1. **What is the relationship between identity and power? How can understanding this relationship help us navigate complex issues like cultural appropriation and indigenous rights?**

Identity and power are closely intertwined, as the way we see ourselves and others can have significant impacts on our relationships and interactions with others. Understanding this relationship is crucial for navigating complex issues like cultural appropriation and indigenous rights. Cultural appropriation, for example, occurs when individuals or groups borrow elements from another culture without permission or proper understanding, often reinforcing harmful stereotypes and power imbalances. Indigenous rights, on the other hand, center around the need to recognize and respect the sovereignty and cultural heritage of indigenous communities, whose identity is often threatened by colonialism, racism, and displacement. By understanding the relationship between identity and power, we can learn to recognize and challenge oppressive structures, promote cultural understanding and respect, and work towards greater equity and justice for all.

2. **How do religion and culture shape our understanding of the world and our interactions with others? How can we learn to appreciate diversity without falling into stereotypes and prejudices?**

Religion and culture play a significant role in shaping our worldview and influencing our interactions with others. They provide us with a sense of identity, belonging, and meaning, and help us make sense of the world around us. However, they can also lead to stereotypes and prejudices when we fail to appreciate and understand diversity. To learn

to appreciate diversity, we need to engage in meaningful dialogue and learn about different cultures and religions. This can help us challenge our assumptions and stereotypes, recognize our biases, and promote empathy and understanding across differences.

3. What are some of the challenges facing LGBTQ+ communities in different parts of the world? How can we support these communities and promote their rights?

LGBTQ+ communities face significant challenges in different parts of the world, including discrimination, violence, and legal barriers. In some countries, homosexuality is still considered a criminal offense, and LGBTQ+ individuals may face harassment, arrest, or imprisonment. To support these communities and promote their rights, we need to challenge discriminatory laws and practices, provide safe spaces and support networks, and promote education and awareness about LGBTQ+ issues. This can include advocating for legal protections, providing resources for mental health and support, and engaging in activism and advocacy efforts.

4. How have border policies changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What are some of the ethical and practical implications of these changes?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in border policies around the world, including restrictions on travel, quarantine requirements, and increased surveillance measures. While these measures are intended to control the spread of the virus, they have raised important ethical and practical questions around issues like freedom of movement, immigration policy, and border control. For example, some argue that these policies have unfairly targeted certain groups of people, such as refugees or migrant workers, and have further entrenched existing inequalities and power imbalances. To address these issues, we need to engage in critical reflection and dialogue about the implications of border policies, advocate for policies that promote human rights and dignity, and work towards greater global cooperation and solidarity.

5. What role can aid play in promoting development and reducing poverty? How can we ensure that aid is used effectively and reaches those who need it most?

Aid can play an important role in promoting development and reducing poverty by providing resources and support to communities in need. However, it is important to ensure that aid is used effectively and reaches those who need it most, as there are many challenges and risks associated with aid distribution. These can include corruption, bureaucracy, and cultural misunderstandings. To ensure that aid is used effectively, we need to engage in meaningful partnerships with local communities, promote transparency and accountability in aid distribution, and prioritize long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty.