

What is religion?

Religion is hard to define because it looks different in different places and to different people. Not all religions are the same or practiced in the same way. The word religion comes from an old Latin word, but not everyone uses that word to describe their beliefs. People in different parts of the world may think about religion in very different ways. Sometimes, people try to explain all religions using ideas from the Western world (like Europe or America), but that doesn't always work. This can make religion seem simpler than it really is. In truth, religion is messy and complicated. People and communities might follow a religion, but they don't always do it in the same way. One person might pray a lot, another might focus on helping others, and someone else might just feel connected to their faith in quiet ways. Religion can be about many things—like believing in a god or gods, doing special rituals, trying to be a good person, having deep feelings, or being part of a group. Everyone shows their religion in their own way. A long time ago, during something called the Reformation, some Christians wanted to make their religion simpler. They wanted people to focus more on reading the Bible and having a personal relationship with God, instead of doing a lot of fancy rituals. But even today, many Christians still use rituals to help them feel closer to God.

Understanding Religious Beliefs and Experiences. The idea of the Trinity (God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) took a long time to fully develop. It was officially agreed on at a big church meeting called the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, but Christians still show and understand it in different ways today. Religions don't usually start all at once. They grow and change over time as people talk, think, and sometimes even argue about their beliefs. For example, in Christian history, there was a disagreement called the Arian Heresy, where people had different ideas about who Jesus was. These kinds of discussions helped shape what Christians believe today. Studies show that lots of people have had special experiences that feel religious or spiritual—even people who don't belong to a religion. Sometimes, just one person's powerful experience can lead to a whole new religion or set of beliefs. Here are a few examples: Julian of Norwich had deep visions of God's love. St Bernadette saw visions of Mary, Jesus's mother. Moses saw a burning bush and heard God speak. Muhammad (peace be upon him) received messages from God that became the Qur'an. Guru Nanak had a powerful experience with God that led to the beginning of Sikhism. These stories show how important personal experiences can be in religion.



Bernadette was a sheep-keeper at Bartrès and sometimes she helped with service at her aunt's cabaret at Lourdes. 1858 – January 17: Bernadette left Bartrès. 1858 – February 11: first apparition at the Grotto of Massabielle. 1858 – June 3: Bernadette made her first communion. Between 11 February and 16 July 1858, a young girl called Bernadette Soubirous experienced eighteen apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a cave on the outskirts of Lourdes, now known as the Grotto.

To know that religion is hard to define and that all religions do not look the same nor are expressed in the same way (for example, decolonising Dharmic traditions before study). To know individuals and communities might identify with organised worldviews such as religious traditions, but their lived experience may be incredibly diverse.

You will develop knowledge and understanding that in practice, religion and worldviews are hard to define and look different to all people.



Disciplines

Human and Social Sciences

Census	an official count or survey, especially of a population
Colonialism	the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, <u>occupying</u> it with <u>settlers</u> , and <u>exploiting</u> it economically.
Contested	oppose (an action or theory) as <u>mistaken</u> or wrong
Deen	is an Arabic word with three general senses: judgment, custom, and religion. ^[1] It is used by both <u>Muslims</u> and <u>Arab Christians</u> .
Dharma (Dharmic)	regarded in Hinduism as a <u>cosmic</u> law underlying right behaviour and social order.
Pluralism	a condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., <u>coexist</u> .
Religion	the belief in and worship of a <u>superhuman</u> power or powers, especially a God or gods. "ideas about the relationship between science and religion"
Religious	Someone who is religious has a strong belief in a god or god
Experience	practical contact with and observation of facts or events
Ritual	a religious or <u>solemn</u> ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.
Secularisation	the action or process of <u>converting</u> something from religious to <u>secular</u> possession or use.