

# What does it mean to be religious today?

## INTRODUCTION

This session explores whether you have to belong to one of the major six world religions or other ancient and historical belief systems such as Taoism or Shinto in order to be considered 'religious'. In an era of growing new religious movements and many people describing themselves as 'spiritual' rather than religious, this session also asks students to consider their opinions on whether following the game of football could be considered as being religious.

## ACTIVITY

Ask the students to respond to such questions as:

- does being religious necessarily mean belonging to a well-known, historical religion such as Christianity or Islam?
- can you be considered religious if you belong to a more recent religious movement?

Explain to the students that some people think that the game of football is fast emerging as a new religion. Furthermore, the recent religion that has been set up by a fan based around the rapper Kanye West, has once again raised the question of what is a religion and what it means to be religious today.

Play the students the following BBC clip (or something similar):

**Stimulus:** Show students these two short videos:

'Old Trafford – a place of pilgrimage':  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z7xcd2p> and

'Why are we obsessed with Celebrities?':  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oIQPKaN04A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oIQPKaN04A) and ask them to respond to such questions as:

- *What are the similarities and differences between following a religion such as Christianity and a football team?*
- *Can football be considered a religion?*
- *Could people that devote their whole life to following a football team be considered religious?*
- *Do you have a favourite 'celebrity? Would you go as far as saying you 'worship' them?*
- *Could it in any way be offensive to consider celebrity worship a religion?*

- *In what ways is being fanatic about a celebrity similar or different to following a religion?*
- *Should we view celebrity worship as a joke or something to take seriously?*
- *Is everybody 'religious' in their own way?*
- *Is there anything else you think could be considered a new religion?*

After listening to students' views on these questions introduce a couple of new questions:

- *What does it mean to be 'spiritual' and is this the same as being 'religious'?*
- *Is it easier these days to say you are 'spiritual' rather than 'religious'? Why / why not?*

**Stimulus:** Ask students to try and come up with a definition of what spiritual or spirituality is.

Type into Google Images 'spirituality', which brings up a myriad of different images related to spirituality. Ask students to think about what each image says about what it may mean to be spiritual and whether this could also be termed as religious. Do they think there is any difference between being spiritual and being religious?

## **CONCLUSION**

Ask students to think of their own definition of what a religion is and what it means to be religious. Ask them whether their views have changed in any way after this session. Encourage them to compare their views to see if there is any consensus or agreement.