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Lesson 1 Introduction to Religious Freedom

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Articulate ways in which an individual's freedom of religious expression may be restricted.
- Explain the nature, facts and issues of *Singh v. Booth*.

Materials

- Handout 1: Historical Context
- Handout 2: Religious Expression in the News
- Case Packet: Complaint and Defendant's Opposition to Plaintiff's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order
- Handout 3: Analyzing the Case Documents and accompanying answer key

Lesson Assessments

- Discussion responses
- Responses to guiding questions
- Homework: newspaper article or news report about the case

Instructional Activities

Anticipatory Set

- Explain to students that the First Amendment prohibits the government from making any law that prohibits the free exercise of religion. In practice, the prohibition is far from straightforward; in some contexts, courts have established that religious freedom is not absolute. Think about the following environments and ask yourself whether a person's exercise of religion *should be* limited in these settings, and if so, how:
 1. In school
 2. In prisons
 3. In the government
 4. In the military
- Introduce the mock trial unit. Explain that students will investigate the degree to which the government should be permitted to limit a citizen's freedom of religious expression.

Unit 6: Lesson 1
Religious Freedom

Distribute and discuss **Handout 1: Historical Context** to provide students with historical context for the case.

- Assign each student one or more short articles from **Handout 2: Religious Freedom in the News**. Students should read the article(s), considering the ways religious freedom is at issue. Ask students to report to the class, giving a short summary of their article(s), the issues in freedom of religious expression they raised, and their reactions. Ask students to think back to their “Do Now” exercises: are there clear scenarios or contexts where religious freedom *should* be limited? What scenarios/contexts are these? What about situations where the government’s right to limit freedom of expression is unclear? The unit will focus on investigating and conducting a mock trial for one such case, *Singh v. Booth*.

Guided Practice

- Direct students to read from the **Case Packet: Complaint and Defendant’s Opposition to Plaintiff’s Motion for Temporary Restraining Order**. Point out that much of this text is from original court documents, but has been modified because of the length of the original texts.¹ Students should respond in writing to the following questions using **Handout 3: Analyzing the Case Documents**:
 1. Who is the plaintiff? Who is the defendant?
 2. What is the plaintiff’s claim?
 3. What relief does the plaintiff seek (what does the plaintiff ask the court to do)?
 4. What is the defendant’s response?
 5. What restrictions did the Army place on the plaintiff regarding his beard and turban?
- Engage in a brief class discussion of the guiding questions above to check student understanding of this background material. Model answers are included below.

Homework

- Ask students to write a brief newspaper article or deliver a brief news report (no more than 250 words) telling the public about the case. Encourage students to be creative - students may report in a BuzzFeed-style article with accompanying gifs/images or create their own blog post in response to the facts and claims raised.

Closure

- Explain that students will be exploring the case through a mock trial, beginning with pretrial preparation.

¹ Original materials from *Singh v. Carter* are available on the Clearinghouse website. You may access it at <http://www.clearinghouse.net/detail.php?id=15267>.