

Religion in the Media

- Images in U.S. film – Reel Bad Arabs video, Jack Shaheen
- Top 10 religious news stories from 2009
- Definitions: Religion and spirituality
- Structure of news
- Media labels – types of ownership
- Categories of news
- Accessing religion articles in the news
- Conclusion/implications of religion news
- Media workshop

Top 10 Religion Stories, 2009

(by religion newspaper reporters)

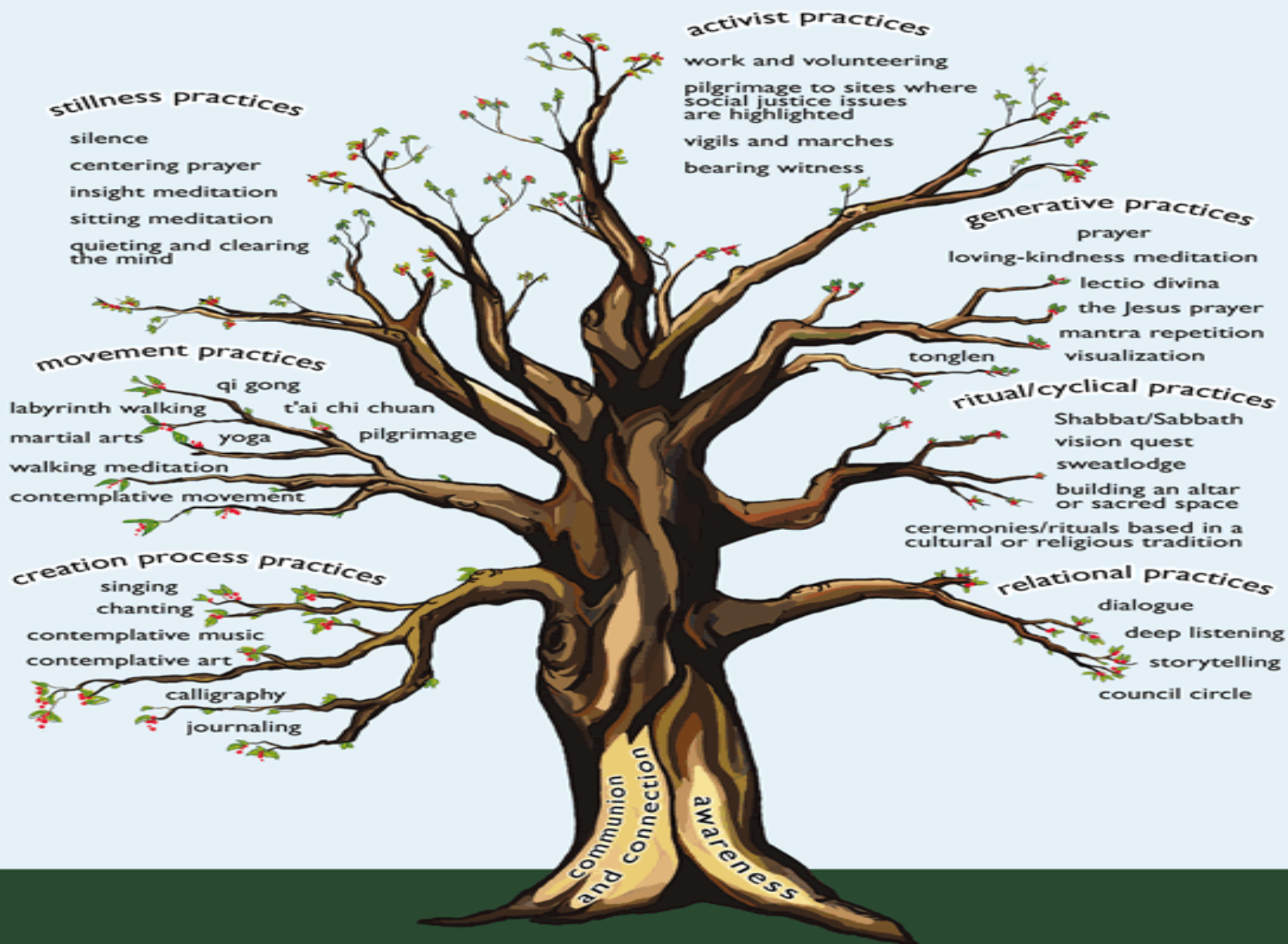
1. Obama's speech in Cairo pledging a new beginning to Muslim-U.S. relations
2. Health care reform. Faith-based groups appeal strongly for action to help "the least of these," and others, such as the Roman Catholic bishops, for restrictions on abortion funding.
3. Religion and terrorism, e.g. Fort Hood gunman
4. Murder of U.S. leading abortion doctor at Lutheran church. Killer professed radical religious beliefs.
5. Mormons in California help sink Prop. 8, outlawing gay marriage; , Iowa, Vermont and New Hampshire approve gay marriage, but it is overturned by voters in Maine.

- 6. Obama receives honorary degree and gives commencement speech at Notre Dame after fierce debates at the Roman Catholic university over Obama's views on abortion.**
- 7. Lutheran ordination of gay clergy splits denomination.**
- 8. Recession forces cutbacks at a great variety of faith-related organizations—houses of worship, relief agencies, colleges and seminaries, publishing houses.**
- 9. Episcopalians vote to end a moratorium on installing gay bishops**
- 10. Obama's inauguration includes a potpourri of religious/political ideologies - controversial invocation by Rev. Rick Warren (evangelical) and a controversial benediction by Rev. Joseph Lowery (civil rights activist), as well as a pre-ceremony prayer by gay Bishop Gene Robinson.**

Definitions – Religion and Spirituality

Religion - a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

Spirituality – relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material. Traditionally associated with religion, deities, supernatural and afterlife. It may include existentialism and introspection, and the development of an individual's inner life through practices such as meditation, prayer and contemplation.



The Tree of Contemplative Practices

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
www.contemplativemind.org

Media Labels*

*use with caution

- **Mainstream** - specifically designed to reach a very large audience, such as the population of a country. Typically, but not always, owned by private corporations, multinationals.
- **Alternative** - media (newspapers, radio, television, movies, Internet, etc.) which are alternatives to the business or government-owned mass media.
- **International** — corporate or government-owned media originating in countries or regions other than the U.S. (for American audiences)
- **Specialty** — media whose content focuses on one specific topic or theme, e.g. religion, sports, economics, etc.

News Categories

- Hard news (intl, natl, regional, local)
- Features
- Sports
- Business
- Editorials/Opinion (op-ed)/Columns

Top 10 Religion Stories, 2009

(U.S. News and World Report magazine)

1. Why Rick Warren's Invocation at Obama's Inauguration Matters
2. A New White House Tradition: Commissioning (and Vetting) Prayers for Obama Events
3. The Paul Weyrich I Knew
4. Ralph Reed Launches New Values Group: Not Your Daddy's Christian Coalition
5. Ex-NFL Coach/Christian Conservative Asked to Join White House Faith Council
6. Newt Gingrich Steps Up Efforts to Organize Religious Conservatives
7. White House Consulted U.S. Religious Leaders on Muslim Speech
8. Exclusive:
9. Newt Gingrich Opens Up on Catholic Conversion and Embracing 'Overt Christianity'
10. Rick Warren Comes to Washington
11. Four Ways 'No Religion' Boom Will Alter U.S. Politics

Accessing Religion News

- religionnewsreport.com
- www.world-newspapers.com/religion.html
- Evergreen Library databases

Implications of Religion in the Media

- Religion news tends to adhere to traditional, limited categories
- Need to broaden themes/topics/issues?
- New ways of thinking about religion in the public square: Alternative categories?

Media Groups Workshop

- Meet in small groups
- Over lunch, find an article on religion in the mass media (mainstream, alternative, intl and specialty OK) and print it (Library computer lab is open).
- In your media groups, summarize the content of the article you found; where it was published (title of article, author, publication, date of publication).
- As a group, discuss what categories your stories fall into. You may use traditional media categories (Intl, natl, regional, local hard news; features, sports, business, editorials/opinion (op-ed)/columns) or creative new categories. Chart your findings, e.g. names of categories and number of articles per category. Present findings to whole class and draw any conclusions you can.