



Teaching Plan for *JUST A PIECE OF CLOTH: High School*

Developed by teachers Dorothy Allen and Roxana Mohammed¹
Logan High School, Union City, California

Audience: High School Students – appropriate for World History, US History, Life Skills, and Ethnic Studies, among other classes.

Length of time: 1 to 1.5 weeks (since class sessions in different schools vary in length, we have only given approximate time frames for each activity, and left it up to each teacher to decide how much to do each day).

Materials and resources needed

- Documentary video-[Just a Piece of Cloth](http://www.justapieceofcloth.com) (to order the video or learn more about it, go to <http://www.justapieceofcloth.com>)
- The evidence and interpretation document
- Basic principles of Islam (CAIR website)
- Women in Islam (About Faith website)
- Reading – [Religion and American Law 2012](#)
- Recommended: Guest Speaker –a Muslim woman who wears or doesn't wear the hijab.

Vocabulary: hijab, burqa, chador, Islam, Muslim, Qur'an, hadiths, imam, hajj, stereotypes, culture

Learning objectives:

Students will be able to

- identify important principles of Islam;
- deepen their understanding of Muslim women and their choice to wear or not wear the hijab;
- engage in serious discussions about Muslim women and the hijab;
- dispel stereotypes about the hijab and Muslim women's choices to wear or not to wear the hijab;
- connect their personal experiences with issues similar to Muslim women and the hijab.

¹ We are grateful for the support provided by the Open Meadows Foundation. This plan is available for any teacher to use; if you pass this plan along to others, please give the authors, Dorothy Allen and Roxana Mohammed, credit for their work.

Common Core Standards addressed

- Speaking and Listening grades 9-12/Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 6-12
Comprehension and Collaboration:
 1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 2. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.Research to Build and Present Knowledge:
 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Assessment:

- Quiz on the major principles of Islam
- Comparative essay

Other activities:

- Religious discrimination reading for a possible class debate
- Guest speaker presentation from ING ([Islamic Networks Group](http://www.ing.org)) (url: www.ing.org); for more information particularly relevant to schools, see www.ing.org/schools-overview; Resource page: <http://www.ing.org/7-12>

PROCEDURE

1. Show students the trailer (lasts 1.5 minutes) for the documentary *Just a Piece of Cloth*. This is available from the website at www.justapieceofcloth.com or directly from youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMU6u0VP6Go>

After seeing the trailer, ask the students to take out a piece of paper and write their answer the following question, What do you think of when you see a woman wearing a hijab? Write the question on the board for them (about 10 minutes).

2. Introduction to the documentary

On the board write the words hijab, burqa and chador. Say the words and then show visuals of them. Visuals may be found at many different websites; the following is one good example: [Guide to Muslim Headwear](http://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear) (url: <http://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear>). Ask students if they are familiar with any or all of these words. Ask students to explain to the class including the similarities and differences between the three words. Once satisfied that the students understand what the three words are, tell them that the hijab is the subject for this lesson.

[Hijab comes from the Arabic root, hjb, meaning to veil, to seclude, to conceal, to form a separation, or to mask.] See [Glossary](http://middleeast.about.com/od/glossary/): <http://middleeast.about.com/od/glossary/>

Allow the students a minute or two to share the perceptions they wrote down with a partner, and then allow students to share their answers with the entire class. This is a good time to talk about the stereotypes associated with Muslim women and the hijab and where these stereotypes come from. Let the class know they will be watching the rest of this documentary that deals with four Muslim women living in the San Francisco Bay Area and how these women deal with the hijab (about 10 minutes).

3. Watching *Just a Piece of Cloth* and taking notes

On the [Evidence and Interpretation](#) sheet, the students will take notes on each of the women during the documentary. The students should make notes about what they see and hear from each of the women, and then interpret the evidence that they wrote down by asking a question or making a connection to themselves. (Teacher should model this before watching the documentary. The kinds of things that students might observe for notes: how she wears the hijab if she does, how she thinks non-Muslim men and women view her if she wears it and why she thinks these non-Muslim folks feel that way, how these women feel about being Muslim and wearing the hijab or being Muslim and not wearing the hijab and why they feel that way).

When finished viewing the documentary, give the students a few minutes to wrap up their notes. Then as a class, have a variety of students share their observations about each woman. (about 45 minutes –this includes the 34 minutes for the video itself)

On the same page used in the introduction, have the students write down 2 new things that they have learned about Muslim women and the hijab that they did not know before. Also, they should explain how this changes or does not change what they have been thinking about Muslim women. Have students share what they learned and whether any of their perceptions or assumptions have changed. Students can also take notes as other students share and use this to write their short essay assignment (about 10 minutes).

4. Exploring more: Major principles of Islam; women in Islam (about 40 minutes)

Provide information that describes some of the major principles of Islam. See this website for CAIR ([Council on American Islamic Relations](http://www.cair.com/american-muslims/about-islam.html)) (url: <http://www.cair.com/american-muslims/about-islam.html>)

Students read the information and the teacher and/or Muslim student(s) in class provides more detail about these principles. The teacher should welcome Muslim students to share their knowledge.

Provide a slideshow that talks about women and the hijab according to sacred documents in Islam. Students should write down information that the teacher emphasizes.

See: [Women and Islam](http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Islam/Galleries/Why-the-Hijab.aspx?p=1) (url: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Islam/Galleries/Why-the-Hijab.aspx?p=1>)

Then show the students one Muslim woman's reasons for wearing the hijab and have the students discuss what they think the message of the video is. Do the reasons differ from the reasons you heard from the women in *Just a Piece of Cloth*?

See [What is hijab?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qI41PjyvvrA) (url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qI41PjyvvrA>)

5. Assessment

- Quiz on the major principals of Islam: *Name the principles of Islam. Then choose any three of the principles and provide examples to show how those principles could be practiced.*

- Comparative Essay assignment (at home):

Write about what you have learned about women and the hijab. Use examples from your particular culture or other cultures to describe how these examples are similar/different. Also, what things can you do to ensure that the stereotyping of these women stops and that we are all more sensitive to these women and this particular religious/cultural practice?

Evidence and Interpretation: A notetaking tool.

Use this tool to take notes as you view the documentary *Just a Piece of Cloth*; continue on the back if you need more room

#1: Arwa Abushariefeh, Palestinian from Chicago/Jordan/Philadelphia

Evidence: Summarize each point

Interpretation: Ask a question, write what comes to mind, or make a connection to your life

2: Dian Alyan, from Indonesia

#3: Nur Laura Bean-Caskey, from Louisiana

Evidence: Summarize each point

Interpretation: Ask a question, write what comes to mind, or make a connection to your life

4: Mahsa Mohaddess Modirzadeh, from Iran

Religion & American Law

This blog represents a project of students at Bucknell University.

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Hijab Discrimination under a Different Name

Discrimination is a reality of societies unfortunately. People discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, and nation, among other factors. In this essay, I will write about the religious discrimination that a Muslim woman named Hani Khan experienced in San Francisco. This incident was discussed in [the USAToday](#) by Marisol Bello. Khan was a student, and she worked for three months in a clothing store as a stockroom clerk. Her supervisors offered her two options. Either she could remove her headscarf, known as a hijab, or she would be fired from her job, even though she wears the hijab as a religious observance. Eventually she refused to remove her scarf, and she was fired. Khan filed a federal job discrimination complaint against the company. Bello explains that "She (Khan) is among a growing number of Muslim women filing complaints of discrimination at work, in businesses or in airports." In fact, according to the news, in 2009, 425 Muslim women filed workplace discrimination complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. These complaints were dismissed or resolved through mediation and lawsuit.

In this incident, the most important thing was that Khan's scarf became a problem for the company in view not because it was an Islamic observance, but because her wearing of the headscarf violated the company's "look policy" according to the company. "The policy instructs employees on clothing, hairstyles, makeup and accessories they may wear to work."

My purpose in this essay is to ask a question: Is there a law which cannot be interpreted by different ways? Is there a law that everyone infers from this law the same meaning? I think definitely not. For example, everyone knows that in the United States religious discrimination is prohibited. However, the conception of discrimination is being interpreted by people. In this incident, the company claimed that it was not discriminating, but was only carrying out its policy about workers' appearance. Furthermore, there is a similar issue between Bob Jones University and the International Revenue Service. Since the sponsors of the university believe that the Bible forbids interracial dating and marriage, they apply some rules on enrollment to the university. They follow their faith but the IRS considered these rules as racial discrimination.

In addition, especially after 9/11, the United States developed a security policy which generally is intended to target Muslims. For example, in American airports Muslim women often have to remove their hijab, or have to undergo extra security checks. Nobody knows why security officers have to check Muslim women multiple times. Either they think that even though all Muslims are not terrorists, all terrorists are Muslim, or they do not have such a prejudice and their purpose is only security issues. It is very difficult to determine in these kinds of cases whether the company is actually enforcing its workplace appearance policy or if it is in fact discriminating on the basis of religion. However, when I look at the result of the issue, I can see that a woman is prevented to get her scarf freely. If a Muslim woman has to remove her headscarf, how can the laws found neutrality or equality among citizens? Is not it a kind of discrimination?

Finally, I offered here an example of religious discrimination which was carried out for another reason, the appearance policy of a company. There should be a way to prevent the using of such reasons. No company does have a right to determine a policy which causes a kind of discrimination because human rights are more important than companies' or countries' policies. Otherwise, every time people may be undergone such discriminations by different reasons. What is the cause of such a conflict, the structure of laws which is proper to be interpreted differently, or there is not sufficient and explicit clauses to stop these kinds of interpretations?

Posted by Emrah Kaya at [9:21 PM](#) 