

INTRO TALK: PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

RELIGIOUS LITERACY

- 1) Non-devotional
- 2) Religions are Internally Diverse
 - We don't assess "authenticity." People get to self-define.
- 3) Religions Evolve and Change
 - Careful of presentism (seeing a tradition's current form as its eternal "essence")
- 4) Religions are embedded in cultures

Source: Harvard Religious Literacy Project

THE PROTESTANT LENS

- "Religion" is a European word with no cognates in other languages (historically; today, such words often do exist)
- Our view of "religion" is shaped by a Protestant Lens that sees religion as defined by:
 - Belief
 - Books
 - Individual
 - Interior
 - Separate (from medicine, statecraft, law, economics)
 - Mutually exclusive
- Understanding other traditions means paying attention to other options:
 - Orality
 - Visuals
 - Objects (that may indicate identity or carry power)
 - Communal (even the interior religious sentiments & silent prayers are shaped socially)
 - Integrated (with medicine, law, astrology, etc.)
 - Syncretic (meaning the blending of religions)
- Often Western law's conflicts with religions are on elements other than beliefs (e.g. land, dress)



THREE GUIDING QUESTIONS (For Studying Religions)

- Who is the Other?
- Who am I?
 - "He who knows one, knows none." (Max Mueller)
- Who are We?
 - Behaviours; Emotions; Groups
 - Western cultures emphasizes agency (thinking, deciding) but thinking can be a *consequence* of other factors, and not their cause
 - Conversion to a religion or out of a religion may be driven by changes in B. E. G.
- Consider how Religion is partly an aesthetic

