Muslims have lived in North America since the earliest days of Western European colonization here. From 1530 on, roughly 10–30 percent of the African slaves brought here were Muslims. In 1805, Thomas Jefferson himself hosted a feast, or Iftar dinner, in the White House to celebrate the conclusion of the month-long fast of Ramadan in order to welcome the first Muslim ambassador to the United States.

Today, roughly 3.3 million Muslims live in the United States, comprising about 0.9 percent of the population. (Pew Research Center projects that by 2050, the number of Muslims in America will increase to 8.1 million, or 2.1 percent of the population.) At the same time, several national and world events as well as political campaigns have thrust Islam into the forefront of many Americans’ awareness. Because of terrorist acts committed by a few in the name of Islam, debates in the media and in private life have heated up. Disagreement frequently surfaces about everything from the meaning of “jihad” to what restrictions should or should not be placed on Syrian refugees.

We view the recent focus on Islam in our media as an opportunity to help educators gain clarity about Islam in the United States. It is an opportunity to think about what a healthy discourse about Islam or, for that matter, any religious view or opinion can look like. In this spirit, we provide in this issue of the CA3Rs Bulletin an annotated list of resources to help educators understand the religion itself and its role in the world today.

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CA3Rs Bulletin

Resources Available Through CA3Rs

We start with introductory resources to increase religious literacy about Islam. These free resources are hyperlinked in the electronic copy of this Bulletin, but all can be accessed through the “World Religions and Philosophies” page on the website of the CA3Rs (ca3rsproject.org). Access Islam – Timeline

This timeline includes a section on Islam in America with notable events such as John Quincy Adams’ freeing of Abdul Rahman ibn Sori and the 1998 Ramadan Iftar meal hosted by the Pentagon for Muslims on active duty in the U.S. armed forces. The website is produced by the Educational Broadcasting Corporation, local public television affiliate Thirteen/WNET New York, and the PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly program.

Access Islam – Video

Here is a menu of 19 short video segments from PBS’s Religion & Ethics Newsweekly. The videos help describe madrasahs (religious schools), the observance of Ramadan (the month-long period of daily fasting and prayer), and the cultural gaps between native-born American Muslims and immigrant Muslim communities. The videos range from two or three minutes to 10 minutes in length.

Frontline: Muslims

Frontline is an investigative journalism program produced for PBS. This website provides links to its program Muslims. Of particular interest to today’s educators would be the interview with University of Malaysia Professor Chandra Muzaffar on “Islam and the West.”

Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet

This film presented by KQED radio in Northern California and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting profiles Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

Islam: Empire of Faith

The resources and lessons here are designed to help teachers use the PBS series Islam: Empire of Faith and companion website in secondary social studies, civics, religion, and language arts classes. The lesson plans may also be adapted for use as stand-alone resources.

Islam Divided: The Shiites and Sunnis

In this lesson from Bill of Rights in Action, students learn about the history and differences between these major Muslim sects. In a map-making activity, students identify major Shiite and Sunni nations as well as dominant ethnic groups in the Middle East.

Constitutional Rights Foundation Resources

These CRF materials provide information about Islam by viewing historic and current conflicts though the lens of law and policy. Unless otherwise noted, the following free resources can all be found on CRF’s “America Responds to Terrorism” web page (crf-usa.org/america-responds-to-terrorism/americaresponds-to-terrorism.html). CRF has updated the page, which also includes material related to domestic terrorism, whether religiously motivated or otherwise.

The Origins of Islamic Law

In this web lesson, stu-

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students learn that “Islamic law, like Judaic law, represents one of the world’s great legal systems.” Topics covered are the development of Sharia, family law, criminal law, criminal procedure, and Islamic law today. In a discussion activity, students examine excerpts from Sharia in order to make logical inferences about Islamic society and culture.

Ibn Battuta: The Greatest Traveler in the Middle Ages

In this web lesson, students learn about 14th century traveler Ibn Battuta’s many journeys in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe. In a research activity, students examine the cultures of areas he traveled to.

Islamist Terrorism from 1945 to the Rise of ISIS

In this web lesson, students are provided with a survey history of conflicts in the Middle East in the 20th and early 21st centuries that have affected the West. Students learn to differentiate between Islam, the religion, and Islamism, the political ideology. Even further, students learn to separate jihadism, or violence done in the name of Islam, from mainstream Islamism. In a discussion activity, students evaluate U.S. foreign policy proposals on confronting threats from Islamist-based terrorism.

Civil Conversation: The Syrian Refugee Crisis and U.S. Policy

What should U.S. policy be for refugees from the Syrian civil war? In this web lesson accessible through the Educating About Immigration website, students use a balanced reading to address this question. In the civil conversation method, students are “encouraged to engage intellectually with challenging materials, gain insight about their own point of view, and strive for a shared understanding of issues.”

Blasphemy! Salman Rushdie and Freedom of Expression

In this lesson from Bill of Rights in Action, students learn about novelist Salman Rushdie’s book The Satanic Verses, which angered many Muslims, who accused Rushdie of blasphemy and insulting the Prophet Muhammad. Students consider what, if any, limits there should be on freedom of expression. Then, in a role-play simulation activity, students can evaluate a proposed constitutional amendment on blasphemy laws.

How Do You Feel? What Do You Think?

Students need a chance to reflect on their thoughts and feelings in troubled times. In this web lesson, students have the opportunity to express their feelings and discuss their perceptions of traumatic events, such as acts of terrorism or violence.

Miscellaneous Resources on Contemporary Issues

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Muslims

The Islamic Networks Group (ING) is a California-based nonprofit advocacy organization whose mission is to “counter prejudice and discrimination against American Muslims by teaching about their traditions and contributions in the context of America’s history and cultural diversity . . . .” Careful to disclaim any authority to speak on behalf of all Muslims, and drawing from its own base of Muslim scholars, ING presents this FAQ on such questions as What is the difference between “Islam,” “Islamic,” “Muslim,” and “Arab”? and What does Islam Teach?. ING is also represented on the CAIRs’ Advisory Council.

A Short History of Islamism

This Newsweek article by journalist Robin Wright gives a thorough yet concise history of the political movement known as Islamism. “Islamists now take many forms,” writes Wright, “from moderates in Tunisia to militants in the Islamic State, also known as ISIS.” Wright is a joint fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Extended Interview: Millenial Muslims on Life in America

In this CBS News interview from December 2015, five young Muslims born in the United States discuss their lives. Scott Pelley of CBS is the interviewer.
The Three Rs Comes to CCSS

The CA3RS is delighted to inform readers of the *Bulletin* that Dr. Peg Hill and Damon Huss will be co-presenting a session at the upcoming 55th Annual Conference California Council for the Social Studies Conference at the Hilton Orange County in Costa Mesa, California.

“The Third Rail? Teaching About Religion is Rigorous, Engaging, and . . . Constitutional!” will be the session with lesson demonstration on the free exercise of religion on Friday, March 4, at 2:15 p.m. at the conference. Register now at [www.ccss.org/conference](http://www.ccss.org/conference). Hope to see you there!

The 2016 Annual Meeting

For those of you on either the Advisory Council or Planning Committee of the CA3RS, please note our annual meeting is fast approaching on March 3, 2016, at the Orange County Department of Education. The Planning Committee meeting will be at 10:00 a.m., and the Advisory meeting will follow at 12:00 p.m. If you are planning to come but did not respond to the original Doodle poll for RSVPs, please send Damon an email at damon@crf-usa.org.

Are you on Twitter?

Use the hashtag #CA3Rs whenever you tweet about religion in public schools. And catch the #CA3Rs feed at [www.ca3rsproject.org](http://www.ca3rsproject.org)

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