

Background

Most of the now numerous reports on the status of contemporary American education (from A Nation At Risk forward) have called attention to the need seriously to inform today's students on the subject of moral and ethical values. At the same time, there is widespread recognition that our society is rapidly moving toward a multi-cultural configuration, one of the most prominent configurations of which belongs to the elementary and secondary schools.

The purpose of our proposed regional summer institute is to work from the combination of this oft-repeated educational injunction and this set of social and cultural demographic facts toward substantial humanities resources that can bring clarity and depth to both of them simultaneously. Our purpose, in short, is to provide an opportunity for selected elementary and secondary school teachers to come together for intensive study of "the teachings of the world's religions" via analyses and interpretations of their respective sacred scriptures and classic texts. We recognize, of course, that even the most intensive study can hardly do justice to a subject of such depth, scope and complexity. But, with the assistance of a dedicated group of university scholars (the majority of them from the University of California), we are confident that we can identify the texts that are responsible for the distinguishing ideas -- the definitive teachings, the representative tenets -- of these religions so that participants in the institute will come away from their study with an ability to compare one tradition with another and with reliable

knowledge of the histories of the traditions as well as of the specific circumstances under which each came into being, and the intentions that each continues to serve.

We anticipate that participants in the institute will come from a wide variety of academic fields and backgrounds. There may be some, perhaps, who are designated teachers of religion (or religious studies), and who, therefore, already possess some expertise on the subject. But we would expect most of the participants not to be specialists or experts on the subject, but, instead, to represent the fields of literature and history. We do not foresee such teachers wishing or intending to cultivate a specialty in the field of religious studies, but rather to be motivated to learn much more about a subject in which they are probably inadequately formally trained but concerning which they are obliged to come to terms in their regular classroom teaching. We have often said that one can hardly make in-depth sense of the literature of our culture, and/or of the history of our republic, without being knowledgeable about the religious factors that are implicit (and sometimes explicit) therein. Given the nature of that history and the content of that literature, it is difficult to formulate a counter argument. But the need to be informed on the subject of religion is even more apparent and urgent when one considers how closely interrelated contemporary world cultures have become. In a former day, it may have sufficed to be knowledgeable about one or two religious traditions -- Judaism and Christianity serving as the prime examples within the United States of America -- and/or the comparative intellectual work that belonged to the field may have consisted

primarily of similarities and differences drawn between Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism, and, additionally, between the groups and sects that belong to Protestant Christianity. But in today's world, the range of actual religious possibilities has expanded enormously. Today's students can hardly make sense of the evening news without knowing something substantial about Muslims, for example. Similarly, the great religions of Asia -- Buddhism and Hinduism, specifically -- were rather confidently relegated to the Asian world, not very many years ago. But in today's world, the Asian religions have millions of adherents within the United States; one cannot understand the contemporary world without coming intellectually to terms with their respective teachings, ritual practices, and prescribed patterns of behavior. We expect that an opportunity to devote concentrated study to this subject will be welcomed by elementary and secondary school teachers representing a wide variety of teaching areas. We also confidently anticipate that the teachers will find a wide variety of ways to make use of their institute experience in the classes they teach. Indeed, it belongs to the fundamental work of the institute to provide specific guidance -- by consulting working examples -- as to how such uses can be made.

The Institute Itself

The program is being conceived as a regional institute of four weeks' duration, beginning on Sunday evening, July 9, 1990, and continuing through Friday, August 3, on the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California. The "region" is defined as the western states, including California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii Idaho and Utah. Elementary and secondary school teachers in all

relevant fields are eligible to apply, so too are school administrators with particular interest in the subject.

The institute will be directed by Professor Walter H. Capps, of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Though Professor Capps has not directed an NEH institute before, he has directed several Summer Seminars for School Teachers, several Summer Seminars for College Teachers, a year-long Seminar in Residence for College Teachers, and a Summer Seminar for Undergraduate Fellows in the Humanities. As past Chair of the California Council for the Humanities and past President of the Federation of State Humanities Councils, Professor Capps is well acquainted with NEH incentives and procedures, and is dedicated professionally to like-minded aspirations. The subject of the institute is designed similarly to the seminar Professor Capps conducts for entering graduate students in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Professor Capps has also taught widely over the undergraduate curriculum in religious studies, and is very familiar with the contents of orientational and introductory courses in the field. As a former director of the Institute of Religious Studies at UCSB, and as former president of the Council for the Study of Religion -- the "umbrella organization" for the chief professional organizations in the fields of religious studies and theology in North America -- Professor Capps is able to draw upon expert supporting and contributing consultants. And, as an educator who has held an adjunct faculty position in the Graduate

School of Education at UCSB -- and, as one who is frequently invited to address regional and national meetings of teachers, administrators and other school personnel -- Capps is also uncommonly conversant in the field of education. It is the combination of these interests on which he will draw in preparing and guiding the work of the institute.

The professorial "consultants" who will help staff the institute are all recognized experts and/or authorities in their respective fields and disciplines. Professor Robert S. Michaelsen, former Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UCSB, is a distinguished teacher and researcher in the field of American Religion, with a special expertise in church/state relationships. Several years ago, he chaired the California statewide committee that produced the document on Moral Guidelines for the Public Schools. Professor Nicholas Piediscalzi, who has recently retired from the faculty at Wright State University, is the founder and former president of National Association on Religion and Public Education. No one in the country has had more experience in providing counsel to teachers, schools and school systems regarding appropriate and compelling ways of teaching about religion. Professor Piediscalzi is also an expert in American religious history. Professor Barbara Holdrege, also of UCSB, is a specialist in Hindu and Judaic religions, and is one of a handful of American scholars specifically trained in comparative studies in religion. Professor Holdrege has addressed seminars of school teachers in the past, and will make presentations in the proposed institute on Hinduism, Judaism, and the methods and techniques

of comparative analyses of religious traditions. Professor Inez Talamantez, who embodies the tradition that she also analyzes and interprets, will lead the sessions that are devoted to Native American religion(s). Professors William Powell and Allan Grapard, each of whom has spent more than a decade living in various cities and countries in Asia, will be responsible for the sessions of the seminar devoted to Asian Religions, notably, the religious traditions of China and Japan. Professor M. Gerald Bradford, who is a psychologist of religion at the University of California, Irvine, while serving as executive director of the west coast office of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, will present provocative materials on Mormonism. Professor Jacob Needleman, member of the faculty in philosophy at San Francisco State University, is responsible for imparting information on the subject of "New Religions," a topic that will also be addressed by Dr. J. Gordon Melton, director of the Institute for American Religion, and noted authority on the sects and cults. Two well-known and highly-regarded sociologists of religion, Phillip E. Hammond and Wade Clark Roof, will offer guidance in tracing contemporary American religious trends. Professor Richard Hecht, noted Philo scholar, and the author of a forthcoming study of the history of the city of Jerusalem, is responsible for the presentations on Judaism. Professor Juan Campo, who has concentrated on some of the esthetic features of the religion, has agreed to address the institute on the subject of Islamic religion. Then, in addition to the presentations that have been scheduled on the histories and belief-systems of the major religious traditions

of the world there will be lectures, workshops and seminar sessions on contemporary education. Though the "consultants" for this part of the work of the institute have not been confirmed in final form yet, we are working with Dean Richard Shavelson and Professor Norman Boyan of the Graduate School of Education at UCSB as these plans progress.

As indicated, the institute will meet over the period of four weeks, each morning, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon, Monday through Friday, and three afternoons per week. Approximately twice per week, there will be scheduled meetings in the evenings. The morning sessions will consist of lecture/presentations on the teachings of the world's religions; the afternoon sessions will be devoted to practical pedagogical and curricular matters; and the evening sessions will consist of special-feature items. It will be during the morning hours that the participants hear the consultants who are expert on the various religious traditions. During the afternoons the participants will be working on the development of courses, units of courses, and lesson plans. The evening sessions will be devoted, for example, to analyses of the national reports on education, contemporary trends and/or developments in both education and religion, and to conversations with guest presentors who are expert on related topics and subjects. Participants in the institute will be expected to attend all sessions, do all necessary reading and other preparation for the presentations of the traditions, as well as design and construct the relevant classroom materials.