

Lesson Plan – Exploring Secularism

KS5 lesson 5 – Should there be exemptions to animal welfare laws?

Background	Students should read the Stimulus 1 where they will be introduced into what are animal welfare laws and the current situation about religious exemptions to this law and figures of (non) pre-stunned slaughtered animals in recent years. This is followed by reading the range of viewpoints or arguments often used in the debate around animal welfare laws. In the exercise, students should reflect and evaluate the viewpoints and decide if accommodating religious animal slaughter constitutes religious privilege and if we should continue with such exemptions to the law or not.
Subjects	Religious Studies Sociology
Curriculum links	<p>OCR: A LEVEL Specification RELIGIOUS STUDIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant social and historical developments in theology or religious thought including the challenges of secularisation, science, responses to pluralism and diversity within traditions, migration, the changing roles of men and women, feminist and liberationist approaches. <p>2. Sources of wisdom and authority including, as appropriate: (at least one of the following)</p> <p>a) secularisation</p> <p>Challenges: The Challenge of Secularism</p> <p>6. Two themes related to the relationship between religion and society, these may include:</p> <p>c) religious freedom</p> <p>Challenges: The Challenge of Secularisation</p> <p>Content of Developments in Christian thought (03)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finally, this component explores the challenges posed by secularism, and a range of responses to this. These topics enable the study of how developments in beliefs and practices have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophy, politics and studies of religion, as well as an investigation into the diversity within Christian practice.

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Content of Developments in Islamic thought (04)

From the overview:

- In Islam and the State, learners will undertake the important exploration of changing ideas about the relationship between Islam and political systems, in particular the challenge of secularisation and modernity.
- The identification of secularism with modernisation and social progress.
- The adoption of Western legal codes in modern Muslim states.
- Opposition to secularisation in the Muslim world.
 - The identification of secularism with Western imperialism and moral decline.
 - Different reactions to secularism in the Muslim world.

Content of Developments in Jewish thought (05)

Under “The Jewish Haskalah and Jewish Emancipation” one of the topics is: “the creation of secular Jewish culture, emphasis on Jewish history and Jewish identity rather than religion”.

AQA: A LEVEL Specification Religious Studies Christianity, migration and religious pluralism

How migration has created multicultural societies which include Christianity, with particular reference to the diversity of faiths in Britain today; freedom of religion as a human right in European law and religious pluralism as a feature of modern secular states. The influence of this context on Christian thought.

WJEC: A LEVEL Specification Religious Studies

(Unit 3: A Study of Religion) Option A: Christianity

Theme 2: Significant historical developments in religious thought

A. The relationship between religion and society: respect and recognition and the ways that religious traditions view other religions and non-religious worldviews and their truth claims.

Challenges from secularisation:

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	<p>The conflicting religious and non-religious views on Christianity in the UK (the value of Christian faith schools; whether the UK can be called a ‘Christian country’); beliefs conflicting with laws of country; perceived challenges to Christianity (decline of role and status of Christianity; reduced impact in public life; restricted religious liberty).</p> <p>AQA A Level Sociology</p> <p>4.2 Topics in Sociology</p> <p>Beliefs in Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The significance of religion and religiosity in the contemporary world, including the nature and extent of secularisation in a global context, and globalisation and the spread of religions. <p>OCR A Level Sociology</p> <p>Section B Option 3: Religion, belief and faith</p> <p>4. Is secularisation occurring?</p>
Key Question	Should religions be exempt from animal welfare laws?
Learning Outcomes	<p>Expected: Students should be able to explain what animal welfare laws are.</p> <p>Students should be able to understand why is there consensus that pre-stunning prior to slaughter is more humane.</p> <p>Students should be able to explain main arguments for and against exemptions to animal welfare laws.</p> <p>Greater Depth: Students should be able to evaluate the arguments for and against exemptions to animal welfare laws.</p> <p>Students should be able to formulate a secular position on exemptions to animal welfare laws.</p>
Stimulus	Stimulus 1 - Religious exemption to animal welfare laws

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Animal welfare legislation requires all animals to be stunned before slaughter in order to minimise suffering. Yet, slaughter of animals without pre-stunning is permitted in the UK despite a recommendation by the Government's own advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), that the practice should be banned. The only exemption allowed is for religious communities to meet Jewish and Muslim religious dietary preferences. All kosher meat (Jewish dietary requirements) is non-stunned and around 42% of halal (Islamic dietary requirements) is non-stunned (Figures from the Food Standards Agency for 2018). In total, 81.5% of animals were stunned prior to slaughter in 2017 in the UK.

There is currently no requirement for meat from animals killed without stunning to be labelled as such, and this consequently means that many non-stunned animals that were slaughtered for religious purposes end up in marketplaces without consumers being able to know what kind of meat are they buying.

Stimulus 2 - Viewpoints about exemptions to animal welfare

Viewpoint 1

People's religious practices are more important than animals. Although animals are sentient beings that experience pain, they are not autonomous moral beings that have human rights. This speciesism is one of the reasons why we as humans do take the right to eat animals. If we are more significant than animals, then our deeply held religious beliefs and practices that come from it should be protected.

Viewpoint 2

Religious slaughter is good for animal welfare, as the method of slaughter is to minimise the pain and animal distress. Both the shechita (kosher meat) and dhabibah (halal meat) slaughter require the use of a sharp knife and a cut to the neck area in order for the animal to quickly lose blood flow to the brain and lose consciousness. Other animals must not be present as well, and everything is done in order to minimise the pain and distress of animals.

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Viewpoint 3

Motivation behind ending the religious slaughter is often grounded in antisemitism and Islamophobia. Animal welfare is just a proxy for a wider issue of anti-religious bigotry. New atheism, militant secularism and anti-religious bigotry both on the left and the right use animal welfare to attack religions. The far right has especially been vocal against religious migrant groups and have openly criticised many of their religious practices. The reason why people advocate for animal rights is not to protect the animals, but its motivation is deeply anti-religious sentiments.

Viewpoint 4

Animals are sentient beings and experience pain in a very similar way humans do. EU's Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) have stated that: "Due to the serious animal welfare concerns associated with slaughter without stunning, pre-cut stunning should always be performed." The government's own advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) states that the practice should be banned. The FAWC have concluded that animals slaughtered without pre-stunning are likely to experience "very significant pain and distress" before they become unconscious.

The scientific consensus is clear that it is more humane to stun an animal prior to slaughter than not to do so.

Viewpoint 5

We should have complete separation of the state and religion, and both should be completely disentangled. There should be no accommodation for religious practices or anything stemming from religious beliefs even if there would be no concerns about animal welfare, as religious practices and beliefs are superstitious and are inherently negative for societies, and we should restrict them whenever we can.

Viewpoint 6

We should accommodate religious practices, but this should not come to the expense of anyone else. There must be one-law-for-all and equality before the law without allowing certain groups any sort of privilege, especially if that privilege would entail allowing

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	<p>slaughter of animals in a way that includes avoidable and unnecessary suffering of sentient beings. If the law demands that animals are stunned before the slaughter to reduce the pain and suffering then this should be applied to everyone, irrelevant of what they believe in or what is their religious or cultural practice.</p>
Exercise	<p>Exercise 1</p> <p>Discuss questions.</p> <p><i>Q1. Rank the viewpoints from 1-6, with 1 being the strongest and 6 the weakest</i></p> <p><i>Q2. Explain why do you think this is the strongest argument</i></p> <p><i>Q3. (Viewpoint 1) Is religious belief or practice more important than welfare and humane treatment of animals?</i></p> <p><i>Q4. (Viewpoint 2) „Religious slaughter of animals is concerned about animal welfare; this is why there is a cut to the neck in order for minimum pain and distress“. How far do you agree or disagree with this statement?</i></p> <p><i>Q5. (Viewpoint 3) „The reason why people complain and criticise religious exemption to animal welfare is motivated by hate towards religions“. How far do you agree or disagree?</i></p> <p><i>Q6. (Viewpoint 4) „Scientific consensus clearly shows that stunning animals before slaughter is reducing suffering and is more humane“. How far do you agree or disagree?</i></p>

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	<p><i>Q7. (Viewpoint 5) “Even if all religious practices accept stunning of the animal before slaughter, we should still prevent religious ritualistic slaughter because religions are unwelcome superstition”. How far do you agree or disagree?</i></p> <p><i>Q8. (Viewpoint 6) “Law that prevents avoidable and unnecessary suffering of animals should apply to all equally and no should be exempt from it no matter what they deeply believe”. How far do you agree or disagree?</i></p> <p><i>Q9. Is religious exemption to animal welfare justified? Is it religious privilege?</i></p> <p><i>Q10. Should we change the law? Why yes, why not?</i></p> <p><i>Q11. Should we have labels on the meat stating if was pre-stunned or non-stunned? Why?</i></p>
Take it Further	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Write a letter to your MP and argue that we should change the current law and protect the welfare of animals.2. Write a letter to your MP and argue that we should keep the current law and protect the religious practices.3. Research the work of National Secular Society and their campaign of ending the exemptions to animal welfare laws.
What do secularists think about exemptions to animal welfare law?	<p>Secularists do not believe that religious values are more important than non-religious (viewpoint 1), especially when conflict of values produces some negative effect (e.g. unnecessary suffering of animals). Many argue that religious slaughter does minimise pain of animals, which may have been true historically before we developed better methods (e.g. stunning before slaughter), but today this method is not the optimal for reducing suffering (viewpoint 2). Many critics have argued against “backward” religious practices and used it as an attack towards religious communities themselves,</p>

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especially coming from the intolerant anti-migrant right-wing position. This should not take away from the fact that the ban on exemption to animal welfare is something coming from scientific consensus of the majority of organisations involved in animal welfare (**viewpoint 3 and 4**). Strong secularism is a form of secularism and some might argue for it but not all secularist will (**viewpoint 5**). Most secularist would want to allow and accommodate religious practices and would not demand a complete ban of religious slaughter if it complies with the law without exemptions (**viewpoint 6**).

Secularists argue for one-law-for-all and equality before that law. Religious practices should be accommodated if there are no negative effects of such accommodation for individuals or society. The scientific consensus is clear that it is more humane to stun an animal prior to slaughter than not to do so. Because of this secularist campaign for meat produced from animals that is not stunned before slaughter to be clearly labelled to allow consumer choice. This is a first step in pressing for law changes to end the exemption that permits animals to be slaughtered in the UK without prior stunning.