

# Lesson #1: Islam and Cultural Identity in Europe (Video Clips)

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(Access online or via Lesson 1 digital media folder)	

*Muslim Women in Lyon*  
*Turkish Teacher*  
*Hijab in Europe*  
*Nasheed – Free (Hijab)*



LESSON PLAN



Video Clips

# Islam and Cultural Identity in Europe

## Lesson Objectives:

- Students will review issues related to the experience of Muslim women in Europe.
- Students will understand impacts on Muslim women resulting from cultural prejudice and legal bans on headscarves in some European countries.
- Students will recognize the power of words, images and sound to bias impressions.

## Vocabulary:

Islam, Muslim, headscarf, veil, hijab, daily prayers, identity, secularism

## Media



*Muslim Women in Lyon, France 24, 2007. (2:47)*



*Turkish Teacher, Aljazeera English, 2008. (3:05)*



*Hijab in Europe, Dir by Xavi Sala, 2005. (3:36)*



*Nasheed - Free (Hijab), Perf. By Sami Yusuf, 2008. (3:11)*

## Materials Needed:

- Teacher Guide
- Student Worksheet
- Student Reading
- Video Clips (access online or via Lesson 1 digital media folder)

## Time

50 minutes

## Lesson Procedures:

1. Present *Introduction to the Lesson* to the class.
2. Distribute the *Student Worksheet* for logging the clips.
3. Play the video clips while students log their answers.
4. Lead students through a decoding of the video clips using *Media Sample Questions and Answers Teacher Guide*.
5. Discuss funding sources and credibility in films using *Further Questions*.



TEACHER GUIDE

# Islam and Cultural Identity in Europe



Video Clips

1. Review the *Introduction* to this Kit.
2. Organize and make copies for the class activities.
3. Introduce the lesson:

## Lesson Introduction

Viewing film and video is taken for granted as part of our daily experience, so much that we often overlook the power of moving images to influence our ideas and opinions. In this lesson you will view 4 brief video clips on the topic of cultural identity for Muslim women in Europe. They were made in four European countries – France, Turkey, Spain and England. The media forms you will see include two news reports, a short film and a music video. Each of these clips is an excerpt from a longer broadcast or production.

As you view each excerpt, you will be asked to fill out a worksheet that asks you to analyze the filmmaker's message and the techniques used to communicate that message. After viewing all four excerpts, we will have a discussion about how words, image and sound can impact our understanding of deep and complex issues.

4. Have students read the *Student Reading*. (Optional: give reading as a homework assignment the night before.)
5. Distribute *Student Worksheets*. Have students work individually or in pairs to log each video excerpt.
6. Play the clips, reading the brief introduction to each excerpt and pausing in between for students to write their answers.
7. Lead a discussion of the clips using the *Media Sample Questions and Answers Teacher Guide*. Have students give specific evidence from each clip to back up their answers.



## ***Muslim Women in Lyon*** **France (2:47)**



### **Film 1 Introduction**

This excerpt is from the international television news channel France 24. The “About France 24” web page reports “France 24 is targeting an audience of opinion leaders. Initially, it is broadcast in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the cities of New York and Washington D.C. Its coverage will ultimately extend worldwide. France 24 brings a fresh new look at international developments, with a view to ensuring greater pluralism in a multi-faceted world where information plays a decisive role. To this end, it has been endowed with the necessary resources - both financial and human - to guarantee its editorial independence and enable it to offer new and original reporting.” France 24 is equally owned by two shareholders, France’s largest network, TF1, and the national public television station, France Télévisions.

## **Media Sample Questions & Answers**

**1. What is the filmmaker’s message about the challenges facing Muslim women in Lyon, France?**

**Possible Answer:** Muslim women have difficulty managing their daily prayers and wearing the veil publicly due to prejudice in the workplace and laws banning the headscarf. Family relations have been strained for women like Salima who have converted to Islam and whose relatives hold misinformed views of Islam. Some Muslim women are dominated by men who use their interpretation of Islam to force women into submissive roles.

**2. What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate this message?**

**Possible Answer:** The filmmaker chooses three women to profile, each of whom bring a different perspective on the experience of Muslim women in Lyon. The first is a woman who emigrated to France in 1963, the second a woman who converted to Islam as a teenager and the third a woman who works in an organization opposed to male domination of women. The diverse experiences of these woman inform the concluding statement of this report: “In a never-ending compromise Muslim women in France must find their way somewhere between French laws and their personal faith.”



### *Turkish Teacher* Turkey (3:05)



#### Film 2 Introduction

This excerpt is from Al Jazeera English, an English-language news and current affairs channel, headquartered in Doha. Its “Corporate Profile” webpage reports, “Al Jazeera English is the world’s first global English language news channel to be headquartered in the Middle East. From this unique position, Al Jazeera English is destined to be the English-language channel of reference for Middle Eastern events, balancing the current typical information flow by reporting from the developing world back to the West and from the southern to the northern hemisphere... Building on Al Jazeera Arabic channel’s ground breaking developments in the Arab and Muslim world that have changed the face of news within the Middle East, Al Jazeera English is part of a growing network that is now extending this fresh perspective from regional to global through accurate, impartial and objective reporting.”

## Media Sample Questions & Answers

1.) What is the filmmaker’s message about the challenges facing Muslim women in Turkey?

**Possible Answer:** The Turkish government’s ban on headscarves forces Muslim women to choose between honoring their religious beliefs and the laws of the country. University women have been chased by police for choosing to wear headscarves. Women’s job and educational options have been limited, leaving them in unequal positions with men.

2.) What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate this message?

**Possible Answer:** The filmmaker chooses to use as the primary soundtrack the voice of one woman, primary school teacher Zeynep Piyade, who describes herself as a “feminist Muslim woman”. As Piyade speaks, the filmmaker shows heroic images of women, police confronting university women wearing headscarves, women removing their headscarves while entering the workplace, women gathering together to address common concerns, and an all-male Turkish government session.



### *Hijab in Europe* Spain (3:36)



#### Film 3 Introduction

This excerpt is from a Spanish short dramatic film by filmmaker Xavi Sala. Sala has worked as a director, production assistant, and screenwriter for cinema, television and creative advertising. This film, "Hijab," was nominated for the Best Short Film Award at the Goya awards - or the Spanish Oscars and won Best Narrative Short at the 2008 Fargo Film Festival. The word "hijab" refers to the veil or cover for Islamic women. In the preceding section of this excerpt, the teacher has asked the student to remove her headscarf before entering the classroom on her first day at a new school.

## Media Sample Questions & Answers

1.) What is the filmmaker's message about the challenges facing Muslim women in Spain?

**Possible Answer:** The expectation for female Muslim students in Spain to remove the hijab presents a painful and confusing choice for students of the Islamic faith. Spanish teachers are shown to be insensitive to the feelings and faith commitments of Muslim students. Choosing to maintain one's commitments to Islamic dress is a real challenge for teens in a diverse classroom.

2.) What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate this message?

**Possible Answer:** The filmmaker chooses to illustrate their perspective by telling a short story of a young Muslim woman who must choose between her personal choice to wear the hijab and winning acceptance of teachers and students on her first day at a new school. Most of the interaction is between Fatima, the student, and the teacher who tries to persuade her to remove her hijab. The expressions on the young actress's face suggest the depth of challenge for her character as she is faced with this difficult choice and then with the gazes of the students in the new class. The other student wearing the hijab suggests that it is possible to be true to one's religious beliefs and still attend school.





## *Nasheed – Free Britain* (3:11)



### Film 4 Introduction

This excerpt is from a video using the music of Sami Yusef, a British Muslim. According to his "Biography" webpage, Yusuf is a "composer, singer and an accomplished musician. He was born in July 1980 into a musical family of Azeri origin, thus music played an integral part in his life...To his credit, Sami has sold over a million copies of his debut album 'al-Mu'allim' and his second album 'My Ummah' is exceeding sales of three million copies worldwide. Sami is a devout Muslim who sees songs as a means of promoting the message of love, mercy, peace and tolerance and encouraging the youth to be proud of their religion and identity." He has been called "Islam's biggest rock star" by Time Magazine. The video was made and posted on YouTube by a Muslim in his twenties.

## Media Sample Questions & Answers

1.) What is the filmmaker's message about the challenges facing Muslim women in Europe?

**Possible Answer:** Muslim women face judgments from non-Muslim Europeans who assume that they are oppressed and in despair for having to wear the hijab. The filmmaker suggests that Muslim women do not require "liberation" but rather understanding from the false assumptions placed on them. In the filmmaker's perception, Muslim women choose to wear the hijab as an expression of modesty, dignity and integrity and this choice is a choice which affirms the human rights of freedom and equality.

2.) What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate this message?

**Possible Answer:** The filmmaker chooses to compose his video around a song by a well-known British Muslim. The lyrics of the song further his message by comparing the images of proud Muslim women wearing hijab to images of the natural world. He suggests that the choice to wear the hijab is as natural as a flower, a mountain or a sunset and references images of Muslim women, men and children at prayer.

### FURTHER QUESTIONS

- » Discuss whether and/or how the filmmakers' and speakers' perspectives on the topic might be influenced by their nationality, religion or gender.
- » Who might benefit from each film and who might be harmed?
- » What important information is left out of these excerpts?
- » How credible are these sources?
- » Do you think these clips present a balanced view of opinions regarding the issue of banning headscarves in Europe? Why or why not?
- » How could you find perspectives that support the headscarf ban in Europe?
- » Compare the effectiveness and emotional impact of these three kinds of filmmaking: news reporting, dramatic film and music video.
- » What kinds of actions might one take in response to each film?
- » What group do you know that is working to deal with issues relating to religious tolerance?

### CONNECTIONS

Compare these video clips and their messages with the visual images regarding perspectives on Islam in the Global Media Perspectives lesson on Southeast Asia. How are they similar and different in media form, purpose and credibility of message?

Continue an exploration of assumptions and perceptions of Islam by using Project Look Sharp's digital media literacy kit, *Media Construction of the Middle East*. See Unit 1 – Introducing the Middle East and Unit 4 – Militant Muslims and the U.S.

## Islam and Cultural Identity in Europe

### Student Reading

#### Why Study Global Media Perspectives?

The global media play an essential role in the process of economic and cultural globalization. Today people in France can view commentary from the United States by logging on to MSNBC or The Onion while people in the United States view French perspectives by connecting to the Agence France-Presse homepage or by viewing a video made by a young person from France. Whenever we read a webpage, watch a YouTube video, glance at a magazine cover or listen to a podcast, we are taking in messages about the world. These mediated messages are constructed for particular purposes, they come from a point of view, and they use certain techniques to influence the viewer, reader or listener. Our ability to make good choices depends on our ability to critically analyze and evaluate the media messages we receive.

#### The Islamic veil across Europe

The word hijab comes from the Arabic word for veil and is usually used to describe the headscarves worn by Muslim women. Governments across Europe are debating whether Muslim women should be allowed to wear the hijab in school or in the workplace. In recent years this debate has taken place in courtrooms, across the dinner table and especially in the media throughout the continent, raising issues of religious freedom, female equality, secular traditions, and even fears of terrorism.

Islam's holy book, the Koran, considered by many Muslims to be the literal word of God, instructs both male and female Muslims to dress modestly. For men this means covering the area from the navel to the knee. For women (in the presence of men they are not related to) it is often interpreted as covering everything except their face, hands and feet. Islamic scholars debate as to the specific meaning of modest dress as defined in the Koran.

#### The Hijab in France, Turkey, Spain and Great Britain

France has the largest Muslim population in Western Europe, estimated in 2004 at 5 - 6.5 million people or somewhere between 8-10% of the total French population according to the French government. Most of the French Muslim population has ancestry in the former North African colonies of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Though many Muslims living in France are French citizens, the growth of the Muslim community has strained the French principle of *laïcité*, or the strict separation of church and state. A 2004 ban on "conspicuous" religious symbols in public schools was interpreted by many in France as a ban on the hijab.

In Turkey roughly 99% of the population is Muslim, though the Turkish state is secular or non-religious in orientation. When Turkey applied to join the European Union in 2006, some representatives wondered whether a poor Muslim country could fit in, in turn causing some in Turkey to wonder if the European Union was merely a "Christian club." Due to its commitment to secularism, Turkey has held to a longstanding ban on the wearing of headscarves in civic spaces, including schools, universities and official buildings. A law proposed by the Turkish parliament in 2008 to loosen the headscarf restriction was struck down by the Turkish high court.

Spain has a strong Islamic legacy due to almost 800 years of Moorish rule ending in 1492. Recent immigration of Moroccan workers has brought the Muslim population of Spain to over one million or about 2.3% of the total population. In 2008, Spain's Equality Minister criticized the wearing of the hijab, as "a violation of human rights" that "promoted inequality" among Muslim men and women. She was widely criticized for her remarks by Spanish

Muslim representatives, who said that she should not talk about what she "didn't know about".

According to the 2001 census, Great Britain's 1.6 million Muslim's make up 2.8% of the population. Great Britain's Muslim population is very young; 1/3 is under the age of 16, and very diverse in country of origin, with Muslim communities from East Africa, South Asia and the Middle East. The British government supports multiculturalism and has no laws banning Islamic dress.

### Questioning Media Perspectives Wherever You See Them

Whenever we receive media reporting, it is always important to ask these key questions: Who produced this media document and for what purpose? Who might benefit from this media construction and who might be hurt? How credible is this information and what is left out that might be helpful to know? Consider these questions as you explore the material in the following lesson.



Still-shot from "Nasheed -Free" British music video



Homepage from [Anatolian Storms](#) Turkish blog

**Compare the different messages about the hijab in these European media documents.**

**How might each reflect Muslim attitudes about the hijab in Britain and Turkey?**



## Lesson #1: Student Worksheet For Islam & Cultural Identity In Europe

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Read over the questions below before watching the short video clips. You may want to take notes as you view the clips. You will then be given time to write your answers after viewing the clips.

**Title of Film Clip:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the filmmaker's message about the challenges facing Muslim women in that particular region (France, Turkey, Spain, Europe)?

2. What techniques does the filmmaker use to communicate this message?

