

Megan: [00:00](#) What's up nerds? Welcome to Keeping It 101: A Killjoy's Introduction to religion.

Ilyse: [00:21](#) Hi. Hello. I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, a professor at the university of Vermont ,where I write and teach about Islam, imperialism, racialization of Muslims on the history of religion. I'm also definitely a killjoy, which means I basically ruin the fun with feminist anti-racist critique all the time. Just ask my kids.

Megan: [00:37](#) Hi. Hello. I'm Megan Goodwin. I am the program director for Sacred Writes, which is a Luce-funded project that promotes public scholarship on religion, hosted by Northeastern University. I write and teach about gender, sexuality, white supremacy, minority religions, politics and America, and I think everything is about religion because it IS. On today's episode, our second one, we're going to talk about what defining religion does actually.

Ilyse: [00:59](#) Did y'all bring us an apple? Because class is in session, which means it's time for the LESSON PLAN!

Megan: [00:59](#) So time for the lesson plan, starting with stupid question minute. In the last episode we told you all that religion is what people do. Hey Ilyse, what does that mean?

Ilyse: [01:16](#) So we talked about "religion is what people do" in a couple of ways. The first way I think gets at most of this, which is that people's practices tell us more about religions than texts in particular for like a whole host of reasons. Some religions don't have texts, many religions have multiple texts. Many religions have a long history of many ways of reading the same texts or doing the same kind of prayers, practices, you name it. Many religions have a text or a set of text, but the thing that makes it all religion, like the thing that makes this holiday Christian isn't in that text. And here I'm thinking of like the real basic Christmas trees, right?

Ilyse: [01:56](#) Like nowhere in the new Testament is it like also get a Christmas tree yet and yet we would not, we would not be mistaken if we asked a bunch of kindergartners in the United States what is Christmas and they'd say a Christmas tree, right? So religion is what people do, becomes this really easy phrase to hold on to even as we complicate every single episode how religion operates. And so, so yeah, because religion can be so many different things, thinking about "religion is what people do" gives us a foothold even as we sort of destroy the landscape around it.

Megan: [02:34](#) And so when listeners are out in the world thinking about religion and someone says, the Quran says this, so Muslims do that...hopefully you'll reflect back to our charming conversations and think like, Hmm, I bet it's more complicated than that. What would Ilyse say?

Ilyse: [02:51](#) No one should ever be asking themselves what I say. But they might want to say, if the Koran says X, does that mean Muslims believe X or do X or have they always, then that's, that's a net gain for us. We've, we've won podcasting, if that's a thing that happens.

Megan: [03:07](#) On episode two! Congratulations to us.

Megan: [03:11](#) On today!

Ilyse: [03:12](#) <tongue pop>

Megan: [03:12](#) So now that we've defined religion, we want to think about why defining religion matters. What happens when we say certain people or certain behaviors or certain places are religious and, and this is really what I care about. What...not that...all of it is important, obviously. But what I really care about is who gets left out, right? So what happens when people or behaviors or places or texts, all of that stuff that we said makes up religion gets left out of what counts as religion in specific contexts. On this very special episode of Keeping It 101, we'll give you the 101 on why defining religion matters.

Megan: [03:48](#) We'll think about how what some people do counts as religion legally, popularly historically and how what other people do does not count as religion and to do that we'll talk through one example in American legal history, which is my whole gig.

Ilyse: [04:01](#) and listen, here's a disclaimer. American legal history, whether she wants to admit it or not, is actually Megan's whole gig. But just because we're going to focus on the United States today doesn't mean that this is the only place where religion functions in this way where laws are set up to exclude and include all at the same time. We're definitions of religion have to be clear in order to make sure we know who we're talking about. We're focusing on the United States and in this very special episode. The example that's to follow because this is the thing Megan knows really well, but also because we're not mean you can't handle three case studies in three places in the world, but never fear. We're going to get to global things with me next episode. Very excited for next episode and global things.

- Megan: [04:52](#) But first: primary sources. It's the bit where we talk about how this affects us as people because...we are.
- Ilyse: [04:59](#) All right. Megan, why don't you start us off this time. What is your primary source, uh, experience with how defining religion affects who you are, how we exist in the world. You name it.
- Megan: [05:10](#) Okay. I will talk about my example of trying to get healthcare set up with a primary care physician when I moved to Maine. So Maine is a funky state for a lot of reasons and like a lot of places that struggle with poverty and have a lot of rural spaces, a lot of the healthcare that's available in Maine is through Catholic hospitals. And a thing that a Catholic hospital is going to want to know when they're setting up your primary care gig is what religion you are not for -- like not necessarily because they are using it to provide care for you. But if something happens and you're on death's doorstep, they want to know who to call. So my defining religion, primary source this week is going in and trying to explain to a very nice Catholic healthcare provider that I'm Pagan. And she did not know what was and I did a little bit of explanation, but where she starting is not, wow, religion is so interesting and please tell me about it, giant nerd. What she wants to know is, which box do I check? Right? And the boxes that are available do not include Pagan or witch or any of that stuff. So she's going through the lesson, she asks if she can put me down as a Spiritualist, which is not what I am, but was a fascinating moment in like Maine medical history. And I said, no thank you. So I am currently unaffiliated in that hospital system. So for me the primary source is really this religious studies scholars are people that care about religion, think of religion as this like big, vibrant, nebulous, hard to pin down thing. But for people that have to fill out forms or people who like make laws as we will discuss later, religion is a lot about "how do I fit you into a box that makes sense?"
- Ilyse: [06:45](#) Yeah! Where are you on the dropdown menu?
- Megan: [06:48](#) Yeah, right. Do I, do I have a button that I can push for you? No? Well then you're a problem and maybe you don't count.
- Ilyse: [06:54](#) Yeah. Yeah. So my primary source is in the same vein. I have two kiddos. One is six years old and one is two. One is in public school, the other is in a daycare that follows the public school calendar, which means as Jewish folk living in Vermont, which is despite being known, at least at this moment by Bernie Sanders, is not known for its Jews. And that means that none of our holidays are days off in any of these kinds of public or pseudo-public kinds of spaces. Right. Because the daycare is private but

follows a public calendar because it is acknowledging that the public calendar is a thing that most of the constituency of this daycare will acknowledge as a real calendar. So none of our Jewish holidays are off Christian holidays, our days that we don't have care despite as Jewish people. The theory being that we could work on those days, right? Like Christmas is just Wednesday for me and so in a capitalist system one would think that that would be a day that the systems would want me to work but I can't because I do not have childcare and childcare is a thing that's deeply important for my ability to work. You were laughing cause you have met my wild children.

- Megan: [08:08](#) I love them so much but no work is not possible.
- Ilyse: [08:10](#) Nooo. I also work at a public institution and my university calendar is the same. They claim that no one gets religious holidays off though there is an exception for Good Friday and they can claim that because the calendar is oriented around Christmas, right? Like we don't have finals during Christmas or before New Year's. The semester ends with enough time to get there because of a history of Christian stuff. So, uh, and like for the record, since I come from a long line of public school teachers and think daycare workers are grotesquely underpaid and undervalued and it's gendered and classed, and raced in all sorts of fucked up ways. Oh shoot, I shouldn't swear on the podcast!
- Megan: [08:48](#) You can swear on the podcast. It's our podcast. Okay. Damn hell ass!
- Ilyse: [08:51](#) Purple monkey dishwasher!
- Ilyse: [09:00](#) Uh, I want everyone to have more than a week off at Christmas, right? And like the daycare has to close in order for folks to have proper time off. What I, what I mean to say in this primary source example though, is that my religion, despite being a so-called major religion, still doesn't actually count. I have to fight. I have to advocate. I have to remind my kids' teachers that they're not sick, that they are in fact Jews and not coming to school that day. I have to argue to observe my religious traditions and with antisemitism on an unprecedented historical rise. We could imagine that that might have risk to me or my family, whether that's like big picture risk, like risk of outing yourself as Jewish in a moment where you might feel unsafe to do that but more likely like risk of using sick days that you need for being sick or the risk of being seen as needing a special accommodation in a system that doesn't want anyone to have any special accommodations ever. And I would say on the

personal end too, it means that I, and this has been like genuinely pissing me off recently, it means that I don't have the luxury of doing the holidays in a way that my Christian counterparts get to. Right. There's no like leisurely take off and there's no like come down at the end. If Yom Kippur is on a Wednesday and I teach Tuesday, Thursday I come home, I have things already ready. We do it. I don't go to work on Wednesday but I wasn't going to work on Wednesday anyway cause I wasn't teaching that day. And then Thursday I go back as if that wasn't my highest holiday of the year. It doesn't prevent anyone from sending me emails that day. It doesn't prevent anyone from thinking that I should have the same 24 hour turnaround. But like as a Jewish person, I don't send people emails on Christmas. So it's all these different ways that are both legal and public and private and personal--that defining religion matters.

Megan: [10:45](#) Well, and it sounds to me too, like it's not just about clearly identified religious exceptions, right? Because legally you are entitled to days off to observe your holidays, but they're not assumed. They're not normalized. Everybody doesn't take off for Yom Kippur despite the fact that Yom Kippur is the biggest holiday for a major world religion. And we'll talk about that next week. But it's also things like--hmm--you get Christmas off whether or not you celebrate Christmas, the assumption is this is how we ordered the year, right? So things like calendars and schedules just smuggle Christianity in even if you yourself are not Christian.

Ilyse: [11:23](#) Right! Absolutely. And also like to say nothing of the way that sick days, vacation days are not standard, not guaranteed and often fought for in and of themselves. And so if you are an observant Jew and you need to take that day off, just because you're legally allowed to take that day off doesn't mean you actually have that day available to take off. So yeah, I uh, my primary source is, calendars and why I'm mad about them. And uh, at the end of the episode I will give some recommendations on what to read that's not just about Jewish experience, but about Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu experience around fighting for access to calendar representations.

Megan: [12:00](#) Oh, I love that. Let's do that. Yeah.

Silly sounds: [12:10](#) [Mr Roger's Train Sounds]

Megan: [12:10](#) Next section: What's the 1-0-1? So this is the segment where we do some professor-work as our inspiration, Hannah McGregor would say. We are claiming that there are material consequences to defining religion. Basically that when we say

this counts as religion or that doesn't count as religion, it's not just an academic question. It affects how people are able to live their lives and be themselves out in the world. So what does that mean?

- Ilyse: [12:34](#) I think it means that defining religion affects real people in real time and real systems, right? So it's never just academic. Just like this example of a calendar, right? Like we can go toe to toe on whether or not most Jews celebrate Yom Kippor or what day of the year Eid is going to fall and Muslims might disagree amongst themselves, but if your kids don't have access to having that day off, if you don't have sick days to take, if holidays are not a thing that's recognized, that's a, that's a real decision you have to make. You have to decide if it's safe in your rural community to out yourself and your family as not coming in on a certain day. Right? So obviously we're going to talk in the next couple of minutes about the academic stuff. How definitions of religion I have developed over time and we're going to absolutely get to that more explicitly in the next episode, episode three, but we're going to focus on this practical example because keeping it 1-0-1 means showing and not just telling.
- Silly sounds: [13:35](#) I need something for show and tell!
- Megan: [13:37](#) And that means I'm totally going to talk and also show you a picture on the internet about the Satanic Temple.
- Ilyse: [13:42](#) Can you, can you tell me what the Satanic Temple is? Megan, I don't know! (That's a lie. I know everybody, but I want Megan to tell. I want Megan to tell you in a way that she has told me for years and years and years why I should care about the Satanic Temple.)
- Megan: [13:57](#) They're so interesting and particularly if you care about legal definitions of religion, you have to be paying attention to what's going on in the Satanic Temple. So the satanic temple is a group that gets founded in the 21st century that cares so much about religious freedom in the United States, which is a thing Americans say we're really invested in and actually really suck at doing. So the satanic temple focuses on making sure that people have the freedom to practice their religion, how and where they want. And this is really their big thrust is getting the government to not pick sides in religion. So the two things that I'm talking about, there are disestablishment and free exercise. Those are your keywords for today.
- Silly sounds: [14:41](#) it's our secret word of the day!

Megan: [14:44](#) Disestablishment and free exercise are two of the three constitutional protections that Americans are guaranteed with respect to religion. So people talk about the separation of church and state. Like it's a thing like we can just point to it in the constitution and then it's sorted. But there are tons of court cases spanning the entire history of the United States trying to figure out what it means to say that we are invested in disestablishment and free exercise. So quick definitions. When we talk about disestablishment, it means that the United States government constitutionally can't favor one religion over other religions. There's not allowed to be a state religion. We are not allowed to as the state of North Carolina tried to do several years ago say, uh, we are a Christian nation. Officially, people can feel that way, but legally we can't act in that way. Free exercise sounds like it's about letting religions do what they want, but historically has meant religions are allowed to believe what they want or religious people are allowed to believe what they want and then they can fight with the courts about whether or not they get to act on those beliefs.

Megan: [15:42](#) So the Satanic temple spends a lot of time thinking about this disestablishment question and how and where the U S government or state governments try to pick sides and exclude some religions while favoring mostly white Christianity. So what I hear you saying is that one of the major ways we can see the material consequences to defining religion is in legal systems. Yeah, no, it is. And I am still struggling with the fact that I guess I do work on legal history. My research tricked me into caring about legal history because laws force us to define our terms. We talked last time about how big and complicated and messy religion is. Hey, Ilyse, what kind of things make up religion? What goes under religion?

Ilyse: [16:24](#) Like all of the things.

Megan: [16:27](#) Mmhmm. List the things.

Ilyse: [16:27](#) Okay. So, uh, texts, Holy languages, relics, art, ideas about the divine, communities, rituals, individual practices, which I guess in my mind means things like, but not limited to prayers. Uh, wearing religious clothing, observing holidays, maybe having access to appropriate food, but that actually comes back down to legal stuff too. Cause like, can you call something kosher if it's not kosher? Can you call something halal if it isn't halal?. I guess it could mean belief or not. I guess it could be public or private. But am getting at it, man?

Megan: [17:00](#) Yes. Good job, Professor Morgenstein Fuerst. Um, yeah, no, defining religion is a hot mess. Religion is all of the things, right? Anything that someone is doing and saying that they're doing religion can count as religious, as religion for people who work on religion like we do. But, um, that's not how the law works. The law actually needs definitions. It needs lines. It needs boxes. It needs an item on the drop down menu. So the US constitution makes religion special. Uh, religion is special in other places too, but that's Ilyse's problem, and we'll, we'll come back to that. But the U S constitution protects Americans from being told that they have to be a specific religion to have the full protection of the government. And it protects us from sort of being told how we're allowed to practice our religion. If you're going to legally protect something like religion, you have to define your terms. So laws are a place where we define what religion is, what kind of behaviors, people, spaces, objects count as religion. And so this brings us to our next segment show and tell.

Silly sounds: [17:58](#) All right back to show and tell!

Ilyse: [18:01](#) Alright! It's show and tell! In this segment we are going to you know, show you stuff and tell you stuff about the things that we just showed you and told you and told you. So I want to ask in this section as we are continuing to show you and tell you why we care about defining religion specifically around the satanic temple in the United States. The question that's organizing me here is what happens when we decide certain things count as legitimate ways of doing religion and other things don't. What are the consequences of those boundaries? So let's let, let's show and tell ya!

Megan: [18:39](#) So my show and tell for today is the Satanic Temple's statute of Baphomet, which if you watched any of the chilling adventures of Sabrina, the teenage witch and the beginning of the first season, you probably saw a picture of because they straight up stole it from the Satanic temple and then later settled out of court! So we will uh, include some background on the satanic temple and also put a picture of the statue in our show notes. And you can always find us on Twitter. You can find us on Twitter and if you tweet at us, I will show you other pictures. You can also tweet at the Satanic temple, Lucian Graves would probably be happy to talk to you. So, okay. Spoilers. Members of the satanic temple, they don't eat babies, but they do care a lot about religious freedom. People assume that Satanists are kind of anti Christian, but this organization is really organized around holding US and state government to its word about constitutional protections for religious difference.



Megan: [19:32](#) Okay. So why are we talking about the statue. First I need you to picture it. It is very large. It is a giant goat headed figure that has angel wings and has children like snuggling its knees. It is meant to be provocative to look upon and they commissioned it first tonight I want to say 2015 when the Oklahoma state government wanted to put a 10 Commandments monument on state owned property is the satanic temple said these monuments historically have been used to prop up specific readings of Christianity and we would really prefer because we're guaranteed constitutionally that the U S and state governments will not establish a religion that you didn't put a monument to one specific religion or even arguably two specific religions on state grounds. And Oklahoma said, but we're gonna though. So the Satanic Temple said, cool! Well if we're going to put religious representations on state, on grounds, we would also like to represent our religion. And here is this giant goat dude. You can have it.

Ilyse: [20:36](#) Let me ask a silly question.

Megan: [20:37](#) Sure I love a silly question.

Ilyse: [20:39](#) This is pretty snarky, right?

Megan: [20:41](#) It's not, not snarky, but that doesn't mean it's not also serious. The fact that it is the top, that it's big and showy doesn't mean that they're not trying to make a serious point. And that's one of the reasons that I like the say tannic temple in terms of thinking about how we define religion because they're making an over the top point, but one that also affects everyday people in way smaller and sneakier ways like, can my kids get off for Hanukkah?

Ilyse: [21:09](#) I was going to say my kids do not need to have off for Hanukkah, but point taken.

Megan: [21:15](#) they got off for Christmas though.

Ilyse: [21:18](#) Oh sure did.

Megan: [21:19](#) Anyway, so Oklahoma says, yeah, you're a fake religion. Beat it and bless 'em, bless, bless the local Hindus in Oklahoma said, "Hmm, we would like to put a giant statue of Hanuman next to your 10 commandments. Tell us we're a fake religion."

Ilyse: [21:37](#) Oh, I really like the solidarity here.

- Megan: [21:40](#) It was really lovely. And this is a place where, again, I have appreciated the satanic temple because they are shown solidarity by other minoritized groups. And they also show up for minoritized groups in really impressive ways. So after a number of, uh, anti Muslim violence incidents, uh, they have offered to accompany Muslims just to the grocery store so they can get out if they're not feeling safe, they're like, we won't wear anything scary. We won't identify ourselves as Satanists. But like, if you just want some big, like, don't mess with us lookin' dudes to go to the grocery store with you so nobody messes with you, we got your back.
- Megan: [22:13](#) You know, it's, it's a group, it's complicated. But as a group, they have done some impressive work. So, okay. Oklahoma tries to, tries to put a 10 commandments, a monument up, Satanic Temple pushes back. They also get a solidarity moment from the local Hindus, Oklahoma backs down. Arkansas. Uh, I think the very next year decides that they're going to do something similar and they got their monument up. So the day it went up, folks from the satanic temple showed up with the giant statue hold, a religious freedom, freedom of speech rally right in front of it. And it is currently living in Salem, but the satanic temple is suing the state of Arkansas for religious discrimination, basically.
- Ilyse: [22:56](#) Okay. So can I, can I give a quick recap to see if I'm following?
- Megan: [22:59](#) Yes please!
- Ilyse: [23:00](#) I've got two separate states. The Satanic Temple sue's in both cases, where two separate States erect a monument that is ostensibly about Christianity, though one could argue about Judaism and Christianity. In Oklahoma, they backed down on their own after a show of solidarity, but not before the state of Oklahoma telling the satanic temple that they are not a real religion, which is fascinating.
- Megan: [23:24](#) Yeah. Yeah. It really is. And the places that you see these arguments about what is and isn't a real religion, most clearly are in these legal examples. We see them in lawsuits and we see them in prisons.
- Ilyse: [23:35](#) Okay. And so then Arkansas gets on the wagon. They build their thing, the Satanic Temple protests. But seemingly the protest doesn't go anywhere because or, or is in the process of going somewhere because there is now a lawsuit around religious discrimination.

Megan: [23:49](#) That's correct. So they, they brought the statue in as a protest, but they were not granted land next to you or in proximity to the 10 commandments monument. And they clarified, by the way, this is important that they didn't want it there. They didn't want the Baphomet statue to be there just to be there. They only want it in conversation with the 10 commandments monument. So if they'll take the 10 commandments monument down, they won't put the statue up. But if the 10 commandments are going to speak to Christian and kind of Jewish, but this is, this movement has really been a white Christian movement.

Ilyse: [24:19](#) Oh, Oh yes, yes indeed.

Megan: [24:21](#) Also was directly connected to the 10 commandments movie, which is a thing that I learned. Like MGM actually made the a lot of these and gave them out for free. That's how they started popping up in the 50s.

Ilyse: [24:30](#) Everything about that makes me so weirded out. I don't, I don't know what to say. Is it like, okay, well that's a separate episode. Everybody that's a rabbit hole...

Megan: [24:43](#) Charlton Heston did speeches about of course he, yeah, about how the America is a Christian nation and a morality is actually really simple and you're welcome because he gave you a list.

Ilyse: [24:55](#) That makes it even more upsetting that my Hebrew school wants she'll the 10 commandment because a teacher was sick.

Megan: [25:05](#) Okay. No one should show a child Charlton Heston. No child should have to look at that. I should never have to explain to my fictional child why Charlton Heston is, the end. That's how I feel about that.

Ilyse: [25:16](#) Cool. So I really do appreciate that this example shows us both that movies are real and have real effect in the world, but also that religion and defining religion has real effect in the world because the very fact that Oklahoma can snap back at a religious organization and say, you are not a proper religion and only upon hearing from a so-called proper world's religion, does that seem like a fire not worth playing with.

Megan: [25:42](#) Yeah, I mean again, it sounds silly. It sounds like a stunt, right? It is hard for, I think, some folks to take seriously a state saying, I want to do this thing that seems super normal and commonplace. I want to look at the 10 commandments and

then for a group to say, "Hmm, that's not fair. Please accept my giant goat head dude." It seems ridiculous on the surface, except that we live in a country that says state governments and the federal government can't pick sides. You don't get to say this religion is valid and that religion isn't. So if all religions are valid, then the tenets that are espoused in the 10 commandments--right? Community relationship with the divine relationship with your family--should get to sit next to the tenets held dear by, the Satanic Temple, things like reason and compassion and empathy. These should be able to, if you'll forgive me, coexist and Oklahoma and Arkansas, were not having it. And the satanic temple basically called them on violating the disestablishment clause of the first amendment.

Silly sounds: [26:43](#)

[Mr Rogers Train Sounds].

Ilyse: [26:47](#)

Alright. So it seems after that really fascinating and like it feels like an only in America moment, but it's not that we've arrived at our thesis, which is that defining religion does work on people. It does real work in and on communities and it makes it possible to perform or restrict practice.

Megan: [27:09](#)

Yeah!

Ilyse: [27:10](#)

And so for me as a historian, that means that that literally whole groups have been denied in the United States first amendment rights because they were not seen as a proper religion or a formal religion or a real religion. And it also means both historically and in an ongoing way. And that way that these legal definitions have a pernicious way of replicating themselves. Because if it's a legal definition, you have to fight that legality at every turn. And so I'm thinking here about even groups like Sikhs who are a recognized religion, the IRS sees them as, as worthy of the religious designation for nonprofits. Sikhs, however, have had to fight for and win rights, like being able to serve in the police force while also, uh, wearing a turban. And so even if Sikhi or Sikhism had already been a religion that was "counting," to be fully counted and be able to have freedom to choose a career or a military service or playing basketball has been fought through the courts, not through public opinion.

Megan: [28:18](#)

Right! Absolutely. And then practically in American history, this has meant that religions that are not white mainstream, mostly Protestantism have tried to make themselves legible, understandable look more like religion by looking more like American Protestantism. We'll talk about this more when we talk about why religion is not a native category. Rest in peace, JZ Smith.

Silly sounds: [28:42](#) [Reading Rainbow Noises.]

Ilyse: [28:42](#) Don't pack up your stuff yet, nerds, you've got homework!

Silly sounds: [28:45](#) Homework! What homework?

Megan: [28:48](#) Don't forget that all of this and more will be in the show notes or you can find us on Twitter and talk about it there. For today's homework class, there are a lot of great books about thinking through how definitions of religion have material consequences on people.

Ilyse: [29:00](#) So for me, I want to come back to both the question of legality that we've been talking about the whole episode, but also to my primary source. So I've got two short media items that you can find in the show notes. Both are about laws and calendars. So in 2015 the New York city public school system recognized formally Eid as a Muslim holiday as one of the days that the New York city public school system would be closed. And that's a major victory because New York city public schools is the largest school district in the country. And usually what New York does other schools find possible to do. So that was in 2015 and right now as of March of 2019 New York state is entertaining a recent that would allow New York's--New York State schools--so any school in the state of New York to close without penalty as part of their, you know, like 180 days mandatory attendance, it would allow those schools to close for Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim holidays provided that that school district had something like seven and a half percent of its population identifying in that way. So I've got a lot of issues around like who do identify as who counts, who doesn't. But those are communities that have been historically completely marginalized, absolutely underrepresented. And yet in New York state, at least in New York city in particular, you've got folks advocating for and arguing for this kind of inclusion that allows kids and families to not necessarily make choices, right? Like if you have the day off, then you can make a decision as a family that's private. If you don't have the day off, you have to publicly say to a secretary, a principal, an administrator, I'm keeping my kid out of school. So those are my two short pieces. They're both really short, like news articles.

Megan: [30:39](#) That sounds awesome. And also this sounds like a potential action item. So even if your religious holidays are represented by the quote unquote secular calendar, this would be a great thing to check in with your school systems about. You could maybe write some letters or ask some school councils, how are we being accommodating of religious difference?

- Ilyse: [31:00](#) Yes, yes. One of the things that I have told other parents to do is to ask if the school has an interfaith calendar available and if it is hard to get to from the school district's main calendar page. It's really simple, but if it's not, if holidays aren't listed on the school calendar at all, regardless of whether or not it's possible to get those days off, then no one even knows it's a thing.
- Megan: [31:22](#) I love that and I love an action item. My homework is I've got a super nerdy scholarly list of resources they may want to look at. Again, we will include these on the show notes and I've got one fun. You can watch it on Hulu examples, so when we're talking about defining religion and why American laws require us to define religion in order to protect it, my go to is Winnie Sullivan's and possibility of religious freedom. It is an oldie but a goodie. If we're looking at how defining religious protections have affected minority religious communities. I really like Sarah Barringer Gordon's Mormon question and if you want to think about groups like the Satanic Temple or things like pastafarianism or the Jedi religion. Carol Cusec invented religions does a really great job of helping us think through why taking quote unquote parody or invented religion seriously should change the way that we think about the category of religion. All of those are very smart and I love them and if you tweet at me I will tweet right back at you about them. And then my fun one, not that these aren't all fun obviously it's fun to learn but my multimedia example is the documentary Hail Satan (Question Mark), which is currently available on Hulu came out last year and it is specifically about the efforts of the Satanic temple to protect disestablishment and free exercise in the United States.
- Ilyse: [32:40](#) So before we outline what's coming next on our, on our syllabus, I want to remind everyone that you can follow us on Twitter at keeping it underscore 1-0-1. You can follow me at prof IRMF. That's P, R O. F. I, R, M F. And you can follow Megan at MPG P. H. D. we post a lot of silly stuff, you guys, and you will be missing out. So come --. So come hang out with us online.
- Megan: [33:06](#) You can also check out our show notes, episodes, lots of other things at keeping it. 1-0-1 dot com Hey Ilyse, what's up next time?
- Ilyse: [33:14](#) So next time we're gonna talk about religions, plural. We're going to specifically, let me go hog wild on what is called the world's religions paradigm. But mostly we're going to talk about why these categories, like if you named five top religions, what would they be are problematic and violent and Imperial. It's

going to be awesome. It's going to be globally focused and I am going to be a grump about it.

- Megan: [33:40](#) I have two American dollars that say that you cannot get through this episode without talking about the East India company. Let's find out.
- Ilyse: [33:46](#) Is that a challenge? All right.
- Megan: [33:48](#) Tell me about the rifles. Rifles, George.
- Ilyse: [33:53](#) All right, well until next time: Peace out, nerds.
- Megan: [33:57](#) Do your homework. It's on the syllabus.
- Speaker 1: [34:16](#) [Theme song]
- Megan: [34:17](#) what is this very special episode.