

Movie Kit

In God We Trust: Religion



American
Spaces



Year of Release: 2005

Length: 27 minutes

English level: Medium/Hard

Themes: Religious Diversity; Democratic Values

Link: <https://americanspaces.kanopy.com/video/god-we-trust-religion>

Please Note:

1. American Spaces Coordinators should **work together with their Public Affairs Sections** in planning programs for the American Spaces, and to determine appropriate themes and content.
2. This film is available at no charge through **Kanopy**, which can be accessed through **eLibraryUSA** (<https://elibraryusa.state.gov/>)
3. American Spaces should log onto their **institutional eLibraryUSA account** with their existing username and password. Spaces that would like to **request accounts** can email americanspaces@america.gov to request them.
4. Films on Kanopy **cannot be downloaded** ahead of time, and is only available via streaming service. Therefore, American Spaces staff should ensure the Space has the **technological capability for an event that relies on streaming video**. American Spaces staff should have a back-up plan ready in case of technological challenges.

Warning/General Advisory

Film is acceptable for audiences of all ages.

Context (from Kanopy video summary)

Most religions define themselves by their respective rituals and traditions. What is remarkably consistent, however, is the role that virtually all religions play in the lives of their followers. Religion in the United States and its effect on the tapestry of American society - and politics - are the focus of this lesson.

Key Vocabulary

- **Religious pluralism** – an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society.
- **1965 Immigration and Nationality Act** – a law that ended an immigration-admissions policy based on national origin, and established new immigration policies for reuniting immigrant families and attracting skilled labor.

- **Tolerance** – A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry.
- **Spirituality** – the quality of being concerned with the human spirit, religion, or religious matters

Discussion Questions

- **This film shared different religions or spiritual beliefs that Americans practice – what are some of these religions or belief systems practiced in America?**

Christianity (which includes Catholicism, Protestantism, and more sub-groups/denominations), Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. There is great diversity in the religions and faiths practiced in the United States. The film also talks about the less well-known religion of Voodoo, and some of the related faith-based practices in Louisiana. Overall, religion is important to most Americans with 76% of Americans identifying themselves as belonging to a religious group (according to Pew Research Center). In addition, there are about 3,000 religious groups in the United States.

About 23-24% of Americans do not identify as having any religious affiliation. Some of these people do not have religious beliefs, while others consider themselves as “Spiritual but not religious.”

- **What role did religion play in fueling early immigration to the American colonies?**

The issue of religious freedom has played a significant role in the history of the United States. Beginning with the earliest settlements, Europeans came to America to escape religious oppression. This desire guided the Founding Fathers of the United States to create a country that has the separation of church and state as one of its principal foundations. Additionally, the freedom to practice one's faith without fear of persecution was guaranteed. That guarantee was clearly stated in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

- **How do the speakers explain the relationship between Catholicism and Voodooism in Louisiana?**

In the 1700's, American colonists began bringing African slaves into Louisiana. These slaves had their own religions. The slave owners refused to allow the slaves to practice their religious beliefs. Instead, Catholic missionaries tried to convert the slaves to Catholicism. The slaves incorporated many of the Catholic religious figures and rituals into their own religious practices as a way to cover up some of their traditional practices. The speakers explain this as the spiritual path of Voodooism.

- **What role has religious pluralism played in American society?**

U.S. religious pluralism traces its origins to America's colonial past, when members of persecuted religious minorities migrated from Europe to the New World so they could freely practice their faiths. Followers of all faiths are protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. This enables the United States - which is made up of people of many different faiths - to exist without warfare or the persecution of religious minorities. Religious tolerance is a key element to preserving a diverse, free society.

- **What does the phrase “separation between church and state” mean?**

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution mandates that the government shall not establish any religion, or favor any religion over another.

- **What religious beliefs and protections have you seen in your communities?**

Share America Resources:

<https://share.america.gov/why-religious-freedom-matters-to-americans/>

<https://share.america.gov/american-religious-landscape/>

<https://share.america.gov/pence-u-s-stands-for-religious-freedom-always/>

<https://share.america.gov/declaration-of-religious-freedom/>