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What Students Need to Know
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High school geography and world history textbooks lay the foundation for students' life-long understanding of the world in which they live. Since the anniversary of 9/11 coincides with the start of the school year, this is a good moment to take stock and consider what our students should know about the world that was not in their textbooks prior to 2001. Since the events of 9/11 highlighted Islam as a religion we did not really notice, let me identify what we now realize our students should know about it.

Students need to know that Europe is home to millions of Muslims. Given Europe's centuries-long history as the center of Christianity and then as the cradle of the Enlightenment, we have overlooked the large numbers of Muslims who have immigrated into European countries. Immigration has been so large that France may now be 10 percent Muslim, while Holland is 5 percent, and Great Britain 3 percent.

Similarly, students should know that an increasing number of United States citizens are Muslims. Islam in the nation's fastest growing religion and it will shortly become, if it has not already, the second largest religion in the country (after Christianity). In the United States, like Europe, Islam is not a religion out there, but is increasingly "in here."

Students should learn that successful integration of immigrants, especially Muslims, requires planning and careful thought. As a nation of immigrants, the United States has long known that settling large numbers of newcomers is difficult and that they go through a long period of adjustment, sometimes over two or even three generations. Part of this integration is economic--many of the rioters in Paris last winter and many of the home-grown terrorists recently arrested in Britain are unemployed young Muslim men.

But part of the integration is cultural. The Muslim desire for religious and economic freedom often is not matched by a desire to live in a society that promotes individual freedom in cultural and moral spheres of life. In fact, much of the Muslim revulsion against the West (the revulsion that feeds terrorism) is due to our society's

refusal to require "proper" ethical behavior. This is especially true of the sexually-enticing character of Western popular culture.

Students should know that the Muslim world has not undergone an Enlightenment as we understand it. Although the adoption of Islamic mathematical, medical, architectural, and scientific techniques brought Europe out of the Dark Ages, the last three centuries have put such knowledge on a new foundation. During this time, the Enlightenment altered the West from a culture based on religion to a culture based on the application of human reason. This change enabled not only modern science, technology and medicine, but also the social sciences and humanities, where reason is used to analyze human creations, from art to automobiles, and human activity, whether as individuals or in groups. Indeed, our entire educational system, from K-12 to graduate study, derives from Enlightenment principles of reason.

Students should realize that although many Muslim individuals are excellent scientists, engineers, doctors, and educators (indeed, they probably will be taught by some of them), most Islamic societies have not yet undergone this Enlightenment process. They do not have the social structures in place that mediate between religious and scientific domains of experience. They have not experienced the decades, even centuries, of struggle between the two types of knowledge, religious and scientific, that the West underwent.

While such struggles constitute part of the adjustment problems Muslim immigrants have had with Western society for decades, they are also being felt in the Middle East. Iran, for example, recently called for the expulsion of "liberal professors," that is, those educated in Western Enlightenment-based thought, from its universities. As Islam seeks to find this balance, its struggles will surely affect the rest of the world.

9/11 brought to the West the recognition that Islam, the globe's second-largest religion, plays a major part in the world, both in far-away countries and here at home. Our high schools and universities should be preparing their students to live in that world.