

Exploring Secularism

**A 15-week discussion curriculum
for high school groups**



secular
student
alliance

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

Welcome everyone to our first meeting of the year. First, I would like to introduce my leadership team, our advisor, and myself to all of you. Then I want to go around the room and have everyone say their name and pronouns, what grade level they are, and what drew their interest to our chapter. After the introductions, I will play some clips that go over what our chapter is about as well as answering the question, "What is Secularism?". When these clips finish, we will wrap up the meeting by answering any questions you might have.

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing video clips
- Sign-in sheet
- Pencils or pens

Media:

- [Introduction the Secular Student Alliance](#)
- [What is Secularism?](#)
- [Brief History of Secularism](#)

Discussion questions:

- What drew you to this chapter?
- What events interested you and what event do you want to see be held?

ATHEISTS, SKEPTICS & HUMANISTS

Introduction:

Today we will begin our discussion with what everyone has researched in smaller groups. After these smaller group discussions, we will come together and watch each clip going over the traits of each group. When the clips finish, we will participate in cross the line. For this game, we have a line of tape on the group, and everyone will stand on one side. When I say a trait, you will cross the line if you identify with it. Then I will say a topic, and if you identify with it, you will pass the line. The hope is to find similar minded people in our group and being able to connect with them.

Media:

- [Atheist VS Agnostic-How Do They Compare & What's The Difference?](#)
- [What is Humanism?](#)
- [What is Skepticism?](#)
- [Are you a Free Thinker? \(Take the Test\):](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Painters tape, for cross the line



WEEK 2

ATHEISTS, SKEPTICS & HUMANISTS

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Welcome returning students and newcomers to your chapter and leadership team. Reintroduce the topic for this meeting and lightly go over what was needed from the last meeting.
- (6-15 Min) Have a leadership member take a small group of members to discuss one of the topics. Have each leader be a scribe or note-taker for the group. This will come in hand for after the clips are shown.
- (15-30 Min). Have the members stay in small groups while you play each clip until the time suggested. During the clips, the chapter leader will create five columns for each topic to write down the group findings. Then after the last group leader presents quickly, go over what was written down.

Discussion Questions:

- What is something new you learned today about atheists, skeptics, and humanists?
- Can you be an Atheist and Agnostic?
- Which section resonated with you the most?



WEEK 3

WHAT IS BEING ATHEIST?

Introduction:

This week we will discuss what we think being an Atheist means as well as planning for Ask an Atheist Day. For those who identify as being atheists, you will lead discussions on how being an Atheist affected your life. On the whiteboard, I will write down what we think being an Atheist means as a group and also how media has portrayed Atheism. Then we will watch two clips about Atheism. After the clips finish, as a group, we will compare what we wrote to what was shown in the clips. To complete this meeting, we will go over commonly asked questions about Atheism and the answer we found today.

Media:

- [President Obama on Atheism/Real Time with Bill Maher](#)
- [Challenges Facing Atheists in the U.S.](#)

Discussion Questions:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Whiteboard and Whiteboard markers

WHAT IS BEING ATHEIST?

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Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to be an Atheist?
- How can we help promote Atheism?
- What are common issues that non-Atheists bring up during discussion?

Introduction:

We are celebrating Banned Books Week by discussing our favorite books and seeing if they have been banned either by our school or in history. Last week I asked each of you to bring your favorite book and also do some research to see if they have been banned or are currently banned. We are going to watch two clips of the top-most banned books from the last year as well as books that have been surprisingly banned. After these clips, we as a group are going to pick which book surprised us that was on the banned list from the clips and our school's banned list. To wrap up this meeting, we will answer the following question, "Is there a good reason to ban a book?"

Media:

- [Top 11 Most Challenged books of 2018](#)
- [Surprising Banned Books/What the Stuff?!](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Each member brings in their favorite book
- Print out of current banned list

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

Agenda:

- (1-10 Min) Welcome everyone to the meeting and start by having everyone get seated. The first portion of the meeting is to show the clips. The first step will help your chapter in framing the goals of banned book week.
- (10-30 Min) Once the clips finish, have your chapter arrange the tables and chairs into a circle or shape that allows for a group discussion. The discussion will start with the president sharing their book, answering if the book is currently on the banned list that was shown or the school's banned list, then answering what surprised them about the books that are forbidden as well as answering if the reasons for the ban were justified. Then have each member share their books and answers for the questions.
- (30-45 Min) Once the last member has finished, then reorganize the room to its original state. Thank everyone for their participation and announce the next meeting's agenda. For the next meeting, have your chapter think of ideas on how to promote voting in your school and community.

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

Discussion Questions:

- What are the local issues in our community?
- Who is running for local, state, and nationwide office?
- What changes would our chapter like to see?
- What secular issues can we identify?

WEEK 5

THE POWER OF THE VOTE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Introduction:

Today we will be debating if the topic of whether the age to vote should be lowered to sixteen. The clips we will be watching goes over the issues of voting and how high schools students view this privilege. We will be watching testimonials of students who became legal age adults during high school and voted for the first time. As a group, we will create an idea web around voting and how we, as a chapter, can promote this privilege in our school and our community.

Media:

- What can be done to motivate young voters?
Students answer
- High school students at St.Teresa's Academy, many other high schools vote for the first time

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Whiteboard or chalkboard for creating idea web

THE POWER OF THE VOTE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Agenda

- (1-15 Min) Welcome, everyone, to the meeting, including new interested students. The topic of today's meeting is to think of ideas on how to promote voting in their school as well as the local community. Separate the chapter into two sides, one for the school and the other for the local community. Have two leadership members be the note takers for each team.
- (15-18 Min) At this point, have the groups finish up their last talking point and then begin screening the clips.
- (18-30 Min) Once the clips are finished have both note-takers present their sides talking points. From that point, both note-takers will give their side's ideas. The leader will create an idea web which will ultimately lead to two projects the chapter can participate in

Discussion Questions

- What are some issues in your community you would like to see improved?
- How could voting in local elections help address these issues?
- How can we as a chapter spread awareness about the importance of voting?

LGBTQ COMING OUT DAY

WEEK 6

Introduction:

National LGBTQ Coming Out Day is the eleventh. Let's have a discussion on how religion and politics play a role in the LGBTQ community. As a group, we are going to answer the following questions. What have we seen from local and national news that touches upon both sides? As a chapter, how do we promote equality for the LGBTQ community? What are some stereotypes that we see in social and mass media that is seen as typical?

Media:

- Futurama "Gaydar" Clip<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jK8jK8jK8>
- The roundtable "LGBT in Animation: Highs and Lows"

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Whiteboard or chalkboard

LGBTQ COMING OUT DAY

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Have the leadership team, as well as volunteers, arrange the room to have a group discussion. While the room is being rearranged, write down the discussion question on the board.
- (6-20 Min) Show both clips to the chapter. Have each member take note on what is shown for the discussion.
- (20-30) Once the clips finish, the chapter answer the discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

- What have we seen from local and national news that touches upon LGBTQ community as well as those who oppose this group?
- What are some stereotypes that we see in cartoons?
- As a chapter, how do we promote equality for the LGBTQ community?

WEEK 7

EVOLUTION AND CREATIONISM

Introduction:

Today we will be discussing evolution and creationism theory. First, we will watch two clips describing each point. We will then break into two groups, one for evolution and one for creationism, and discuss the pros and cons of each side. We will then come together and present our findings.

Media:

- [What is Evolution](#)
- [What is a Creationist?](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Camera or cell phone for recording discussion for the Question and Answer panel.

EVOLUTION AND CREATIONISM

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Welcome everyone back to the chapter and give an overview of the meeting. At this time, have your leadership team create a table with four columns. The two topics are Evolution and Creationism. In the four columns, write a pro and a con side.
- (5-20 Min) Have the chapter watch each clip as a whole. When the clips end have each member share the info that they gathered before coming to the meeting
- (20-30 Min) At this time, have your leadership moderate the pros and cons discussion. Make sure to write down items that lead back to what was shown in the clips and the information provided by the students.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you think it is important that evolution is taught in school?
- Should creationism be taught alongside evolution in school?

CLIMATE CHANGE OR GLOBAL WARMING?

WEEK 8

Introduction

The meeting today is to learn the difference between global warming and climate change. Then we will watch some clips about how students our age are fighting these effects by protesting and gathering attention from adults and especially policymakers. After these clips, we will break into small groups and assign each group an area that we can make a difference in (school and the local community, city or county, state, and finally nationally). When we come together we will present our ideas and pick which ones can we work on as a chapter.

Media

- [The Difference Between Global Warming & Climate Change](#)
- [Teen Activist Great Thunberg Urges US lawmakers to 'listen to the scientists'](#)
- [Students around the world go on climate strike](#)
- [Why Teens are Taking To The Streets To Fight Climate Change](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE OR GLOBAL WARMING?

Equipment

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Agenda

- (1-5 Min) Greet the chapter and then write down climate change and global warming on the board. Ask your members what they think or feel when they hear either word. Take about 4-5 answers and then write them down next to their respective answers.
- (6-15 Min) Have your chapter watch the clips. After each clip ask this question.
- (15-30 Min) After the clips, have leadership gather members into smaller groups to participate in discussion questions.

CLIMATE CHANGE OR GLOBAL WARMING?

Discussion Questions:

- Did you see anything in this clip that we should promote, advocate for, or participate in?
- What can our chapter do at the school and local level, city or county level, and finally state and national level?

WEEK 9

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Introduction:

The point of this meeting is to discuss what happens after we die. We will first watch a clip that goes over the different possibilities of an afterlife and the potential to have a soul or spirit. When the clip ends, I will separate you into groups to hold discussions on this topic. Each group needs to have a scribe to take down notes on what each group talks about. After five minutes, we will come together and present what each group talked about. If there is time in the end, we will hold a five minute question portion.

Media:

- Is There Life After Death?

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Large sheets of paper with markers to write about topics that were assigned

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Agenda:

- (1-5 min) Greet the chapter and showing the clips to the chapter. Once the clips end have separate the members into smaller groups with a leadership member acting as a moderator and scribe.
- (6-15 min) Have the group discuss what was shown in the film as well as what they believe happens. Walk around the groups and listen in to see if the conversations are moving constructively. Towards the end of the discussion, start an idea web with "Life After Death?" in the middle.
- (15-30 min) Once all leadership team members signal the end of the group discussion, then have them present what was said in the groups. Have the group take a vote on which ideas they believe or resonates with them.

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think happens after we die?
- Is there such a thing as an afterlife?
- Did the discussion groups change your opinion about the topic?

GRAVEYARD OF THE GODS

WEEK 10

Introduction:

Graveyard of the Gods is a great event to bring attention to the Gods and Goddesses that humanity used to worship. We will now watch a clip about Graveyard of the Gods to show why we needed the tombstones, and I had you research your Gods and Goddesses. Each member will now present their God or Goddess in 2-3 minutes. At this time, if you still need to work on your tombstones, we will work together as a chapter.

Media:

- [Graveyard of the Gods at University of Iowa](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Construction paper, wooden stakes, pictures of the Gods and Goddesses
- Arts and crafts material to decorate the tombstones

GRAVEYARD OF THE GODS

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Welcome everyone to the chapter and show the clip provided. During this time have our leadership team organize the material to create the tombstones.
- (6-10 Min) Have the members present the Gods and Goddesses that they have chosen to create a tombstone for. At most, this should take 2-3 minutes; if there is time left over, then add it to the next step.
- (15-30 Min) After all the Gods and Goddesses have been presented, then have your members create their tombstones.

Discussion Questions:

- How does thinking about gods/goddesses that are no longer worshipped influence how you view religion today?
- What purpose did worshipping these gods/goddesses do for their followers?

WEEK 11

CARL SAGAN DAY

Introduction:

Carl Sagan, through his work, has expanded our understanding of the universe as well helped many to think of their place in the universe. After watching these clips, we will have a round table discussion about what each member thinks of there place in the universe as well as how religion has affected humanity's understanding of science and the universe.

Media:

- [Star Stuff: The Story of Carl Sagan](#)
- [Universe Not Made of US \(Car Sagan on Religion\)](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Painters tape, for cross the line.

Read: Scientists weigh in on the possibility of life outside Earth

CARL SAGAN DAY

Agenda:

- 1-5 Min) Greet the chapter and explain why the chapter is celebrating Carl Sagan Day. Can touch upon his support of scientific-based research, his thoughts on the universe and religion, and the promotion of educating humanity with the environment and science
- (6-15 Min) Show the clips and go over the main points of the article. Once these are shown to the chapter, have the members participate in a discussion about the topics Carl Sagan advocated for.
- (15-30 Min) For the end of the meeting, have the chapter create artwork of space and the universe, environment, and landscapes, and humanity.

Discussion Questions:

- After watching these clips what do you think of your place in the universe?
- What can we do to make our time on Earth more enjoyable?
- What differences can we make in our environment so that future generations may enjoy it as well?

THANKSGIVING & FRIENDSGIVING

WEEK 12

Introduction:

Thanksgiving is portrayed by the media as a time to come together as a family and celebrate what we are thankful for in our lives. Also, to celebrate the first Thanksgiving that took place between the Puritans and Native Americans in 1621. We will watch the first clip o get a better understanding of the events that took place at the first Thanksgiving. Then as a group, we will have a discussion around what we learned and compare it o the ads we brought in that advertise Thanksgiving. After this discussion, we will watch a clip about Friendsgiving ad plan out a small potluck for our chapter.

Media:

- [The First Thanksgiving: What Really Happened](#)
- [Jimmy Kimmel on Friendsgiving](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips

THANKSGIVING & FRIENDSGIVING

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Greet the chapter and hold a quick discussion of the traditions your member would like to have with Friendsgiving.
- (6-15) Watch the first clip and have a discussion comparing what was shown to the advertisement brought in by each member.
- (15-30 Min) To wrap up this meeting watch the second clip and see if the chapter would like to participate in Friendsgiving?

Discussion Questions:

- Does this holiday still hold true to our values as a secular chapter?
- What changes can the chapter make to Friendsgiving to make it more inclusive for the student body?

WEEK 13

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction:

Freedom of Speech is one of the essential rights that are granted to United States citizens. Today, we will watch three clips that show how high school students can use their Freedom of Speech as well as examples of students exercising this right. After watching the clips, we, as a group, will work to answer the following question, "Why is it important as Secular Students to have Freedom of Speech?".

Media:

- [7 Things You Should Know About Free Speech In Schools: Free Speech Rules \(Episode 1\)](#)
- [Supreme Court Fight For Students' Free Speech Rights](#)
- [Students' Rights: Free Speech at School](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Whiteboard with markers to write down ideas

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN HIGH SCHOOL

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Greet the chapter then move into a small discussion about Freedom of Speech and what your members feel is their right to it in high school
- (6-15 Min) After the small discussion have the chapter watch the clips.
- (15-30 Min) When the clips finish having the chapter come together and create an idea web about Freedom of Speech in high school and how the chapter can use that right.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is Freedom of Speech important to you as a student?
- How can we use our Freedom of Speech to spread awareness of secular issues?

FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER

WEEK 14

Introduction:

This meeting will cover the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. We will first watch the clips then after we discuss what we found interesting. We will then have some spaghetti and meatballs to celebrate the flying spaghetti monster.

Media:

- [Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster Invocation](#)
- [Spaghetti, Wenches & Metaphysics: Episode 1](#)
- [The Standard Family: We are Pastafarians](#)

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Painters tape, for cross the line.

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Greet students that come in and have an introduction to the Flying Spaghetti Monster. If having the Spaghetti social, have your leadership team begin to serve spaghetti and meatballs. (6-15) Watch the clips provided to get a better understanding of Pastafarianism and why it was created. (15-30 Min) Have a discussion about Pastafarianism.

FLYING SPAGHETTI MONSTER

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways does Pastafarianism advance secularism?
- How does this religion use the ideology of other religions and how does it attract its members?

WEEK 15

WINTER HOLIDAYS AND SOLSTICE

Introduction:

This is our last meeting for the semester. Today we will watch two clips about how our current holidays fall around the Winter Solstice. We will collect our ideas you have brought in and created a new holiday for our chapter to celebrate before Winter break.

Media:

- Holidays Fall Around the Winter Solstice

Equipment:

- Laptop computer
- Television or projector for showing clips
- Painters tape, for cross the line.

Agenda:

- (1-5 Min) Greet the members and set up the video clip to be shown. Have your leadership team discuss what will happen for the next meeting(6-15) Screen the clip provided and have your members take notes on what was shown. While the clip is playing, start creating an idea web for the potential holiday your chapter will create. (15-30) After the clip is shown, have the students begin to pitch ideas for the new holiday. Remember to take names for the new holiday!

WINTER HOLIDAYS AND SOLSTICE

Discussion Questions:

- What purpose do holidays and traditions serve in your life?
- How can we make these religious traditions into secular traditions?
- The solstice is a great time to reflect upon the past year while looking forward to the next. What goals do you have for yourself and for the chapter in the coming year?