

Prejudice and discrimination.

In this unit there are a lot of new terms that you will need to know the meanings of. As the printed notes come across them there will be a definition. For example:

Prejudice: is when a person has a preconceived idea about something or some one. Usually it is Unfavourable.
It is often used to describe a person's dislike for people of a certain group.

Discrimination: is when a person is singled out because they are different in some way. This may be in a positive or a negative way.

There are also other words that you will be expected to know and are central to this unit of work. For example the common themes that runs through this are:

Equality: that everyone is as important and valuable as each other.

Justice: that everyone is entitled to the same rights and treatment.

Community: that we are one community and should act that way.

When we think and talk about prejudice we have to accept that there are people who we do not get long with. Yet we all have to make an effort not to allow ourselves to put our ideas / dealings with a person or group of people into practice. We are all guilty of that happening at some point but how can we change this?

Prejudice is based on ignorance, but we can be educated against holding them. If we don't then it can colour our images and the way we deal with people in the future. All of the world's religions teach us about how we should behave towards each other and as a result of this we can at least see another way of dealing with people we may not like.

	Equality:	Justice:	Community:
Christianity.	Love one another - John 13 vs. 34	Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do unto them also - Matthew 7 vs. 12	There is neither Jew nor Greek - Galatians 3 vs.28
Islam.	All Muslims are equal - Muslim declaration of Human rights.	Whenever you judge between people, you should judge with justice - Qur'an 4 vs. 58	Cling firmly together by means of Allah's rope, and do not be divided - Qur'an 3 vs. 103.

Racism:

Racism - this is the belief that a colour of a persons skin or their race determines their ability. It is also the belief that some races are superior to others. Commonly racist describes a person who discriminates negatively against those of a different race or skin colour.

Legally and morally, racism and racist behaviour is unacceptable. In the UK there are no laws that cover white people, but they do for people of other skin colours. This form of behaviour can cost a person dearly - either expulsion from school or loosing their jobs.

The UN Declaration of Human rights state:

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights ... should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood; that everyone is entitles to all rights and freedom... without discrimination of any kind'.

	Views on Racism:
Christianity.	Christians are united in their condemnation of racism. Expressed in Galatians 3 vs. 28. There are other stories relating to the issue of racism (look in your notes for the story of Jonah). Jesus did not discriminate against those who needed his help.
Islam.	Islamic people have often been victims of racism due to a lack of knowledge about their culture and beliefs. Islam believes that all people are crested equally. Muhammad* also had non - Muslim friends and shows that there is a community of the world - this is called the Ummah.

How can we fight racism?

All religious traditions consider racism wrong and believe it is right to stand up to it. There are many people who have stood up for what they believe in (look to your notes on either Malcolm X or Theodore Herzl for a practical example of this). This is a strong issue and there are many ways that racism has been fought - both violently and none violently.

Sexism:

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination against people, especially women, because of their sex.

This issue does not just concentrate on the issue of women being treated unfairly. But it is an issue of inequality. There have been debates about the issue - think about the issue of women priests. Up until 1994 there were no women priests in the Church of England. When the first women priests were ordained many of those who did not agree with this left the Church in a protest. Yet women can not become priests in the Catholic Church. The main arguments point to the example of Jesus. After all he lived in a male dominated society where women were second class citizens. But do not forget that Jesus had a lot of female followers as well. Who was it who went to the tomb and was told that Jesus had risen from the dead? It was Mary and the other women.

The central point in this issue is down to the sacraments. The issuing of communion in the Church. After all there were no women who were present at the Last Supper in the upper room before Jesus was placed on trial and on then on the cross.

Many people ask what the problem is - after all men and women are different due to their appearance and their sexual organs. Yet the Islamic world does not accept that argument either. The Qur'an and the Hadith show that women are to be respected as they perform the most important job of all - raising the family. Islam does split the role of men and women but both sexes are expected to follow the faith.

People in the West do not see Islam as being particularly fair to women. This is understandable as there is little education to show that women are equal. Yet you must remember that it is the culture of Islam that shows women in an unfavourable light. Yet for Islamic women this is not an issue as it is their way of life.

Homophobia:

Homophobia is a prejudice against people who are homosexual or lesbian because of their sexuality. A phobia is an irrational fear.

In the last 20th century the age of consent was not stated for lesbians. For gay men it was 18 but the age of consent for heterosexuals was 16. Many people campaigned for the reduction in age arguing that if you can know you are ready for sex at the age of 16 (if you are heterosexual) how can this change just because you are gay?

People who are gay often face hostility just because they are gay. It takes many forms but the most common one is rejection from their own families. It is the most recently acknowledged form of prejudice but little is done for those who are assaulted. The police class homophobia as an assault on a person, yet when it involves a person of a different skin colour, it is classed as a racist attack.

	Views on Homosexuality:
	Condemned within Islam. It is considered unnatural and is punishable under

Islam:	Islamic law. Part of the reason is that pregnancy cannot happen. If people continue to act in a homosexual way they can be punished. It is the law and should not be able to occur within Islam.
Roman Catholic Church.	RC Church states that it is wrong. States that people have a choice about how to act and should not be tolerated. Discriminates about this issue.
Church of England.	CofE states that it is wrong but if people ask for forgiveness they will be forgiven. Some priests will accept homosexuals within the Church. But it did ask for people to speak out against homophobia.

It does sound that religions do not accept homosexuality in any way. But do not think that other people in other Churches take this view. There are groups within the Quaker church there is acceptance. They do so on the basis of God created all men and women as equals.

There are some big issues within this unit and as a result of this you will have to take your time to understand these issues along with the ideas of equality and justice for all of mankind.