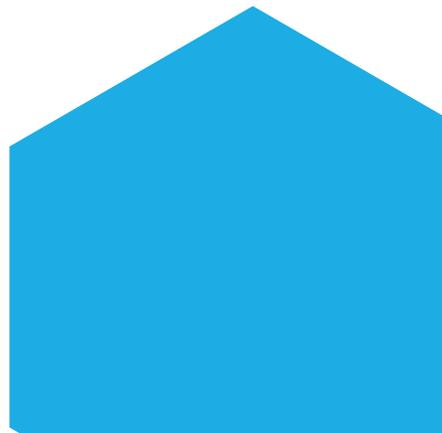
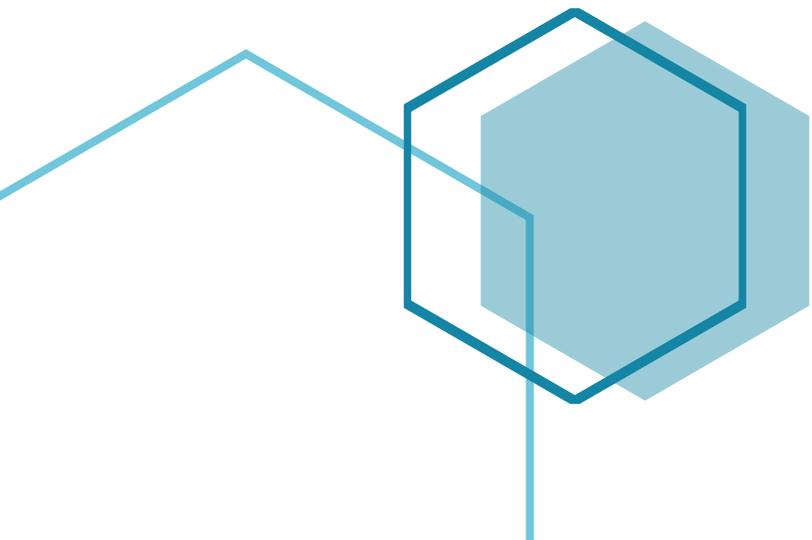




Cookies & Questions 2021

A Review

The following is a reflection of the four Cookies & Questions events held during Fall 2021. Included are statistics, analysis, and interpretations presented by Alana Daeger, CFV Interfaith Intern.



Cookies & Questions 2021

A Review

Introduction

Hi! My name is Alana Daeger and I'm an interfaith intern with the Center for Faith and Vocation here on campus. You may have seen me at my Cookies & Questions events throughout the Fall semester. If you happened to stop by, you've already heard my spiel. If not, here's a brief summary of Cookies & Questions and its purpose.

I'm very passionate about interfaith cooperation, and I want to use this event as a way to promote interfaith engagement on campus. One of my big goals this year was to concentrate on educating the wider campus about the holidays and traditions of some of the minority religions that are represented on campus. Each of my Cookies & Questions events had a theme (Rosh Hashanah, Interfaith Engagement, Samhain, and Diwali) and questions that related to the theme. The questions were presented on poster boards and answered by using different colored stickers that corresponded with a religious or secular identity. Anyone who answered all the questions received an Insomnia cookie.

I've chosen one poster from each of the four events to show an example of the types of questions that the campus answered. These questions were answered by anyone who stopped by my table. They began by looking at a key and choosing the sticker that matched their religious or secular identity. If they did not see their identity, they were encouraged to choose a new sticker color and add it to the key. Once the participants had their stickers, they made their way through the questions, placing one sticker on each poster and finished by grabbing a cookie. The answers are anonymous, which I hope encouraged honesty and made people feel safe from any judgment.

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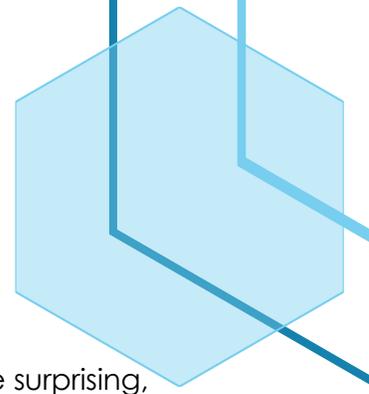
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Key

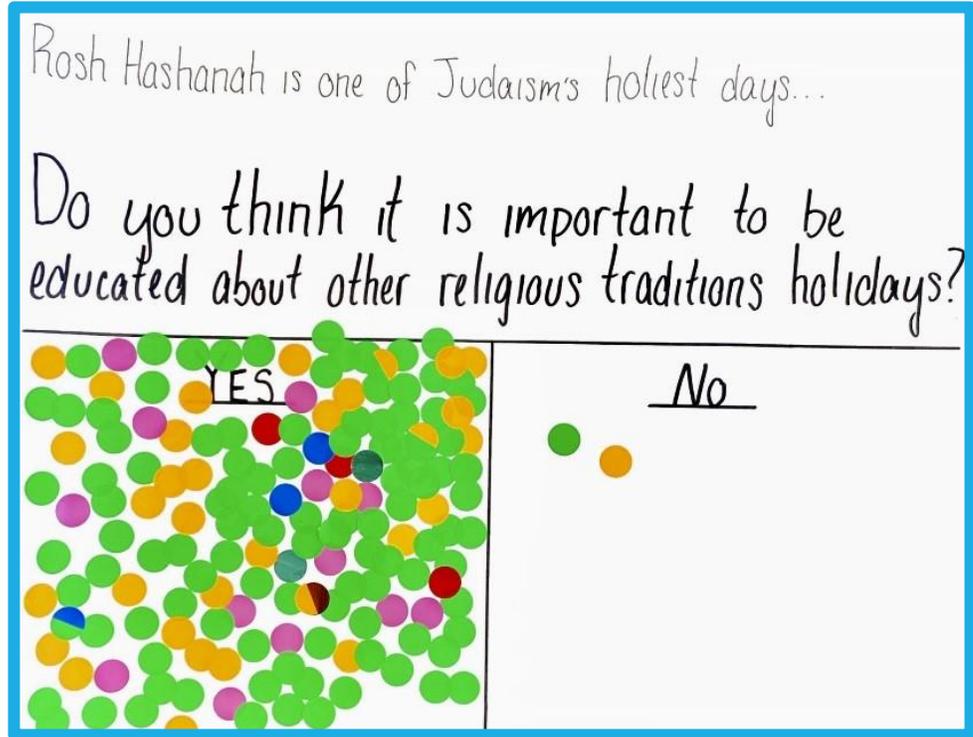
For each poster, I am going to highlight the answers or trends that I found to be surprising, interesting, or just worth pointing out. Before I begin, I would like to make it clear that **my interpretations and analysis are just things I noticed and potential explanations**. I am drawing possible conclusions based on my knowledge and life experiences, but **I am not claiming to know exactly why certain groups answered the way they did or did not**. This reflection aims to identify trends and share my personal thoughts, opinions, and experiences I had throughout the semester in relation to the Cookies & Questions events.

In each event, the majority of stickers were placed by people who self-identified as Christian (green), followed pretty closely by Secular/Nonreligious (orange), then lower numbers of people who identified as Spiritual (pink). Most of the other colors and their corresponding identities were present in lower numbers, but always there. Additionally, the stickers that appear to be two colors were placed by people who identified as two separate things, and I did not want them to have to choose just one, I wanted them to be able to represent their religious or secular identity as accurately as possible. Here's a picture of the key which contains all of the traditions represented and their corresponding colors.



Event 1: Rosh Hashanah

For my first Cookies & Questions event, I made posters containing facts and questions in relation to the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah. This was the first event, so my questions were pretty general. As you can see, most people answered “yes” when asked if it is important to be educated about other religious traditions’ holidays. I was a bit surprised by the two “no” answers.



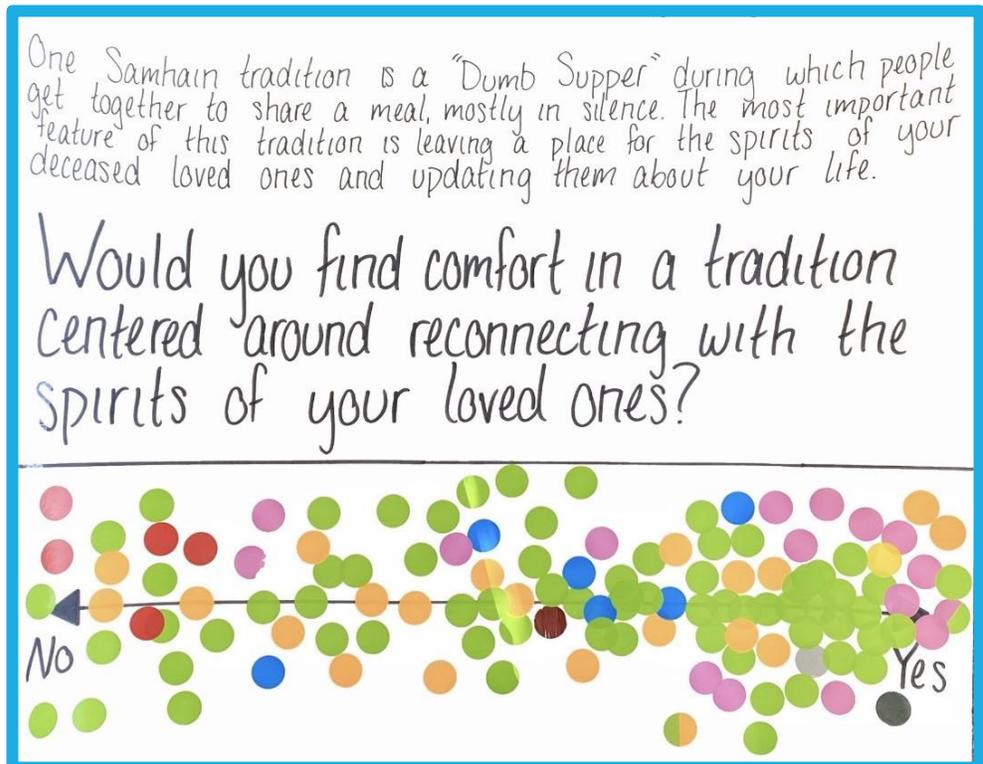
The orange sticker represents someone who self-identified as “secular/nonreligious”, and the green sticker is from someone who self-identified as Christian. I do not know who placed these stickers; I don't watch people as they're going through the questions because I would not want anyone to feel uncomfortable or pressured. However, I did remember that both of these stickers were placed rather early, probably within the first thirty minutes. As other people gave their answers, some would comment on the two “no” answers, usually saying something about how they were surprised that people on Butler's campus do not feel that it is important to be educated about other people's traditions.



Event 3: Samhain

The third event was about the Pagan tradition of Samhain (pronounced "sah-win"). Unlike all my other events, I did not know anyone on campus who celebrated this holiday. I had the pleasure of meeting and working with current Interfaith Council member Kynneddy Masheck, a practicing Pagan, in order to create questions that accurately represented the tradition. This was my favorite event of the four, because people seemed most interested to learn about Samhain and very few people had ever heard of the holiday. It was also very helpful to have Kynneddy there with me to answer any questions about Paganism. The question that I have chosen to highlight from the third Cookies & Questions event is about the Samhain tradition called a "Dumb Supper." As explained on the poster, a Dumb Supper is a silent meal during which people leave open spaces and food for the spirits of deceased loved ones. The question was answered on a scale of how comfortable you would be celebrating a tradition centered around reconnecting with the spirits of your loved ones.

This question had the most diverse answers. Answers by Christian, Spiritual, Secular, and Jewish (blue sticker) students ran across the entire spectrum. However, there is one identifiable trend on this poster: Muslim student answers (red sticker) leaned toward "no." I reached out to my friends Rami and Yossra to ask if there was something in their religious teachings that would explain their answers, and there is! The answer is "jinn." Jinn is a term that refers to supernatural creatures of dark magic, which can appear when one is reaching out to spirits of deceased people. Rami and Yossra explained to me that black magic is forbidden in Islam, and that reaching out to dead people would require black magic, so something like a Dumb Supper would not be allowed.



Event 4: Diwali

The final Cookies & Questions event was about Diwali, also known as “the festival of lights.” This event had a twofold purpose. Firstly, to help educate the wider campus about Diwali, and secondly, to promote SASA’s Diwali event (which was a huge success and a great time). I was able to set up a conversation with my friend Meet to discuss the history and traditions of Diwali.



He told me about how Diwali is a holiday that celebrates the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. This led to one of my favorite questions of the whole semester: Are people inherently good or evil? The most obvious trend on this poster is the lack of “no” answers. To me, this was also the most surprising trend. I had fully expected almost every Christian would answer “no,” because of their belief in original sin. In summary, original sin is a Christian doctrine that says every human being is born in sin and must accept God and be baptized in order to remove their original sin. I had thought that most Christians would answer “no” based on the belief that humans are born sinful and evil, but I was wrong.

Final Thoughts

My favorite part about this event was knowing that many people were able to learn something that they did not know before about a holiday that they sometimes had not even heard of. I felt so rewarded when people would stare at a question and really think about their answer, or when someone exclaimed "I never knew that before!" or "I had no idea that was true!" I was always so happy to see someone asking Kynnedey or Meet a question about their traditions and beliefs because it showed me that there are other people on campus who care about interfaith learning. I hope everyone who stopped by enjoyed the events as much as I did and I'm so excited to come back out this semester with more questions and more cookies!





UPCOMING CFV EVENTS

Cookies and Questions

Events will be on Thursdays at 2pm at the Atherton Gazebo, weather permitting. Exact dates and locations will be posted on the CFV Instagram.

- Holi: March 18
- Naw-Ruz: March 24
- Ramadan: March 31
- Passover: April 14

Interfaith Podcast Series

Be on the lookout for a series of four podcasts featuring IFC Alumni, hosted by Interfaith Intern Alana Daeqer!