



For the Civic Good: The Liberal Case for Teaching Religion in the Public Schools (The New Public Scholarship)

Walter Feinberg, Richard A. Layton

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Why teach about religion in public schools? What educational value can such courses potentially have for students?

In *For the Civic Good*, Walter Feinberg and Richard A. Layton offer an argument for the contribution of Bible and world religion electives. The authors argue that such courses can, if taught properly, promote an essential aim of public education: the construction of a civic public, where strangers engage with one another in building a common future. The humanities serve to awaken students to the significance of interpretive and analytic skills, and religion and Bible courses have the potential to add a reflective element to these skills. In so doing, students awaken to the fact of their own interpretive framework and how it influences their understanding of texts and practices. The argument of the book is developed by reports on the authors' field research, a two-year period in which they observed religion courses taught in various public high schools throughout the country, from the "Bible Belt" to the suburban parkway. They document the problems in teaching religion courses in an educationally appropriate way, but also illustrate the argument for a humanities-based approach to religion by providing real classroom models of religion courses that advance the skills critical to the development of a civic public.

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