Religion in American History: 1877-2006
Professor Sarah Barringer Gordon
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History 325/Religious Studies 315
Mon., Weds., 10:00 - 11:00
TA - Rebecca Cutler
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Recitations: Thurs, 4:30-5:30, Fri 10-11; 11-12

This course will explore major themes and moments in religious history that have shaped the development of the nation since the Civil War era. The approach will be chronological, but also topical. The course will move through time from the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, from Native American religions to Evangelicalism, African-American religions, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Mormonism, Scientology and more. It will also connect past events to issues and problems that continue to affect religious beliefs and practices in our own culture, including the revival that has characterized American religious life for the past three decades. Rather than debating religious truth, the course explores and analyzes the many religious perspectives that have shaped American history. This exploration includes looking at things that many students would not consider “religious” at first glance, and thus thinking deeply about how we have defined religion. At times, the course will use a “case study” approach to explore specific events and ideas that have a wider applicability, rather than trying to cover every significant religious development and every religious group.

The course will meet twice a week for lectures, with recitation once per week, and will satisfy the post-1800 lecture course requirement for history majors and the University’s undergraduate history requirement. Course requirements include regular class and recitation attendance, a religious walking tour of Philadelphia and written midterm assignment based on the tour, a short (12 pages) research paper, and a final examination. Final grades will be based on the midterm (25%), final exam (30%), research paper (30%), and class participation (15%).

Course packet, online at and also available at Campus Copy

1. Religion in America: An Introduction to the Civil War era

2. Growth and Change in Worship and Practice after the Civil War
   Booker T. Washington, “Up from Slavery” (1901)
   W.E.B. duBois, The Souls of Black Folk (1903)
   Dashcke & Ashcraft, 30-45

3. The West
   Josiah Strong, Our Country (1875)
   Section 132 The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (1880)
   Metta Victor, Lives of Female Mormons, a Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction (1872)

4. American Catholicism

5. American Judaism
   Gaustad & Noll, 24-29
   Abram Cahan, The Rise of David Levinsky (New York, 1917)
   Recommended: Film, Hungry Hearts (1922)
6. Alternative Spiritualities and the Chaos of Urban Life
   Gaustad & Noll, 93-102; 114-24
   Daschke & Ashcraft, 50-6
   Helen Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy (Phila., 1889)

7. Resistance and Massacre: Wounded Knee and Native Belief
   E.A. Dyer, Wovoka, A Paiute Indian (1889)

8. Science, Social Darwinism and the Social Gospel
   Charles Hodge, What is Darwinism? (1874)
   James Woodrow, Address to the Presbyterian Seminary (1884)
   Henry Ward Beecher, Evolution and Religion (1886)
   Charles Sheldon, In His Steps (1896)
   Washington Gladden, Present Day Theology (1913)

9. War and Salvation – WWI
   Gaustad & Noll, 125-32; 168-77
   Diane Winston, Red-Hot & Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army (Cambridge, Ma: 2000)

10. The Trial of the Century
    Bryan and Darrow at Dayton (1925)
    H.L. Mencken, “The Monkey Trial”: A Reporter’s Account (1925)

11. MIDTERM – Religious History Walking Tour of Philadelphia and writing assignment

12. Fascism, Communism, and Depression
    Charles E. Coughlin, “Am I an Anti-Semite?” (1938)
Robert A. Parker, *The Incredible Messiah: The Deification of Father Divine* (1937)

13. **The Hot and Cold Wars**  
   West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, United States Supreme Court, 1943  
   Gaustad & Noll, 484-89; 559-66  
   Film: Ben Hur ????

14. **Pluralism in Private and Public Life**  
   *Everson v Board of Education* United States Supreme Court, 1947

15. **Prophetic Religion, Integration and Separatism**  
   Martin Luther King, Jr, *The Power of Love* (1963)  

16. **Vatican II and the Place of Women**  
   Gaustad & Noll, 534-52  
   (Something on nuns and departure from religious orders)  
   Film: *The Singing Nun* (1966)?

17. **Separation of Church and State**  
   *Engel v. Vitale*, United States Supreme Court, 1962  
   *Epperson v. Arkansas*, United States Supreme Court, 1968

18. **The New Age**  
   Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)  
   Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake* (1981)  
   Daschke & Ashcraft, 241-58
19. **Televangelism, Megachurches and the New Right**  
   Gaustad & Noll, 655-72  

20. **Resurgent Orthodoxy**  
   Lis Harris, *Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family* (1985)  
   Film: *The Chosen* (1981)

21. **Your Faith: Religion on Campus**  

22. **Religion and Popular Culture**  
   Alcoholics Anonymous, *The 12 Steps*  
   Film: The passion of the Christ OR the DaVinci Code

23. **The New Millennium**  

24. **Divided: The Way We Live Now**  
   Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry, mission statement, 2005  
   DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act)  
   George Marsden, “The Sword of the Lord,” *Christian Century* (?)