

Religion in American History: 1877-2008

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History 325/Religious Studies 315

Religious life in America is extraordinarily rich, innovative and wonderful to study over time. This course explores 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: we will talk about Ghost Dances, spirit rapping, polygamy, holy wars, self-help groups, faith healing and psychedelic religion, as well as more mainstream developments such as Vatican II, conscientious objection, televangelism, the ordination of women, and same sex marriage.

The course will move through time from the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, including lectures on Native American and African-American religions, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Mormonism, Christian Science, and ecumenicism. We 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, political allegiances and culture wars.

Rather than debating religious truth, the course explores and analyzes the many religious perspectives that have shaped American history and students' lives. 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.

The course will meet twice a week for lectures and a third time for section, and will satisfy the post-1800 lecture course requirement for history majors and the University's undergraduate history requirement. Lectures always include slides, and often music and film clips. Course requirements include regular class attendance, a religious history walking tour of Philadelphia, a short (10 pages) research paper, and a final examination. Final grades will be based on the final exam (50 %), research paper (40 %), class participation (10 %).

Required texts: A Documentary History of Religion in America since 1877, Edwin S. Gaustad and Mark A Noll, eds. (3rd edition, 2003); New Religious Movements, Dereck Baschke & W. Michael Ashcraft, eds. (2005); and Arthur Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet (1887) (all available at House of Our Own book store, 3920 Walnut St)

Course packet, online at and also available at Campus Copy

Lecture topics and Readings are included below:

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

(No assignment)

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)

George Edmunds, "Political Aspects of Mormonism," Harper's Monthly (1882)

Arthur Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet (1887)

4. American Catholicism

John McGreevy, "The Nation," in Catholicism and American Freedom (N.Y. 2003)

Colleen McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity," 1860-1960," in Religion and American Culture, David G. Hackett, ed. (N.Y. 1995)

5. American Judaism

Gaustad & Noll, 24-29

Jonathan Sarna, "Two Worlds of American Judaism," in American Judaism, a History (New Haven, 2004)

Abram Cahan, The Rise of David Levinsky (New York, 1917) (skim)

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 (Philadelphia, 1889)

7. Resistance and Massacre: Wounded Knee and Native Belief

E.A. Dyer, Wovoka, A Paiute Indian (1889)
James Mooney, "The Doctrine of the Ghost Dance," in The Ghost Dance Religion and Wounded Knee (New York, 1966)

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)
Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," North American Review (1889)
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

Elizabeth Knauss, The Conflict (1923)
Bryan and Darrow at Dayton (1925)
H.L. Mencken, "The Monkey Trial": A Reporter's Account (1925)

11. 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)

12. The Hot and Cold Wars

West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, United States Supreme Court, 1943
Gaustad & Noll, 484-89; 559-66

13. Religious History Walking Tour of Philadelphia

14. Pluralism in Private and Public Life

Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in Religious Sociology (1955)

Everson v Board of Education United States Supreme Court, 1947
Recommended: Film: The Ten Commandments (1956)

15. **Prophetic Religion, Integration and Separatism**

Martin Luther King, Jr, The Power of Love (1963)
James Forman, The Black Manifesto (1969)
Malcolm X, God's Judgment of White America (1963)
James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (1962)

16. **Vatican II and the Place of Women**

Gaustad & Noll, 534-52
"The Catholic Exodus: Why Priests and Nuns are Quitting," Time Magazine, 23
February, 1970
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**

Stephen Shore, "The Soul of the New Exurb," New York Times, 27 March 2005
Gaustad & Noll, 655-72
Beverly LaHaye, Who But a Woman? (1984)
Recommended: Film, The Apostle (1984: 1998)

20. **Resurgent Orthodoxy**

Lis Harris, Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family (1985)
Film: The Chosen (1981)

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

Chronicle of Higher Education, Religion and Freshmen (2005)
Conrad Cherry, et al., Religion on Campus (2001)

22. Religion and Popular Culture

Alcoholics Anonymous, The 12 Steps
Becky Tirabassi, Change Your Life (1999)
Michael Medved, Hollywood vs. America (1992)
Film: The Life of Brian (1979)

23. The New Millennium

Islamic Circle of North America, US Muslim Council Issues Fatwa against
Terrorism (2005)
Kennedy School, Starting Amachi: The Elements and Operation of a Volunteer-Based
Social Program (2003)

24. Divided: The Way We Live Now

Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry, mission statement, 2005
DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act)
Ron Suskind, "Without a Doubt," New York Times Magazine, 17 October 2004
George Marsden, "The Sword of the Lord," Books & Culture (March/April, 2006)