

History 4479-01W

American Religion Since 1800

Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams
Office Hours: TLC 3225
Mon., 1-5pm
Wed., 1:30-5:30pm
(and by appointment)

Email: dkw@westga.edu

Phone: 678-839-6046

Course website: www.westga.edu/~dkwillia

Class Location:
Pafford 208
MWF, 11-11:50

Description:

This course will examine the history of religious beliefs and practices in the United States from 1800 to the present. The course will look at theological and organizational developments in America's religious institutions, and explore the history of Americans' "lived religion" – that is, the religious practices of "ordinary" Americans. In a study of religion that goes beyond the walls of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques, this course will also examine the intersection between American religion and the nation's political, social, and cultural trends.

This is a Writing-across-the-Curriculum (WAC) course, so writing assignments will be a central component of this class. Writing assignments in this course include a research paper, two book analyses, an in-class essay exam, a take-home final exam, and four email book summaries that will be distributed to other members of the class.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and class discussions. I encourage all students to participate by asking questions during lectures and making comments during discussion sessions. Six classes will be devoted entirely to discussions of the reading material, and the lecture-based classes will include some discussion time, as well.

Learning Outcomes:

This course will help students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze opposing points of view. Students will gain a broad understanding of faith traditions in the United States, the opposing viewpoints in contemporary and historical debates about the role of religion in society, and the ways in which Americans have constructed (and continue to construct) their religious beliefs and practices. This course will also help students improve their communication and research skills, with a particular emphasis on writing.

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	15%
Book analyses	20%
Research paper	25%
Class participation & emails	20%
Final exam	20%

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students' written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95
A/A- = 94
A- = 92
A-/B+ = 90
B+ = 88
B+/B = 87
B = 85
B/B- = 84
B- = 82
B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range and D-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C. A grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade on an essay assignment, a student's essay must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of the assigned documents, and competence in writing. They rarely

contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of the assigned documents, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: There will be two midterm exams and a take-home final exam. The midterm exams will consist of essay questions and I.D. terms, and will emphasize broad themes presented in the lectures, discussions, and readings. One week before each exam, you will receive a study guide that will give you more information about the material covered on the test. I will give a make-up exam only in cases of a pre-arranged, excused absence for which documentation must be provided, or in cases of a legitimate health or family emergency that must be documented with a doctor's note, dean's note, or similar measure of proof. In all other cases, a make-up exam will not be an option.

The take-home final exam will consist of essay questions. I will give you the exam on Wednesday, December 2, and you will have until 5pm on Monday, December 7, to write 8-10 pages in response to the essay questions.

Book analyses and research papers: You are required to write two 4-6 page book analyses for this course. Each of those analyses is due on the date on which the class discussion for the book is scheduled. Please see the book analysis guidelines for more information about this assignment.

You will also be expected to write one 8-12 page research paper for this course. Consult the guidelines for research papers for more information about this assignment.

Papers that are turned in after the assigned date will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are overdue.

It should go without saying that all papers that you write must be your own work, and that any students who are caught plagiarizing another student's work, a paper from a web site, a textbook, or any other source will automatically fail this course and may be subject to further disciplinary action. Plagiarism is a serious offense that will not be tolerated.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester.

Class participation and email assignments: Classes will consist of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. In addition, there are six class periods reserved for discussion of the assigned books. It is very important for you to read these books prior to the class discussions so that you can come to class

prepared to participate. Failure to attend these discussions will adversely affect your class participation grade. I do not have a formal attendance policy, but since students cannot participate in class discussions if they do not attend class, habitual absences, as well as habitual silence in class throughout the semester, could negatively affect a student's class participation grade. Your contributions to class discussions of assigned online primary source documents will have a positive effect on your class participation grade.

In addition, as part of your class participation, you should email me short summaries of all of the books for which you do not turn in a book analysis. Each of these emails is due by 8am (three hours prior to class) on the day on which we are scheduled to discuss the book in question. I will not assign these emails a letter grade, but I will instead treat them as I would comments that you make in class, and I will consider their content when I formulate class participation grades at the end of the semester. I will also distribute copies of these emails to all of the other members of the class for their consideration in preparation for our class discussions. For more information on this assignment, please consult the guidelines for the email summaries that are posted on the course website.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly.

University policy also prevents me from disclosing grades over email, so if you would like to discuss your grade on any assignment in the class, please set up an appointment to meet with me in my office. Please do not email me with a request for your grades, since I am not allowed to email that information to you.

To protect students' privacy rights, I will not return graded papers or exams to any third party (e.g., a student's friend or relative who asks to pick up a student's work on that person's behalf) unless a student gives me permission in writing (e.g., an email) to do so. There are occasions when I must disclose a student's grade to university administrators, other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair), or athletic coaches who need to know the academic status of students on their team, but in all other cases, I will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of students' grades.

I would like to do whatever I can to help you succeed in this course. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question about any subject pertaining to this class. I make it a priority to respond promptly to emails from students, and I am happy to talk with students during my office hours, so please feel free to stop by my office to introduce yourself and discuss any concerns that you may have about this course. I believe that this will be an excellent semester, and I'm pleased to welcome you to this class.

Required readings:

The following texts are available in the college bookstore, and are required:

Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*

Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America*

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist*

Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*

Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*

Paul M. Barrett, *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion*

Class Schedule:

- 8/14 Introduction: Why Study the History of American Religion?
- 8/17 The Revolt against Calvinism
- 8/19 The Second Great Awakening
- 8/21 Two American Denominations: The Disciples and the Mormons
Primary source reading: “Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith”
(<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/bm/jstestimony>)
- 8/24 Millenarianism and American Sects
- 8/26 Temperance and Abolitionism
- 8/28 The Beginnings of African American Christianity
- 8/31 **Discussion of *Southern Cross***
(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)
- 9/2 The Civil War as a Religious Conflict
James Henley Thornwell, “The Rights and Duties of Masters”
(http://books.google.com/books?id=MqARAAAAIAAJ&dq=james+henley+thornwell&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=FCLJawy0kn&sig=sb0IAU2EbJ603isKURZICFfd2OI&hl=en&ei=k0xSSq-XAsmktwe55fSgBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3) (read pp. 11-27)
- 9/4 Liberal Protestantism and the Victorian “Crisis of Faith”
- 9/7 No class (Labor Day)
- 9/9 Immigrant Religions: Catholicism and Judaism in America’s Cities
The Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism, 1885
(http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/1700-1914/Denominationalism/Reform/Pittsburgh_Platform.shtml)
Research paper topic due
- 9/11 The Social Gospel
Primary source reading: Walter Rauschenbusch, “Christianizing the Social Order”
(<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/power/text9/rauschenbusch.pdf>)
- 9/14 Evangelicals, Missionaries, and Revivalists
- 9/16 Protestant Moral Reformers
- 9/18 **Discussion of *The Mormon Question***

(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)

- 9/21 The Azusa Street Revival
Primary source: Testimony of Florence Crawford
(<http://www.azusastreet.org/AzusaStreetCrawford.htm>)
- 9/23 The Fundamentalist Controversy
Source list for research paper due
- 9/25 Fundamentalist Politics
Primary source: William Jennings Bryan, "The Menace of Evolution"
(<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/bryanonevol.html>)
- 9/28 Jesus in a Business Suit: Mainline Protestantism in the 1920s
Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"
(<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/>)
- 9/30 Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in the Early 20th Century
- 10/2 **Discussion of *The Long Loneliness***
(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)
- 10/5 The Religion of the Harlem Renaissance
- 10/7 Christianity during the Depression
Reinhold Niebuhr, "Our Secularized Civilization"
(<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=472>)
- 10/9 The Effect of World War II on American Religion
- 10/12 The Religion of Postwar Suburbia
- 10/14 **Discussion of *The Chosen***
(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)
- 10/16 No class (Fall Break)
- 10/19 Cold War Christianity
Billy Graham, Sermon at Yankee Stadium, 1957
(<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/exhibits/NYC57/13sample68-2.htm>)
- 10/21 **Midterm Exam**
- 10/23 The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement
Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail
(http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)

- 10/26 The Effect of the Civil Rights Movement on American Churches
- 10/28 The Prophetic Church: Theologies of Social Justice in the 1960s
- 10/30 **Discussion of *God's Long Summer***
(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)
- 11/2 Catholicism after Vatican II
First draft of research paper due
- 11/4 The Religion of the Counterculture
- 11/6 Cults and Alternative Religions of the 1970s
- 11/9 Religion and the Politics of Sex and Gender
- 11/11 The Resurgence of Conservative Religion
- 11/13 The Christian Right
 “Themes of Catholic Social Teaching” from “Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Catholic Political Responsibility”
<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/bishopStatement.html#6>
 Jerry Falwell, *Listen America*
http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch36_02.htm)
- 11/16 The Religions of America’s New Immigrants
- 11/18 Contemporary Questions of Church and State
- 11/20 Film: *Arranged* (part 1)
- 11/23 Film: *Arranged* (part 2)
Research paper due
- 11/25 No class (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/27 No class (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/30 **Discussion of *American Islam***
(Email summary due at 8am or book analysis due in class)
- 12/2 America’s “Unchurched”
Take-home final exam questions distributed
- 12/4 Religion in America Today

12/7 **Take-home final exam essay due by 5pm**