

History 5479

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)

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Class Location:
Pafford 208
MWF, 11:00-11:50am
and
TLC 3205
Wed., 12:00-12:50pm

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.

Classes will consist mainly of interactive lectures and discussions. In addition, graduate students will participate in weekly, one-hour, small discussion sessions that examine current monographs and articles on postwar American history.

Learning Outcomes:

This course will give students a broad awareness 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. Students will learn how to approach the study of religion from a historical perspective and how to integrate an analysis of religious faith and practice into their work in other fields of history. This course will also help students to improve their writing, research, and communication skills.

The graduate component of this course will emphasize historiographical trends in the field, and will give graduate students a better understanding of the scholarship in this historical discipline, which may help them in preparing for research and teaching projects in other areas of your graduate program.

Assessment:

Students' final grades will be determined as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Midterm exam | 15% |
| Book analyses | 20% |
| Research paper | 25% |
| Class participation | 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).

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 69.5, which converts to a C, is the lowest possible passing grade for graduate students 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 sophisticated interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a graduate course. A-grade papers demonstrate a mastery of the historical technique and historiographic understanding expected for M.A. students in history courses at this university.

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

the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for a graduate-level 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.

A failing grade is assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Exams: Graduate students will take two take-home exams in this course. You will receive the midterm exam essay question on October 14, and you will have until 5pm on October 21 to submit a 5-7 page essay in response to that question.

The take-home final exam will also require you to respond to an essay question. I will give you the exam on December 2, and you will have until 5pm on December 7 to write 8-10 pages in response. The midterm and final exams will test your ability to analyze the concepts covered in class readings, discussions, and lectures.

Book analyses and research papers: You are required to write two 4-6 page summaries of two of the eight books that you read for this course. That analysis is due on the date on which the graduate discussion for the book takes place. A book review should give a brief summary of the book while highlighting the author's thesis or point of view, and it should also evaluate the historical significance of the subject. It should include a detailed analysis of the book's relationship to broader historical trends discussed in the textbook and the lectures. You should discuss its usefulness to researchers and its relationship to other work in the field to the extent that you are able to do so. As a graduate student, you will be expected to demonstrate some awareness of the historiographical significance of the book that you review.

You will also be expected to write one 12-15 page research paper for this course. Consult the online 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: Classes will consist mostly of interactive lectures, which will give you a chance to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented in the readings. I also expect you to attend the weekly discussion sessions that I will hold for the graduate students each Wednesday

from 12:00-12:50pm in the history department's seminar room (TLC 3205). Your class participation grade will be based primarily on your participation in these weekly meetings. At these meetings, we will discuss graduate readings that do not appear on the undergraduate syllabus, with an emphasis on historiographical questions, as well as historical content.

I do not require or expect you to attend the six undergraduate book discussion sessions, especially because most of those discussions will focus on books that do not appear on the graduate student reading list. However, if you would like to attend any of these sessions, you are welcome to do so.

Class communication: I may send out periodic email communiqués to students in this course, so please check your UWG email account regularly. The university administration has stipulated that all email communication between faculty and students should take place on UWG email accounts, so please use your UWG email account for all electronic communications that you send me.

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 or other history department faculty (e.g., the department chair, students' advisors, or the graduate studies coordinator), 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:

Graduate students in this course will follow a reading list that differs from that of the undergraduates who are taking HIST 4479. The following books are required for graduate student discussions, and can be ordered online or at the university library through GIL Express:

Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). ISBN: 978-0807849873.

R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). ISBN: 978-0520226821.

Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). ISBN: 978-0807847169.

George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0195300475.

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). ISBN: 978-0300091359. (Both the 1st and 2nd editions are acceptable).

Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003). ISBN: 978-0374529567.

Stephen Prothero, ed., *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0807857700.

Joshua M. Zeitz, *White Ethnic New York: Jews, Catholics, and the Shaping of Postwar Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). ISBN: 978-0807857984.

Class Schedule:

- 8/14 Introduction: Why Study the History of American Religion?
- 8/17 The Revolt against Calvinism
- 8/19 The Second Great Awakening
Graduate discussion:
Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History," *J. of American History*, 90 (March 2004): 1357-1378 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
Robert A. Orsi, "When 2+2=5: Can We Begin to Think about Unexplained Religious Experiences in Ways that Acknowledge Their Existence?," *American Scholar*, 76 (Spring 2007): 34-43 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
Jan Shipps, "Richard Lyman Bushman, the Story of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, and the New Mormon History," *J. of American History*, 94 (2007): 498-516 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
Richard Lyman Bushman, "What's New in Mormon History: A Response to Jan Shipps," *JAH*, 94 (2007): 517-521 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
- 8/21 Two American Denominations: The Disciples and the Mormons
- 8/24 Millenarianism and American Sects
- 8/26 Temperance and Abolitionism
Graduate discussion: Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross*
- 8/28 The Beginnings of African American Christianity
- 8/31 Undergraduate discussion of Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross*
- 9/2 The Civil War as a Religious Conflict
Graduate discussion:
George McKenna, "The Blue, the Gray, and the Bible," *First Things*, August / September 2007, pp. 29-33 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
William L. van Deburg, "William Lloyd Garrison and the 'Pro-Slavery Priesthood': The Changing Beliefs of an Evangelical Reformer," *J. of the American Academy of Religion*, 43 (1975): 224-237 (JSTOR).
J. Albert Harrill, "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Criticism and Christian Moral Debate," *Religion and American Culture*, 10 (2000): 149-186 (JSTOR).
Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920," *J. of Southern History*, 46 (1980): 219-248 (JSTOR).

- 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
 Graduate discussion: Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*
 Rosemary Skinner Keller, “‘When the Subject is Female’: The Impact of Gender on
 Revisioning American Religious History,” in *Religious Diversity and American Religious
 History* (photocopied handout).
Research paper topic due
- 9/11 The Social Gospel
- 9/14 Evangelicals, Missionaries, and Revivalists
- 9/16 Protestant Moral Reformers
 Graduate discussion: Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question*
- 9/18 Undergraduate discussion of *The Mormon Question*
- 9/21 The Azusa Street Revival
- 9/23 The Fundamentalist Controversy
 Graduate Discussion: George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*
Source list for research paper due
- 9/25 Fundamentalist Politics
- 9/28 Jesus in a Business Suit: Mainline Protestantism in the 1920s
- 9/30 Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in the Early 20th Century
 Graduate discussion: John T. McGreevy, “Thinking on One’s Own: Catholicism in the
 American Intellectual Imagination, 1928-1960,” *J. of American History*, 84 (1997): 97-
 131 (JSTOR).
 Richard Wightman Fox, “The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism, 1875-1925,”
J. of Interdisciplinary History, 23 (1993), 639-660 (JSTOR).
 Richard Wightman Fox, “The Niebuhr Brothers and the Liberal Protestant Heritage,” in
Religion and American Intellectual Life, ed. Michael J. Lacey (Cambridge: Cambridge
 University Press, 1989), 94-115 (photocopied handout).
- 10/2 Undergraduate discussion of *The Long Loneliness*
- 10/5 The Religion of the Harlem Renaissance
- 10/7 Christianity during the Depression
 Graduate discussion: Wayne Flynt, “Religion for the Blues: Evangelicalism,

- Poor Whites, and the Great Depression,” *J. of Southern History*, 71 (2005): 3-38 (JSTOR or EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
- 10/9 The Effect of World War II on American Religion
- 10/12 The Religion of Postwar Suburbia
- 10/14 Undergraduate discussion of *The Chosen*
 Graduate discussion: Joshua Zeitz, *White Ethnic New York*
Midterm exam essay question distributed
- 10/16 No class (Fall Break)
- 10/19 Cold War Christianity
- 10/21 Undergraduate midterm exam
 (No graduate discussion)
Graduate midterm exam essay due
- 10/23 The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement
- 10/26 The Effect of the Civil Rights Movement on American Churches
- 10/28 The Prophetic Church: Theologies of Social Justice in the 1960s
 Graduate discussion: David L. Chappell, “A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Faith, Liberalism, and the Death of Jim Crow,” *J. of the Historical Society*, 3 (March 2002): 129-162 (EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
 Jane Dailey, “Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after *Brown*,” *J. of American History*, 91 (2004): 119-144 (JSTOR or EBSCOhost Academic Search Complete).
- 10/30 Undergraduate discussion of *God’s Long Summer*
- 11/2 Catholicism after Vatican II
- 11/4 The Religion of the Counterculture
 Graduate discussion: Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus*, pp. 1-16, 124-303.
- 11/6 Cults and Alternative Religions of the 1970s
- 11/9 Religion and the Politics of Sex and Gender
First draft of research paper due
- 11/11 The Resurgence of Conservative Religion
 Graduate discussion: R. Marie Griffith, *God’s Daughters*

- 11/13 The Christian Right
- 11/16 The Religions of America's New Immigrants
- 11/18 Contemporary Questions of Church and State
Graduate discussion: Stephen Prothero, ed., *A Nation of Religions*
- 11/20 Film: *Arranged* (part 1)
- 11/23 Film: *Arranged* (part 2)
- 11/25 No class (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/27 No class (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/30 Undergraduate discussion of *American Islam*
- 12/2 America's "Unchurched"
(No graduate discussion)
Research paper due
Take-home final exam question distributed
- 12/4 Religion in America Today
- 12/7 **Take-home final exam essay due by 5pm**