

Judith Hunter Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

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The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Harry S. Stout of Yale University. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

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I. Syllabus Justification

I teach at a public liberal arts college, and my colleagues and I have to be generalists. However, each spring I get the chance to teach an American religious history survey. Given the structure of our offerings, it is necessarily an upper-level course only history majors take. As a 300-level class, department practice is that a substantial research paper be required (12-15 pages). My department also expects a substantial reading load at this level, but the cost of books is an issue. The students are suffering from state budget cutbacks that have led to substantially higher tuition charges. Therefore, I dropped plans to include a primary source collection (the Gaustad) to try to keep down total expenses. Interestingly, although the students are well into the history major by the time they take this course (they are usually juniors or seniors), they are unfamiliar with religious history and seem somewhat uncomfortable for the first few weeks of class. Years of public education seem to have subtly suggested to them that religion is somehow a taboo subject in the classroom. But I am fortunate that Geneseo students are typically highly motivated, and it is very satisfying to watch them as they learn to approach the study of religious history as a valid area of academic inquiry.

I am also very lucky to be located in the heart of the "burned-over" district; Geneseo is only 30 miles south of Rochester, New York. I try to include a monograph concerning some burned-over district religious expression each time I give the course; now that Spencer Klaw's book on Oneida is available in paperback, I will try using it. (Students always seem fascinated by Oneida anyway.) One of the most enjoyable classes I teach is the one in which I explain to the students that our region, which they associate with dairy farms and snowbound winters, was once the spiritual heart of the nation. It seems to be a revelation each time I teach it. Our campus library also has an extensive local history collection, which the students often end up exploiting as they write their papers.

As a rule, I try to encourage students to explore "non-mainstream" religious issues in their papers. I do that to balance the class emphasis I need to place on the mainstream. These students know so little about the role of religion in American culture that I feel compelled to make sure they know the basic framework. I start with the creation of a Protestant hegemony and trace its development through the Civil War, and then I trace the fragmentation of the religious landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a

result of both pluralistic forces (e.g., immigration) and internal divisions among Protestants (e.g., the Modernist controversy). I tend to conclude with the emergence of the postwar consensus surrounding civil religion, both because of time constraints and because I have not found reading material I feel comfortable with for the more recent period.

I am doing several things differently this semester with the class reading list. For instance, I have dropped Albert Raboteau's "Slave Religion" in favor of Frederick Douglass's 1845 narrative so the students will have some reading in primary sources (the Gaustad and Dorsett books also have appendixes with very useful documents). I have also given up using a general text (although I will put several on reserve) and have adopted David Hackett's "Religion and American Culture: A Reader" instead. This has the advantage of exposing students to some of the most innovative scholarship available in brief doses each week. As I have never been satisfied with the "narrative line" provided by general texts, I will place more emphasis on making connections in class and asking students to make connections in our Friday discussions (my general custom is to lecture -- albeit with questions and answers -- two days a week and keep Friday's class sacrosanct for discussing the reading assignment for the week). I will look for other ways to incorporate more readings in primary sources in the future, but I do feel that the research paper experience requires students to do a great deal of independent work in original sources. The paper is an absolutely essential part of the course; it counts for 40% of each student's final grade and so I do a lot of work with each student on their papers over the course of the semester. They have to present an argument based on primary sources as much as possible, so if they are not reading in documents for class every week, they are doing it on a regular basis in their own research. Besides incorporating that research into a traditional paper, students will also get a chance to expose the rest of the class to their findings in a week of presentations and discussions after the papers are turned in.

Despite my students' initial apprehensions about studying religion in an academic setting, it is very rewarding to see how excited they can become about religious history by the end of the semester. I believe that is because students bring a personal engagement to the topic of religion (even the decision not to be "religious" is a religious decision) they don't bring to other fields of history. And by confronting traditions other than their own, I think students learn more about the objectivity that is supposed to be the core of the discipline of history than they do in any other course.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

History 360, Religion in American History

Required Texts:

- Hackett, David, ed. Religion and American Culture: A Reader
- Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop
- Gaustad, Edwin S. Neither King nor Prelate: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826
- Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave
- Spencer Klaw, Without Sin: The Life and Death of the Oneida Community
- Lyle Dorsett, Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America
- Robert Anthony Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street
- Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (5th ed.)
- William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, Elements of Style (3rd ed.)

There are nine books required for this course, all of which should be available at Sundance Books on Main Street. You will not be able to purchase the course books any other place. Please advise me if you have any difficulty obtaining these titles. You will not find specific readings from either Strunk & White or Turabian

on the course schedule; they are included to help you with the writing of the term paper. All papers must conform to the conventions set out in Turabian (especially for footnotes/endnotes) and all papers must show a familiarity with the rules of good writing as set out in Strunk & White.

Course Requirements:

Grades will be based on the midterm examination (20%), a 12-15 page research paper (40%), and the final examination (40%). Class participation will be considered in the determination of the final grade, so the above percentages should be considered approximations.

You may write your paper about any subject you wish, so long as it falls within the parameters of the course. All students are urged to consult with me early in the semester on possible topics. You have great latitude so that you may choose the area of American religious history that will be most interesting for you to research, but you should narrow the focus quickly. Remember, this is to be a research paper, ideally based on primary sources as much as possible. Any paper based entirely on secondary research will not be suitable for this assignment. Remember as well that you must advance and support an argument in your paper. All papers must be typed and double-spaced. There will be no extensions given; all late papers will be penalized. We will talk more about this very important aspect of the course as the semester progresses. You may turn in the paper at any point in the semester before the start of class Friday, April 19. However, students who submit their papers on or before April 5 may rewrite them by a deadline to be announced once it is clear how many students wish to take this option.

Classes the week of April 22 will not follow the pattern of the rest of the semester. That week, all students will give very short presentations on their research (approximately 5 minutes each). We will then discuss as a class how these findings depart from or are consistent with broader themes we have covered in the course.

Course Schedule:

Week of January 22:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Course Introduction / Encounters

European Contexts for American Religious History

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Ramon Gutierrez, "The Pueblo Indian World in the Sixteenth Century."

Week of January 29:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Puritan Belief

Puritan Practice

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: David Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England;" Edmund S. Morgan, Puritan Dilemma, pp. 1-100.

Week of February 5:

LECTURE TOPIC:

Quakerism and the Importance of an Inclusive Utopian Effort

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience;" Morgan, pp.101-205.

Note: We will discuss this week's reading on Wednesday, February 7. Class on Friday, February 9 will meet at the Milne Library Reference Desk.

Week of February 12:

LECTURE TOPICS:

The Great Awakening

Acadian Refugees and the limits of American Inclusiveness

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: David Hackett, "The Social Origins of Nationalism: Albany, New York 1754-1835;" Edwin S. Gaustad, Neither King nor Prelate: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826, pp. 1-84.

Week of February 19:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Religion in the Revolution / A Revolution in Religion?

Religion in the Early Republic: Democratization, Revivalism, and the Second Great Awakening

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Joel Martin, "From 'Middle Ground' to 'Underground': Southeastern Indians and the Early Republic;"

Albert Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel;" Gaustad, pp.85-174 (including the documents in the appendixes).

Week of February 26:

LECTURE TOPICS:

The Legacy of the Awakening: Reform Societies and the Benevolent Empire

American Slavery and American Religion

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: William Gravelly, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations;"

Charles Joyner, " 'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity;" Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, pp. 1- 145.

Week of March 4:

LECTURE TOPICS:

The Burned-Over District As a Case Study

Antebellum Catholicism: New/Old Challenges to the Mainstream

Readings:

Religion and American Culture: Mary Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York;" Jan Shipps, "The Genesis of Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition;" Tamar Frankiel, "California Dreams;"

Midterm, Friday March 8.

Week of March 11:

LECTURE TOPICS:

American Apocalypse: American Religion and the Civil War

The Paradox of the Latter Day Saints

Preliminary Thesis Statement and Bibliography due Friday March 15.

Week of March 18: Spring Break.

Week of March 25:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Judaism and Pluralism

Roman Catholicism in a Decreasingly Protestant America

Film: "Hands to Work, Hearts to God" (we will look at the Shakers as described in this film and compare them to the residents of Oneida).

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Jonathan Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue;" Colleen McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity, 1860 1960;" Spencer Klaw, Without Sin, pp. 1 174.

Note: We will discuss these readings on Monday, April 1.

Week of April 1:

LECTURE TOPIC:

Modernism and Protestantism: The Gospel of Wealth and the Social Gospel

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause;" Leigh Schmidt, "The Easter Parade: Piety, Fashion, and Display;" Mark Carnes "Man made Religion: Victorian Fraternal Rituals;" Klaw, pp. 175-294.

Week of April 8:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Fundamentalism: The Refusal to Accommodate Religion, Depression, and War

Neo-Orthodoxy

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "The Feminist Theology of the Black Baptist Church;" Grant Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism and the Pentecostal Character;" Lyle Dorsett, Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America, pp. 1-207 (including the documents in the appendixes).

Week of April 15:

LECTURE TOPICS:

The Postwar Era: Boom but No Revival

Civil Rights vs. Civil Religion

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Robert Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life;" Allen Deck, "The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism;" Robert Anthony Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street, pp. xiii 106.

Class on April 19 is the FINAL deadline for all papers.

Week of April 22:

Class Research Presentations

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Deborah Dash Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles;" James Cone, "Martin and Malcolm: Integrationism and Nationalism in African-American Christianity;" Orsi, pp. 107 231.

Week of April 29:

LECTURE TOPICS:

Catholicism after Vatican II: Mixed Blessings Conclusions and Loose Ends

General Trends in American Religion since the 60s

READINGS:

Religion and American Culture: Raymond DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethno-historical Account;" William Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens;" Karen McCarthy Brown, "The

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Power to Heal in Haitian Vodou;" Diana Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter: The Meeting of East and West in America since the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions."

Week of May 6:

Review; prepare for Final Examination, Friday, May 10, 8 -- 11 AM.

Please note that you will need to provide your own blue books for the examinations.

Our standard practice will be to save Fridays' sessions for discussing the readings of the week. Your attendance and participation in these classes will be especially important to me in evaluating your overall performance in the course. There will also be discussion on Mondays and Wednesdays, but it will be more general in nature.