

# Madeline Duntley Course Syllabus

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

Madeline Duntley  
Department of Religion  
College of Wooster

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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. Katherine Albanese of the University of California, Santa Barbara. 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

### **Setting:**

The College of Wooster is a private, liberal arts college of about 1800 undergraduates. All students are required to take one introductory world religion course before they graduate. "Religion in America" is an upper division humanities elective, so enrollment will range from about 8 to 20 students. My students are generally white, middle to upper middle class, from the midwest or east. Few have much background in religion either personal or academic, nor do they have a good grasp of history or chronology, so this course is a challenge.

### **Course Outline:**

I want my students to get the sense that different ethnic groups, religions, and regions do not remain isolated, but that they interact, develop simultaneously, and have an impact upon each other. Religion is not static, it is continually changing with new times and circumstances, and religion in turn shapes history and peoples' perspectives on life, and of each other. One of the themes running throughout the course is civil and religious liberties and limitations. We study religious and civil liberties in the context of colonial America and the Constitution, in terms of Nativism and Catholics and Jews, the Civil Rights activism of the 1960s, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. What is the legislative history of this nation concerning religious groups outside the perceived "mainstream?" When and why were these laws repealed, or were new laws enacted to protect and promote religious liberty and civic participation?

### **Fieldwork:**

My own training and research in Ritual Studies has convinced me of the teaching potential of fieldwork. I use participant-observation fieldwork in some fashion each time I teach this course, and students respond with excitement and enthusiasm. I meet with students individually to help them choose a project and to discuss their progress, and I distribute handouts with tips on fieldwork. Students can choose a group here in town, or in nearby urban centers, or some even do their fieldwork during vacation breaks in their home

cities. The particular fieldwork assignment as it appears here is geared to help students learn how to rely on their own research, to trust their instincts, follow up hunches, and be inspired to spend the time and effort to uncover and discover answers to their questions. They learn that they can and must be critical and informed when reading secondary sources--that texts have their limitations. Also, my phenomenological leanings orient students toward active immersion in the group by reading the group's own publications, experiencing their rituals and community, and seeking knowledge from the insiders' points of view, on their own "turf" and terms, rather than passively sitting in class watching a film or listening to a guest speaker.

### **Frustrations:**

I have consistently cut down on the amount of reading and writing I require because I find students often don't or won't find time for close reading even in seminar formats. This seems to have little to do with interest--the College of Wooster emphasizes extracurricular involvement, and my students are often busy and exhausted. Students like to take active control in the classroom, but are unwilling to be consistently prepared for class. This makes designing class sessions difficult--if I focus entirely on the reading, class will be slow or confusing to those who have not read and absorbed the material. Also, it is difficult to know how to engage them in "conversation" with each other about the texts--they tend to talk to me. Fieldwork projects diffuse this, because they will displace me from the "authority" role and are more concerned with engaging their peers in their reports. But since this is scheduled for the end of the term, it can't help the dynamics in the earlier part of class. Lastly, the breadth of this course is one of its strengths, I think, but to include the fieldwork I need to cut down on the coverage of the 20th century. This century interests my students the most--they seem to care little for Puritans and the 17th and 18th centuries, and get bogged down in the 19th century--confusing the first and second Great Awakenings, and unsure of Western frontier geography and chronology. So I am searching for ways in class to connect the readings with life today, which is why I chose the "civil liberties" theme and fieldwork.

## **II. Course Syllabus**

### **RELIGION IN AMERICA**

*Dr. Madeline Duntley, The College of Wooster*

### **Course Goals:**

First, we will spend time charting a chronological history of religion in America using a variety of textual sources: secondary histories, primary sources, and autobiographies. We will discuss the readings in class, and the lectures will provide background to the readings and general topics we will cover. We will highlight key episodes in America religious history and focus on how and why religions and cultures tolerate, dominate, and challenge each other. By focusing on a variety of America's religious traditions, we will see how these groups have experienced transformation and upheaval over the years, and how new religions are created.

Second, you will have an opportunity to do fieldwork with a particular religious group. Several times throughout the term you will visit and observe the group's worship services, ceremonies, meditations, or other ritual events. You may choose any group: Eastern Orthodox, New Age, Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist--but preferably it will be a group you want to learn more about, and it should be one you have little knowledge of or exposure to at present

### **Fieldwork Assignment:**

Questions you will ask and answer with fieldwork observation include: how central is religious ritual or worship to this group or community? What is the sacred space like? In what ways can the location (building, church, synagogue, mosque, hall, outdoors, etc.) and the participants (the ritual leaders, members, congregation, etc.) influence the style, sequence, and/or format of the ritual or worship? How did your involvement in observing a group on its "own turf" add to your understanding of this religious group?

Not only will you visit and observe, but you will be researching this religious group by consulting the following source materials: "Insider Accounts," or historical/explanatory materials that the group has written, produced, and often distributes about itself (books, tracts, pamphlets, bookmarks, etc.), as well as interviews and conversations with the group's members and participants. You will also utilize "Outsider Accounts" which include textbooks, histories, studies of the group written by scholars in fields such as history, religious studies, anthropology, as well as your own observations and data collected in fieldwork.

This research will help you explore the scope and usefulness of the various source materials available on this group. For example, do scholars generally provide a description of religious practices? Why or why not? Do scholars' accounts and insider accounts agree on the fundamental identity of the group? How and on what points do they differ? Should scholars incorporate "insider" sources in their depictions of a religious group? On the basis of your research, how central is religious ritual to the maintenance, perpetuity, and formation of this particular community?

You will receive a detailed handout on how to pursue your fieldwork project a little later on in the course. During the last week, you will have the chance to give an oral report on your fieldwork experiences and share your findings with other members of the class.

## **Assignments:**

Two take-home exams, worth 25% each  
Fieldwork Written Project, worth 30%  
Oral Report, worth 10%  
Ongoing Reaction/Reflection assignments on readings; class participation, preparation, and involvement worth, 10%

## **REQUIRED TEXTS AND RESERVE READING BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### *Required Texts:*

(PA) Vaughan, Alden T. and Edward W. Clark, eds. *Puritans Among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1981).

(PP) Bristol, Sherlock. *The Pioneer Preacher*. Ed., Dewey D. Wallace, Jr. (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1989).

(VH) McDannell, Colleen. *The Christian Home in Victorian America 1840-1900* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1986)

(LD) Lame Deer, John with Richard Erdoes. *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*. (NY; Pocket Books, 1972).

(MMA) Cone, James. *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

Library Reserve Readings:

RR1 Gutierrez, Ramon A. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*. (Stanford Univ. Press, 1991).  
Intro and Chapter 1, pp. xvii-36

RR2 Hall, David D. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New  
England*. (NY: Knopf, 1989). Chapter 2, pp. 71-116.

RR3 Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*. (NY: Oxford,  
1978), Chapter 2, "Death of the Gods" pp. 43-92.

RR4 Rutman, Darrett B., ed. *The Great Awakening*. (Huntingdon, NY: Robert E. Krieger, 1977) Chapter 2,  
"The Great Itinerant" pp. 35-51--impressions of the evangelist George Whitfield by a farmer, Benjamin  
Franklin, and Dissenters in Virginia.

RR5 Myers, Sandra L. *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915*. (Albuquerque: Univ. of  
New Mexico Press, 1982), Chapter 4, "The Savage Within: Women, Race, Religion, and Class on the  
Frontier," pp. 72-97.

RR6 Pratt, Norma Fain. "Transitions in Judaism: The Jewish American Woman through the 1930s" pp. 207-  
228 in *Women in American Religion*, ed. Janet Wilson James (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press,  
1989).

RR7 Neusner, Jacob. *Stranger at Home: The Holocaust, Zionism, and American Judaism* (Univ. of  
Chicago, 1981), Part 1, "The Problematic of Judaism in America: Identity, Self Hatred and Crisis of  
Community" pp. 27-57.

RR8 Schreiber, William I. *Our Amish Neighbors*. (Univ. of Chicago, 1978), Chapter 2, "The Amish  
Homestead" and Chapter 3 "The Old Order Amish Way of Life" pp. 43-96.

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS, DISCUSSIONS, LECTURES, & TOPICS**

(Readings must be completed before class on the day assigned. For example, readings listed for Monday  
must be read before class meets on that day.)

14 week term; Class meets MWF

Day Subject Readings

Week 1, M Indigenous Peoples of North America None

W Case Study: The Pueblo World Reserve Reading #1 (RR1) Gutierrez  
"Pueblo World in the 16th Century"

F Spanish Catholic "Conquest" None  
New Mexico

Week 2, M English Colonists: The Puritan Worldview None

W Puritans and the Algonquians PA: Mary Rowlandson, pp. 29-75

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F Puritans Meet French Jesuits and PA: John Williams, pp. 167-226  
Catholic Mohawks

Week 3, M Popular Religion in New England RR2, Hall, "A World of Wonder"

W Witchcraft & the Salem Trials None

F Slavery in the New World None

Week 4, M African Slave Religion RR3, Raboteau "Death of the Gods"

W American Colonial Religion: Church Establishment & Diversity None

F The Great Awakenings & Revivals RR4, Rutman, "The Great Itinerant"

Take-home exam #1 due

Week 5, M Revolution & Constitution: None  
Religious Liberty?

W Camp Meetings & Second Great (Play & Discuss Camp Meeting  
Great Awakening Spirituals)

F Evangelicals & Reform: Pioneer Preacher(PP), pp. 1-64  
Abolition & Temperance

Week 6, M Conversion & Perfection PP, pp. 65-183 (selected chapters)

W Frontier Religion & The Westward Migration None

F Women on the Frontier: Anglos, RR5, Myers, "Women, Race,  
Indians, Mexicans & Mormons Class & Religion on the Frontier"

Week 7, M 19th Century Immigration & None  
Nativist Backlash

W 19th Century Urban & "Suburban" Victorian Home (VH) pp. 1-51  
Catholics and Protestants

F Rituals of the Hearth VH, pp. 52-107

Week 8, M Cult of Domesticity & Male/Female VH pp. 108-155  
Role Models

W Darwinism & Fundamentalism None

F The Rise of Protestant Liberalism None

Take-home exam #2 due

Week 9, M Indian Wars & Lakota Religion (Read the entire *Lame Deer* book throughout the week).

W Lakota Ceremonials and Rituals

F American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA): Indian Civil & Religious Rights

Week 10, M African American Civil Rights: Introduction, Chaps-1 & 2, pp. Two Religious Models: 1-58

W Nationalist & Integrationist MMA, Chaps. 3 & 4, pp. 58-118

F Nation of Islam and MMA, Chaps. 5 & 6, pp. 120-180  
The Black Church and Chap. 9, pp. 244-271

Week 11, M American Judaism: An Introduction None

W Women & Judaism RR6, Pratt "Jewish Amer. Women"

F Identity & Self Hatred RR7, Neusner, "The Problematic of Judaism"

Week 12, M Asian American Religions

W New Age Religions

F Amish Religion & Community \* RR8, Schreiber, Chaps. 2 & 3 in "Our Amish Neighbors"

Week 13, M Fieldwork Reports [Oral]

W Fieldwork Reports

F Fieldwork Reports

Week 14, M Fieldwork Reports

W Fieldwork Reports

F Fieldwork Reports

Fieldwork report papers due during Finals Week

\*Local Amish Farm Tour Fieldtrip to be scheduled during the term

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To review introductory course syllabi prepared in other phases of the Young Scholars in American Religion project follow the links provided below.