

Richard J. Callahan, Jr.
Department of Religious Studies
University of Missouri-Columbia

Course Rationale

The University of Missouri-Columbia (MU), established in 1839 as the first state university in the Louisiana Purchase, is the oldest state university west of the Mississippi River. In 1870, the University was approved as a land-grant university under the Morrill Act of 1862. MU is the largest of the four campuses of the University of Missouri System. MU serves approximately 27,000, including over 19,600 undergraduate and over 6,400 graduate and professional students, and is classified as a Doctoral/Research University-Extensive as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The MU Department of Religious Studies is dedicated to the study of religion in its various historical, cultural and social contexts. Created in 1981 as part of the humanities division in MU's College of Arts and Science, the program developed without formal ties to particular religious traditions or institutions. As part of a state university, the department eventually evolved an innovative structure that has received national recognition for its originality and excellence. Broadly described, that structure incorporates the study of Western, Asian and Indigenous religions in a coherent and integrated program. The primary basis for the department's structure is the affirmation that the focus of curriculum should be the exploration of religion in human life rather than the study of one or two specific traditions, and the belief that such exploration can only be carried out in a comparative framework. In 1998 the department began offering an MA degree.

The department is small, consisting of seven full-time, tenure track faculty and two adjuncts. I am the Americanist. While we have approximately fifty majors, a large portion of the students who enroll in our classes have not taken courses in religious studies before, and may not take any more in the future. This is especially true in a course like Religious Studies 3210: History of Religion in Post-Civil War America. Most of the sixty to seventy students who enroll in this course are taking it to fulfill a Humanities general education requirement. The audience, therefore, helps to dictate the purpose of the course. Since this will probably be the only religious studies course these students ever take (and almost certainly the only course in American religion), and since it will serve to fulfill their humanities requirement, I want the course to foster skills in critical thinking, reading, and communicating. Although it is a course in American religious history, and it is cross-listed with the History Department, I am less concerned with specific historical details than I am with encouraging students to reflect critically and creatively about the places, roles, and meanings of religion in the United States. This means, too, that I want them to interrogate the meanings of "religion" and "the United States" in ways that might be new to them.

A high percentage of my undergraduate students were born and raised in rural Missouri, though St. Louis and Kansas City are also the homes of a sizeable number. The large majority are Christian, mostly Protestant, and in my experience a large number lean toward the conservative evangelical end of the spectrum. There are a smaller number of Roman Catholics. This range, from conservative Protestant to Roman Catholic, is the extent of most students' experience of religious diversity. Therefore, I feel that another goal of my courses is to awaken students to the diversity of religious orientations in the United States, *including* the diversity

within Protestant Christianity (with which many are unfamiliar). I try to do this both spatially and temporally: to illustrate that the religious landscape of Missouri is not the same as the religious landscape in some other areas of the country, and to examine historical transformations of religious issues and attitudes in the United States.

I have taught Religious Studies 3210 several times before. Each time I get frustrated with it. I struggle with issues of breadth vs. depth, with chronology and historical narrative vs. thematic or issue-based approaches, and with the best way to approach a class of seventy students who range widely in ability and interest. I am taking this opportunity to propose an admittedly experimental design for the course, one that I hope speaks to some of the concerns I've had in past efforts.

For this syllabus I have broken the fifteen-week semester into three parts. **First**, we spend two weeks getting oriented to ways of conceptualizing and approaching religion in America. I do this because I have found that too often courses in American religious history jump right in, assuming that students know something about the institutions, organizations, terms, and so forth that they are suddenly asked to converse with. I remember when I first took a religious studies course in college, and I felt completely lost because I didn't know the names of (or differences between) various Protestant denominations that were being tossed around in the texts and lectures—and I was someone who was interested in religion. Many of my students come to the class with less interest in religion than I had, and less experience of religious diversity. By reading the introduction to Catherine L. Albanese's textbook, *America: Religions and Religion*, we open up a space and a language to begin to talk about religion in new ways. This also furthers my goal of introducing students to religious studies (not just church history). During this part of the course I also introduce the students to the various Protestant denominations, religious and social distinctions, and "major players" in the American religious landscape. We also explore historical and sociological questions about diversity, voluntarism, and secularization.

Next we spend four weeks reading the second half of Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt's *The Religious History of America*. I have not used this text before, but it appears to me to be a good choice for a relatively quick and enjoyable read through of the "traditional" narrative arc of American religious history. And this is what I aim to accomplish in this section of the course—familiarize the students with the "standard" or "traditional" narrative. In the past I have used textbooks by Peter Williams and by Hudson and Corrigan to structure the course in a chronological manner, but I have always been frustrated by the knowledge that we are skimming the surface and leaving much out, and that religion in American history does not follow one narrative thread. Nevertheless, I do think that it is important that students become familiar with that narrative since it sets up how many people have thought and continue to think about America's religious past and present. While the students are reading the Gaustad text, I will be lecturing on issues related to the construction of historical narratives, different perspectives on the American religious experience, and the broader historical context of the periods. In the middle of the narrative history we break for an "interlude" to return to methodological and theoretical questions about studying American religious history. Specifically, we read a chapter on civil religion from Catherine L. Albanese's *America: Religions and Religion* and the introduction to David Chidester's *Patterns of Power: Religion and Politics in American Culture*. With two weeks of historical data to draw from, we discuss these more complicated and sophisticated aspects of religion's location and function in America. We return to the questions and frameworks introduced in this interlude throughout the remainder of the course.

Finally, the remaining nine weeks of the semester are devoted to studying three issues in more depth through reading book-length studies, spending three weeks on each one. Theoretically, this section of the course could change each year to focus on issues that are particularly relevant at the time the course is being taught. I have tried to select books that each cover most of the time period from the Civil War to the present, rather than shorter periods, so that the history of religion in post-Civil War America is told through the history of a specific issue (thus confronting the issue of narrative threads in history). I have also tried to select issues that cut across the spectrum of traditions or religious orientations so that we don't get stuck in a mode of thinking that sees each tradition as having a separate and isolated history. Finally, I tried to select issues and books that relate religion to the broader contours of American life, so that students can see religion operating in everyday life, intertwined with social, cultural, and economic concerns. I am sensitive to the fact that many issues that I would like to cover are left out in my choice of books, including race, labor, immigration, Asian religions, Islam, war and peace, and many more. I am convinced that no matter what I chose I would leave something out, and therefore try to raise critical questions about these "missing" issues as the class reads the books I did choose.

The first book on this syllabus is Eric Michael Mazur's *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order*. I want the course to spend some time dealing with religion and the law, not only because it is essential to American religious history but also because I think it is important for students to understand *how* the American legal system shapes and challenges religious legitimacy. I also want students to think critically about religious diversity in America in ways that challenge their understanding of both religion and America. Mazur's book covers a wide historical period. The second book I have chosen is Stephen Prothero's *Purified By Fire: A History of Cremation in America*, since it covers from 1874 to the present, and deals with changing perceptions of death in a way that I hope will provoke students to think about religion in a *religious studies* manner—not necessarily limited to church history or doctrine or theology or particular "world religions" tradition. Finally, I have chosen Daniel Wojcik's *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* for similar reasons. It puts American apocalyptic beliefs and practices into historical perspective, provides a way to think about them, and explores their manifestation in a variety of settings including Protestant, Catholic, and secular. I think that apocalypticism is a particularly powerful and pervasive religious idiom in American religious history and culture, and I would like students to be able to identify it and be able to place it in a critical perspective.

Each week the class meets for two lectures and a discussion section. The entire class is present for the lectures, while it splits into thirds for discussion sections. Students are required to write one-page thought papers reflecting on the week's reading assignments and lectures, which are due at their discussion sections most weeks (as noted on the schedule). These are designed to encourage focused thinking on the topics covered and to prepare students for active discussion. They are also designed to give feedback to the students about how effectively they are communicating their ideas. I will post prompts for these papers to the course web site on the Monday before they are due. I intentionally do not prepare these at the beginning of the course. Instead, I design the prompt based upon how the class is going and other factors (such as issues in the news). When thought papers are not assigned, I assign reading for discussion sections that is selected to provoke discussion about the week's topic.

It is easy to see how much is left out by taking the approach I am taking to this course. I hope that our three weeks reading Gaustad and Schmidt will alert students to the many things that we are not covering in depth. However, by designing the semester to provide general analytical and interpretive tools for thinking about American religion, reading an example of the “standard” narrative of American religious history since 1865, and then going over much of that history a few times through the focus of different lenses, I hope that students will get more out of the course than the general surface-skimming that has frustrated me in the past. During each class period I will be relating historical examples to current issues in American religion, thereby linking past to present, covering some of the contemporary religious landscape that otherwise wouldn’t be covered in the course, and hopefully helping students to use the past to achieve critical perspective on the present (as well as using the present to help imagine the past).

I also have the students write a final research paper in which they are asked to explore an issue that we did *not* cover in depth in the course, allowing them to apply the methods, themes, and concerns that they have learned through the semester to a topic of their own choosing.

Additional assignments include A) a number of pop quizzes, which I have found to be useful for keeping students attuned to the reading schedule (and which, surprisingly, have generated positive feedback from students); and B) an interview project, in which students are required to interview a family member and a non-family member about their religious background and orientation. The interview write-up and analysis should be about 3-4 pages long and is due any time in the first third of the semester. I have used this assignment once before, and know colleagues who have also used it. I’ve found that it helps to bring the course material closer to the students’ own life, it helps them to locate themselves and others within the context of the material (and vice versa), and it also can lead to surprising discoveries of religious diversity, difference, and transformation.

Religious Studies/History 3210 **History of Religion in Post-Civil War America**

Richard J. Callahan, Jr.
221 Arts & Science Building
callahanrj@missouri.edu
882-0060

“The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a present and its past. Consequently, fear of the present leads to a mystification of the past. The past is not for living in; it is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act.”

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

This course surveys the social and cultural history of religion in America since about 1865. After the Civil War, the American religious landscape became more and more diverse. The Protestant Christianity that had dominated the country's self-identity to that point was itself increasingly conflicted, and the growing presence of Roman Catholics, Jews, and others challenged Protestantism's authority. Alternative religious ideas and practices became more visible and influential in the developing spiritual (and consumer) marketplace. Later in the twentieth century Asian immigrants added their religions to the mix. By the end of the century, conservative Protestants reasserted themselves politically as Americans wrestled to define and redefine the place of religion in the nation's soul.

Because of the broad scope of the subject, a course such as this one can only survey the landscape rather than being a comprehensive account. We will pay special attention to the diversity of American traditions and cultures while we also look for patterns that emerge from their shared history as Americans. We will also explore the history of a few selected religious issues more thoroughly. Along the way, we will be attentive to issues of power that have shaped American religious history, the ways we interpret that history, and the ways we think about religion. Students should be aware that this is not a course in theology. Though we will touch upon theological issues now and again, the course is not designed to be a survey of theological issues.

By the end of the course, you should be familiar with a general chronological overview of historical developments and issues in American religion. You should be able to recognize key figures, events, and themes. You should also know some strategies for critically analyzing and interpreting events, practices, and ideas that you encounter in the American religious landscape. The course attempts to illustrate the dynamic and powerful role that religion has played, and continues to play, in the social, cultural, political, economic, and creative aspects of realms of American life.

Required Texts:

- Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh E. Schmidt, eds., *The Religious History of America*, revised edition (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002).
- Stephen Prothero, *Purified By Fire: A History of Cremation in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Texts are available at the MU Bookstore. All other assigned readings will be available on Blackboard (for instructions on how to use Blackboard, please see separate handout).

Course Requirements

- **6 quizzes: 10%.** These are intended to be an incentive for you to keep up with the reading assignments, and will be unannounced. I will drop your lowest quiz score at the end of the semester.
- **10 one-page thought papers: 30%.** These are intended to encourage you to reflect in a focused manner on the topics we are reading and to help prepare your thoughts for discussion. Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, and will be due in your discussion sections (the weeks that thought papers are due are noted in the class schedule below). I will post a topic to prompt your thinking on Blackboard on the Monday before each paper is due. These papers will not be graded with a letter grade, but will be read and given a “check +,” “check,” or “check -.” You can think of each paper as worth ten points, with a “check -“ being the equivalent of an 8, a “check” being the equivalent of a 9, and a “check +” being a 10. Your papers should be thoughtful, and you should proofread them for spelling and grammar before handing them in. Some students in each discussion section may be asked to read their papers aloud and to elaborate on key points.
- **2 interviews: 20%.** Knowing the religious background of your own family members and of others around you is a helpful (and sometimes surprising) way to begin to orient yourself to the landscape of American religion. You will conduct two interviews in this class, one with a member of your family and one with somebody who is not a member of your family (a classmate, a friend, a colleague, a stranger—anybody). More information on conducting these interviews will be distributed in a separate handout. Your interviews are due no later than the end of the fifth week of the semester.
- **Final 8-10 page paper: 30%.** This will be on a topic in American religious history since the Civil War that we have not covered in depth in the course, but that you would like to explore more thoroughly. I will distribute a list of possible topics (though you may also come up with one on your own). A research proposal will be due by your discussion section during the thirteenth week of the semester. Details regarding the paper will follow in a separate handout.
- **Participation: 10%.** Participating in class and in discussion sections is an important part of your learning in this class. Showing up is only the first step. You should be prepared at

all class meetings to respond to questions and engage actively in conversations and activities.

Discussion Sections:

You are required to attend the discussion section for which you registered, and to participate actively in it. You should consider your discussion section a good time to bring up any questions you have regarding the reading and lectures. Sections will also allow you to follow up on or to discuss issues that interest you but that we are unable to linger on during lectures. Please come to your section prepared for discussion. *Please bring your books and assigned reading to all class meetings.*

Grading

- A grade of an "A" indicates outstanding work that goes substantially beyond the basic requirements for the course or assignment and shows a sophisticated mastery of the material.
- A grade of "B" indicates a strong understanding and mastery of the course material, its concepts, and its goals.
- A grade of "C" indicates that the student has satisfactorily met the requirements of the course or assignment, and has shown a working understanding of the concepts and familiarity with the materials.
- A grade of "D" indicates that the student has met the minimal requirements of the course.

Late Assignment Policy: Papers or other assignments are due at the time of class. Papers handed in after class will be lowered 1/3 letter grade (a B will become a B-). The grade will be lowered an additional 1/3 letter for each day after the due date that they are not turned in. A day is defined as ending at 4:30, when the Department of Religious Studies office closes.

University Policies

Academic Integrity: Each student should read the University Guidelines on Academic Discipline in the M-Book under "Standard of Conduct" (<http://www.missouri.edu/~mbook/>). According to policy, it is the duty of any instructor who is aware of an incident of academic dishonesty in his/her course to report the incident to the Assistant Provost, 114 Jesse Hall, and to inform the department chair of the incident. This report should be made (in writing) as soon as possible and must contain a detailed account of the incident. The report also must indicate any action taken by the instructor with regard to the student's grade. The instructor may include his/her opinion of the seriousness of the incident and whether or not he/she considers disciplinary action to be appropriate. The decision as to whether disciplinary proceedings are instituted is made by the Office of the Provost and a report of the disposition of the case will be sent to the instructor and Dean of the School/College.

The instructor determines the grade to be assigned to a student and may take into account academic dishonesty on the part of the student for academic but not for disciplinary reasons. According to college policies, when there has been academic dishonesty, the instructor may assign a failing grade for the assignment or a failing grade for the course or may adjust the grade as deemed appropriate. The instructor may also require the student to repeat the assignment, or to perform additional assignments. Any words or ideas derived from outside sources must be given

complete citations in your written work. These outside, or secondary, sources include books, journals, newspapers, magazine, etc., *and also the Internet*. Quotation marks must surround phrases or sentences, which you borrow from such sources. To fail to give appropriate credit is to *plagiarize* from the work of another. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, citing, etc., please consult the instructor or a manual of style like that of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6 ed.

Students with Disabilities: If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need assistance, please notify the Disability Services (A048 Brady, 8824696) and your instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable effort will be made to accommodate your special needs. For more information about the rights of people with disabilities, please see <http://ada.missouri.edu> or call 884-7278.

Attendance: In a 3.0 credit course, if your class meets *three times a week* and you have *six absences*, your grade will be reduced by one point (e.g. a “B” becomes a “C”). I reserve the right to assign a grade of “F” to any student who misses ten or more classes.

Schedule

I. Introduction to Studying American Religious History

Monday: Introduction to the course

Wednesday: What is religion?

- Catherine L. Albanese, “Introduction: The Elephant in the Dark,” in *America: Religion and Religions*, 3rd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999).

Discussion sections:

- Danya Steel, “Generation Next: Losing My Religion,” *Wiretap* December 6, 2002 (<http://www.alternet.org/wiretap/14690>)

Monday: Mapping the American religious landscape

- Maps from Bret E. Carroll, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
- Handout on denominations and religious groups in the United States
- Explore http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html

Wednesday: Recent patterns of transformation in American religion

- Wade Clark Roof, “Religious Kaleidoscope: American Religion in the 1990s,” *Tenemos* 32 (1996): 183-193. (<http://www.abo.fi/comprel/temenos/temeno32/roof.htm>)
- “Kambiz GhaneaBassiri Explains Muslims' Mixed Feelings About American Culture, 1997,” “Richard Wormser Describes Pressures on Muslim Teenagers in American High Schools, 1994,” and “Prema Kurien Explains Hindus' Adjustments to American life, 1998” in Patrick Allitt, ed., *Major Problems in American Religious History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

II. Narrative History of American Religion

Post-Civil War Transformations

Monday: Post-Civil War America's internal diversification

- Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh E. Schmidt, eds., *The Religious History of America*, "Immigration and Diversity," 207-230.

Wednesday: Urban and industrial challenges to the religion

- Gaustad and Schmidt: "Cities and Social Gospels," 231-254

Discussion sections:

- W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Coming of John," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

Monday: Globalization, growth, and struggle

- Gaustad and Schmidt: "The Church and the World" and "Growth and Schism," 255-298.

Wednesday: Intellectual challenges at the turn of the century

- Gaustad and Schmidt: "Faith and Reason," 299-321.

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

Interlude: Expanding Our Thinking About Religion in America

Monday: Public religion, society, and culture

- Catherine L. Albanese, "Civil Religion: Millennial Politics and History," *America: Religion and Religions*, 3rd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999).

Wednesday: Religion, politics, and power

- David Chidester, "Introduction: Religious and Political Power," in *Patterns of Power: Religion and Politics in American Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988).

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*
- *Interviews are due by discussion section meetings this week*

Religion, Politics, and Power in the Twentieth Century

Monday: Religion, power, and politics in the first half of the twentieth century

- Gaustad and Schmidt, "War, Peace, and Religious Renewal" and "The Courts, the Schools, the Streets," 327-373.

Wednesday: Diversity, Civil rights, and the religious right: since the 1960s.

- Gaustad and Schmidt, "Justice, Liberation, Union" and "Politics and Pluralism," 374-427.

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

III. Topics in American Religious History

1. Religion and the Law

Monday: Thinking about religious diversity and the law

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, "Introduction."

Wednesday: American Religions and the Authority of Law

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, 1-27.

Discussion sections:

- Catherine L. Albanese, "Public Protestantism: Historical Dominance and the One Religion of the United States," *America: Religion and Religions*, 3rd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999).

Monday: "Constitutional Congruence"

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, 28-61.

Wednesday: "Constitutional Conversion"

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, 62-93.

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

Monday: "Constitutional Conflict"

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, 94-121.

Wednesday: "Constitutional Questions"

- Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities*, 122-144.

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

2. Cremation: A Modern American Deathway

Monday: Cases for cremation: science, spirit, and sanitation

- Stephen Prothero, *Purified By Fire*, 1-66.

Wednesday: Competing conceptions of body and soul

- *Purified by Fire*, 67-102.

Discussion sections

- "Religion, Death, and Dying," in David Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002)
- Read transcript and listen to the broadcast of this NPR program:
<http://www.npr.org/programs/death/980125.death.html>

Monday: The business of cremation

- *Purified by Fire*, 105-126.

Wednesday: Memorializing the absent body

- *Purified by Fire*, 127-160.

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

Monday: A new deathway for a new time

- *Purified by Fire*, 161-187.

Wednesday: Cremation in contemporary America

- *Purified by Fire*, 188-212

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

3. American Apocalyptic

Monday: Apocalypticism in American history

- Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 1-36

Wednesday: The rapture of Hal Lindsey

- *The End of the World As We Know It*, 37-60.

Discussion sections:

- Bring an example of apocalypticism, from any American source, to class. Be prepared to describe it and discuss its significance as you see it.
- *Paper proposals due by this week. Paper proposals should be approximately three pages in length, clearly defining the subject of your paper and explaining what questions you aim to explore about that subject. Your proposal should indicate how you will go about finding answers to your questions, and should include a bibliography containing at least two secondary and two primary sources.*

Monday: Miraculous photographs, The Bomb, and the Virgin Mary

- *The End of the World As We Know It*, 60-96.

Wednesday: Nuclear apocalypse, punk rock, other secular apocalypses
- *The End of the World As We Know It, 97-132.*

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

Monday: Fate and fatalism in post-Cold War era

- *The End of the World As We Know It, 133-174.*

Wednesday: Alien Apocalypse

- *The End of the World As We Know It, 175-215.*

Discussion sections:

- *Thought paper due*

Paper due during scheduled final exam period.