

Rachel Wheeler
IUPUI

Course Rationale

In the midst of my tenure as a Young Scholar, I went from teaching at a small, private liberal arts college in the Northwest to a large public university in the Midwest, which has prompted a significant change in the way I think about teaching the American religion survey, and thus a substantial change in my syllabus. At Lewis and Clark College, I taught the survey as a 200 level course over two semesters, split chronologically at the Civil War. My first semester at IUPUI, I was scheduled to teach a one semester 100-level introduction to American religion.

My goals for the course have changed significantly with the move. My goal for my courses at Lewis and Clark had been primarily to bring students to an understanding of the role of religion in shaping American history, and to teach critical thinking and writing. Here, I have shifted priorities somewhat, and see one of my main purposes (especially at the 100 level where I have everyone from nursing to criminal justice to physical education students with only a few liberal arts majors) as teaching religious literacy. Students taking the course are generally not taking it with thoughts of becoming majors, but for reasons of personal or professional interest. For example, a number of the nursing students have told me they are taking the course so that they will be able to better understand their patients. So, much more than before, I have focused on teaching the basic history, beliefs and practices of different religious traditions with an almost civic goal in mind of assisting students in understanding their fellow Americans.

The first big question I faced was, of course, textbook selection. Not having much time, and being unfamiliar with the IUPUI system for course packets and reserve readings, I was eager to have all readings come from books. I had previously used at various times, Marty, Gaustad, or LeBeau as textbooks and Hackett, Butler and Stout, or Allitt as readers, all with benefits and drawbacks. My first step was to go to the YSAR website and see what previous Young Scholars from similar type universities had used. I ended up basing my syllabus in part on Ava Chamberlain's, of Wright State University, choosing Julia Corbett's, *Religion in America* as the basic text. Other options I considered were Peter Williams, *America's Religions* and the new Corrigan edition. I chose the Corbett in large part because it covers material that I least like to lecture on. I decided I'd use the Corbett to cover the basic beliefs and practices and that I'd lecture to provide more of the historical context and larger interpretive framework. To supplement Corbett, I assigned both the Hackett reader and Amanda Porterfield's *American Religious History*. While they don't fit entirely neatly together, the three have worked fairly well in providing basic information, a taste of primary documents and an introduction to the scholarship, with the Hackett reader presenting mostly social history approaches and non-mainstream subjects, and the Porterfield providing more traditional approaches and subjects.

The main challenge I have found is that the format runs against my historian's sensibilities. The syllabus is roughly chronological in covering traditions as they appear on the American scene

(except for Native American religions, which are not covered at all in Corbett, but which I dropped in the middle of the course, in order to challenge the idea that Indians only exist in the distant past), but chronology is not the central logic. The “major traditions” approach has the obvious advantage of being able to show the trajectory of particular traditions, but the disadvantage of jumping around a good bit chronologically, making it difficult for me to provide students with a sense of historical context.

As for assignments, I decided to focus on critical reading, rather than critical writing skills. So rather than traditional academic writing assignments, I am requiring students to turn in daily summaries of the readings from Hackett or Porterfield. This has allowed me to get a sense of just what their skills are and how they are absorbing the material, as well as simply ensuring that they do the reading. The other writing assignments include reports of two visits to religious services and a family religious history. Finally, a midterm and final test both the factual material from Corbett and asks them to synthesize the readings from Hackett and Porterfield. On the whole, I think the course is working, and that in the future I will tinker rather than overhaul. I hope eventually, to be able to offer two different introductory courses in American religion: one with a goal of religious literacy geared toward non-majors, and another that would serve as an introduction to American religious history for Religious Studies, American Studies, and History majors.

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R173 AMERICAN RELIGION
R185
M, W, 9:30-10:45
BS 3011

BULLETIN DESCRIPTION: A consideration of American religion, with particular emphasis on the development of religious diversity and religious freedom in the context of the American social, political, and economic experience. Special attention will be directed to changes in Roman Catholicism and Judaism as well as to alterations in the nature of American Protestantism. [This is the official description from the course catalog.]

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Corbett, Julia Mitchell. *Religion in America*, 4th edition
Hackett, David G. ed. *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*, 2nd edition
Porterfield, Amanda, ed. *American Religious History*

GOALS: This course is intended to be an experience in active learning. It is expected that you will be an active participant both in and outside of the classroom. At the end of the course, you will have a greater understanding of the important role that religion has played in American history. Additionally, you will have a solid knowledge of the diverse religious traditions found in America. And finally, you will work at developing the skills essential to the academic study of religion, not necessarily so that you can go on to being professors of Religious Studies, but so that you can be informed observers and commentators on the place of religion in American life.

EXPECTATIONS: It is expected that you will spend on average 3-4 hours per class session assigned reading, research and writing. The success of the course will depend in large part on your individual and group contributions. I will lecture on occasion, but the bulk of class time will be devoted to discussions and presentations. You are expected to have all of the reading done by class and to come prepared to discuss the material. I will not accept late papers except under extraordinary circumstances, in which case you are expected to make arrangements with me well in advance. Class attendance is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

ASSIGNMENTS: Daily assignments (see below) due in class every day. Papers may be turned in during class, or by 4:30 to my office on the day due. Further instructions for the Religious Service Reports and the Family Religious Biography will be handed out prior to the due dates.

- Religious Service Reports, due Feb 16 and April 26 25%
- Family Religious Biography, due March 31 10%
- Midterm Exam, Mar. 3 15%

- Daily assignments and class participation 25%
- Final Exam 25%

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Assignments are listed in the course schedule. The reading is to be completed by class on the day listed. Abbreviations are used to designate reading as follows: C = Corbett, *Religion in America* H = Hackett, *Religion and American Culture*, and P = Porterfield, *American Religious History*. For each day's reading, you will be expected to turn in a one-paragraph summary of the main thesis of the reading. Most days have several readings assigned—your summary should be of one of the scholarly articles (essays from Hackett or the first part of Porterfield). In addition you should develop 2-3 substantive discussion questions prompted by the various readings. Also, please keep a list of any terms or words you do not understand. Extra credit may be available for those terms whose definitions you look up. I will collect these at the end of the class period. Summaries will be graded on a 5-point system.

WEEK 1 WHY STUDY AMERICAN RELIGION?

Jan. 12 Course Introduction: What is American Religion?

Jan 14 Studying and Describing Religion
Corbett, Ch. 1
Porterfield, "Introduction," 1-23.

WEEK 2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DIVERSITY

Jan 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday: NO CLASS

Jan 21 The Meaning of Diversity
Corbett, Introduction
Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls" **P-2**

WEEK 3 RELIGION IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED STATES

Jan 26 Religious Freedom and Civil Religion
Corbett 21-33
Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause," **H – 10**
Jefferson, "Act for Establishing Religious Freedom" **P-15**
"American Indian Religious Freedom" **P-39**

Jan 28 Popular Religion

Corbett, 33-39.
Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock'n'Roll," **H –22**

WEEK 4 CONSENSUS RELIGION

Feb 2 The Puritan Legacy: Presbyterians and Congregationalists
Corbett, 41-50, 58-63
Miller, "Errand into the Wilderness," **P-1**
Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," **P-10**
"Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson" **P-11**

Feb 4 Revival Protestantism: Baptists and Methodists

Corbett, 50-56

Taves, "Shouting Methodists" **P-3**

Edwards, "Nature of True Virtue" **P-14**

Finney, "What a Revival of Religion is," **P-17**

WEEK 5 DENOMINATIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Feb 9 Liturgical Protestantism: Episcopalians/Lutherans

Corbett, 56-58, 60-62.

Hutchison, "Protestants as Establishment" **P-4**

Schmidt, "The Easter Parade," **H – 11**

Feb 11 Liberal Protestantism: Quakers and Unitarian-Universalists

Corbett, 64-66, 120-123, 131-139.

Addams, "A Function of the Social Settlement," **P-25**

James, "Varieties of Religious Experience," **P-26**

Machen, "Christianity and Liberalism" **P-28**

WEEK 6 CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA

Feb 16 Catholicism and National Identity

Corbett, 70-89

Dolan, "Catholicism and American Culture" **P- 6**

Brownson, "The American Republic," **P-21**

FEB 16 RELIGIOUS SERVICE REPORT DUE

Feb 18 Catholicism and Individual Identity

Orsi, "He Keeps Me Going," **H – 16**

Tweed, "Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape," **H – 24**

Day, "From Union Square to Rome," **P-29**

WEEK 7 JUDAISM IN AMERICA

Feb 23 Judaism and Community Identity in Early America

Corbett, 92-118

Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," **H – 12**

Wise, "Our Country's Place in History" **P-22**

Feb 25 Judaism and Modern America

Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots," **H – 18**

Kaplan, "The Future of the American Jew" **P-30**

WEEK 8 WOMEN IN CONSENSUS RELIGIONS

Mar 1 Challenges from within

Corbett, 42-46

Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History," **H – 8**

Daly, "Beyond God the Father," **P-37**

Ruether, "Sexism and God-Talk," **P-40**

Frankiel, "The Voice of Sarah," **P-41**

MAR 3 MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 9 CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTISM

Mar 8 Evangelicals and Fundamentalists

Corbett, 169-175

Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures," **H – 17**

Scofield Reference Bible, **P-27**

Mar 10 The Religious Right

Corbett, 164-169, 175-85

Balmer, "American Fundamentalism" **P- 5**

Griffith, "Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soldiers," **H – 21**

Reed, "Active Faith" **P-43**

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10 NEW AMERICAN RELIGIONS

Mar 22 Holiness and Pentecostalism

Corbett, 185-200

Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish," **H – 20**

Mar 24 Mormonism and Christian Science

Corbett, 141-163

Pratt, "Pre-Existence of our Spirits," **P-23**

Eddy, "Science and Health," **P-24**

WEEK 11 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIONS

Mar 29 Early Encounters

Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," **H – 3**

Wheeler, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," **H – 5**

Williams, "Key into the Language of America," **P-12**

Mar 31 New Religious Movements

DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance," **H – 15**

Martin, "From 'Middle Ground' to 'Underground,'" **H – 7**

Complanter, "The Code of Handsome Lake," **P-16**

Black Elk, "Foreword: The Sacred Pipe," **P-31**

MAR 31 FAMILY RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY DUE

WEEK 12 AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Apr 5 Varieties of African American Christianity

Corbett, 201-203, 212-226

Raboteau, "African-Americans, Exodus and the American Israel," **H – 4**

Apr 7 Women and African-American Christianity

Corbett, 226-231

Higginbotham, "The Feminist Theology of the Black Baptist Church," **H – 13**

Lee, "The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee," **P-18**

Week 13

Apr 12 Religion and Protest

King, jr. "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" **P-33**

Malcolm X, "God's Judgment of White America" **P-34**

James Cone, "Martin and Malcolm," **H – 19**

Apr 14 Islam in America

Corbett, 231-247

Simmons, "Striving for Muslim Women's Human Rights" **P- 9**

WEEK 14 RECENT IMMIGRANT RELIGIONS

Apr 19 Hinduism in America

Corbett, 248-261

Joanne Waghorne, "The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World," **H – 25**

Apr 21 Buddhism in America

Corbett, 261-276

Prebish, "The Faces of Buddhism in America" **P- 8**

Epstein, "Thoughts without a Thinker" **P-42**

WEEK 15 NEW DIRECTIONS

Apr 26 New Age

Corbett, 277-295

Christopher Jocks, "Spirituality for Sale," **H – 23**

APR 26 2ND RELIGIOUS SERVICE REPORT DUE

Apr 28 When Religion is Dysfunctional

Corbett, 302-333

WEEK 16 SUMMING UP

May 3 What is American Religion?

Robert Bellah, "Is There a Common American Culture?" **H – 26**