

## **CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY: SYLLABUS RATIONALE**

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**Metropolitan State University of Denver**

### *Institutional setting:*

Metropolitan State University of Denver is a public, non-residential university located in downtown Denver. About 22,000 students are enrolled, almost all from the Denver metropolitan area. About three quarters of them stay on the Front Range after they graduate. Given its local student body, MSU-Denver emphasizes its local identity, which it strengthens through partnerships with school districts, government agencies, non-profits, and businesses. MSU-Denver also prides itself on serving a non-traditional population. About 40 percent of the student body attends part-time, and the average age is 26. Approximately one-third of MSU-Denver students are first-generation college students. Roughly the same percentage receives Pell Grants, and nearly 40 percent identify as racial and ethnic minorities. The University has been classified as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, which reflects its progress in its ten-year plan to achieve the necessary 25 percent Hispanic enrollment for full HSI classification. The University recently became the only university in the state to offer a special tuition rate to undocumented immigrants who could verify residency and meet certain academic qualifications. MSU-Denver appeals to its diverse population by underscoring its affordability, flexibility, and community partnerships.

The University's mission to attract, support, and retain students comes at a time when meeting any of these goals is a challenge. On the one hand, MSU-Denver is upwardly mobile; it made the jump from college to university status a few years ago, and it has added graduate programs and a professional school. But at the same time, our enrollment has declined (and enrollment in history classes has declined even faster), which has affected funding. These changes have had tangible consequences for faculty. Our enrollment minimums have gone up, and we have cut sections. Given the challenge of filling those sections, faculty who offer new courses must think about how to make them as compelling and useful as possible for as many students as possible.

### *Curricular context:*

The History Department is currently overhauling its major, and the consequences for our ability to offer a wide range of upper-level electives are not yet clear. Between declining enrollments and our soon-to-be restructured major, it has been difficult recently to launch new upper-level courses – but there may be more room for such courses as we settle into the new curriculum. It is with these uncertainties in mind that I have developed this course, which will be an upper-level lecture-discussion course that will fit into our departmental curriculum as an American history elective.

I am optimistic about this course's success because there appears to be widespread interest in religious history courses among our students. I teach an upper-level survey of American religious history, a few of my colleagues teach the religious histories of other regions, and another Americanist periodically teaches a class that covers religion in contemporary American society. This new course would complement these other offerings without being redundant. Students who take my American Religious History class (mostly a combination of History majors and Religious

Studies minors) have commented that they would like even more choices. The course will be open to any student who has taken at least one introductory history course. It will not cross-list with the Religious Studies minor (only truly interdisciplinary courses can), but applicable courses can generally be adjusted in student records to count toward the minor. It might also cross-list with the Political Science department and count toward the Interdisciplinary Legal Studies minor, both of which would help increase enrollment.

*Teaching methodology:*

My goal for this course is twofold: to offer students who have a background in American religious history a chance to study the subject in more depth, and to attract new students with a topic that seems to have broad appeal. MSU-Denver students tend to be very politically engaged and come from a wide range of religious traditions. The relationship between religion and the state, I have found, is one area in which they have considerable interest but relatively little background knowledge. I have designed the course so that it will introduce students who have backgrounds in religious history to new material and themes while remaining accessible and relevant for those who have a minimal background in American history. Accordingly, in addition to specialized lecture topics, I will include regular and broad-ranging discussions, which small groups of students will plan and lead (in consultation with me). I intend the mix of primary and secondary sources to serve as the foundation for these discussions. Moreover, I am planning a mix of writing assignments in this class that will both engage students in the readings and allow them to delve deeper into a topic of their choice. Students will, over the course of the semester, complete two short reading response papers. These papers may be informal but must make specific reference to the assigned readings and (by design) should encourage students to show up prepared to discuss these readings. The more substantive writing assignment for the semester will be a short research paper on a contemporary topic. I hope to engage students in historical inquiry, with the understanding that many of these students will have never done a primary historical research project before. I anticipate that having a readily accessible source base for these papers will make the projects more navigable for students. And, I hope, focusing on the historical contexts for contemporary topics will make those topics seem more concretely and immediately relevant.

**CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY**  
**History 3XXX-001 (XXXXX) • Spring 2016**  
**T/Th 12:30-1:45**

Prof. Shelby M. Balik  
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*office:* 211 Central Classroom  
*office hours:* T/Th, 2-4:30 p.m.

**Course Description:** Somewhere, in the overlapping space between religion and the state, Americans have sought to define their nation. But in that seemingly narrow overlap, they have imagined nearly infinite national identities and visions. How have Americans used religion to define national belonging, nation to define religious membership, and how have churchly and national politics given shape to each other? As we explore these questions, we'll consider several key moments in American history that can shed light on the relationship between religion and the state. In particular, we'll consider several questions. First, how have Americans understood religious liberty (or lack thereof) to serve the purposes of their society and nation? Second, how has religion intersected with politics during some of the fiercest debates of American history? Third, how has religious belief given rise to various political coalitions? And finally, how have Americans linked spiritual and national identity in different ways? By investigating these questions, perhaps we will come to a better understanding of what it has meant to be religious (or not) and American.

**Required Readings:** The following books will be available at the Auraria Campus Bookstore (bargain-hunters should also try the selection of used books on Amazon.com and Bookfinder.com, but make sure you get the right editions). You can also find copies on reserve at the library.

John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011)

Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (North Carolina, 2004)

Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, 2008)

Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (Hill and Wang, 1996)

**Assignments, Grading, and Course Policies:** The course requirements and their value toward your grade are as follows. *You must complete all of these components in order to pass.*

Attendance/participation: 15%

Research Paper: 20%

Discussion leadership: 5%

Two response papers: 10% (5% each)

Midterm exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

*Attendance policy:* I expect regular attendance and will take roll. Everyone is allowed two “byes” – unexplained absences – in the class. After that, any absences – except in the case of legitimate and documented emergencies, medical or otherwise – will detract from the attendance/participation portion of your grade. You are responsible for making up the work you miss during any absence, excused or otherwise.

Classes will generally include a combination of lecture and discussion. Your level of preparation and participation will both improve the quality of class meetings and boost your participation grade.

It should go without saying (but often doesn't) that when you attend class, you will refrain from disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) talking amongst yourselves, reading the newspaper, or texting. **Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices before you enter the classroom.**

*Response papers:* You will write two brief response papers (about two pages each), in which you engage a week's reading assignments. These papers may be informal, but you must discuss the readings in specific terms. You can submit these in any week, as long as you follow the following rules:

- You may not submit a response paper during the same week in which you are leading discussion.
- You must submit one of your response papers before the midterm, and one after the midterm.
- You must submit a response paper on the Thursday of the week when the readings in question have been assigned (in other words, the paper you turn in on Thursday of week two must engage the readings assigned during week two). Plan accordingly.

*Research paper:* Each student will submit a short (10-page) research paper on a contemporary controversy relating to the relationship between church and state. These papers are not intended to be opinion pieces; instead, they should be based on research in both scholarly sources that provide historical perspective on the issue and current coverage (which could include partisan pieces, more traditional journalism, laws, and court decisions). You will have intermediary deadlines throughout the semester to help you pace the work on these papers, and you will receive more guidelines as each assignment comes due. You may pick specific topics within one of the following themes, or you may select a different topic. Final drafts must be submitted in hard copy and on Blackboard.

Possible research topics:

- *Public education:* school prayer, history standards, science standards, charter schooling (especially as it relates to public funding for religious charter schools).
- *Gender and reproductive rights:* women's rights, availability of abortion and birth control, public funding of women's health services.
- *Gay rights and marriage equality:* civil unions and marriage, equal employment, equality in public accommodations, cultural representations of the LGBT community.
- *Religious and ethnic pluralism:* culture war over Christmas, contemporary debates over religious accommodations for Muslims and followers of eastern religions, post-9-11 debates over the place of Muslims in American society, debates over the United States' relationship with Israel and other Middle Eastern countries.

*Midterm and final exams:* The midterm will cover all material taught and reading assigned up to the exam; the final (in-class) will be cumulative, but weighted toward the second half of the semester. Both exams will include shorter identification questions and essay questions (no multiple choice), covering lectures and readings. More information will follow.

*Discussion leadership:* Each student will be responsible (with one or more partners) for leading one discussion during the semester. Discussion leaders should complete their readings far enough in advance to meet with each other, discuss the readings in light of the course unit, and design a plan for discussions that includes questions to ask and themes to cover. Discussion leaders will be required to go over their plans with me in advance of their discussion session.

*Deadlines and exam attendance:* All papers are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted, and all students are expected to take exams on the specified dates. Late papers will be graded down one-third of a grade (A to A-, etc.) for every day they are late, starting after the beginning of class.

Papers will not be accepted late or via e-mail, except with a valid excuse (medical or family emergency, etc.) AND prior approval from me. No-shows for exams will receive an F. Make-up exams will not be allowed, except for students who have a valid excuse and have made prior arrangements with me.

*Cheating and plagiarism:* Either offense is grounds for a zero on the assignment and failure in the course. If you are unsure of what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, I strongly encourage you to check with me *before* you hand in your assignment. Please also note that any student who cannot or will not produce the notes, outlines, and other preparatory work for his or her paper will be considered guilty of cheating or plagiarism and subject to the same penalties. For further clarification on these offenses, consult the university's Code of Student Conduct.

*Special Needs:* Students who need accommodations – for disability, religious observance, or any other reason – should let me know within the first two weeks of class. Those with a documented disability should contact the Disability Resources and Services Office to arrange for accommodations.

*For more information, please see the information on History Department policies and deadlines posted in the “Syllabus and Policies” folder on Blackboard.*

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**  
(subject to change)

Any readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are available as links or PDFs on Blackboard.

**WEEK ONE**

*Readings:* *Manifest Destiny*, prologue and part I  
*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, introduction and chapter 5  
\* John Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration”

T: Introductions  
R: Defining Our Terms: Church, State, Nation, and Liberty

**WEEK TWO**

*Readings:* \* “Laws Divine, Morall, and Martiall” (1611)  
\* John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630)  
\* Wei Zhu, “The Forgotten Story of the Flushing Remonstrance”

T: Colonial Establishments  
R: The Idea and Ideal of Protestant Liberty (*student-led discussion*)

**WEEK THREE**

*Readings:* *Religion in American Politics*, introduction and chapter 1  
*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapters 6-8  
\* Susan Juster, “Heretics, Blasphemers, and Sabbath Breakers: The Prosecution of Religious Crime in Early America,” and Richard Pointer, “Native Freedom? Indians and Religious Tolerance in Early America,” both in Chris Beneke and Christopher S. Grenda, eds., *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*

T: Toleration, Identity, and Belonging: Religion and Early American Communities  
R: A Holy Resistance (*student-led discussion*)

**\*\*\* ONE-PARAGRAPH RESEARCH TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS \*\*\***

**WEEK FOUR**

*Readings:* *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapters 11-15  
\* Wythe Holt, “The New Jerusalem: Herman Husband’s Egalitarian Alternative to the United States Constitution,” from Young, et al., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*

T: Millennial Visions  
R: The Founders’ Faith(s) (*student-led discussion*)

## WEEK FIVE

*Readings: Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapters 9-10

- \* Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty* (1773)
- \* Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and criticism thereof (1786)
- \* Testimonials for and against religious language in the Constitution (1787-88)

T: Christianity and the Constitution

R: Was the United States Founded as a Christian Nation? (*student-led discussion*)

## WEEK SIX

*Readings: \* John Leland, "The Rights of Conscience Inalienable" (1791)*

- \* Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and the Danbury Baptists (1801-1802)
- \* Catharine Beecher, selections from *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1845)

T: The First Disestablishment: Reconciling Church and State in the Early Republic

R: Godly Women in the New Republic

## WEEK SEVEN

*Readings: Manifest Destiny*, part II

- \* Samuel F. B. Morse, selections from *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States Through Foreign Immigration* (1835)
- \* Constitution of the Know-Nothing Party (1840)
- \* Andrew Jackson, "Second Annual Message to Congress" (1830)
- \* John L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation" (1845)

T: Immigration and the Papal Threat

R: Manifest Destiny? Religion and Nation in the Transnational West

**\*\*\* ANNOTATED WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS \*\*\***

## WEEK EIGHT

*Readings: Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapter 1

*Religion in American Politics*, chapter 2

- \* Angelina Grimke, from *An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1838)
- \* Richard Fuller, selection from *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution ...* (1845)

T: Millennialism, Perfectionism, and Abolitionism

R: Southern Christianity and Pro-Slavery Ideology (*student-led discussion*)

## **WEEK NINE**

*Readings:* \* Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (1863)  
\* Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)  
\* William Bennett, selection from *Narrative of the Great Revival that Swept the Southern Armies* (1877)

T: The Civil War as a Spiritual Crisis  
R: Midterm

## **WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK**

## **WEEK ELEVEN**

*Readings: The Politics of American Religious Identity* (entire)

T: The Mormon Odyssey  
R: Polygamy, Family, and the State (*student-led discussion*)

**\*\*\* PAPER OUTLINE WITH A DRAFTED INTRODUCTION AND THESIS STATEMENT  
DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS \*\*\***

## **WEEK TWELVE**

*Readings: Religion in American Politics*, chapter 3  
*Manifest Destiny*, part III  
\* Selected position pieces on “The Philippine Question”

T: Christian Imperialism, Religious Warfare, Christian Realism  
R: The American Mission in the Philippines: A Case Study (*student-led discussion*)

## **WEEK THIRTEEN**

*Readings: Religion in American Politics*, chapters 4-5  
*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapter 2  
\* Stephen S. Wise, “I am an American” (1942)  
\* Mordecai Kaplan, selection from *The Future of the American Jew* (1948)  
\* John F. Kennedy’s Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association (1960)

T: The Second Disestablishment: The Secularization of the American State  
R: Catholics, Jews, and the Politics of the Melting Pot

**\*\*\* ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS \*\*\***

## **WEEK FOURTEEN**

*Readings: Religion in American Politics*, chapters 6-7  
*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation*, chapter 3  
\* Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)  
\* Pat Robertson, "Action Plan for the 1980s" (1979)  
\* "Can My Vote Be Biblical?" from *Christianity Today* (1980)

T: Conscientious Objectors: The Rise of the Religious Left  
R: Christian Nationalism and the Rise of the Religious Right

## **WEEK FIFTEEN**

*Readings: Manifest Destiny*, part IV  
\* Nathan Glazer, "Jewish Loyalties" (1981)  
\* George Bush, selection from the 2002 State of the Union Address  
\* Jerry Falwell, "God is Pro-War" (2004)  
\* Richard Wormser, "High School," from *Growing Up Muslim* (1994)

T: Holy Wars  
R: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism since the Mid-Twentieth Century (*student-led discussion*)

## **WEEK SIXTEEN**

*Readings: Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* chapter 4, conclusion  
*Religion in American Politics*, chapter 8

T: Religious Liberty and the Law: Case Studies  
R: Presentations and discussion of research papers

**\*\*\* FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE THURSDAY IN CLASS \*\*\***

**\*\*\* FINAL EXAM TBA \*\*\***