

James Bennett
Fall 2019
Department of Religious Studies

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Kenna Hall 300i, 551-1910
OH: Tue & Wed 10:30-11:30 a.m., or by appt.

RSOC 111
INVENTING RELIGION IN AMERICA

T, TH 2:00-3:40, Heafey 125

“The disciplined study of any subject is, among other things, an assault on self-evidence, on matters taken for granted, nowhere more so than in the study of religion.” Jonathan Z. Smith

Course Description

This course explores the spiritual creativity that characterizes much of the American religious experience. The totality of this creativity is far too extensive to cover in a single quarter. Therefore, we will examine a representative cross section of traditions. Groups covered include Mormons, Adventists, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Nation of Islam, Scientology, the People's Temple (Jonestown) and the Branch Davidians in Waco. The course will focus on the historical contexts that gave rise to each tradition and affected its growth, expansion, and in some cases, decline. We will also explore unifying themes, including democratization, millennialism, gender, race, and the effort to integrate religion and science. Pervading our explorations will be attention to interpretive and ethical issues that create challenges for scholarly investigations of marginal religious groups, the social tensions that new religious movements both create and respond to, and the complex, controversial, and even contradictory ways that Americans have understood, defined, and treated such groups.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- explain the origins, context and basic beliefs of several major new religious movements in the United States
- critically evaluate the use of the word “cult” and other language often used to describe marginal religious groups
- identify and critically evaluate sources of information concerning new religious movements
- apply theoretical frameworks to understand both individual movements and their relationship to the larger American religious landscape

Core Curriculum: Religion, Theology and Culture 3

The study of Religion, Theology and Culture forms an important component of a Santa Clara education. This course fulfills the requirement for the third course in Religion, Theology, and Culture (RTC 3). **In order to earn RTC 3 credit students must have completed both RTC 1 and RTC 2 courses, and have earned at least 88 units (transfer students excepted).** RTC 3 is part of the Explorations dimension of the Core Curriculum. It builds upon the first two RTC courses, applying insights from the study of religion to difficult, open-ended questions of vital interest to contemporary societies. As an RTC 3 course, this class will enable students to:

1. identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions
2. evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society

In the context of RSOC 111, we will develop these skills by exploring alternative religions and the ways they are depicted and treated in American society.

American Studies Pathway

You can find information about Pathways on the Core Curriculum website <https://www.scu.edu/provost/core/> including specific Pathways, all courses associated with them, and the Reflection Essay prompt and rubric used to evaluate the final essay you will submit.

SAVE YOUR WORK FROM THIS CLASS. If you declare this Pathway, material from this course may be helpful in preparing your Pathway Reflection Essay, in which you will reflect on an issue or problem that emerged across your Pathway courses and is best understood from a multidisciplinary perspective. You are encouraged to save work from the class to help write your Pathways reflection essay.

Books (available at the University Bookstore and on reserve at Orradre)

Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals*

Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher, *Why Waco?*

Additional Readings: Readings not included in the above texts will be posted on Camino.

Course Requirements

There are three keys to succeeding in this course:

- Read Carefully
- Think Critically
- Participate Confidently

That is all. The graded course assessments are simply demonstrating these three things:

Intellectual Engagement. Your presence and participation is essential to your success in this course, and to the success of the course as a whole. Discussion of assigned texts forms a core aspect of this third-level religious studies course and is essential to the Humanities as a mode of inquiry and learning. As a result, the intellectual engagement grade extends beyond mere attendance to emphasize engagement with course materials. Attendance is only a necessary pre-condition for this engagement, not a measure of it. Intellectual engagement will be measured by the extent to which you come to class prepared and are willing and able to discuss the assigned readings. For each class meeting, you should have the assigned reading open and with you to refer to, be prepared with questions, comments and observations about the assigned readings and discussion topics, as well as having completed any additional assigned tasks for that day's class.

Writing. Written assignments will consist of several Reflect and Respond papers, two essays, and a final paper.

Reflect and Respond Papers (2-3 pages unless otherwise noted). Throughout the quarter (approximately once a week), there will be Reflect and Respond papers, in which you will reflect upon the reading using prompts (on Camino). Like all work for submission, these responses should be typed (doubled-spaced) and written with clear, concise prose. Based on the trajectory of our discussions and/or changes in the pace we move through the materials, the dates and/or frequency of Reflect and Respond papers may change from the schedule below. Any changes will be announced in class and on Camino. Reflect and Respond papers may not be turned in late, as their purpose is to focus discussion for the particular day they are due.

Essays (4-5 pages). Essay topics will be posted on Camino. Essays should be well-written, with a clear, focused thesis statement, supporting evidence and critical analysis, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, and include citations when appropriate (see note on academic integrity below).

Final Paper. The final paper final will provide the opportunity to use course materials to reflect on several topics that the course has covered and to make connections between course topics, readings, and discussions. The prompts for the Final Paper will be distributed during the last week of class and the paper is due at the end of the scheduled final exam time (Thursday December 12 at 5 p.m.)

Late Paper Policy:

There will be a minimum one point deduction for each day late (*late Reflect and Respond papers will not receive any credit*).

Grading:

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|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Intellectual Engagement | 10 |
| Reflect and Respond Papers | 30 (3 points each) |
| Essay #1 | 15 |
| Essay #2 | 15 |
| Take-home Final | 30 |

Final grades will be based upon the following scale: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (below 60). Final grades are not negotiable and cannot be changed, except in the case of clerical error.

The Santa Clara University *Undergraduate Bulletin*, identifies the standards for grades as follows: A (excellent), B (good), C (adequate), D (barely passing), F (not passing).

Attendance

Students who miss two or more classes will lose at least one point off the total grade for each absence.

Accommodation Policy

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the Office of Accessible Education (Benson 1, <http://www.scu.edu/oe>, 408-554-4109) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged

accommodations through OAE, please discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class.

To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology. Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible. The Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations.

Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code

Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class.

Students are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and ask questions of one another. However, all written work (including Reflect and Respond Papers) must be your own and clearly distinguishable from the work of others. When you present others' work as your own, or fail to cite the contributions of others to your own work, you have engaged in plagiarism. It matters not whether the work is from a fellow student, the world-wide web, or a traditional printed source. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the instructor. Santa Clara University and the Religious Studies department take seriously the commitment to academic integrity. Any violations, including plagiarism or cheating, may result in an "F" and referral to the Office of Student Life.

Course Schedule

The following calendar of readings and assignments is tentative and subject to change. Additional information, instructions, and updated deadlines and assignments will be posted on Camino. Updates to Camino supersede the deadlines and assignments listed below

PRELIMINARY MATTERS: CATEGORIES, CONCEPTS, AND TERMS

Sept. 24 Course Introduction and Overview

Sept. 26 Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements"; William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Stark, "Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models"

**** Reflect and Respond Paper: BEFORE completing any of the readings, write your own definition of the words "Religion" and "Cult."**

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONTEXT: THE NEW REPUBLIC

Oct. 1 Nathan O. Hatch, "The Crisis of Authority in Popular Culture"; Gordon Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism."

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

MORMONISM

Oct. 3 Conkin, *American Originals*, 162-216; "Articles of Faith," *Book of Mormon* (excerpts)

Oct. 8 Conkin, *American Originals*, 216-225; *Doctrines and Covenant* Section 132, OD 1, OD 2 (available on lds.org)

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

UTOPIAN AND COMMUNAL IMPULSES: GENDER IN THE 19TH CENTURY US

Oct. 10 Suzanne Thurman, "Shaker Women"; "Shakers: Primary Source Documents"

Oct. 15 Louis Kern, "Ideology and Reality"; "Oneida Community"

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

MILLENNIALISM, PART 1

Oct. 17 Millerites and Seventh Day Adventists
Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 110-145; "Millerites"; Adventist.org
Film (in class): "Midnight Cry!"

Oct. 18 **** Essay #1 due by 4:30 p.m. via Camino**

Oct. 22 Jehovah's Witnesses
Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 145-59; James Penton, "Major Doctrines"; jw.org

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Oct. 24 Christian Science
Conkin, *American Originals*, 226-69; Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (excerpts); Robert Peel, *Spiritual Healing in a Scientific Age* (excerpts); "Ian Lundman Case"; Stephen Carter, "The Power of Prayer Denied"; christianscience.com

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

Oct. 29 Spiritualism
Video: "Telegrams from the Dead"

RELIGION AND RACE

Oct. 31 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 1-4

Nov. 5 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 5-11

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

Nov. 7 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 12-19; noi.org

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

RELIGIOUS CREATIVITY IN CALIFORNIA: SCIENTOLOGY AND THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

Nov. 12 Scientology: *Dianetics* (excerpts); www.scientology.org; Janet Reitman, "Inside Scientology"; Hugh Urban, "Fair Game: Secrecy, Security and the Church of Scientology in Cold War America."

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

Nov. 14 The People's Temple: Catherine Wessinger, "1978-Jonestown"; David Chidester, "Rituals of Exclusion and the Jonestown Dead"

Nov. 15 **** Essay #2 due by 4:30 p.m. via Camino**

MILLENNIALISM, PART 2

Nov. 19 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 1-3

Nov. 21 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 4-6

Dec. 3 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 7-8

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

THE FUTURE OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Dec. 5 Rodney Stark, "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model"

**** Reflect and Respond Paper**

THURSDAY DEC. 12 @ 5 p.m.

**** FINAL PAPER DUE VIA CAMINO**