

RELIGION IN AMERICA

RELS 202

Spring 20xx

TR xx:xx-yy:yy

Classroom TBA

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-11:00 AM

RELS 202: Religion in America. Survey of major themes in religion in America; examines how religion has influenced and been influenced by American history, culture, economics, politics, and social consciousness. Prerequisites: None.

EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide a broad consideration of some of the major themes in the American religious experience. It will focus on the ways in which religion in America has influenced, and been influenced by, the history, culture, economics, politics, and social consciousness of the American nation and the American people. It will examine the ways that these religious, cultural, and social forces have served to shape one another from the Colonial era through the twentieth century. Christian traditions and denominations will figure most prominently, although other religious traditions (Unitarianism, Deism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, New Thought, etc.) will also appear. Major recurrent themes include: religion and politics, Americanization, race and religion, immigration, nativism, wartime religion, the American Civil Religion, nationalism, and pluralism.

COURSE READINGS

- Griffith, R. Marie, ed. *American Religions: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN 0195170458
- Noll, Mark. A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992. ISBN 0802806511
- Flake, Kathleen. *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003. ISBN 0807855014
- Other readings will be available on the class E-Campus page and will be labeled on the syllabus as “E-Campus.”

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course learning outcomes. By the end of this course, the successful student should be able to:

1. Describe the interaction between religion and broader elements of culture with respect to major themes and events in the American story.
2. Evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and critically engage with substantive historical material, including both primary sources (original documents) and secondary sources (historical monographs).
3. Identify historical and social contexts that produced the diversity of religious thought and culture we see in the American experience.
4. Communicate their original ideas and analyses in both written and oral form.
5. Apply their historical knowledge to their personal lives and studies.

Core curriculum learning outcomes. RELS 202 meets the Language, Philosophy, and Culture (KLPC) core curriculum foundational component area. The core curriculum objectives for this course are:

1. **Critical Thinking:** creative thinking; innovation; inquiry; and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
2. **Communication:** effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
3. **Social Responsibility:** intercultural competence; knowledge of civic responsibility; and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
4. **Personal Responsibility:** ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

Cultural discourse learning outcomes. Additionally, RELS 202 meets the Cultural Discourse (KUCD) graduation requirement. As a general statement, the learning outcomes for CD courses are for students to be able to:

1. Hold respectful discussions and discourse on difficult topics.
2. Recognize social inequalities, prejudices, power structures, conflict and the multiple perspectives therein, and the multicultural and global nature of society.
3. Integrate classroom learning with experiences at Texas A&M and beyond.

Texas A&M University has explicated a series of student learning outcomes reflecting the institution's commitment to long-term student education and edification. For a complete list, please see:

<http://catalog.tamu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/student-learning-outcomes/#baccalaureate>

COURSE STRUCTURE AND GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Grading Scale: 900-1000 = A; 800-899 = B; 700-799 = C; 600-699 = D; 0-599 = F

1. Exam 1 (midterm exam) – 200 points
2. Exam 2 (final exam) – 250 points
3. Paper – 200 points
4. Paper presentation – 100 points
5. Discussion/Participation – 100 points
6. Aggie Experience reflection paper – 25 points
7. Social and Personal Responsibility reflection paper #2 – 25 points
8. Attendance – 100 points

EXAMS: There will be two exams – a midterm (200 points) and a final (250 points). They will include multiple choice questions, ID/short answer questions, and lengthier essay questions. Exam dates are listed in the course schedule (below).
[Course learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4; Core curriculum learning outcomes 1, 2]

DISCUSSION: This class will incorporate regular discussion periods in which we discuss the class readings – most commonly, primary source readings that are assigned throughout the semester. Therefore, be sure to read assigned material as laid out on the course schedule so that you are not only prepared to absorb the lecture material, but also to participate actively and enthusiastically in class discussions. Certain class periods are marked out on the course calendar as discussion days, in which the whole class period will be devoted to class discussion. At other times, the professor may include discussion elements in conjunction with a lecture. Therefore, students should keep up with the readings and be prepared to engage with the material at any time. I suggest that students take notes on the primary source readings to use during class discussions.

Class discussion will constitute 10% of each student's final course grade, and will take into account both the level of engagement (how often the student participates in the discussion) and quality of engagement (how prepared the student is to analyze the issues/topics in a thoughtful and meaningful way).

[Course learning outcomes 1-5; Core curriculum learning outcomes 1-4; Cultural Discourse learning outcomes 1-2]

PAPER and CLASS PRESENTATION: By week 7, each student will meet with the professor to select either a historical monograph or a substantial set of primary source materials about which to write a 1200-1500 word paper (~5-6 double-spaced pages). Papers will not simply be summaries, but will be critical/analytical engagements with the material. More detailed instructions will be provided on E-Campus.

In addition to writing this paper, each student will give a brief (10 minute) oral and visual presentation to the class, explaining the content and argument(s) of their monograph/source, its significance, and situating it within the themes of the course. The presentation should include a short powerpoint (or similar) presentation (5 slides or fewer) to serve as visual aids and/or to show key source information.

[Course learning outcomes 1-4; Core curriculum learning outcomes 1-2]

AGGIE EXPERIENCE REFLECTION PAPER: As part of the Cultural Discourse graduation requirement, students will attend one activity/event on campus related to Religion in America, whether it is a cultural event, an academic event (e.g., a talk), or some other type of event. Students may choose to attend a religious service in the Texas A&M community to fulfill this requirement, *but this must be a religious service of a different religious tradition than the student's own*. Students are responsible for checking with the instructor beforehand to ensure that their chosen event meets the criteria for this requirement. After attending their activity/event, students will then write a reflection paper, focusing on: describing the experience, reflecting on how the experience is related to their own lives and the material in the course, and indicating how their engagement in the experience reflects their personal responsibility. Specific guidelines are on ecampus.

[Course learning outcomes 4-5; Core curriculum learning outcomes 2, 4; Cultural Discourse learning outcome 3]

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY REFLECTION PAPER: Students will write a short reflection paper on how this course will influence their choices as an informed citizen of Texas, the United States, and the world (i.e., social responsibility) and their ethical interactions with others in every day life (i.e., personal responsibility). Specific guidelines are on ecampus.

[Course learning outcomes 4-5; Core curriculum learning outcomes 2-4; Cultural Discourse learning outcome 2]

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required in this class. Because it is a small, seminar-style class which includes substantial discussion time (see “Discussion” section, above), it is important that students attend class in order to make the course as beneficial as possible for everyone involved. Students will be allowed one “free” unexcused absence that will not impact their grades; after that, each unexcused absence will result in a 10-point reduction in attendance grade. Hence, two unexcused absences for the semester would equate to an attendance grade of 90, three unexcused absences would equate to an attendance grade of 80, four unexcused absences would equate to an attendance grade of 70, and so on.

Students who miss a discussion period due to an excused absence will be assigned an alternative assignment per Student Rule 7. I will handle all absences, and work/examinations related to them, in accordance with TAMU student rule 7 (Student Rule 7: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>).

E-CAMPUS

Course announcements, study guides (if applicable), class documents, additional class readings, additional instructions, additional assignments, and students' grades will be posted on the course homepage on E-Campus (<http://ecampus.tamu.edu>). It is your responsibility to check the course page regularly to access these important course

materials. You may also receive emails through your TAMU email address. It is your responsibility to have a valid email on HOWDY and to read your emails.

ELECTRONIC ETIQUETTE POLICY

Please make sure that you turn off/silence cell phones and similar devices. You may use laptop computers for note-taking ONLY. Other activities, such as checking social media, playing games, or surfing the web not only distract YOU from processing the course material, but they also distract your CLASSMATES. Please show respect toward your fellow students by exercising self-restraint on your electronic devices.

ADA: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

Students are expected to understand and abide by the Aggie Honor Council Rules and Procedures, available at <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>

TITLE IX AND STATEMENT ON LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report (per Texas A&M System Regulation 08.01.01) the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared:

- Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff, or third parties visiting campus.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu/>).

Students and faculty can report non-emergency behavior that causes them to be concerned at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>.

COMMUNICATION

Please feel free to contact me with questions. Whenever possible, it is better to address your questions or problems earlier in the semester rather than waiting until much later. My office hours are included at the top of this syllabus. **Email is the best avenue for contacting me outside of class.** My email address is listed at the top of this syllabus. I aim to respond to all class-related emails within 24 hours, excluding weekends and university-recognized holidays.

PLANNED COURSE SCHEDULE¹

Week 1: Colonial America – Establishment and Diversity (1)

Tu – Lecture: New England Puritanism and Its Dissenters

Th – Lecture: Diversity of Religious Beliefs Outside of Puritan New England

ADD/DROP DEADLINE FOR FALL SEMESTER: FRIDAY

Week 2: Colonial America – Establishment and Diversity (2)

Tu – Lecture: Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans: Perceiving the “other” racially and religiously

Th – class discussion

Week 3: Religion, Revivals, and Revolution

Tu – Lecture: Great Awakening: first “national event” or “interpretive fiction”?

Th – Lecture: Faith and Politics – Religious Patriotism and Patriotic Religion

Week 4: Revivalism (continued)

Tu – Lecture: The Second Great Awakening and New American Religions

Th – class discussion

Week 5: Immigration and Racial Othering

Tu – Lecture: American Nativism and the “Catholic Threat”

¹Any changes will be communicated in class, by email, and on E-campus.

Th – Lecture: Proslavery Religion, Antislavery Religion, and Slaves' Religion

Week 6: Midterm Exam week

Tu – abbreviated discussion and exam prep

Th – Midterm Exam

Week 7: Religion and the Social Fabric: Civil War, Reconstruction, Immigration

Tu – Lecture: Civil War

Th – Lecture: Urbanization & Industrialization; Pluralism & Nativism

By the end of week 7, students should have already met with the professor and chosen their paper topic and book/source material.

Week 8: Religious Pluralism and Politics

Tu – Lecture: How to Deal with Pluralism? Americanization as a Condition for Political Inclusion

Th – class discussion

SPRING BREAK

- *I suggest that you use (some) of your break reading your source material and working on your paper.*

Week 9: Responses to Modernity

Tu – Lecture: Splintering “Protestant America” – Modernism and Fundamentalism

Th – Lecture: Neo-Evangelicalism, Social Gospel, Transcendentalism, & New Thought

- *Aggie experiences reflection paper due by the beginning of class (uploaded to TurnItIn)*

Week 10: American Religion and American Warfare

Tu – Lecture: Injecting Faith into the Fight: the State's Interest in Sacralization

Th – class discussion

Week 11: Civil Rights

Tu – Lecture: Black Religious Traditions and Laying the Groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement

Th – Lecture: A Theological Movement?

- *Social and personal responsibility reflection paper due by the beginning of class (uploaded to TurnItIn)*

Week 12: The Civil Religion and the “American Way of Life”

Tu – Lecture: American Civil Religion Through the Centuries: Unity through the Indefinite

Th – class discussion

Q-DROP DEADLINE: MONDAY, 4/15 AT 5:00 PM

Week 13: Writing/paper prep

Tu – Writing workshop (in-class)

Th – Writing workshop (in-class)

Week 14: Class Presentations

Tu – *Presentations*

**All papers due (uploaded to TurnItIn) by the beginning of class.*

Th – *Presentations (final class meeting)*

Tuesday, 4/30 – *Redefined Day: Students attend Friday classes*

FINAL EXAM: see the schedule posted at: <http://registrar.tamu.edu/Courses,-Registration,-Scheduling/Final-Examination-Schedules#0-Spring2019>