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Florida State University
April 2005

Syllabus justification: Rel2121 Religion in the U.S.

Florida State University is a large, public university situated in the thoroughly southern city of Tallahassee. The University draws its nearly 39,000 students from throughout the diverse state of Florida, which means that in any given classroom I can expect to have students from urban Miami and small towns in the panhandle, with an equally wide range of intellectual capacities and preparation for college-level work. Their economic, social, and educational backgrounds range from marked deprivation to extraordinary privilege. In short, one of the challenges of this course is effectively teaching a wide range of students.

Religion is the one characteristic that my students share in common: though there are always exceptions, the majority of my students self-identify as Christian, and many of them equate Christianity with evangelical Protestantism. I see the influence of this particular religious orientation on the first day of class when I invite students to share some things they know about the history of religion in the U.S. Without exception one or more students provide some form of a standard declension narrative about moral decline and growing secularity in American society. Over time, I've learned to respond to this moment by framing the class as an opportunity to learn surprising things about American religion. I invite students to continue through the course to ponder why declension is one of the most enduring stories in a nation with a documented trajectory toward ever-higher levels of religious affiliation. On a more general level, then, my overall goal for the course is to provide students with information and analytical tools to construct more complex, and more historically accurate narratives about American religion. My course objectives reflect that, I'd like students to learn both historical content and critical skills in the class.

The Religion in the U.S. course fulfills multiple requirements in the "liberal studies" portion of the curriculum, and thus draws a significant number of students whose primary motivation for

selecting the course may not be pure intellectual interest or enthusiasm for the subject. The course generally enrolled freshman or sophomores. Each term the university lists multiple sections of the course, taught by both professors and graduate students, and all sections fill to capacity. This term there are approximately 700 students enrolled in 8 sections of the course, with sections varying from 22 to 180 students. In my better moments I can see the strategic component of student enrollment in my class as an opportunity for creative engagement with otherwise disinterested students. On a practical level, though, the complex motivation of most students enrolled in the course means that I have to structure class meetings and course readings to be as accessible and compelling as possible. I cannot assume that students will read or attend class without some structural element of reward or penalty. I've learned from experience not to assign historical monographs because students either find them impenetrable or "boring." Instead I assign novels or novel-like narrative histories, supplemented with a reader of more traditional historical scholarship. I do find that novels teach well across the "range" of skills I find in my classes. Less gifted students can engage with the story element of novels and seem relieved at the lack of historical "jargon" in them. More advanced students can engage with critical textual elements like metaphor or symbolism in the text.

The version of the syllabus that follows is one I developed for an unusually small honors section, capped at 20 students—a rare treat for me as a teacher. The small size and elevated skill level of the students is reflected in the heavier than normal reading load and incorporation of discussion into the class format. I've also taught this course to sections of over 100 students, and in those versions of the course I rely more heavily on lecture and assign fewer pages of less rigorous reading per week.

I've experimented with both chronological and thematic ways of organizing the course, and for now I've settled on a system that organizes themes in roughly chronological order. I found that when chronology can too easily become an explanatory paradigm—so that when they story falls in chronological order students start to read narratives of progress or inevitability into American religion. The themes (hopefully) circle back, building and complicating each other, so that by the time students encounter new religious movements of the antebellum period, they can interpret them not only in terms of "revivalism and reform" (the theme of the unit in which I introduce

them) but also as an other layer of “pluralism and syncretism”(the theme that came before) in the historical record. I used to have 6 or 7 separate themes, but found that students felt overwhelmed by the number and the pace of the class. So in this version of the course I combined themes into pairs, trying to embed a more dynamic vision of religion into each unit by asking what the relationship is between the two themes of the unit—so what’s the relationship between pluralism and syncretism, or between revivals and reform, or gender and ethnicity, or violence and resistance? Students read one book for each themed unit.

I’ve inserted italicized explanations of each theme and class meeting into the syllabus below. The italicized text does not appear in the syllabus I distribute in class.

Students write 3 short papers, each 3-4 pages in length. Papers are based on the major book assigned for each thematic unit, and I use the papers as bridges between themes. So, for example, I ask them to use the novel Black Robe to think about the nature of conversion as a bridge between the exploration of missions in the “pluralism and syncretism” unit and the following unit on “revivalism and reform.” And they write a paper on gender and race in The Kingdom of Matthias as a bridge from the “revivalism and reform” unit to the unit on “gender and ethnicity.” Papers are due the day we start a new unit, and I take at least half of the class session that day to discuss the papers so that students can draw from their own writing and thinking to orient themselves to the new thematic unit.

I’m strict about attendance, assigning penalties for missing for than 3 class meetings over the course of the term. I use sign-in sheets to keep track of daily attendance so that I have a paper trail for assigning attendance and participation grades and assigning penalties. I so periodically given quizzes, and often I warn them in advance that I’m going to give a “pop” quiz on the reading at the start of the next class.

I evaluate students through an in-class midterm examination and a take-home final examination. I find that having both an in-class and a take-home exam levels the inequalities that can result from students performing better in one type of exam or the other. The mid-term I use changes every semester, though the ID and essay format remains the same. Since this class attracts

mainly freshman, I devote some of class time to teaching them how to write good identification answers and letting them practice this before they do it on the midterm. The practice sessions are a good way of reviewing--- i.e. having them write a practice identification on a person or concept from the week's reading. The final exam contains a triplet exercise where students have to identify each term (as they did for the midterm) and then write an additional sentence or two explaining the connection between the individual items in the triplet. The final exam also asks one post-midterm essay question and one broad comprehensive question.

I used to use a formula where each exam and paper was worth 100 points but then its significance to the overall grade was weighted in some way, but I found that the mathematical calculations at the end of the term were burdensome and confusing. Now I use a 1000 point system where the various assignments add up to 1000 points and students can keep track for themselves of how many points they have or need to fall into the 930 or above "A" category by the end of the term.

REL 2121
Religion(s) in the US
TR 9:30- 10:45, Dodd 207
Florida State University
Spring 2005

Professor: Amy L. Koehlinger
Dodd Hall 120D (level 1W)
644-0214
akoehlin@mailier.fsu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 10:00-12:00 and by appointment

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the historical study of religion in the United States, with an eye toward ways that social and cultural contexts have shaped the religious experience of Americans in different places and times. We will survey religious developments, movements, groups, and individuals, stopping to linger over representative “soundings” within each historical period. The primary goal of the course is for you to become familiar with the history of American religion both by learning about central events and trends, and by learning how to think and write historically.

Course Objectives:

- 1) For you to learn about the major religious events, movements, themes, and people in the United States from the colonial era to the present
- 2) For you to understand the complex interaction between religious belief and the political, social, economic, cultural, intellectual, and familial context in which religious people inhabit and enact their faith
- 3) For you to learn how to read, contextualize, and interpret historical arguments
- 4) For you to improve your skills in writing and constructing persuasive arguments

Student Responsibilities:

1) Attendance: Come to class. It is essential for you to attend all class meetings. You are permitted a maximum of three absences before your final grade is affected. **Each absence, starting with absence number four, will deduct 50 points from your final numerical score of 1000 possible points for the course.** (Hint: when you're tempted to sleep-in and take an absence early in the term, remember that you may need that absence later in the term should you become sick.) Conversely, accruing less than three absences will positively affect the attendance and participation component of your grade. You will be responsible for material covered during an absence, and should therefore make arrangements to get notes from a colleague if you miss a class.

In addition, please turn off your cell phones in our classroom. If your phone rings, buzzes, or chirps, I reserve the right to answer it.

2) Preparation and participation: Active participation in the class and engagement with course materials are essential to your own learning process as well as that of your colleagues. Assigned readings should be completed by the dates indicated in the syllabus and you should come to class with questions and comments, prepared to participate in a lively discussion. You will be called on to respond to readings and other material in the class. I reserve the right to assign pop quizzes to assess whether readings have been completed. Quiz scores will be calculated into the attendance and participation component of your grade

3) Complete all assignments, and in a timely manner: Late papers and final exams will be substantially penalized.

4) Obey the FSU Honor Code: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. I will pursue administrative consequences against any and all cases of plagiarism. Remember, if you can find it on the web, I can too. Please review, once again, FSU's Honor Code, especially the section entitled "Student Responsibility." Please see me if you have questions about referring to or

citing another work in the assignments you complete for this course

5) Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should register with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC, 644-0566). Please bring a letter to class from the SDRC indicating that you need academic accommodations. This should be done within the first week of class. Please contact me if you have further questions about this.

Course Materials: Required books for this course may be purchased at Bill's and FSU bookstores.

James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain

David Hackett, Religion and American Culture: A Reader

Paul Johnson, The Kingdom of Matthias

Brian Moore, Black Robe

Robert Orsi, Madonna of 115th Street

Course Requirements:

Your grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Attendance/participation	100 points
In-class mid-term exam	150 points
Take-home comprehensive final exam	300 points
<u>3 short papers, each worth 150 points</u>	<u>450 points</u>
TOTAL	1000 points

1) Attendance and participation, 100 points. Class attendance is required and will be monitored through sign-in sheets available at the start of each class meeting. In order to do well on the exams you must keep up with the reading schedule. The participation component will be based on your participation in class discussion and on reading quizzes that I may give periodically.

2) In-class mid-term exam, 150 points . The mid-term exam will be comprised of short-answer

identifications and an essay question. To do well on the exams you will need to have done all of the reading for the weeks bring covered.

3) Take-home comprehensive final exam, 300 points. The exam will include both comprehensive and non-comprehensive components, including identification triplets, a non-comprehensive essay, and a comprehensive essay. The final exam will be distributed on Thursday, April 21, and is due to my office no later than 5:00 on Tuesday, April 26

4) 3 short essay papers, each worth 150 points (450 points total). You will write a short paper of 3-4 pages on a topic I designate to bridge between themes and readings. Papers are due on February 1, March 15, and April 5. Papers must be turned-in in printed form. I will not accept electronically-submitted papers. Computer or printer errors are not legitimate excuses for late or incomplete papers. There will be no exceptions to this requirement. Late papers will be penalized 50 points for each day that they are late, beginning with the start of class on the day that they are due. Papers more than 2 days late will not be accepted and the student will receive a 0 for the assignment.

Grading Scale and Criteria:

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale: A 930–1000; A- 900-929; B+ 870-899; B 830-860; B- 800-829; C+ 770-799; C 730-769; C- 700-729; D 600-699; F 0-599.

Essays will be graded according to the following criteria. An A essay demonstrates not only a factual command of the material but also the ability to construct a coherent and complex argument-driven thesis that is supported by evidence and presented in clear and accurate prose. A B grade will be assigned to exam essays that possess both an identifiable thesis and adequate factual command, but that lack sufficient detail, or clarity and/or complexity in thinking or writing. Grades in the C range reflect essays that lack a thesis, or that provide minimal detail or evidence, or that exhibit significant writing problems. D grades will be assigned to essays that are clearly inadequate in content, organization, and writing.

Course Schedule:

Theme one: Pluralism and Syncretism

In this thematic unit, I want students to develop an appreciation for the complexity of the North American religious landscape from the earliest moments documented by historians. I also want them to understand religious pluralism and religious competition as constant elements of American religion through all time periods. I ask students to think about how religious people and religious traditions are transformed by their contact with each other, and I challenge them to consider how disparities of power influenced this process in colonial North America. Through the unit we develop an expanding list of terms to describe different historical examples of this contact: conquest, conversion, syncretism, annihilation, adaptation, etc.

We read Brian Moore's novel Black Robe about a Jesuit missionary among the Iroquois people. The novel is a tad graphic for some students (language and sexuality) but it does an excellent job of taking students inside clashes of religion and culture in colonial missions, and allows students to see both Native Americans and European missionaries through each others' eyes.

January 6: Introduction to course and themes

Review syllabus, class processes, administrative details, etc.

January 11: Methodology, patterns of American pluralism

I present a general introduction to historical-critical study of religion. Then I draw a "bird's eye view" of colonial religious pluralism on a map of North America, highlighting Native American language groups, Spanish settlements in Florida, Spanish missions in the Southwest, French Jesuit missions in New France, the pattern of importation of enslaved Africans, the arrival of English Protestants in Virginia and Massachusetts, and the development of Jewish communities on the Eastern seaboard. I then ask students to revisit the map and consider racial, then religious pluralism in colonial North America.

January 13: Native American religions

Gutierrez, “The Pueblo Indian World in the 16th Century” in Religion and American Culture (RAAC)

I present a series of generalizations about Native American religion based on Joel Carpenter’s work, and then ask students to evaluate Carpenter’s generalizations based on the portrait of Pueblo religion and culture in the Gutierrez essay.

January 18: Colonial settlements and missions

Black Robe chapters 1-4

I present three case studies of colonial missionary activity—1) Spanish system of encomienda in the Caribbean, 2) Spanish missions to the Pueblo people in the Southwest, and 3) Puritan “praying towns”—comparing the strategies used to produce converts in each setting. I then ask students to compare this with the model of French Jesuit missionary activity in Black Robe, and we try to develop a vocabulary of terms and definitions (conversion, conquest, syncretism, etc) to describe the differences between these different examples.

January 20: Spiritual holocaust or syncretism?

Black Robe chapters 5-8,
Joyner, “Believer I Know” in RAAC

I provide a series of generalizations about West African religion (based on Catherine Albanese’s textbook) and provide some general historical information about the logistics and statistics of the development of slavery in North America. I then ask students to consider which elements of African religions might best survive the process of enslavement and displacement. Finally, I describe the historiographical conversation about the persistence of African religion (using Blasingame, Raboteau, and Butler to represent the different positions) and then ask students to place Joyner’s essay within the debate and evaluate which position they find most convincing.

January 25: Varieties of American Judaism

Sarna, “The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue” in RAAC

I add the term “assimilation” to our list of terms describing religious contact, and then describe the historical development of Reform, Conservative, and resurgent Orthodox Judaisms as different responses to the question of how and how much Judaism should adapt to the particular opportunities and challenges that American society presented to the tradition. I ask students to evaluate why mixed-seating was such a contentious issue within American Judaism.

January 27: Black Robe discussion, paper assignment #1 distributed
Black Robe chapters 9-12

This class session is devoted to discussion of Black Robe. I ask students to think about the concept of “conversion,” asking who, if anyone, is converted the “baptisms” (or “water sorcery”) in the final chapter.

Theme two: Revivalism and Utopianism

In this thematic unit I want students to develop an appreciation for the perennial nature of revivalism and utopian reform in American religion, as well as working familiarity with representative examples of both. Throughout the unit I ask students to think about possible relationships between recurrent revivalism and the impulse to re-create society according to interpretations of God’s will. As the unit unfolds, I encourage the class to collectively develop a model to describe the relationship between religion and social activism: is religion a way for people to cloak self-interest in transcendent--and thus harder to criticize—principles (as many of my students claim), or does social position and experience shape specific interpretations of the nature of God and by extension God’s will for society, or are the two related in some way?

We read Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz’s The Kingdom of Matthias, a narrative history of the antebellum utopian (dystopic?) community. The book is highly readable and places students in the middle of the “burned-over district” during the Finney revivals, providing one case study of the relationship between revival and reform.

February 1: Introduction to revivalism, itinerancy, camp meetings, *paper #1 due*

We discuss various definitions of “conversion” from their papers, and explore the effects of conversion upon a person. I introduce revivalism, defining revivalism and arguing that it an episodic but constant feature of North American religion. I then provide an overview of the “top 11 revivals in American history” (‘cause 10 isn’t enough). I ask students to identify unique elements in each revival and ask them to identify patterns or common elements shared among the revivals. I ask students—given these patterns—to predict where and when the next great revivals will take place, what will be its central focus, etc. I introduce the idea of revivals as religious responses to social destabilization, and challenge them to think about social, economic, or political changes in the context of revivals we will explore during the unit.

February 3: George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, the debate over the First “Great” Awakening and its effect Kingdom of Matthias, pp. 3-47

I survey economic, demographic, and intellectual changes in 18th century colonial society as context for the First Great Awakening. I introduce George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, explaining the unique contribution of each to revivalism. I introduce the historiographical debate over the “greatness” of the revival and the related debate over its effect on the American Revolution, arguing that at the very least the revivals were profound social experiences for those who attended, and hastened the decline of Calvinism. I also introduce Nathan Hatch’s interpretation of the social effects of revivals and pass out images from Hatch’s Democratization of American Christianity asking students to provide a narrative about power in revivals based on the images. Usually students end up telling a very different story than Hatch, and we discuss the difference between his interpretation and theirs.,

February 8: Introduction to utopianism, Puritan “errand into the wilderness” Hall, “A World of Wonders” in RAAC

I introduce several concepts related to religion and social reform (and “utopianism,” its most extreme incarnation), describing the various forms it has taken in American history and enumerating different ways that religious reformers have claimed to know the divine plan for a perfect society. I then introduce the Puritans as an early example of religious reformers with a specific vision of God-ordained society, focusing on the centrality of covenants (of grace, social, and church) to their social vision. We then discuss Hall’s essay as a complicating interpretation of how idealism looks different in practice than in abstract formulations.

February 10: Disestablishment and the “antebellum spiritual hothouse”
Kingdom of Matthias, pp. 49-90

I explore political and social changes that contributed to the religious vitality of the antebellum period. I review the origins of the first amendment, the arguments made by its supporters and critics, and its effects on religious creativity in the early republic. I also briefly survey revivalism in the “burned-over district” highlighting their mystical content and challenge to traditional religious authority. We then use the reading from Matthias as a case study to explore the relationship between revivalism and religious creativity in this period.

February 15: 19th century utopias
Kingdom of Matthias, pp. 91-125

I introduce six concepts or characteristics for understanding antebellum religious creativity--occultism, communitarianism, utopianism, concern for health, optimism, and gender. I then briefly introduce four 19th-century utopian religious groups: the Millerites, Oneidas, Shakers, and Mormons. We discuss common elements shared by these groups as well as distinctions between them, comparing them with the community of the Kingdom of Matthias.

February 17: 19th century revival and reform: “purity crusades” and the “lost cause”

Wilson, “The Religion of the Lost Cause” in RAAC

I ask students to consider the relationship between revivalism and reform by contrasting the origins of abolitionism in Finneyite revivals with the origins of the “lost cause” in Confederate revivals. I challenge students to consider how revivals growing out of similar religious traditions could lead to opposing visions of race and social order.

February 22: 20th century Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism

Wacker, “Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish” in RAAC

I introduce the concept of “routineization” and ask students to consider how revival movements change when they become institutionalized and permanent. To do this I survey the history of Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism, highlighting the tensions within these two related religious movements between divine revelation and pragmatic, mundane details of organization. Grant Wacker’s essay provides additional material for discussion on these internal tensions.

February 24: Christological utopianism: the social gospel and Catholic workers

I begin the class by passing out images from the Catholic Worker, asking students to comment on the images of Christ in them and specifically to reflect on the message of who Christ is conveyed in the images. We talk about the moral imperative that is embedded in these images of Christ. We then use the images a foundation for discussing “Christological utopianism,” social reform based on interpretations of who Christ is and what he would do in modern society. I present general overviews of the Social Gospel and the Catholic worker movements, highlighting the respective perspectives of Walter Rauschenbusch and Dorothy Day.

March 1: Kingdom of Matthias discussion

Kingdom of Matthias, pp. 127-179

We devote the class meeting to discussing the relationship between revivalism and reform based on the example of the Kingdom of Matthias.

March 3: MID-TERM EXAM

Theme three: Gender and Ethnicity

In this unit, we turn from social and even political facets of religion to more personal and devotional ones. I want students through this unit to develop a vocabulary and analytical tools for thinking about the intimate terrain where religion intersects with identity, imagination, selfhood, and experience. I encourage students to think about religion as a porous and dynamic component of culture and--building on our conversation about religion and reform from the previous unit--throughout this unit we work to develop a model to describe how religious devotions are related to ethnic and gendered experiences of selfhood. Thus I introduce gender and ethnicity as both dynamic social constructions and as constitutive elements of religious selfhood. Throughout the unit I encourage students to reflect on how ideas about manhood, womanhood, and ethnicity have changed from historical moment to historical moment.

From semester to semester I alternate using Robert Orsi's The Madonna of 115th Street with Jenna Joselit's The Wonders of America. Students tend to find both books tedious in their repetition, but both books offer a case study of complex interactions between ethnicity and gender in the devotional worlds of religious traditions.

March 15: Introduction to gender, comparative gender in American Catholicism, paper #2 due

Griffith, "Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soldiers" in RAAC

I begin this unit with a general introduction to gender, explaining that gender is the set of culturally-specific meanings attached to biological sex that people internalize and perform. I add that performances of gender are enforced in society through reward and stigma, stressing that gendered ideals are historically-contingent. I describe the normative models Catholic manhood through the 19th and 20th centuries in terms of an evolution from 1) bishops as successful business tycoon to 2) the Knights of Columbus as patriotic family men to 3) Catholic athletes as men of

physical prowess and competence. I point out that these models of manhood specifically contradict anti-Catholic stereotypes of Catholic men from each time period. We then discuss the historical evolution of the gendered ideal of female submission in Griffith's article on Women Aglow.

March 17: Immigration and ethnicity in American Catholicism

The Madonna of 115th Street, chapters 1-3

I introduce the concept of ethnicity and its relationship with notions of race (particularly in the 19th century), and then review the "Big Six" groups of Catholic immigrants to the U.S. from 1820-1920, describing the demographics and specific devotional culture of each group. (I provide information about 5 of the groups but ask students to construct the information about Italian Catholics from their reading of Orsi.) I ask students to think about the challenges that this ethnic mix posed to the American Catholic Church, and then introduce the concept of the national parish as a response to ethnic pluralism in American Catholicism.

March 22: Female Religious innovators

Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" in RAAC

We discuss Braude's essay, isolating generalizations about the role of women in American religion (i.e. women outnumber men, women gain religious authority through claiming divine revelation, devotional expertise, or moral purity, etc.) I then introduce Mary Baker Eddy and Aimee Semple McPherson as examples of female religious innovators, describing the biography, ministry, and religious organizations build by each. I ask students to evaluate the ways in which these women confirm or challenge Braude's generalizations.

March 24: Devotionalism: Jewish domestic piety and the Italian-Catholic "domus"

Madonna of 115th Street, chapters 4-6

In this class meeting I introduce devotionalism as an arena of religious practice and religious experience where gender and ethnicity historically have been closely entwined. I rehearse

Joselit's research on Jewish domestic piety, stressing her argument that through the development of an intricate Jewish material culture in the 20th century the religious identity of Judaism became a largely cultural identity of Jewishness, giving students room to push against this thesis (as they almost always do). We then discuss Orsi's chapters on the domus in Italian-Catholic culture, discussing the ways that distinctions between religion, gender and ethnicity become blurred within this religious world.

March 29: Latino/a piety (guest lecture by Dr. Cadence Kidwell)

Cadence Kidwell, a professor of Latino/a literature, discusses traditional religious devotions in Cuban and Mexican-American Catholicism, using slides of processions, altars and shrines, santos, etc.

March 31: Madonna of 115th Street discussion

Madonna of 115th Street, chapters 7-8

We finish the unit by discussing the meaning of the feste in Orsi's book, returning to concept of gender as culturally-constituted and enforced performance and asking to what extent individuals can resist or negotiate new meanings within given religious systems.

Theme four: Violence and Resistance

In this final unit, we return to thinking about the relationship of personal religious experience to social and political power by exploring the power of religion to alienate and oppress people, and to empower them. My goal is for students to move past "religion is good" or "religion is bad" evaluations that characterize much post- September 11 rhetoric toward a more complex understanding of religion as a powerful social force that, though not neutral, has historically been marshaled both toward and against civility and social tolerance. Building on the previous unit's emphasis on religion as a constitutive component of individual identity, this unit asks students to evaluate how religious selves then pursue social rupture or social healing as a result of religious formation. To do this, the unit chronicles several examples of intolerance of religious

groups in U.S. history—namely anti-Judaism, anti-Catholicism, and the suppression of Native American religion and people-- emphasizing religious belief as the source of this intolerance. The unit also explores religion as source and sustenance of resistance by African-Americans to historical prejudice against them.

Students read James Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain, which does an excellent job of highlighting the duality of religion that the unit. By the end of the novel, students seem prepared to engage in substantive conversation and debate about religion, resistance, and violence through a comparison of the experience of the characters John, Gabriel, Florence, and Elizabeth.

April 5: guest lecture by Dr. Sylvester Johnson,
paper #3 due
Go Tell It On the Mountain, part one, “The Seventh Day”

Sylvester Johnson, a professor of North American religion at the neighboring Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (and a Young Scholar in the 2005-2006 program) introduces alterity and identity as ways of understanding religious violence and hatred. He discusses the genocide of Native Americans as a central but historically-obscured fact of American history. His lecture provides students with analytical tools and vocabulary for understanding the material of the unit as well as the Baldwin novel.

April 7: Rise of the Gospel Blues
Raboteau, “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel” in RAAC

I trace the development of gospel blues as a musical form, starting with hymns and spirituals in African-American congregations, through the rise of secular blues, and culminating in the fusion of the two musical traditions in the music of Thomas A. Dorsey (often in partnership with Mahalia Jackson). I then describe the ways that gospel blues provided musical resources for the civil rights movement. I also stress the trends toward commercialization and non-religious consumption of these musical forms in all stages. I play songs to illustrate each development:

“Old Rugged Cross” Pilgrim travelers (traditional hymn), “He never said a mumbling word.” Golden Gate Quartet (spiritual), “Oh Mary don’t you weep” Fisk Jubilee Singers (public performance of religious songs) “I need a Little Sugar in my Bowl” Bessie Smith (secular blues), “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” Mahalia Jackson (early gospel blues), “I’m Going to Live the Life I Sing About in My Song” Mahalia Jackson (Jackson as partner with Dorsey), “Mississippi Goddamn” Nina Simone (classical protest music), “Go Tell it on the Mountain” Fannie Lou Hamer (civil rights protest song), “Oh Freedom” Hollis Watkins (civil rights protest song), “Get Your Rights Jack” CORE singers (civil rights protest song).

April 12: Suppression of Native American religion

DeMaille, “The Lakota Ghost Dance” in RAAC

For this class meeting I use DeMaille’s essay as a way to explore cultural conflict and resultant violence in the suppression of the Ghost Dance movement. I begin this class meeting by narrating the story of the massacre at Wounded Knee, stressing that the event was a military response to religious dancing among Native Americans. I then trace the history of the federal support for missionary activities among Native Americans, framing this as forms of institutional violence against Native culture enacted through the Civilization Fund and its mission schools, the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the Religious Crimes Code of 1884. I then introduce the Ghost Dance, describing its prophetic, messianic, restorationist, and syncretic elements and lead a discussion about the relationship between political and religious repression in the military response to the Ghost Dance.

April 14: Anti-Judaism

Go Tell It On the Mountain, part two, “The Prayers of the Saints”

I introduce anti-Judaism by describing the “genteel” and racist tropes that emerged in response to the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, highlighting the common anti-Jewish stereotypes of Jews as “Christ-killers,” political radicals, and members of international financial conspiracies. I introduce the Leo Frank case, and the role of Henry Ford in publishing

the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. I conclude the class meeting by exploring 2 prominent anti-Jewish religious leaders, Charles Coughlin and Gerald Winrod.

April 19: Malcolm, Martin, and religion in the civil rights movement

Cone, “Martin and Malcolm” in RAAC

I this meeting I lead an extended discussion of Cone’s essay in which we explore the tensions between integration and separatism as strategies of political resistance, focusing specifically on the theological and ideological currents that lay underneath each perspective.

April 21: Go Tell It on the Mountain discussion

Go Tell It On the Mountain, part three, “The Threshing Floor”

We conclude the class with an extended discussion of Go Tell It on the Mountain in which I ask students to think about John’s conversion—whether it was a “true” conversion according to the definition they offered in their first paper, what John struggles against as approaches this religious change, and whether the conversion is a source of liberation or oppression in his life.

R2121 PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1, Blackrobe and conversion

In one of their arguments Daniel said to Father Laforgue about the Hurons, “I am telling you that you will never truly convert them to your teachings.” (p. 103). And as he was dying Chomina asked Father Laforgue, “Why would I want to go to a paradise where there are none of my people?” (p. 165). Yet in the last scene of the novel Father Laforgue baptizes a large number of Huron people with his “water sorcery.” What do you make of these baptisms?

In “Believer I Know” Charles Joyner argues that the “conversion” of West Africans to Christianity in South Carolina must be interpreted as a complex, creative process in which enslaved people combined African and white cultural elements to adapt to their new environment.

Using what you’ve learned from Blackrobe and from other class readings, class lectures, and class discussions, *create a careful definition of the term “religious conversion” that takes into account the complicated conditions and circumstances that surround such religious transformations.* Write a 3-4 page essay that explains your definition. Your paper should address specific elements of the context in which conversions occur, such as relationships of power, cultural and linguistic differences, persuasion and coercion, disruptions of social and/or physical environments, and the motivations of the converter and the converted.

You must use specific details or passages from Blackrobe to illustrate your definition. You also may, if you choose, use examples for passages from the essays we’ve read in the Religion and American Culture reader.

**R2121 PAPER ASSIGNMENT #2,
Kingdom of Matthias and the reform imagination**

Over the past weeks we've explored historical examples of how revivals and conversions have inspired reformers to critique existing society (like the Social Gospel), or to imagine how society might more accurately reflect divine nature or divine will (like the Oneidas). But revivals and reforms weren't always about innovation; sometimes they also attempted to preserve "old ways" from being changed (fundamentalism is a good example of this).

I've also noted that reformers and utopianists tended to have specific ideas about who should have power in society. For example, the Shakers had specific ideas about the appropriate roles of men and women in society, while prophets of the "Lost Cause" had specific ideas about the power that different races should have in society.

Using the book The Kingdom of Matthias, write an essay that explores the configurations of gendered and racial power among Matthias' followers. To what extent were the ideas about race and gender in the Kingdom of Matthias radical and perhaps even subversive (as critics charged), and to what extent were they conventional, serving to reinforce traditional patterns of inequality between men and women and whites and blacks? Be sure to illustrate your argument with specific examples drawn from the book.

**R2121 PAPER ASSIGNMENT #3,
The Madonna of 115th Street, oppression and resistance**

In The Madonna of 115th Street Robert Orsi opens-up the internal complexity of the feste to *la madonna*. Orsi argues that the feste was a devotion through which the men and women of Italian Harlem articulated their rage against the *domus*. But at the same time the feste also reintegrated these men and women back into the values and oppressive demands of the *domus*. Orsi writes of women at the feste that, “the source of their comfort was also the source of their entrapment.” (205) Orsi observes, “Women, then, were both the center and the victims of the annual celebration on 115th Street.” (217).

How do you make sense of this internal duality to religious devotions? How can a religion be at once liberating and oppressive?

Write a 3-4 page paper that explores the tension between oppression and resistance in religion through the example of the feste to the Madonna of 115th Street. As always, use specific examples to illustrate your argument.

R2121 MID-TERM EXAM

PART I (20-25 minutes) IDENTIFICATIONS: Identify **4** of the following 8 terms or individuals, making certain to describe the *historical significance* of each one. Each answer is worth 15 points, for a total of 60 points

the “African spiritual holocaust”

the “social covenant”

Cane Ridge, KY, 1802

Isaac Mayer Wise

the encomienda system

the “burned-over district”

“Mother” Ann Lee

Walter Rauschenbusch

PART II (45-50 minutes) ESSAY: Write an essay responding to **1** of the following 2 questions. Your response should have a clear argument and should provide specific examples or evidence drawn from course lectures, readings, or discussions. Your answer is worth 90 points.

1) We’ve seen that the volatile and pluralistic nature of American society presented certain challenges to religious traditions. Historically, religions either adapt themselves to the American context or die out. What specific challenges has American society presented to the following religious traditions, and how specifically have these religions changed in order to survive? Write a brief essay analyzing the context and adaptations in **2 of the following 4** religious traditions: 1) West African religions, 2) missionary Catholicism, 3) Judaism, 4) evangelical Christianity.

2) We've seen that revivals often address developments or changes in the social context of the time. How did the content and focus of revivals change in different moments in American history? Write a brief essay analyzing the relationship between revivals and their social context (and social change) in **2 of the following 4** settings: 1) the (so-called) colonial "Great Awakening," 2) frontier revivals in the early 1800s, 3) Confederate revivals during the civil war, 4) Pentecostal revivals at Azusa Street in 1906-1907.