

James Treat Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

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The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Philip Gleason of the University of Notre Dame. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

I. Syllabus Justification

New Mexico is known for its rich cultural diversity and its stark natural landscape, and the exploitation of both--through tourism and national defense--is at the heart of the state's economic health. Despite (or perhaps because of) the income generated by these pervasive recreational and military presences, New Mexico remains one of the poorest states in the nation. Dependency may very well be the defining characteristic of New Mexico history, since this region was one of the first to be colonized but one of the last to achieve U.S. statehood, and New Mexico remained in territorial status longer than any other current U.S. state. New Mexico has experienced significant urbanization and population growth only since the Second World War; today, well over half of the state's 1.3 million residents live in the Albuquerque metropolitan area.

The University of New Mexico is a large, public, urban university. UNM is one of the few universities in the nation that is classified as both a Research I university (by the Carnegie Foundation) and a Minority university (by the U.S. Department of Education), and the average age of undergraduates is 25. Most people in this diverse student body are New Mexico residents, though many come from other states and countries attracted to the same things that draw tourists to the state, and by a few highly regarded academic programs. Many students receive some form of financial aid and nearly all have full-time or multiple part-time jobs that keep them busy between classes. UNM is the flagship institution in the state's higher education system and one of the fastest-growing research universities in the nation, yet the state legislature maintains a fairly suspicious attitude toward UNM and regards the university's research accomplishments as an expendable luxury in lean budget years.

The Ph.D. in American Studies was the first doctoral degree offered at UNM and one of the first such degrees in the discipline nationwide. Graduate education remains the department's focus, with course offerings organized in six areas that loosely reflect both faculty expertise and student interest: Culture Studies; Southwest Studies; Race, Class and Ethnicity; Gender Studies; Popular Culture; Environment, Science and Technology. A core reading list of about sixty books representing these six areas is the basis for the American Culture Studies exam that all M.A. and Ph.D. students must pass after their first year in the department. There are seven full-time faculty in the department and we enroll about a dozen new graduate students each year.

"Religion and American Culture" is being offered as a topical seminar in the Culture Studies area of the American Studies department and is cross-listed with the Religious Studies program. (Religious Studies is currently housed in the Philosophy department, though this relationship is coming to an end and the future of graduate work in Religious Studies at UNM is unclear.) This interdisciplinary graduate seminar is designed for students enrolled in the American Studies graduate program or the Religious Studies graduate program, and for graduate students affiliated with other departments in the humanities or social sciences who are working on projects involving American and/ or religious topics.

This course explores the role of religion in American culture and of religious studies in American culture studies. We begin the course by viewing "The Promised Land," the second episode of art critic Robert Hughes's recent television series "American Visions," and by reading the first chapter in his *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (1997), its companion volume. Both selections focus on religious themes in American art history, and we examine these texts to consider how American religion is represented by a contemporary scholar who is not primarily engaged in American religious studies. The rest of the course is organized in two parts, historical and thematic.

Part I takes a historical approach to the study of American religion. We read Peter Williams's *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (1990) in order to provide students with a basic background in American religious history. We read this survey text in dialogue with selected essays from Thomas Tweed's anthology *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (1997) and from David Hackett's anthology *Religion and American Culture: A Reader* (1995) in order to consider recent debates over American religious historiography. Students take turns presenting the readings, and seminar discussions focus on key themes in American religious history and on common methods of narrative representation in American religious historiography.

Part II takes a thematic approach to the study of American religion. We explore the role of religion in American culture, and of religious studies in American culture studies, by considering representative scholarship selected in light of the area rubrics of the American Studies graduate program. We read selected essays from the Tweed and Hackett anthologies and from *Religion in Modern New Mexico* (1997), edited by Ferenc Szasz and Richard Etulain, in order to explore the relationship between religion and gender, race, the Southwest, popular culture, and the environment. None of these anthologies include essays specifically dealing with religion and the environment (a noteworthy fault), so we consider this theme by reading Catherine Albanese's *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990). UNM faculty members with expertise in one of these five thematic areas join us and serve as guest discussants during this part of the course.

Throughout the semester, we attempt to evaluate the significance of religion as descriptive marker and as analytical category in the scholarship of American culture studies. Two presentations by library and education specialists introduce students to a variety of strategies for research and teaching in American religious studies. Two optional day-long tours of selected religious communities in the Albuquerque metropolitan area provide students with opportunities to interact with religious leaders at their own facilities. Seminar participants learn to think critically about religion in American culture, engage in religious scholarship that is historically and methodologically informed, and contribute to the ongoing public conversation about religion.

Students are expected to participate in class on a regular basis, submit three short position papers, design a syllabus for a topical undergraduate course in American religious studies, and make a public presentation on their research. In the first position paper, each student is asked to describe their field of study, their own academic project, the way religion is addressed in their field, and the role religion plays in their project. In the second position paper, each student is asked to construct a religious family tree, documenting the religious affiliations, activities and convictions of their direct ancestors. In the third position paper, which is completed at the end of the semester, each student is asked to revise the first position paper in light of their experience in the seminar. These reflexive exercises help students clarify their own academic agendas and

situate themselves in relation to religion and religious studies, The major written assignment for this course is the course syllabus, which allows students to bring their research interests to bear on the practical challenge of teaching about religion in an academic setting. The course culminates in a one-day symposium on religion and American culture, in which students make public presentations organized in thematic panels. Students who pass the course will possess a basic competency to conduct scholarly research on American religion and to teach an introductory college-level course in American religious studies.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

University of New Mexico

American Studies 510.001
Religious Studies 547.001

Spring 1998
Tuesdays 1:00-3:30
Ortega Hall 313

Religion and American Culture

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Course Description

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the role of religion in American culture and of religious studies in American culture studies. It is designed for students enrolled in the American Studies graduate program or the Religious Studies concentration of the Philosophy graduate program, and for graduate students affiliated with other departments in the humanities or social sciences who are working on projects involving American and/or religious topics.

The course is organized in two parts, historical and thematic. Part I takes a historical approach to the study of American religion; it provides students with a brief introduction to American religious studies, an essential background in American religious history, and a basic understanding of recent debates over American religious historiography. Part II takes a thematic approach to the study of American religion; students explore the role of religion in American culture, and of religious studies in American culture studies, by reading representative scholarship selected in light of the area rubrics of the American Studies graduate program: Gender Studies; Race, Class and Ethnicity; Southwest Studies; Popular Culture; Environment, Science and Technology. Throughout the semester, we attempt to evaluate the significance of religion as descriptive marker and as analytical category in the scholarship of American culture studies.

Students are expected to participate in class on a regular basis, submit three short position papers, design a syllabus for a topical undergraduate course in American religious studies, and make a public presentation on their research. Students also have the opportunity to visit selected religious communities in the Albuquerque metropolitan area by participating in two optional day-long tours. Students in this course learn to think critically about religion in American culture, engage in religious scholarship that is historically and methodologically informed, and contribute to the ongoing public conversation about religion. Students who

pass the course will possess a basic competency to conduct scholarly research on American religion and to teach an introductory college-level course in American religious studies.

Course Readings

These texts are available at the UNM Bookstore and are also on two-hour closed reserve at the Reserve Desk in Zimmerman Library:

- Thomas A. Tweed (ed.), *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
- Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1990).
- David G. Hackett (ed.), *Religion and American Culture: A Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995).
- Ferenc M. Szasz and Richard W. Etulain (eds.) *Religion in Modern New Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).
- Catherine L. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Course Requirements

Class participation and course assignments will be graded on a point system. Any assignment submitted after its due date will receive a lowered grade.

- Class Participation (preparation, attendance, discussion) 30 points
- Position Paper #1 (due January 27) 5 points
- Position Paper #2 (due February 3) 5 points
- Research Proposal (due March 10) 5 points
- Position Paper #3 (due April 28) 5 points
- Course Syllabus (due May 5) 25 points
- Public Presentation (May 11) 25 points

Final grades will be determined according to the following scale:

A range 90-100 points
B range 80-89 points
C range 70-79 points
D range 60-69 points

Course Schedule

January 20 Course Introduction

Position Paper #1 assigned

I. American Religion in Historical Perspective

January 27 American Religious Studies

Position Paper #1 due
Position Paper #2 assigned

Hughes, "O My America, My New Founde Land"
Tweed, "Introduction: Narrating U.S. Religious History" (Tweed)
Frankiel, "Ritual Sites in the Narrative of American Religion" (Tweed)
Finke, "The Illusion of Shifting Demand: Supply-Side Interpretations of American Religious History" (Tweed)

February 3 Religion Before "America"

Position Paper #2 due
Student Discussants
Williams, "The Traditions"
Gutiérrez, "The Pueblo Indian World of the Sixteenth Century" (Hackett)
Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England" (Hackett)
Westfall, "Voices from the Attic: The Canadian Border and the Writing of American Religious History" (Tweed)

February 10 Religion in Colonial America

Student Discussants
Williams, "Colonial America: Europeans, Colonials, and Traditional Peoples Before the Revolution"
Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience" (Hackett)
Martin, "Indians, Contact, and Colonialism in the Deep South: Themes for a Postcolonial History of American Religion" (Tweed)
Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim" (Tweed)

February 17 Religion in the American Republic

Student Discussants
Williams, "Religious Community Formation in the New Republic"
Martin, "From 'Middle Ground' to 'Underground': Southeastern Indians and the Early Republic" (Hackett)
Hackett, "The Social Origins of Nationalism: Albany, New York, 1754-1835" (Hackett)
Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840" (Hackett)
Shipps, "The Genesis of Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition" (Hackett)

February 24 Religion in Modern America

Student Discussants
Research Proposal assigned
Williams, "The End of the Frontier and the Rise of the City"
Frankiel, "California Dreams" (Hackett)
Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920" (Hackett)
DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account" (Hackett)
Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens" (Hackett)

March 3 Religion in Contemporary American Life

Student Discussants

Williams, "The Twentieth Century: Further Encounters with Modernity and Pluralism"

Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life" (Hackett)

Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles" (Hackett)

Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism, and the Pentecostal Character" (Hackett)

Deck, "The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism" (Hackett)

Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter: The Meeting of East and West in America since the 1893 World's Parliament of Religion" (Hackett)

Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History" (Tweed)

FRIDAY, March 6 American Religious Diversity

OPTIONAL Tour of Older Religious Communities in Albuquerque

March 10 Research and Teaching

Research Proposal due

Research Strategies Presentation

Mid-Semester Evaluations

March 17 Spring Break Week

II. Religion and American Culture Studies

March 24 Religion and Gender

Guest Discussant

Course Syllabus assigned

Taves, "Sexuality in American Religious History" (Tweed)

Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" (Tweed)

Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue" (Hackett)

Carnes, "Manmade Religion: Victorian Fraternal Rituals" (Hackett)

Brown, "The Power to Heal in Haitian Vodou: Reflections on Women, Religion, and Medicine" (Hackett)

March 31 Religion and Race

Guest Discussant

Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel" (Hackett)

Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1863" (Hackett)

Joyner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity" (Hackett)

Higginbotham, "The Feminist Theology of the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1900" (Hackett)

Cone, "Malcolm and Martin: Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History" (Hackett)

April 7 Religion in the Southwest

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Guest Discussant

Jensen, "Roman Catholicism in Modern New Mexico: A Commitment to Survive" (Szasz and Etulain)
Walker, "Protestantism in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)
Tobias, "The Religious Culture of the Jews in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)
Arrington, "Mormons in Twentieth-Century New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)
Szasz, "The United States and New Mexico: A Twentieth-Century Comparative Religious History" (Szasz and Etulain)

April 14 Religion and Popular Culture

Guest Discussant

Public Presentation assigned
Schmidt, "The Easter Parade: Piety, Fashion, and Display" (Hackett)
McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity, 1860-1960" (Hackett)
Schuetz, "A Rhetorical Approach to Protestant Evangelism in Twentieth-Century New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)
Fox, "Boomer Dharma: The Evolution of Alternative Spiritual Communities in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

April 21 Religion and the Environment

Guest Discussant

Position Paper #3 assigned
Albanese, Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age

FRIDAY, April 24 American Religious Diversity

OPTIONAL Tour of Newer Religious Communities in Albuquerque

April 28 Research and Teaching

Position Paper #3 due
Teaching Strategies Presentation

May 5 Course Conclusions

Course Syllabus due
Semester Evaluations

MONDAY, May 11 Symposium on Religion and American Culture

Public Presentations