

Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp 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. Katherine Albanese of the University of California, Santa Barbara. 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

Religion 29 is a large lecture course that typically enrolls 200 students. Because it also fulfills certain college distribution requirements, the range of students that take the course is very wide, and their preparation for the course equally diverse (as is their interest in the subject matter). Its present format combines meetings of the whole group (Mondays and Wednesdays for 50 minutes) with small section meetings (Thursdays and Fridays).

I have taught this course several times in the past, and have always been frustrated by the difficulties inherent in interacting with students with greatly differing needs and interests. Inevitably, the best students register complaints about the plodding and simplistic nature of the lectures, while others come to me for help because they can't keep up with what they consider to be highly sophisticated concepts. In the past, I have used more of a machine-gun approach to the material, spattering lecture-sized bullets of information and short excerpts of primary documents, and assuming that students would be able to form some kind of coherent picture out of the bits of data they are given. But I have found that many of my students are left puzzling over stray names and faces, confusing Harriet Beecher Stowe with Harriet Tubman, and wondering what difference all of this makes anyway.

This incarnation of the course, as I have tentatively conceived it, tries to solve some of these problems by changing the format significantly. Rather than feeling compelled to discuss every significant religious event and person, I have tried to limit the course to concepts that raise general sorts of questions about religion in American society. I have cut back on the reading load, and have, in the syllabus, tried to group the lecture/discussions in ways that suggest a thematic coherence. My hope is that, arbitrary though some of these choices may be (and weighted toward my own areas of interest), they will allow students to focus on certain questions that may bear upon their own concerns. This is especially true of the post-Civil War material (weeks 9-16), where I gradually give up chronology altogether in order to focus on a few themes in which students have expressed great interest in past years.

My approach follows, on the face of it, a fairly traditional historical narrative format. Students learn about American Indians and European colonizations, the Great Awakening and denominationalism, religion and the Civil War, and the modernist controversy. But in my selection of source materials I try to undercut common assumptions about these events. For example, while discussing the Revolutionary Era they read

Isaac Backus and Richard Allen; during the week on revivalism and evangelicalism they read Jarena Lee rather than Charles Finney; in a discussion of recent "traditionalist" movements we examine both conservative evangelicals and Hasidic Jews, and then move into Islamic fundamentalism. Thus we explore the variety of meanings that historical events and developments have had for Americans. Rather than analyzing African American religion or questions of gender separately from the "grand narrative," through my choice of readings I hope to push students to think continuously about how race and gender have played an ongoing role in shaping American religious experience.

As suggested previously, the latter part of the course is particularly idiosyncratic. In part, it reflects my assessment of what students at a large university in the South are interested in discussing. Because Biblical literacy in this region is generally very high, I spend a week on modernism and fundamentalism, and come back to conservative religious movements in another context later on. But I also address issues that I think students in North Carolina need to learn about, e.g., the many facets of African American religion, Civil Rights, the Black Muslims, etc. Finally, I try to incorporate issues of ethnic diversity and "Americanization," themes that are quite foreign to the experience of most students here (North Carolina is among the most ethnically homogeneous states in the country, with race being the one major dividing line).

Because of the size of the course, grades are calculated largely on the basis of mid-term and final exams. I try to allow for as much critical thinking as possible, given the limited time the teaching assistants have for grading. The in-class exams consist of several short-answer identifications (to make sure they have done the reading) and one or two essays. The final is an extended version of the same format. In addition, students hand in a weekly "thought piece" that raises questions about the readings for the week (it is almost a one-page journal entry). Although these reflection papers are not graded, they are read and often they serve as the basis for discussion.

II. Course Syllabus

Religious Studies 29 History of Religion in America

Prof. Laurie Maffly-Kipp
Fall 1992

Office Hours: 11:00-12:30, Mon. and Wed.
Teaching Assistants: Amy DeRogatis, Susan Rogers, David Zercher

Course Description

This course is a survey of religion in America from the pre-colonial era to the present. Although this is a large class, our goal will be to explore together certain moments and themes in American religious history that have significantly shaped the development of the nation as a whole. The approach will be chronological, that is, we will move through time from the pre-colonial context to the late twentieth century; but our aim will be to connect past events to issues and problems that continue to affect the expression of religious beliefs and practices in our own culture. At times, we will employ a "case study" approach: rather than trying to cover every significant religious development and each religious group, we will analyze specific events and ideas that have a wider applicability. We encourage you, however, to keep up with your reading in the required text (Gaustad's *A Religious History of America*), to read from the supplemental bibliography that we will provide for additional information, and to bring before the entire class issues and concerns that are not directly addressed in lectures or discussions.

Texts

The following texts are available at the UNC Student Bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Undergraduate Library.

Required:

- Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Religious History of America*, rev. ed.
- Lis Harris, *Holy Days*
- Coursepak available at Copytron (readings marked with an "*")

Recommended:

- William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (we will be reading several chapters; the book will be on reserve, but we have arranged for you to purchase it if you so desire).

Meeting Schedule

A. Cultures in Contact

[Week 1 Beginnings](#)

Aug 26 Introductions

Aug 27-28 Sections: What is America? What is religion?

[Week 2 Colonizations](#)

Readings: *Juan Gines de Sepulveda, "Just War Against Barbarians," *Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda, eds., *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues*, pp. 63-94. Gaustad, pp. 3-33.

Aug 31 Early Views of the Land; Natives and Europeans

Sep 2 Differing experiences of colonization and conquest

Sep 3-4 Sections

How did European religious beliefs shape the way early colonists perceived the New World and its inhabitants? In what ways did Spanish, French, and English settlers differ in their approaches to settlement?

[Week 3 Early Settlements](#)

Readings: *John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," *Peter Bulkeley, "A Willing and Voluntary Subjection," *William Penn, "Preface to the Pennsylvania Frame of Government" and *Primitive Christianity Revived*. Gaustad, pp. 39-80.

Sep 7 Labor Day--No class

Sep 9 Massachusetts and Virginia

Sep 10-11 The Middle Colonies

How did the religious and social goals of immigrants in the original colonies shape the kinds of communities they established?

Week 4 Forming a People

Readings: *Nathan Cole, "The Spiritual Travels," *Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light." Gaustad, pp. 81-108.

Sep 14 Americanizing the colonies

Sep 16 The Great Awakening

Sep 17-18 First Exam

What kinds of changes occurred between the 17th and 18th centuries that reoriented the European settlements? In what ways did the religious awakenings of the mid-18th century divide--or bring together--Americans as a new community?

B. Expansion, Progress, and the Meaning of America

Week 5 Revolutions and Religious Liberty

Readings: *Richard Allen, Autobiography, *Isaac Backus, "Government and Liberty Described; and Ecclesiastical Tyranny Exposed," *Catherine L. Albanese, America: Religions and Religion, pp. 432-449. Gaustad, pp. 115-127.

Sep 21 Denominationalism: New religious configurations

Sep 23 The Rise of African churches

Sep 24-25 Sections

What effects did the American Revolution have upon churches in the newly-formed United States? What was the significance of the Constitutional guarantee of religious liberty?

Week 6 Awakenings and Utopianism

Readings: *"The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee." Gaustad, pp. 128-144.

Sep 28 Evangelicalism

Sep 30 Utopian movements: The Shakers

Oct 1-2 Sections

What is evangelicalism, and how did evangelicals in the early 19th century understand their relationship to the nation as a whole? What caused other groups, such as the Shakers, to seek religious purity in other forms?

Week 7 Movement in space

Readings: "Drusilla Dorris Hendricks," in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 20, pp. 242-272 (reserve), *Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature." Gaustad, pp. 145-163.

Oct 5 Mormonism

Oct 7 The sacralization of nature

Oct 8-9 Fall break: No sections

How did the opening of western territories to settlers both provide new religious opportunities and provoke new religious conflicts? What specific kinds of challenges did western migrants face? In what ways did Americans consider the landscape itself to be sacred?

Week 8 Slavery and the Civil War

Readings: *James Thornwell, "The Rights and Duties of Masters," *Nat Turner, "Confessions," *Theodore D. Weld, "The Bible Against Slavery." Gaustad, pp. 164-177.

Oct 12 Slave Religion

Oct 14 White Protestantism and the slave issue

Oct 15-16 Sections

How did various groups of evangelicals--white northerners, African Americans, and white southerners--understand the significance of black enslavement before the Civil War?

C. Empire and its Discontents

Week 9 War and its Aftermath

Readings: *Clifton Johnson, ed., *God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Ex-Slaves*, excerpts, *W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Fol* , excerpts. Gaustad, pp. 185-189.

Oct 19 Second Exam

Oct 21 Emancipation and the Black Churches

Oct 22-23 Sections

How did the newly-freed slaves religiously reorient themselves after Emancipation? How did white churches in the South and the North react to the war's end?

Week 10 Modernism and Fundamentalism

Readings: *"The World's Most Famous Court Trial," *Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"; *J. Gresham Machen, "History and Faith." Gaustad, pp. 255-283.

Oct 26 Darwinism, Science, and History

Oct 28 The Conservative response

Oct 29-30 Sections

What effects did Darwinian theory, and new views of science and history, have upon Protestants? What other kinds of issues played a role in the development of fundamentalism?

Week 11 Religious relativism

Readings: William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures 4 and 5 ("The Sick Soul"), and Lecture 20 (Conclusions); Gaustad, pp. 190-197, 242-255.

Nov 2 The Comparative study of religions

Nov 4 Harmonial religions

Nov 5-6 Sections

How did the Protestant encounter with other religious traditions affect religious faith? What attracted Americans in the late 19th century to East Asian religions? to Christian Science and other "harmonial" religions?

Week 12 Ethnicity, assimilation and "Americanization"

Readings: *Abraham Cahan, "The Imported Bridegroom." Gaustad, pp. 178-185, 198-214.

Nov 9 Immigrant Catholicism

Nov 11 Immigrant Judaism

Nov 12-13 Third Exam

How did American culture challenge the traditions of immigrant Catholics and Jews? What social factors impinged upon the religious experiences of new immigrants?

D. Religion and Modernity: Unresolved Questions

Week 13 Religion, race, and nationality

Readings: *Marcus Garvey, "The Challenge of Black Nationalism," *Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," *Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, excerpts. Gaustad, pp. 331-351.

Nov 16 Black Religion, Black Nationalism

Nov 18 Civil Rights and The Nation of Islam

Nov 19-20 Sections

How have the religious struggles of African Americans been connected to social and political events in the twentieth century? What are some of the similarities and differences between Garvey's UNIA, the Civil Rights movement, and the Nation of Islam?

Week 14 Community and the return to "traditionalism"

Readings: Lis Harris, Holy Days. Gaustad, pp. 352-371.

Nov 23 Conservative Evangelicalism: "Born Again"

Nov 25 Hasidic Judaism: discussion of Holy Days

Nov 26-27 Thanksgiving break: No sections

Why are so many Americans finding "conservative" forms of religion (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) so attractive in recent years? What is the appeal of traditionalism?

Week 15 New Religious Communities: The Case of Islam

Readings: To Be Announced

Nov 30 Islam in America

Dec 2 Fundamentalism and Black Muslims

Dec 3-4 Sections

Are there new issues and challenges provoked by the immigration of Muslims to America? What are our stereotypes of Islamic fundamentalism and Black Muslims, and how do they differ from the reality of the Muslim presence in America?

Week 16 Looking Forward

Readings: *Albanese, America: Religions and Religion, pp. 463-482. Gaustad, pp. 311-330.

Dec 7 Culture Religion and the Separation of Church and State

Dec 9 Religion in the 21st century

Course Requirements

Your grade for the course will be based on three in-class exams (20% each), faithful attendance in both lectures and sections and active participation in discussions (15%), and a final exam (25%). The exams will cover material from both the reading assignments and the class discussions; they will consist of short-answer identifications that cover basic information as well as essay questions. All exams are closed-book.

List of Supplementary Readings

- Juan Gines de Sepulveda, "Just War Against Barbarians" (1544), in Charles Gibson, ed., *The Spanish Tradition in America* (Harper & Row), pp. 113-120.
- Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda, eds., *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues* (Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 63-94.
- John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity"; Peter Bulkeley, "A Willing and Voluntary Subjection," in Michael McGiffert, ed., *Puritanism and the American Experience* (Addison-Wesley, 1969), pp. 27-37.
- William Penn, "Preface to the Pennsylvania Frame of Government," and *Primitive Christianity Revived*, in Giles Gunn, ed., *New World Metaphysics: Readings on the Religious Meaning of the American Experience* (Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 77-81.
- Nathan Cole, "The Spiritual Travels," in Richard L. Bushman, ed., *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740-;1745* (Atheneum, 1970), pp. 66-71.
- Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light," in Edwin Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 214-220.
- Richard Allen, *Autobiography*, in Gaustad, *Documentary History*, vol. 1, pp. 300-303.
- Isaac Backus, "Government and Liberty Described; and Ecclesiastical Tyranny Exposed," in Robert L. Ferm, ed., *Issues in American Protestantism* (Peter Smith, 1976), pp. 108-120.
- Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, 2nd edition (Wadsworth, 1992), pp. 432-449.
- "The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee," in Dorothy Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837* (Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 494-514.
- "Drusilla Dorris Hendricks," in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, vol. 20 (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1977), pp. 242-272.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in Giles Gunn, *New World Metaphysics*, pp. 171-192.
- James Thornwell, "The Rights and Duties of Masters," in Ferm, *Issues in American Protestantism*, pp. 189-199.
- Nat Turner, "Confessions," in Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (Grove Press, 1966), pp. 127-149.
- Theodore D. Weld, "The Bible Against Slavery," in Robert R. Mathison, *The Role of Religion in American Life: An Interpretive Historical Anthology* (University Press of America, 1982), pp. 119-125.
- Clifton Johnson, ed., *God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Ex-Slaves* (Pilgrim Press, 1969), pp. 1-14, 58-64, 91-92, 99-108, 114-115, 148-149.
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Fawcett Publications), pp. 140-191.
- "The World's Most Famous Court Trial," in Robert Mathison, *The Role of Religion in American Life*, pp. 303-312.
- Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" in George C. Bedell, Leo Sandon, Jr., Charles T. Wellborn, eds., *Religion in America* (Macmillan, 1975), pp. 234-238.
- J. Gresham Machen, "History and Faith," in Ferm, *Issues in American Protestantism*, pp. 262-276.
- Abraham Cahan, "The Imported Bridegroom," in Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom and other Stories of the New York Ghetto (Dover, 1970), pp. 93-162.
- Marcus Garvey, "The Challenge of Black Nationalism," in Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, eds., *Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Bobbs Merrill, 1965), pp. 82-91.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (Signet Books, 1963), pp. 76-95.
- Malcolm X, *Autobiography* (Ballantine Books, 1965), pp. 364-382.
- Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, pp. 463-482.

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