

Kathleen M. Joyce 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. Deborah Dash Moore of Vassar College. 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

Duke University is a private university standing at the center of the once-sleepy town of Durham, N. C. Virtually all of the 6,000 undergraduate students live on campus in residential halls or university-owned apartments. Racial minorities are not well represented at Duke. The overwhelming majority of students are white, native-born Americans. The proportion of men to women is about equal. Southern evangelicalism lives on at Duke, but in the last decade a significant number of Catholic and Jewish students have enrolled, most of them coming from areas outside of the South. The "typical" Duke student comes from a background of some privilege. An unusually high percentage of students receive no financial aid. Many students hold jobs on campus, but for the most part undergraduates do not have work or family responsibilities that get in the way of their studies. The unofficial undergraduate motto is, "Work hard, play hard," and if academics suffer it is usually because of over-commitment to voluntary extra-curricular activities.

Duke undergraduates consider themselves among the best and the brightest, and they often speak of their future roles as business and political leaders. On the whole, their sense of themselves is not far off the mark. About half of the students enter Duke with the intention of following a pre-med program, but first semester encounters with organic chemistry cause many students to reassess their career goals. Still, most students are very bright and expect their grades to reflect this. Although grade inflation is a problem at Duke, as it seems to be at so many other institutions, students generally earn the "A" and "B" grades they receive (as well as the less common Cs and Ds). More often than not, students come to my classes prepared to discuss the readings and the issues the readings raise. The quality of group projects and individual papers also is generally quite high.

Course Rationale: Religion 124 was created long before I arrived at Duke, but it was taught infrequently, and then usually by graduate students. Two years before I came, the department changed the title from "American Christianity" to "Religion in American Life." I would like to amend the current title by making "religion" plural and acknowledging that the focus is on the United States, and not on other parts of the Americas.

Religion 124 is a one semester survey course with an average enrollment of 20-30 students. The size of the class encourages active discussion, but the 14-week semester naturally limits the range of issues I can introduce. Because the student body is so homogeneous, I feel a responsibility to expose students to people, events, beliefs, and traditions that are unfamiliar to them, but I do not want to sacrifice depth for breadth. I would prefer to spend several sessions on one theme than to touch lightly on a wider range of themes. Thus, the course focuses on Jewish and Christian mainstream traditions to the exclusion of non-western and minority traditions within the United States. Even with a more limited focus, there are still important issues I don't address. For example, I devote several sessions to the experiences of African-Americans as slaves and as free people with an ambiguous place in American society, but I do not look closely at black churches. My coverage of colonial America is also limited by my focus on New England to the exclusion of other regions. I try to compensate for the time constraints by choosing texts that serve multiple purposes. Thus, *Demos* is used to gain insight into Calvinist beliefs, Native American culture, the contact of cultures, and the challenge of recovering women's voices (the unredeemed captive of the title is a woman whose thoughts and feelings we can only guess at). The other main texts are similarly rich in terms of the worlds they disclose.

Every course I teach is designed to develop students' analytical capabilities and refine their styles of written and oral expression. I target these skills through both the form and the content of the assignments I give.

Primary Documents: I use primary documents in each class to focus our discussion and to introduce students to the complexity of textual interpretation.

Secondary Texts: Selecting a textbook for this course is difficult because there is no single text that is fully satisfactory. I have listed readings here from an old edition of Hudson's *Religion in America* because that is the edition I have (from my seminary days -- I think it dates me). I have heard that John Corrigan is completing a new, substantially revised edition of the text, and that is the one I will use when I teach this class next year.

I think a textbook is necessary to give students a background narrative to connect the specific themes we explore in the other books we use. I find that many students are not accustomed to reading all of a book, since it is more common for instructors to assign selected chapters. I assign each book in its entirety because doing so allows me to raise questions about genre, sources and documentation, and the choices the author makes in selecting and organizing the material he or she uses.

Short Papers: I require students to prepare passages and questions for each document we study, and papers for each book we read, for two reasons. First, and most obviously, it is a way to ensure that students will come to class prepared to discuss the readings. But these assignments also challenge students' critical reading skills by asking them to isolate a passage for explication and identify the salient themes in complex texts. By limiting the papers to 2-3 pages, I also challenge them to use an economy of words to discuss these themes.

Use of Fiction and Films: I ask students to read novels and view films because fiction and film engage the imagination and offer insight into the interior worlds of individuals and the structure of the social worlds they inhabit. Moreover, regardless of what career paths students follow, they are likely to read novels and see movies in their free time. By incorporating fiction and film into my classes, I hope to help them apply their analytical skills to what they often view as purely recreational pursuits.

Final Essay: My goal for every course I teach is to provide some way at the end of the semester for students to synthesize all that they have learned. In this case, having them return to the first article they read allows them to see how much they have learned over the course of the semester, and challenges them to define their own perspective on the central themes of American religious history.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Religion 124

Religion in American Life

Professor Kathleen Joyce
Duke University

Texts

The following titles are available both for purchase at the University Textbook Store and on reserve at the Divinity School Library:.

- Demos, John. *The Unredeemed Captive*
- Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Rikoon, J. Sanford, ed. *Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains*
- Carroll, James. *An American Requiem*
- Brown, Karen McCarthy. *Mama Lola*
- Hudson, Winthrop. *Religion in America* (4th edition)
- Coursepack of documents and articles

Ground Rules

This course is intended to be a collaborative effort, with students and instructor joining together to discuss texts and reflect on the issues they raise. The texts and issues we will be considering lend themselves to active discussion and debate, and I want to encourage full participation in class as well as thorough preparation for class. The success of our time together is related directly to the time we all put into preparing for our meetings. It should go without saying (but I guess it cannot), that regular attendance is required, and that assignments are expected to be completed on time. Written assignments are to be submitted, TYPED, at the start of class. No handwritten papers will be accepted. Grades on late papers will be lowered a half of a grade for each day they are late (e.g. an A paper will drop to an A- if it is one day late). This policy does not apply to the passages and questions prepared for each class session. They will be collected at the end of each class, and late submissions will not be accepted.

Assignments

I. Reading and reflecting on the assigned readings is the most basic requirement of the class, and it is also the most critical one. All primary documents are to be reviewed before the class session in which they will be examined, and students are expected to select at least one passage (anything from a sentence to a paragraph) for discussion. These passages must be formally identified and submitted (TYPED!), together with 2-3 comments or questions, at the end of each class.

The papers will not receive a letter grade, but I will keep a record of them. These papers, along with class attendance, will account for 15% of your final grade.

II. To help everyone keep up with the readings, and to ensure that we have a common basis for discussion, each student is expected to submit a 2-3 page paper on each of the major texts (Demos, Jacobs, Rikoon, Carroll, Brown). These papers should include both summary (limited to one page) and reflection on the main issues raised by the texts. Due dates for these papers are listed in the schedule of assigned readings. Papers must be typed. Handwritten work will not be accepted.

Each of the five papers is worth 5% of your final grade (for a total of 25%).

III. In addition to the assigned readings, students will select one novel from the following list and submit an 8-10 page review of its major themes:

Arthur, Timothy Shay. Ten Nights in a Bar-Room
Bunyan, John. Pilgrim's Progress
Conwell, Russell. Acres of Diamonds
Frederic, Harold. Damnation of Theron Ware
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. The Yellow Wallpaper and Herland
Gordon, Mary. Final Payments
Monk, Maria. Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal
Oke, Janette. Love Comes Softly
Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. The Gates Ajar
Puzo, Mario. The Godfather
Redfield, James. The Celestine Prophecy
Roth, Philip. Goodbye Columbus
Stowe, Harriet Beecher. Uncle Tom's Cabin
Updike, John. S ("S" is the title of the book!)
Uris, Leon. Exodus
Wouk, Herman. Marjorie Morningstar
Yeziarska, Anzia Bread Givers.

These papers should include:

- A. Background on the religious traditions that influence characters in the book.
- B. Information on the social-historical context in which each book was written, and information on how it was received by its contemporaries.
- C. Analysis of the book in terms of its plot and theme.
- D. Reflection on what the book suggests about the place of religion in American life.

This paper is due at the start of class on the day of our 20th class session. It is worth 20% of your final grade.

IV. Throughout the semester, there will be three group presentations. Each of the three groups will be assigned a film to view, and each group will put together a presentation that will include:

- A. A handout providing reference data on the film (title, director, year of release), information on its public reception, and a summary of its theme.
- B. A series of film clips (no more than 10 minutes worth) that illustrate significant points.
- C. A discussion, no more than 10 or 15 minutes in duration, of what the film suggests about both the religious culture of the historical period it depicts and the religious perspectives of the writers, directors, and producers who created the film.

A single grade will be assigned to each presentation (i.e. each person within a group will receive the same grade). These presentations will account for 20% of your final grade.

Group Assignments:

- I. "Black Robe." Presentation: Our 5th class session.
- II. "A Man Called Peter." Presentation: Our 15th class session
- III. "Forrest Gump." Presentation: Our 23rd class session

V. There will be a final take-home exam. In 6-8 pages, you will be asked to prepare your own version of the essay by David Wills that was assigned the first day of class. Your papers will not be as detailed as the Wills essay, but you will be asked to identify the themes/issues that you believe are central to the religious history of the United States, and you will be expected to argue persuasively in defense of your choices.

The final exam will account for 20% of your final grade.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Class One: Introduction to course.

Assignment (to be read in preparation for the next class meeting): David Wills, "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White." *Religion and Intellectual Life* 5:1 (Fall 1987): 30-41.

Class Two: Colonial Encounters

Document: "The Iroquois Warfare" (martyrdom of Isaac Jogues), pp. 189-202, Edna Kenton, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*

Assignment: Ramon Gutierrez, "The Spanish Conquest," pp. 39-94, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*.

Begin reading John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive*.

Class Three: Colonial Encounters

Document: John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," pp. 7-15, David Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition, Volume I* (3rd edition)

Assignment: Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America, "The American Context,"* pp. 11-28; Continue reading Demos.

Class Four: Puritan New England: Piety.

Document: John Cotton, selection from "A Treatise on the Covenant of Grace," pp. 17-28, Hollinger and Capper, *The American Intellectual Tradition, Volume I*.

Assignment: Hudson, "Transplanted Churches," pp. 29-59.

Continue reading Demos.

Class Five: Puritan New England: Dissent.

Documents:"The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown," pp. 29-39, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Roger Williams, "Christenings Make Not Christians," pp. 41-47, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Group Presentation: "Black Robe"

Assignment:James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America,"pp. 16-46, Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin, eds., Colonial America (3rd edition).

Finish reading Demos.

Class Six: Puritan New England: Contact of Cultures

Text:Discussion of Demos, The Unredeemed Captive.

Paper I Due

Assignment:Hudson, "The Great Awakening," pp. 60-103.

Nathan Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America," pp. 497-517, Katz and Murrin, Colonial America.

Class Seven: Revivalism and Revolution

Document:Jonathan Edwards, Selection from "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" (1746), pp. 70-86, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Assignment:Mary Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening," pp. 147-166, David Hackett, Religion and American Culture: A Reader

Nathan Hatch, "The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics," pp. 92-120, Mark Noll, ed. Religion and American Politics

Rhys Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptists' Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765 to 1775," pp. 518-539, Katz and Murrin.

Class Eight: Democracy and Denominations

Document:Charles Grandison Finney, "What a Revival of Religion Is," pp. 201-210, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Assignment:Hudson, "The Republic and the Churches," pp. 105-126.

John F. Wilson, "Religion, Government, and Power in the New American Nation," pp. 77-91 in Noll, Religion and American Politics.

Class Nine: Church and State

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Document: Thomas Jefferson, Selection from "Notes on the State of Virginia," pp. 173-183, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Assignment: Begin reading Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Class Ten: Slavery: The Public Conflict

Document: David Walker's Appeal, Article III.

Assignment: Hudson, "Utopianism, Millennialism, and Humanitarianism," pp. 172-194.

Finish Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Class Eleven: Slavery: The Private Ordeal

Text: Discuss Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Paper II Due

Assignment: Albert Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel," pp. 73-86, Hackett, *Religion and American Culture*.

Class Twelve: From Slavery to Freedom?

Document: Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" pp. 445-460, Hollinger and Capper, Volume I.

Assignment: Hudson, "Post-Civil War America," pp. 195-223; David Wills, "Beyond Commonality and Plurality: Persistent Racial Polarity in American Religion and Politics," pp. 199-224 in Noll, *Religion and American Politics*.

Class Thirteen: Freedom: "How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?"

Document: W. E. B. Dubois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," pp. 7-15, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Assignment: Anne M. Boylan, "Timid Girls, Venerable Widows and Dignified Matrons: Life Cycle Patterns Among Organized Women in New York and Boston, 1797-1840," *American Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1986): 779-97.

Begin reading Rikoon, ed. *Rachel Calof's Story*.

Class Fourteen: Gender and Religion: Victorian Ideals

Document: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Introduction," pp. 7-13, *The Woman's Bible*

Assignment: Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860" *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74

Mark Carnes, "Manmade Religion," pp. 315-326, Hackett, *Religion and American Culture*

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Colleen McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity," pp. 291-314, Hackett.

Continue Rachel Calof's Story.

Class Fifteen: Womenly Women and Manly Men

Documents: Caroline Gilman, *Recollections of a Southern Matron*, pp. 250-257

John S.C. Abbott, *The Mother at Home*, pp. 159-161.

G. Stanley Hall, "Christianity and Physical Culture," *Pedagogical Seminary* 9 (1902): 374-378.

Group Presentation: "A Man Called Peter."

Assignment: Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," pp. 145-64, Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West*.

Finish Rachel Calof's Story.

Class Sixteen: Life on the Frontier

Text: Discussion of Rachel Calof's Story.

Paper III Due

Assignment: Irving Howe, "Disorder and Early Progress" and "The Restlessness of Learning" from *World of Our Fathers*.

Robert Liberles, "Conflict over Reforms: The Case of Congregation Beth Elohim, Charleston, S.C.," pp. 274-296, Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue*.

Class Seventeen: Reform Judaism in America

Document: "Pittsburgh Platform," Conference of Reform Rabbis, pp. 468-469, Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*

Assignment: Edward Kaplan, "The American Mission of Abraham Joshua Heschel," pp. 339-354, Robert Seltzer and Norman Cohen, eds., *The Americanization of the Jews*.

Judith Hauptman, "Conservative Judaism: The Ethical Challenge of Feminist Change," pp. 296-308, Seltzer and Cohen.

Class Eighteen: Conservative Judaism in America

Document: Introduction to the Sabbath Prayer Book (1945), pp. 3-16, Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation.

Assignment: Henry L. Feingold, "Who Shall Bear the Guilt for the Holocaust? The Human Dilemma," Jonathan Sarna, ed. *The American Jewish Experience*.

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Robert Alter, "The Jew Who Didn't Get Away: On the Possibility of an American Jewish Culture," Sarna, American Jewish Experience.

Deborah Dash Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles," pp. 383-406, Hackett, Religion and American Culture.

Class Nineteen: Jewish Identities: Faith and Nationhood

Documents: Silver, "Toward American Jewish Unity," pp. 14-21, Vision and Victory: A Collection of Addresses by Abba Hillel Silver 1842-48, Zionist Organization of America .

Solomon Schechter, "Catholic Israel," pp. 497-499, Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, Jew in the Modern World.

David Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, "An Exchange of Views," pp. 524-528, Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz.

Assignment: Thomas T. McAvoy, "The Formation of the Catholic Minority in the United States, 1820-1860," pp. 254-269, John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson, eds., Religion in American History.

Robert Orsi, "The Fault of Memory," Journal of Family History 15:2 (1990): 133-148.

Class Twenty: Catholicism in America: Birth of the "American" Catholic

Document: Archbishop John Ireland, "The Church and the Age," pp. 177-194, Patrick W. Carey, ed., American Catholic Religious Thought.

Paper on Novel Due

Assignment: James Hennessey, "Roman Catholics and American Politics, 1900-1960: Altered Circumstances, Continuing Patterns," pp. 302-321, Noll, Religion and American Politics.

Timothy Byrnes, "The Bishops and Electoral Politics," pp. 121-141, Mary Segers, ed., Church Polity and American Politics.

Class Twenty-One: Catholicism in America: Religion and Politics

Documents: Charles C. Marshall, "An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith," Atlantic Monthly (April 1927): 540-549

Alfred E. Smith, "Catholic and Patriot: Governor Smith Replies," Atlantic Monthly (May 1927): 721-728.

"Text of Senator John F. Kennedy's Speech to the Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960," pp. 160-164, Patricia Barrett, Religious Liberty and the American Presidency: A Study in Church-State Relations.

Assignment: Patrick Allitt, "Catholic Conservative Intellectuals and the Politics of Sexuality: 1950-1980," pp. 197-214, Segers, Church polity and American Politics.

Mary Segers, "Moral Consistency and Public Policy: Cuomo and Califano on Abortion," pp. 157-174, Segers, Church Polity and American Politics.

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Begin to read James Carroll, *An American Requiem*.

Class Twenty-Two: Catholicism in America: Sexual Politics

Documents: "Casti Connubii," Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage, December 31, 1930.

Frank J. Ewers, "Scientific Rhythm," *Linacre Quarterly* 32:3 (August 1965).

Assignment: Continue reading Carroll, *An American Requiem*.

Philip Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change in the 1960s," pp. 82-96, Gleason, *Keeping the Faith*.

Class Twenty-Three: The Churches and the Second Sex

Document: Mary Daly, "Sisterhood as Cosmic Covenant," pp. 351-361, Charlene Spretnak, ed., *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*.

Group Presentation: "Forrest Gump"

Assignment: Finish reading Carroll, *Requiem*.

Class Twenty-Four: The Crucible of Vietnam

Text: Discussion of Carroll, *An American Requiem*.

Paper IV Due

Assignment: Begin reading Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola*.

Mark Silk, "The Rise of the 'New Evangelicalism': Shock and Adjustment," pp. 278-299, William Hutchinson, ed., *Between the Times*.

Class Twenty-Five: Evangelicalism in America

Document: Harold J. Ockenga, "Can Christians Win America?" *Christian Life and Times*, June 1947, pp. 13-15.

Assignment: Continue reading *Mama Lola*.

Mark Noll and Lyman Kellstedt, "Religion, Voting for President, and Party Identification, 1948-1984," pp. 355-379, Noll, *Religion & American Politics*.

Class Twenty-six: Rise of the Religious Right

Document: Jerry Falwell, "The Imperative of Moral Involvement," pp. 504-511, Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout, *Religion in American History: A Reader*.

Assignment: Finish *Mama Lola*.

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Class Twenty-Seven: Traditional Religions in Modern America

Text: Discussion of Mama Lola

Paper V Due

Assignment: John Corvino, "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex? A Defense of Homosexuality," and David Bradshaw, "A Reply to Corvino," pp. 3-30, John Corvino, ed. *Same Sex*

Class Twenty-Eight: Religion and American Life: Issues for the 21st Century

Documents: Editors of *Commonweal*, "Marriage's True Ends" and Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Against Gay Marriage," pp. 54-60.

Dennis Prager, "Homosexuality, the Bible, and Us -- A Jewish Perspective," pp. 61-67.

Rabbi Yoel H. Kahn, "The Kedushah of Homosexual Relations," pp. 71-77.

Each document from Andrew Sullivan, ed., *Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con*.

Class Discussion