

Paul Harvey 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. Harry S. Stout of Yale University. 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.

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I. Syllabus Justification

I am currently not employed at any institution but am a "visiting scholar" at The Colorado College in Colorado Springs. I am using the college as a setting for this course in part because of the college's almost unique academic calendar, dubbed "the block plan." Students at the college take one course at a time, meeting each day for three and one half weeks at a time. There are eight "blocks" to the year, with a 2 day break (plus the regular weekend) between each block. Professors are very free to arrange their courses as they wish, to meet classes as long or as short as they like, to take students on extended field trips (including to the cabin in the mountains owned by the college, which has overnight accommodations). Students have only one class to focus on at a time.

This freedom to do with your students as you would like is a distinct advantage of the block plan. The disadvantage comes in the fact that the breadth of material one covers in a semester cannot be covered in a "block." Given how much is already left out of survey courses in religion, the already difficult process of selection and culling is even more difficult. Perhaps to offset this disadvantage, the block plan is excellent in terms of offering a depth of discussion difficult to achieve in a normal semester plan. Students are very intense and focused on your subject because they don't have to think about five subjects at once. At times, the system rewards professors by allowing them extended daily interaction with a class that can be immensely satisfying. On the other hand, a recalcitrant or uninterested class can make for three and one-half weeks of sheer hell. But in the 12 courses I have taught at the college, that has happened only once.

Students:

The students here are predominantly white, upper-middle class, comfortable, with a high contingent of the so-called "granolas" represented. One third are from the Chicago area or the East Coast, one third are from the West Coast, and one-third are from Colorado and New Mexico. Minority students make up about 10% of the student body; they are mostly Latino and Asian. The college fields a division-one hockey team and women's soccer team, but is otherwise quite academic in orientation. The students come with mixed abilities, but most of them are quite good, in my experience, and some are truly exceptional. Most of them

come with little or no religious experience in their background. Many of the students in this class, however, would be religion majors, so a broad general interest in the topic could probably be assumed.

Setting:

The setting of the college provides some unique opportunities. As is well known now, Colorado Springs has recently served as a haven for groups affiliated with the so-called New Religious Political Right (it's not so new anymore, actually). Focus on the Family, the James Dobson group, has a mammoth headquarters north of the city which employs hundreds of people. Christian bookstores and even Christian mini-malls thrive in the eastern, suburban part of the city. There are over fifty independent religious organizations with their headquarters here, most of them affiliated with conservative political causes and organizations (if not overtly, then at least implicitly). Also, the "militia" groups well known to Americans now after the OKC bombing thrive all over Colorado, including in the Springs. The aerospace industry (including the Air Force Academy) and the defense industry (Air Force, Fort Carson, and NORAD) are very large employers and give a conservative and highly patriotic cast to the city as a whole.

Less well known, but equally interesting, are the alternative religious groups which thrive in the area. If the suburban eastern parts of town are the mecca for the Religious\Political Right, the western slopes, in the foothills of Pike's Peak, is home to a large number of alternative religious groups. Nearby is the small but thriving tourist town of Manitou Springs, home to any number of healers, crystal readers, and many Native American and pseudo-Native American religious groups.

Finally, there is the small but fascinating community of religious seekers in the San Luis Valley a few hours to the west of the college. Colorado College owns a set of townhouses about 2 hours SW of the college, called the "Baca campus." These townhouses are used for class retreats by professors and are very popular. The area around the Baca campus is stunningly beautiful and sparsely populated. In and around the small town of Crestone, Colorado (population about 100, including several dogs), a number of religious communities thrive. The Carmelites have a beautiful monastery built into the foothills of the San Luis Mountains. There is also a Zen Center which attracts seekers from across the country, as well as an ashram and a Buddhist community. Shirley McLaine owns a substantial grant of land in the county. All of this provides a wonderful opportunity for on-site research experiences by students, who enjoy going to Baca anyway and can use this trip as a "research excursion" within the context of the Block Plan without having to worry about missing other classes at the same time.

COURSE RATIONALE:

I am organizing this course differently than I would do within the context of a normal semester system. The organization is designed to take advantage of the unique advantages of the block plan while also attempting to minimize its several disadvantages. "Coverage" is always a problem, and it is an insurmountable one within the block plan. I announce to students ahead of time that we will be focusing on particular readings and case studies and simply ignoring huge chunks of material. I assign all students a research paper and encourage all of them to pick particular topics which may go outside the specific material we discuss in the course. The course is also structured around discussion of readings. Students at the college have very little tolerance for a lecture style; they will not listen to more than 30 minutes of lecture a day. They will, however, with encouragement and prodding, engage in intensive discussion of the reading selections. They are also enthusiastic consumers of music and movies, so I incorporate a considerable amount of both (particularly music within my own area of research, religion in the American South).

The readings I select try to give some picture of the "big picture" of America's religious traditions, but mostly I focus on interesting case studies which are "readable" within the confines of the block plan. I pick readings that emphasize "encounters" between various religious groups. I can expect students at the college to put in a reasonable amount of reading each night, and we can discuss something substantive each day; but it is very difficult to assign longer texts. Finally, I do select the readings with attention to the local

resources available. Thus, I use Culture Wars here, because Colorado Springs is at the epicenter of these "wars" and because most students here have no sympathy or patience for the views associated with the New Religious/Political Right. I also encourage students to visit the local Christian outlets and bring back examples of Christian kitsch. I would anticipate that they would find this assignment a fun way to exercise their own cultural prejudices, but my purpose will be to get them to see how the marketing of religion is a long-standing American tradition which just takes this particular form today.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA

"What if God was one of us?
Just a slug like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus,
Trying to make his way home?" (Joan Osborne)

In this block we will probe, discuss, and analyze the multiple religious traditions in America. Each student will prepare and present a research project, which may be historical or contemporary, that will focus on a particular religious tradition. Additionally, "fieldwork" will be done in which each student will be asked to participate in a religious event of some sort which will be foreign to your experience, whether that be in a fundamentalist mega-church, a Jewish synagogue, or a New Age temple. We will make a trip to the Baca campus and visit the Carmelite monastery there, and observe their ritual day. Class time will be oriented around discussion of specific texts, with period short lectures to fill in necessary factual material. To encourage discussion of the material, students will also be asked to prepare one or two email responses a week in reaction to questions set by the moderator of our email discussion group (I will serve as the moderator).

COURSE TEXTS

- Edwin Gaustad, A Religious History of America
- James D. Hunter, Culture Wars
- William Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit
- Course Reader

Reader: Excerpts from Albanese, Nature Religion in America; McCauley, Appalachian Mountain Religion; Rodriguez, Days of Obligation; Norris, Dakota; Carter, The Culture of Disbelief; Wilson, Baptized in Blood; Gutierrez, When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away; Ruether and Keller, Women and Religion in America; Gaustad, Documentary History of Religion in North America; M. L. King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"; Perry Miller, "Errand in the Wilderness"; Malcolm X, Autobiography; J. Gresham Machen, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win"; Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness; Jon Spencer, Blues and Evil; John Demos, The Unredeemed Captive

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Email discussions and class participation: 20%
- Two short papers 40%
(one paper based on readings, one paper based on "fieldwork")
- Final research paper: 30%
- Final exam (oral): 10%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept. 1: Introduction and film "Black Robe"

Sept. 2: Encounters in the not-so-new World

Gaustad, chapters one and two

Mary Rowlandson, from *The Captive*

Demos, from *The Unredeemed*

Captive, from *This Dreadfull Judgment* (on King Philip's War)

Sept. 3: The Persistence of Memory: Native American Spirituality

7:30 Guest lecture: Suzi Nishida Harvey and Native American

students, followed by reception at my house

Gaustad, chapter three

Ramon Guetierrez, from *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went*

Away

Sept. 4: Love and Work: Puritans in the New Israel

Gaustad, ch. 4

Winthrop, from "A Modell of Christian Charity"

from Anne Hutchison's statement in Ruether and Keller, *Women and Religion in America*

Perry Miller, from *Errand in the Wilderness*

Sept. 5: God and the Devil in New England

Gaustad, chapter 5-6

Excerpts from witchcraft narratives

Carol Karlsen, from *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*

Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

EMAIL QUESTION TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: WERE THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN EURO-AMERICANS AND NATIVE AMERICANS BASED ULTIMATELY ON RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES, ECONOMIC STRUGGLES, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Sept. 8: Revivals, Awakenings, and Reforms, Part I

Gaustad, 7-9

Rhys Isaac, from *The Transformation of Virginia*

Narratives from *Cane Ridge*

Excerpt from de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Sept. 9 Revivals, Awakenings, and Reforms, Part II

Charles Finney, from *Lectures on the Revival of Religion*

Deborah McCauley, from *Appalachian Mountain Religion*

from Joseph Smith, in Gaustad, ed., *Documentary History of Religion in North America*

Gaustad, 10-12, 14

Sept. 10 Film "Shakers, Hands to Work, Hearts to God"

FIRST PAPER DUE (no regular class meeting today)

Gaustad, chapter 15

Sept. 11 Religion, Race, and Slavery

Charles Johnson, from *God Struck me Dead*

Nat Turner, from "Confessions"

Richard Furman, from *Lectures on the State of Slavery*

Gaustad, 17

Excerpts from abolitionist documents, in Jane Pease, ed., *Abolitionism*

Sept. 12 African-American Christianity

Andrews, ed., *Sisters of the Spirit*, any two narratives

King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Malcolm X, from *Autobiography of Malcolm X*

film: portions of "Eyes on the Prize"

EMAIL QUESTION FOR THE WEEK: WAS DE TOCQUEVILLE RIGHT WHEN HE WROTE THAT AMERICANS ARE SO RELIGIOUS PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY ARE SO AVID IN THEIR PURSUIT OF MATERIAL WEALTH? WHAT EXPLAINS THE OUTBURSTS OF REVIVALISM IN AMERICAN LIFE?

Sept. 15 Social/Intellectual Transformations

Gaustad, chapters 18-20

Henry Ward Beecher, "Acres of Diamonds"

Walter Rauschenbusch, from *Christianizing the Social Order*

Wilson, from *Baptized in Blood*

Daniel Payne, from *Fifty Years in the Ministry*

Sept. 16 Modernism and its Discontents

Shailer Mathews, from *Scientific Management*

Susan Curtis, from *The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture*

H. L. Mencken, from "Sahara of the Bozart"

Joseph Wood Krutch, from *The Modern Temper*

J. Gresham Machen, from *Liberalism and Christianity*

Gaustad, 21

Sept. 17: 2nd paper due

No class, drive to Baca

Night: dinner together, listening to compilation of religious music in America from shaped note singing to spirituals, gospel, blues, Hare Krishna chants, and religious themes in pop music

Reading: from Jon Spencer, *Blues and Evil*

Sept. 18 AT BACA: Nature Religion in America

Catherine Albanese, from *Nature Religion in America*

Gaustad, 22

Visit to Zen Center and Ashram, participation in activities there

Sept. 19 AT BACA: Roman Catholicism in America

GUEST LECTURE: Father Denny, Carmelite Monastery, on the monastery tradition in America.

GUEST LECTURE: Melissa Esquibel, alum. of CC, on Latino Catholicism in America

Kathleen Norris, from *Dakota*

Richard Rodriguez, from *Days of Obligation*

Dorothy Day, from *The Long Loneliness*

Gaustad, 23

ACTIVITY: participation in Carmelite worship exercises

Sept. 22 Culture Wars: Colorado Springs at the Epicenter

GUEST LECTURE: Bruce Coryell, Chaplain, Colorado College

Hunter, pp, 31-132

FILM: Bill Moyers on Colorado Springs

Afternoon: Visit to Focus on the Family Center

Sept. 23 Culture Wars II:

Hunter, pp. 176-224, 272-88, 295-318

Carter, from *Culture of Disbelief*

FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why are Americans so religious? Will they continue to be so? (last email discussion question, and question for oral final exam)

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE SEPT. 24 BY NOON