

## Religion in the Nineteenth-Century American West

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### Course Rationale

*Institutional Context:* Indiana University, Bloomington, is a large public research university and the flagship campus of the eight-campus Indiana University system. It currently has more than 30,000 undergraduates and 9,000 graduate students. The Department of Religious Studies, part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is one of the largest religious studies departments in the United States. About 55 percent of students at IUB are from Indiana; 14 percent are classified as “domestic minorities.” The students who take Religious Studies courses, in my experience, are more likely to be white and from Indiana than the overall student body. To the extent that they have self-identified in my courses, most students come from Protestant or Catholic backgrounds and are most comfortable discussing Christianity, although they generally display keen interest in learning about other religious traditions.

*Nature of this Course:* I have taught versions of this course twice at IUB. It is a 400-level topics course, officially called Topics in American Religious History, designed to give juniors and seniors an in-depth look at a focused subject. (Other topics have included American Catholicism in the twentieth century, religion and nationalism in America, and the problem of race and the American churches.) Most but not all students who have taken this course so far have been Religious Studies majors or minors. I chose “Religion in the Nineteenth-Century American West” as my topic because it reflects my own research interests (and I incorporate primary sources from my research into the course) and because it fills a void in terms of courses being offered by other faculty members. Even IUB students who have taken lower-division U.S. religious history survey courses report that they have spent little time learning about the west. They also universally do not consider Indiana part of “the west” and do not view what they know about local state history in terms of U.S. western expansionism. The list of “big questions” that appears in the syllabus below was generated by myself and my students during the first two iterations of the course, and I have added and subtracted readings and topics to better reflect what students thus far have expressed the most interest in. Although this course is primarily historical, we frequently consider larger theoretical questions regarding the nature of religion, the meanings of “conversion,” how and why religions change over time *and* space, and how religion is interrelated with other social forces, especially race, gender, and nationalism. In the nineteenth-century West, patterns of religious encounter, conflict, accommodation, and exchange played out in especially intensified form, making it a particularly useful place to study how religions are constantly being made and remade, blending, mixing, and fusing in specific local contexts and in relation to larger structural forces and power dynamics.

*Readings and Discussion:* My teaching style for this course (even more than other courses) is heavily discussion-based; even when I deliver mini-lectures I pause frequently to ask students questions and to invite their interpretations of images. For each week, I have paired a secondary source (a book chapter or scholarly article) with one or more primary sources (memoirs, sermons, letters, diaries, speeches, newspaper articles). Students frequently work in groups to analyze the primary sources. I try to devote class time to practice all the skills they will employ in their final

research paper, including close reading, using secondary sources to contextualize primary sources, making historical arguments with evidence, and evaluating the strengths and limitations of different kinds of historical sources.

*Assignments:* The main assignment is an independent research paper that students work on throughout the semester. For the paper, I ask them to select a primary source (not on the syllabus) and analyze what it reveals about religion in the nineteenth-century American West. Students are required to make use of at least three secondary sources (one of which can be from our syllabus) to help them contextualize the source and to make their argument more sophisticated. I require students to turn in a three-page proposal that summarizes the primary source they have selected, explains how their secondary sources will be useful, and poses historical or theoretical questions they hope to answer in their paper. In addition to helping students develop the skills I discussed in the section above, I also devote class time to demonstrating how to navigate online historical databases and for a visit to an archives for an introduction to conducting archival research. I also ask students to write a separate short response paper related to a primary source of their choosing from our syllabus. In addition to facilitating in-class discussion of that source, this response paper gives me a chance to provide feedback on their writing before they turn in their proposal and research paper. There is also a midterm and final which include identifications from class readings, discussions, and lectures and an essay question asking them to make use of material from different weeks to build an argument.

*Special Activities:* I have devised two “fun” activities that have worked well thus far. During week 11, I divide the students into four groups and assign them a role to play in a class debate. Drawing on course readings, the groups imagine the year is 1880 and conduct the debate as if they are members of their assigned group: Mormon leadership, Mormon women, anti-polygamy female reformers, or the U.S. government. In the debate, I ask them to defend their group’s position on the morality and effects of polygamy, the meanings of the First Amendment, and the proper relationship between church and state. In addition to being “fun,” this activity helps students to read carefully, build compelling arguments, and consider multiple perspectives. During week 13, I conduct a “history lab” where students work in groups with primary sources related to a conflict between a Methodist minister-agent and a Catholic priest on an Indian reservation in the 1870s. The primary sources, which include depositions, newspaper accounts, and transcriptions of meetings with Indian leaders, directly contradict one another, forcing the students to think carefully about the limits and reliability of each source. I ask each group to produce a timeline of events; we then compare the timelines produced by the groups to explore how historical narratives are constructed. Finally, I give them an excerpt from my book that makes use of these sources and I talk with them about how and why I crafted the narrative and analysis as I did. This activity helps students to learn the material but also to approach historical texts with greater rigor and to get a sense of the nuts-and-bolts of how historians create narratives and make arguments. I’ve found that, on exams, students are usually strongest on the material from these two weeks because they have worked with the readings in close-up ways.



## Religion in the Nineteenth-Century American West



Religious Studies C401  
Indiana University, Bloomington



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### Overview

Although the boundaries of what is considered “the west” have shifted over the past three centuries, the region has always loomed large in American mythology. Imagined at various times as a virginal wilderness, savage frontier, bountiful garden, and heavenly utopia, the west has served as a reflection of Americans’ wildest hopes and most urgent fears. From its “wide open spaces” where individuality and freedom might finally flourish to its promise of opportunity and re-invention, the west continues to inhabit a central place in American culture.

This course will focus on the religious dimensions of Americans’ fascination and interactions with the west during the nineteenth century. Using a mix of recent writings by historians and primary sources from people who lived during the era (missionaries and converts, map makers and ghost dancers, Mormon exiles and Chinese immigrants), we will consider how religious ideas shaped day-to-day life in the west as well as how religion influenced how the region was imagined, conquered, and transformed.

During our second week, we will generate a list of “big questions” based on our interests with which we will grapple during the semester. We may substitute readings based on these questions. These questions may include:

- Did religious tolerance flourish in the west, as is often asserted, or did the greater religious diversity of the West prompt increased intolerance for those groups outside the nation’s white Protestant mainstream?
- How did the natural environment shape religion in the West? How did religion shape the natural environment?
- How did the religious legacies of the pre-American history of the West (Native American, Spanish, Mexican, British) affect the American period?
- How and why did Native American and Asian American “converts” practice, appropriate, adopt, and adapt Christianity?
- How does studying religion in the West reframe and reorient our understanding of “American” religious history?
- What is “religion” anyway?

### Objectives

Using historical primary sources as well as scholarly books and articles, we will investigate how religion shaped and was shaped in and by the American West during the nineteenth century. It is my goal that students will:

- explore the complexities of North American religious history, especially how and why religions change over time *and* space;
- consider the importance of the west in U.S. religious history and the importance of religion in the history of the American West;
- practice careful reading of diverse textual, aural, and visual primary sources;
- examine a variety of perspectives and weigh the validity of competing arguments;
- think “historically” by paying attention to change and continuity over time;
- formulate their own historical arguments using evidence and careful analysis.

### Readings

Students are required to purchase a **course reader** of sources.

### Requirements

- 20 percent     **Attendance/preparation/participation.** Students should come to each class prepared to discuss that week’s readings. Participation includes contributing to class discussion, joining in group activities, bringing readings to class, asking pertinent questions, practicing active listening, and displaying respect for others. There are no “excused” absences (barring truly extraordinary circumstances) but each student is allowed one absence without penalty.
- 10 percent     **Primary source response paper.** During week two, each student will sign up for a primary source from a later week on the syllabus and write a response paper analyzing that source. Please see page 9 of this syllabus for more information about writing the primary source response paper.
- 30 percent     **Research paper.** In this paper students will find and carefully analyze a primary source related to religion in the nineteenth-century American West that is not on our

syllabus. Paper proposals are due April 10; the paper itself is due April 24. We will talk about this paper throughout the semester and practice together different skills that will help students write a successful paper. These skills include practicing close readings of historical sources, using secondary sources to contextualize primary sources, conducting research online and in local archives, forming and evaluating arguments using historical evidence, and writing with clarity, economy, and verve.

20 percent     **Midterm.**

20 percent     **Final.**

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, will result in university discipline and likely a failing grade in this course. For more information on academic dishonesty, see: <<http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml>>

### **Learning Disabilities**

Students with a learning disability, hearing impairment, speech impairment, or any other disability that may affect their ability to fulfill the requirements of this class should contact Disability Services for Students in Franklin Hall room 96 or at (812) 855-7578.

### **Religious Holidays**

To ensure freedom of religious observance throughout IU's increasingly diverse population, a religious holidays policy was approved by the Bloomington Faculty Council. This policy requires instructors to make a reasonable accommodation when a student must miss an exam or other academic exercise because of a required religious observance. Under IU policy, students are required to request accommodation for religious observance before, not after, it occurs. For more information on religious holidays, see:

<[http://teaching.iub.edu/policies\\_religious.php?nav=policies](http://teaching.iub.edu/policies_religious.php?nav=policies)>

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

### PART ONE: FRAMEWORKS

#### Week 1      1/10: Course Introduction

##### 1/12: What/When/Where Is the West?

- Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Introduction: Something in the Soil," *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 13-28

#### Week 2      1/17: Reorienting American Religious History

- Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho!: American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim," in Thomas A. Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 127-48
- Wade Clark Roof, "Religious Borderlands: Challenges for Future Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (1998): 1-14

##### 1/19: "Resistance," "Conversion," and Religious Change

- Michael D. McNally, "Religion and Culture Change in Native North America," in Peter W. Williams, ed., *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 270-85
- Linford D. Fisher, "Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640-1730," *Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009): 101-24

### PART TWO: MANIFEST DESTINY

#### Week 3      1/24 & 1/26: Sacralizing the Frontier

- Amy DeRogatis, "The Benevolent Design: Mapping the Landscape," chapter one, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 15-60
- Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West*, 1835

#### Week 4      1/31 & 2/2: California Dreaming

- Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, "A Gilded Opportunity," chapter two, *Religion and Society in Frontier California* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 38-62
- James M. Hutchings, "The Miners' Ten Commandments," 1853
- Darius Stokes, *A Lecture, Upon the Moral and Religious Elevation of the People of California*, 1853
- Bernhard Marks, *A California Pioneer*, 1854
- William Taylor, *Seven Years Street Preaching in San Francisco*, 1856
- Herbert Vaughan, "California and the Church," 1866

### **PART THREE: VIOLENCE**

**Week 5      2/7 & 2/9: Oregon, 1847**

- Cameron Addis, “The Whitman Massacre: Religion and Manifest Destiny on the Columbia Plateau, 1809-1858,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25 (2005): 221-58
- Red Jacket, “Against White Missions Among the Indians,” 1805
- Narcissa Whitman, diary, 1837

**Week 6      2/14 & 2/16: Minnesota, 1862**

- Jennifer Graber, “Mighty Upheaval on the Minnesota Frontier: Violence, War, and Death in Dakota and Missionary Christianity,” *Church History* 80 (2011): 76-108
- Henry A. Smith, “Scraps from a Diary: Chief Seattle,” 1887
- Samuel W. Pond, Jr., *Two Volunteer Missionaries Among the Dakotas*, 1893

**Week 7      2/21 & 2/23: South Dakota, 1890**

- Rani-Henrik Andersson, “Wanági Wachípi ki,” chapter one, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (Norman: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 31-99
- James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak*, 1896

**Week 8      2/28: Midterm**

**3/1: Visit to Lilly Library, Indiana University**

### **PART FOUR: MORMONS**

**Week 9      3/6 & 3/8: Mormons and Indians**

- Jared Farmer, “Brigham Young and the Famine of the Fish-Eaters,” chapter two, *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 54-104
- Joseph Smith, “The Wentworth Letter,” 1842
- Solomon Nunes Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*, 1857

**Week 10     3/13 & 3/15: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**Week 11     3/20 & 3/22: Women, Polygamy, and Faith**

- Sarah Barringer Gordon, “The Logic of Resistance,” chapter three, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 85-116
- Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, “*Tell It All*”: *The Story of a Life’s Experience in Mormonism*, 1874
- Helen Mar Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage*, 1884

**PART FIVE: U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS****Week 12 3/27 & 3/29: Texas**

- Timothy M. Matovina, “Defender of *Dignidad*, 1836-1900,” chapter three, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), 65-94
- Jean Marie Odin, “Mission of Texas,” 1844
- Rufus B. Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains*, 1846
- Emmanuel Domenech, *Missionary Adventures in Texas and Mexico*, 1858

**Week 13 4/3 & 4/5: New Mexico**

- Tisa Wenger, “Pueblos and Catholics in Protestant America,” chapter one, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 17-58
- Luciano Osuna, letter to Eugene O’Connell, 1872
- Luciano Osuna, deposition in San Francisco, 1874
- “Romish Church and Indians,” *California Christian Advocate*, 1875
- J. L. Burchard, deposition in Mendocino County, 1875
- F. E. Kellogg, report of meeting with Round Valley Indians, 1875

**PART SIX: IMMIGRANTS****Week 14 4/10 & 4/12: Asian Encounters**

- Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “Engaging Habits and Besotted Idolatry: Viewing Chinese Religions in the American West,” in Fay Botham and Sara M. Patterson, eds., *Race, Religion, Region: Landscapes of Encounter in the American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 60-88
- Benjamin F. Taylor, *Between the Gates*, 1878
- Wong Chin Foo, “Why Am I a Heathen?,” 1887
- Shuye Sonoda, letter to Paul Carus, 1899

**Week 15 4/17 & 4/19: Irish “Romanists” and Chinese “Heathens”**

- Joshua Paddison, “Anti-Catholicism and Race in Post-Civil-War San Francisco,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (2009): 505-44
- James Buchard, “Chinaman or White Man—Which?,” 1873
- Otis Gibson, “*Chinaman or White Man—Which?*”: *Reply to Father Buchard*, 1873
- “Chinese Mission School Anniversary,” *California Christian Advocate*, 1879
- Mary Tape, “A Letter from Mrs. Tape,” 1885

**Week 16 FINAL EXAMINATION**

## Religion in the Nineteenth-Century American West

### Primary Source Response Paper Guidelines

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to look closely at a single primary source. This will help your understanding of the material, help you contribute something specific to discussion, and assist you in studying for exams. **Your response paper should have three sections, each about one page in length:**

1. In your first section, you should **summarize** the source. Your first or second sentence should include the author, the title, and its date. Describe what kind of text it is: autobiography, poem, speech, letter, journal, song, novel, etc. Explain its contents: what are its main points or plot? What is the central idea or ideas that the author is trying to express? Whether your source is one or twenty pages long, be sure to summarize all important parts of the text.

2. In your second section, you should use the secondary source reading for the week to **contextualize** the primary source. What larger historical patterns or changes over time does the primary source give evidence of? In what ways is the perspective in this primary source unique, and in what ways does it represent widespread attitudes? In this section, you are **required to make explicit reference** to the secondary source reading for the week. Use the secondary source to help explain the larger historical trends that shaped your primary source.

3. In your third section, you should **compare or contrast** the primary source to **one or two** other primary sources we have encountered, from this week or a previous week. How does your source's depiction of religion in the west compare to the other primary source or sources? What explains the similarities or differences? What do those similarities or differences reveal about larger historical patterns or change over time?

Additional requirements:

- Response papers should be 3-4 pages long.
- Before you start writing your response paper, be sure to read the other readings for the week (primary and secondary sources).
- If there are any aspects of the source that you don't understand (vocabulary, references, etc.), look them up or email me or come talk to me about your source before you write your paper.
- Throughout your paper, in all three sections, make sure to quote directly when possible instead of paraphrasing, always giving the page number in parentheses after the quotation. Avoid long quotations that run more than 3 lines.
- A work cited or bibliography page is not necessary.
- Provide your response paper with a **title** that describes your overall analysis.
- Response papers should be typed and double-spaced, with standard margins and 12-point Times Roman font.
- Be sure to proofread your paper carefully; read it aloud to yourself to correct basic grammatical errors. You will be marked down for obvious sloppiness.
- Response papers are due in class on the Tuesday of the week we are to discuss the source.

- Response papers must be turned in in hard copy form only (no email attachments please!). Late papers will be lowered one grade for each class day late, so don't forget to bring a hard copy to class on the day it is due to avoid a late penalty.

