

Clarence Hardy
Dartmouth College
April 2004

I. Syllabus Justification

Dartmouth College, the smallest of the Ivies with just over four thousand undergraduates, is caught between two realities. At its core, Dartmouth's reputation, fervent alumni support and self-perception rests on its undergraduate program, but its professional schools and constant comparisons to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton push the institution to seek the breath of an elite research university that can often dwarf the research resources of similarly situated liberal arts schools. The college draws students from across the nation and around the world who are extremely bright, industrious, somewhat sheltered and increasingly wealthy. When compared to its peer institutions, Dartmouth's student body is surprisingly diverse racially and ethnically given its history and its northern New England locale. Like smaller elite liberal arts colleges, good teaching, particularly in a department like religion, is simply assumed. At the same time with an increasingly strong emphasis on research, there has been rising tension in how junior faculty will strike the balance between strong teaching and world class research. Time will tell whether Dartmouth in the long term will be able to accentuate its distinctive position as a research institution with a more intimate touch or passively slide into a pale imitation of Harvard and Yale.

The religion department is rather large (i.e., about ten members) for a college of its size. Many department members have dual commitments (often in leadership capacities) to interdisciplinary programs and institutes. The department has a significant tilt toward Western traditions and while visiting faculty and on-staff faculty have occasionally taught Religion 12 – the introductory course in religion and US society – the department has largely neglected the American terrain. In addition most of those anchored in Western traditions tilt more toward philosophical orientations rather than cultural-historical approaches. With my hire (this coming academic year will be my first teaching there) my intention is to introduce -- along with my requisite courses in modern Christian thought -- many new courses with a focus on modern black and American religious culture. This course then is conceived as a gateway course that will introduce students to the broader field of religious studies while it establishes the importance of engaging US culture and history in the study of religion.

One of the principal challenges for most new instructors in the humanities is the quarter system where the typical academic term is over an intense, compact period that is just over ten weeks. This limits the options for full blown research papers in introductory courses and it has forced me to rethink how I will teach them. For Religion 12, I have dispensed with a traditional textbook and with it a desire to hold fast to an easily digested and accessible dominant narrative of religious history in the United States. Instead I have focused on the role of "religion" in US society and the ways in which notions of religious identity have shaped individual and collective encounters with the state and the larger society. In my view these two overlapping concerns can be helpful in grappling with the basic contours of American culture. While the course follows a loosely historical timeline the overall emphasis is a thematic one grafted on but not strictly bound to the

demands of chronology. For me, then, the primary purpose of this course will be to foster a basic cultural literacy and citizenship that understands the pluralistic nature of the United States as it is connected to a global community. Although most of our students will not continue as majors in the department or pursue future graduate studies in religious studies, I also want to introduce cutting edge scholarship in the field that is reasonably accessible

Classes at the beginning should be under thirty or forty students. The length of each class session throughout the week will demand that I use different media and teaching modes throughout each session. I will dominate no single session with lectures. There will be film, audio, photographs and perhaps an occasional field trip to see architectural delights. Before each weekly session a study guide will be provided that will help students interpret the readings and frame the discussion during the following week. In addition, students will be invited to submit questions about the reading at the beginning of each week that will be incorporated in the week's discussion. All of these factors will be incorporated in the participation portion of the grade.

Given my emphasis on religious identity, it is not surprising that many of the monographs and the one novel I've chosen for this course focus on the importance and place of rhetoric in creating and limiting religious worlds. I have made an effort particularly in the first third of the class to accent material culture in considering religion; there is a continued focus on the state apparatus, commerce and architecture throughout. In their two primary assignments, students will engage and analyze a "text" they have not encountered before in the classroom or in lectures. These "texts" might include a film like *The Black Robe* or a local church building (taking advantage of the locale) as well as traditional texts like conversion narratives from the nineteenth century. In each instance I will ask students to analyze these cultural artifacts in the context of the several themes introduced in lectures and classroom discussion. The final essays at the end of the year will be designed as an integrative exercise to draw together themes discussed throughout the course term. It will serve as a final opportunity to gauge students' ability to analyze and write independently about the culture they live in with a new sophistication that recognizes the centrality of religion in defining American life and character.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Religion 12
Religion and Society in America
12:30-1:45 PM Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
Dartmouth College
Winter Term 2005
Instructor: Clarence Hardy
Department of Religion
305 Thornton Hall

Recommended for Purchase:

James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*
Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*
Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*
Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*
Thomas Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*

Additional Texts:

David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*
Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth Century America*
Ronald Niezen, *Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building*

I have selected several chapters from each of these texts above. Students might find these texts too expensive to purchase. While I will place these texts on reserve, students are invited to purchase what their budgets will allow. Along with these books, I will place a few short readings, outside of journal articles provided online, on reserve. They are primarily from Colleen McDannell's *Religions of the United States in Practice*.

Course Description:

This course focuses on important currents in US religious history and culture. While the approach is very loosely chronological, it is not intended as a comprehensive survey of American religions in the United States. Our goal is to explore the relationship between religion and society by considering the interaction of society's various participants in the shaping of a shared and often deeply contested "American" culture. Beginning with the encounters between native peoples, enslaved Africans and Europeans in the 1600s, we will look at the ways in which individual believers and various groups in the "New World" have defined their religious identities and attempted to manage their relations with one another and the state during periods of colonialism, slavery, migration, industrialization, immigration, and increasing ethnic and religious pluralism.

Course Expectations and Requirements:

- (1) Attendance and active, informed participation in classroom discussion. Informed participation can only happen with the timely completion of reading assignments. Each week a study guide for the following week with several questions will be handed out. These questions should help frame both the students' reading and the weekly discussion that will follow. Please be prepared to directly answer the questions suggested in the study guides. I will directly engage individual students in the classroom. Students will also be invited each Monday to submit a paragraph that offers either an insight or a question generated from the reading. The quality of these questions, along with the other factors already mentioned, will influence the overall participation grade. (10%)
- (2) Two take-home essay examinations (25 % each). In these essays students will independently analyze and engage text(s), movies, or various material objects we have not discussed in class with a paper (six to eight pages) where they apply what we have learned in the classroom and the readings to a text they have not seen before. Students will generally have a choice of a small range of topics.
- (3) Two final integrative essays in lieu of an exam during examination week (40 %)

One additional note: plagiarism is a form of theft and will not be tolerated and will be referred to the proper authorities. All forms of academic dishonesty will result in the immediate failure of the assignment involved and are not acceptable.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

Intro **Religious Definitions, Defining Religion in America**
Catherine Albanese, "The Elephant in the Dark," from *America, Religions, and Religion*
Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

Part I: Religion in "America"

Week 1 **Religion as Encounter: Violence, Resistance and Acculturation**
Michael McNally, "Ojibwe Funerary Hymn Singing," in Colleen McDannell, *Religions of the United States in Practice*
McNally, "Native American Christianity," *Church History* 69 (December 2000), 835-843
Rachel Wheeler, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," *Religion and American Culture* 13:1 (Winter 2003), 27-68.
Niezen, chapters 2 and 5 ("The Conquest of Souls" and "The Politics of Repression")
Michael Gomez, "Vesey's Challenge," from his *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*

- Week 2 Religion on Stage: Private Reckonings, Public Square**
Elizabeth Reis, "Puritan Conversion Narratives," from McDannell, *Religions*
Eddie Glaude, "Of the Black Church and the Making of a Black Public" in Glaude and Cornel West, eds., *African American Religious Thought*
Kilde, chapters 1-2
Peter Williams, "Metamorphoses of the Meetinghouse," from *Seeing Beyond the Word*
Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, "Temperance Songs and Hymns," in McDannell, *Religions*
- Week 3 Religion as Theater: Entertainment, Culture and Commerce**
Frank Lambert, "'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Great Awakening, 1737-1745," *Journal of American History* 77 (December 1990): 812-837
"George Whitefield, Awaker," in Gaustad, *Documentary History of Religion in America*
R. Lawrence Moore, "Religion, Secularization, and the Shaping of the Culture Industry in Antebellum America," *American Quarterly* 41 (1989): 216-242
When Church Became Theatre, chapter 5
Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Easter Parade: Piety, Fashion, and Display," *Religion and American Culture* 4 (Summer 1994): 135-165.
- Week 4 Religion as Social Dissent: Assessments of the Self and the Body**
Thomas Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism*, chapters 1, 3-6
Ann Braude, "Trance Lecturers in Antebellum American," in McDannell, *Religions*
Stephen Prothero, "The Cremation versus Burial Debate," in McDannell, *Religions*

Part II: Forging Religious Identities, Shaping the American Terrain

- Week 5 Religion and the American State**
Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*

Exam 1 Due

- Week 6 In the Face of Modernism**
Harding, introduction and chapters 1-5
Neizen, 190-193
Peter Gardella, "Spiritual Warfare," in McDannell, *Religions*
Audio: Public Radio International's *This American Life*, "Pray"
[<http://thislife.org> under "Our Favorites"]

Week 7 **Excavating the New from the Old**
Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*

Week 8 **America Contested: Liberalism's Fruits and Failures**
Bernhard Lang, "Harry Emerson Fosdick" in McDannell, *Religions*
William Hutchison, "Liberal Protestantism and the 'End of Innocence,'" *American Quarterly* 15 (1963): 126-36
David Chappell, chapters 2-5
Craig Prentiss, "MLK and the Making of an American Myth" in McDannell, *Religions*
Harding, chapters 5-7

Exam 2 Due

Week 9 **Diasporic Imaginings and Realities**
James R. Curtis, "Miami's Little Havana: Yard Shrines, Cult Religion and Landscape," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1:1 (1980), 1-15.
Elizabeth McAlister, "Vodou and Haitian Catholicism in the Age of Transnationalism," in *African American Religious Thought*
Thomas Tweed, "Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape: Cuban Immigrants at a Catholic Shrine in Miami" In Robert Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City*, 131-154

Week 10 **Betwixt and Between: Negotiating Racial and Religious Identity**
James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
"Credo" from Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*

Final Integrative Essays during Exam Period