

Linda Przybyszewski 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. Philip Gleason of the University of Notre Dame. 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

I teach at a state university which enrolls students almost entirely from southern Ohio. They tend to be polite and they range in ability and previous schooling from the best to the worst. They are almost entirely Protestant or Catholic, or slightly lapsed from either and their politeness prevents the kind of attacks that I have seen shallow, sophomore atheists make upon believers. I use a great deal of religious readings in my U.S. Intellectual and Cultural History survey, but I have not yet taught a course on religious history.

My greatest frustration in teaching has been the issue of coverage and I have shied from working out a religious history survey partly for that reason. Instead, I have worked out a seminar focusing on the relation between law and religion in U.S. history.

This course, which I will not be teaching for at least a year, was designed to do several things. For me, it is a chance to focus on a topic which has grown out of my own research. I began as a legal historian and discovered that if I was going to understand the law of 19th-century judges, I had to understand their faith.

This course would be a seminar submitted for the Honors Scholars Program which requires courses which "broaden the intellectual horizons of honors students" and offers "reading assignments focused on important primary sources, writing assignments that demand clear articulation of ideas, and immersion in the methodologies of the particular discipline." The point is not coverage, but depth. Discussion is the rule.

I have taught such an honors seminar before; the students were bright and eager, and never needed any prodding to begin discussion. Often I would use the 1-minute rule whereby everyone (including myself, and whether they liked it or not) had to speak on the reading (or why they hadn't done the reading) for 1 minute. Even students who blanch at this requirement end up wanting more than their minute at some point in the term.

I might also rework this syllabus as a History Junior Topics Seminar because of recent increases in the number of History majors. This would mean adding a guided research component as the final assignment since the purpose of these seminars is to prepare our majors to do a 2-quarter research seminar when they

are seniors. The Scopes Trial would work well as the final focus of a Junior Seminar because of the availability of primary and secondary sources, and the variety of contemporary reaction. I would probably push the film into an optional time period and assign Edward J. Larson's *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (1997). I would assign a book which I have used in our Senior Research Seminar: *Richard Marius A Short Guide to Writing about History* 2nd ed. (Harper Collins, 1995). The writing assignments would be altered, so that students would have to pass judgment on the writing and research of the secondary sources (for example, outlining arguments, writing critical reviews of certain chapters, looking up citations and testing them against their use in the text). I would also need to teach basic library research skills over the course of the quarter, so at least one meeting would be held in the library. Students would have to produce an annotated bibliography and a short research paper.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Law and Religion in U.S. History Honors Seminar

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." The First Amendment (1789)

"Law without (what I call) religion degenerates into a mechanical legalism. Religion without (what I call) law loses its social effectiveness." Harold J. Berman (1974)

Course Description

This course focuses on the relationship between religion and law in a country without an established church. Despite this constitutional separation between church and state, many Americans believed that faith in God in some form was necessary to the success of the Republic. Historians of religion write that the United States had established Protestantism, in effect, voluntarily and informally during the 19th century. But not everyone agreed upon the voluntary part at the time. We will be looking at the attempts of various Americans to determine what the proper relationship between religion and law should be.

This course is designed to teach students certain skills necessary to the study of history. Through classroom discussion and short assignments, students will learn to analyze both primary and secondary sources. Students will learn to identify the arguments made in our secondary source reading by Robert T. Handy and test them against our primary source readings. Finally, students will learn to write formal essays analyzing the arguments and implications found in the writings of historical figures.

Required Books

- Robert T. Handy, *A Christian American: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* 2 ed., (New York: Oxford UP, 1984).
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Penguin, 1981)
- Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1992)
- Irving Younger, ed., *Clarence Darrow's Cross-Examination of William Jennings Bryan in Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* (1987).

Course Packet

- John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630)
- John Adams, "A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law" (1765)
- Thomas Jefferson "Religion" from Notes on the State of Virginia (1787)
- David J. Brewer, The United States A Christian Nation (1905) 95 pages.
- Isaac Hassler, A Reply to Justice Brewer's Lectures (1908) 30 pages

Grading

1st paper, 5-6 pages =20%
2nd paper, 5-6 pages=20%
3rd paper, 8-10 pages =40%
Pages, participation =20%

No late work will be accepted on the assignments. No late papers will be accepted except at the instructor's discretion and only illness or hardship will be excused.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction

(Handouts: Declaration of Independence & 10 page excerpt from Berman's The Interaction of Law and Religion (1974)

Week 2 Read Handy, "The Fate of the Colonial Establishments of Religion," pp. 3-23

Read Winthrop, Adams and Jefferson in Packet

Write a page comparing how each of the authors in the packet envisions the role of religion in their political community. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of Handy, Winthrop, Adams and Jefferson

Week 3 Read Handy, "A Complete Christian Commonwealth" (1800-1860), pp. 24-56

Read Stowe, pp. 41-417

Write a page explaining what arguments convince Senator Bird to break the law. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of Handy and first part of Stowe.

Week 4 Read Handy, "Defending Protestant America (1860-1890)

Read Stowe, pp. 418-629

Write a page on whether you believe the remedies recommended by Stowe in her conclusion are adequate to right the wrongs portrayed in her book. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of Handy and Stowe.

Week 5 Write a 5-6 page essay examining some aspect of Stowe's treatment of law. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of papers.

Week 6 Read Handy, "The Religion of Civilization" (1860-1890), pp. 57-81 and "The Christian Conquest of the World," (1890-1920), pp. 101-133

Read Brewer and Hassler in packet

Write a page on who got the better of the argument and why you think so. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of Handy, Brewer and Hassler.

Week 7 Read Handy "The New Christianity and the Old Hopes (1890-1920), pp. 134-158

Read Charles M. Sheldon, In His Steps

Write a page on what you think were the political implications of doing what Jesus would do. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of Handy and Sheldon

Week 8 Write a 5-6 page essay on how Hassler might have responded to In His Steps.

Discussion of papers Begin viewing of film: Inherit the Wind (1960; 127 minutes).

Week 9 Read Handy, "The Second Disestablishment" (1920-1940), pp. 159-184 and "Variant Attitudes Toward New Realities" (1940-1980), pp. 185-210

Read Clarence Darrow's Cross-Examination of William Jennings Bryan

Write a page on reaction to the cross-examination.

Finish viewing film, discussion of Handy, Darrow and Bryan, and film

Week 10 Draft an introduction and outline for an 8-10 page essay comparing the depiction of the proper relationship between religion and the law in Stowe and in the film. Due at noon the day before class meets.

Discussion of paper outlines.

Final paper due during exam week.