

Justification/Description for Course:

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY (HI399)

Randall Stephens

I first taught this course in spring 2005. At the time I was building the class—discussions, lectures, tests, and assignments—as we moved through the semester. When I taught it again in fall 2007 I had much more time to develop it as a whole and give special attention to areas that most intrigued the students. After taking the course, I would like students to understand the development of American religions over the centuries with a deep appreciation for change over time and cultural context. Covering such a broad timeframe makes thematic focus a little difficult. In the early part of the course I concentrate on the changes religious groups underwent in the Americas. Mark Noll's *America's God* works well on this point. For the 19th century I hone in on Protestant and evangelical dominance and the fusion of religion and politics. And for the 20th century, among other things, I look at the fragmentation of American Christianity and the basic changes wrought on the landscape by new religious movements. At the end of the semester students should have a basic grasp of the major religious movements of American history, and, most importantly, why American religious history is significant and shapes our world now.

I use a variety of materials in the course—websites, videos, primary and secondary source reading—and teaching strategies—lectures, discussions, in-class visits from scholars, trips to historic sites in the area. I have been trying to incorporate more web-based content into my classes. For this course I have expanded the website, adding new reading material, dozens of linked resources in the field, and audio/visual items when possible: www.enc.edu/history/rel_cult.html. I have also tracked down scores of documentaries and feature films to show in class. These have stimulated discussion greatly and helped fill out the larger context nicely.

All of the effort has paid off. The students have been engaged in ways I have seldom seen in the classroom. Discussions have been lively and students' final papers have been all the better as a result. (One well-researched and wonderfully written paper in particular looked like the work of a sophisticated graduate student.) Since 2007 I have hosted a number of leading religious historians, who have visited with students and lectured to the larger college community. From 2007 to 2009 George Marsden, Lauren Winner, Grant Wacker, Charles Marsh, Randall Balmer, Stephen Prothero, and Robert Orsi have spoken to ENC students about American religious history. Stephen Prothero's lecture and departmental visit was a real highlight for the students in fall 2007. They were able to interact with him and ask questions about his book, *American Jesus*, which they had read the week of his visit. (Fitting nicely into the course as a whole, Prothero made a strong case for the importance of religious literacy.) This event combined with student presentations and other outside assignments made this course one of the most profitable and rewarding I have yet taught.

SYLLABUS

**RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE
SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY (HI399)**

EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

Instructor: Dr. Randall Stephens
 Spring, 2009
 Tu Th.: 1:45-3:00
 Credits: 3
 Location: Gardner RM 27

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COURSE OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

This readings seminar offers history majors and non-majors a broad knowledge of religion and American culture from the pre-colonial period to the present. Special attention will be given to the work of historians, filmmakers, religious studies scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists who grapple with the complexities of American religious life. This course will pay close attention to the wide-ranging religious diversity of America—from 19th century Lakota spiritualism to 20th century Catholic devotion; from modern serpent-handling Appalachian pentecostals to covenant-making early American Puritans. Other topics to be covered include: the religious dimensions of gender and sexuality, race and religion, the development of a distinctively American theology, and the recent fusion of religion and politics.

REQUIRED READING (Available on Amazon.com and at the ENC college bookstore)

- * Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
- * John Neihardt and Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (1932; University of Nebraska Press, 2000)
- * George Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Eerdmans, 2008)
- * Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware: Or Illumination* (1896; Penguin Classics, 1986. Available in full on Google Books).
- * Randall Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Harvard University Press, 2008)

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will be evaluated on how well they identify and critique the significance events, terms, and individuals covered and on the basis of their reading, writing, and thinking skills. You must read every assignment and come prepared to discuss these in class. Since this is designed as a seminar/discussion course, your participation will be critical. Always be prepared; I may call upon you at any time. While going over each week's assignment, identify the major themes, challenge or affirm the key arguments, and offer a clear analysis of the material covered. Those who fail to keep up with the reading will do poorly in this course. Participation and attendance is absolutely mandatory for each individual in this class and will figure largely into your overall grade. (Obviously, if you don't attend or read the assignments, you cannot participate.) Two tests will be administered over the semester involving short answer questions and essays. In addition, unannounced pop quizzes may be administered occasionally at the beginning of class. These quizzes will cover the most recent reading assignments and our in-class discussions. Those who arrive late or fail to attend class will not be allowed to retake quizzes or tests, unless, of course, a written medical excuse can be provided.

In addition to a satisfactory evaluation of this work based on content, you are expected to demonstrate competence in writing, argumentation, and English composition and grammar. You must submit a total of 8, 1.5 to 2 page double-spaced, typed answers to discussion questions posted on-line. These will be graded on a scale of 1-10 points. Students will also review one of the following: *Black Elk Speaks*, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, or *The Fire Spreads*. This review must be typed, 2 pages long, and double-spaced. They will be graded on a scale of 1-100.

Students will also write one major research paper. You may choose to write either an 8-10 page paper reviewing some aspect of the historical literature or an 8-10 page primary source research paper. (A bibliography and abstract is required.) I will offer guidance and suggestions on your topics. Each student will present his/her final research at the end of the course.

Students are encouraged to attend lectures on American religious history topics in the Boston area. Extra credit points will be given to those who do so and turn in a 2-page summary of the talk. A number of lectures will be listed here, marked with #.

Finally, a note on proper behavior and academic honesty. Talking with fellow classmates, eating, doing other work, reading newspapers, leaving cell phones on, walking out early or arriving late all reflect poorly on you as a student and will hurt your overall grade. Cheating and plagiarism are even worse and will not be tolerated. Be advised: ANY instance of cheating on tests, essays, or other assignments will result in immediate failure of the course. For more on this fascinating topic, please refer to the ENC history dept. guidelines concerning academic honesty. Those who are guilty will be caught. Incriminating evidence is only a Google™ search away.

GRADING

Attendance and pop quizzes = 10%

Participation = 15%

8 short response Papers = 15%

- 1 short book review = 10%
- Bibliography for research paper (at least 10 published works) = 5%
- Abstract for research paper (no more than one page) = 5%
- 1 Research essay = 20%
- 2 Exams – 10% each = 20%

A = 100-94; A- = 93-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-84; B- = 83-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-74; C- = 73-70; D = 69-60

Failure to complete any of the assignments will obviously result in a significant lowering of your total grade.

WEEK 1: COURSE INTRO

THUR Jan 29: Introduction, review syllabus, course guidelines

WEEK 2: RELIGION IN EARLY AMERICA, 1500-1750

TUES Feb 3: *Religion in American Life*, xi-70; Daniel K. Richter, “War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Oct., 1983), (CP); “Hopi Ceremonies,” (CP); and “Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish Castaway, Becomes an Indian Healer, 1542” (CP).

THUR Feb 5: *Religion in American Life*, 71-109; David D. Hall, “A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England” in *Religion and American Culture*, David G. Hackett, ed. (CP); “John Winthrop Outlines his Plan for a Godly Settlement, 1630” (CP); “William Bradford Sees God’s Mercy and Judgment in New England’s Changing Fortunes, 1654” (CP); “Why Harvard College Was Founded, 1643” (CP); “Maryland’s Act of Religious Toleration, 1649” (CP); and “Cotton Mather Advises John Richards on Detecting Witches, 1692” (CP).

WEEK 3: EARLY AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL HISTORY

TUES Feb 10: *Religion in American Life*, 110-151; Selection from Mark Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, course pack (CP); and Jonathan Edwards Describes the Great Awakening in Northampton, Massachusetts, 1738” (CP); “John Witherspoon Preaches the Revolutionary War as God’s Test to Sinners, 1776” (CP); and “Jonathan Boucher’s Loyalist Sermon Denounces the Revolution, 1775” (CP).

THUR Feb 12: Francis J. Bremer, “Faith and Society: The Making of a Christian America,” in *Reviews in American History* 32:1 (March 2004): 8- 13; David L. Holmes, “A Layperson’s Guide to Distinguishing a Deist from an Orthodox Christian,” in *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (2006) (CP); David D. Kirkpatrick, “Putting God Back Into American History,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2005, pg 4 (CP); “Thomas Jefferson’s Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, 1779” (CP); and “James Madison’s Memorial and Remonstrance, 1785” (CP).

WEEK 4: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND JONATHAN EDWARDS

TUES Feb 17: *Religion in American Life*, 155-210; and selection from Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989), (CP); “Lucy Wight Meets Shaker Leader

Mother Ann Lee (c. 1780), 1826” (CP); and “Joseph Smith Explains How an Angel Guided Him to Found the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), 1842” (CP).

THUR Feb 19: George Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Eerdmans, 2008)

WEEK 5: RACE, GENDER, AND RELIGION IN 19th CENTURY AMERICA

TUES Feb 24: Ann Braude, “Women’s History IS American Religious History,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, Thomas Tweed, ed. (1997), (CP); Charles Joyner, “‘Believer I know’: The Emergence of African-American Christianity,” in *Religion and American Culture* (CP); “Samuel Ringgold Ward Escapes from Slavery and Becomes a Minister (1820), 1855” (CP); “Harriet Beecher Stowe Advocates Enlightened Observance of the Sabbath, 1853” (CP); and “Angelina Grimke Uses the Bible to Justify Abolishing Slavery, 1838” (CP).

THUR Feb 26: Black Elk and John Gneisenau Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* and William K. Powers, “When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens,” in *Religion and American Culture* (CP).

WEEK 6: RELIGION AND THE CIVIL WAR

TUES Mar 3: *Religion in American Life*, 212-260; Selection from Timothy L. Smith’s, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957), (CP); Charles Reagan Wilson, “The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920,” *The Journal of Southern History* (May 1980), (CP); and “Robert Ryland Reminds His Son That the Confederate Cause is Godly, 1861” (CP).

Turn in bibliography for research paper with at least 10 published works.

THUR Mar 5: No Class

WEEK 7: Mar 9-13, Spring Break

WEEK 8: MIDTERM AND RELIGIOUS INNOVATION

TUES Mar 17: Midterm exam

THUR Mar 19: *Religion in American Life*, 261-322; “Mary Baker Eddy, the Founder of Christian Science Denies the Reality of Suffering, Sin, and Death, 1887” (CP); “Booth Tucker Describes the Salvation Army’s Social and Gospel Work in Slums and Saloons, 1900” (CP); and “Abraham Cahan Shows How American Business Life and Religious Pluralism Shattered a Russian Jewish Immigrant’s Traditional Faith, 1916” (CP).

WEEK 9: THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY

TUES Mar 24: Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware: Or Illumination* (1896).

THUR Mar 26: Jon Butler, “Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (March 2004): 1357-1378 (CP); and “Beyond the Niebuhrs: A Conversation with Robert Orsi on Recent Trends in American Religious History,” conducted by Randall Stephens, *Historically Speaking* (July/August 2006), (CP).

WEEK 10: GENDER AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN 20th CENTURY AMERICA

TUES Mar 31: *Religion in American Life*, 323-339. R. Marie Griffith, "Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soldiers: Prayer and Christian Womanhood in Women's Aglow Fellowship," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1997), (CP); "William Jennings Bryan Defends Biblical Infallibility, 1924" (CP); "Sinclair Lewis Satirizes the Narrowness of Midwestern Baptists, 1927" (CP); "Walter Lippmann Traces the Fading of Religious Confidence, 1929" (CP); and "Tina Bell joins an Anti-Abortion Demonstration, 1988" (CP).

THUR April 2: No class

WEEK 11: CONSUMER RELIGION AND PENTECOSTALISM

TUES April 7: Randall Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

THUR April 9: *Religion in American Life*, 340-359; David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch if Rock'n'roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Winter, 1996), (CP); and Melani McAlister, "An Empire of Their Own," *The Nation*, September 22, 2003, pgs. 31-36 (CP).

WEEK 12: RACE AND 20th CENTURY RELIGION

TUES April 14: *Religion in American Life*, 360-394; James H. Cone, "Martin and Malcolm," in *Religion and American Culture* (CP); and "James Baldwin Becomes a Boy Preacher in Harlem (c. 1936), 1963" (CP).

THUR April 16: Advising day – no classes

WEEK 13: PLURALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF ASSIMILATION

TUES April 21: "In Focus: Mormonism in Modern America," <http://pewforum.org>, May 16, 2007 (CP); Jenna Weissman Joselit, "Jewish Food and Jewish Identity," in *Major Problems in American Religious History*, Patrick Allitt, ed. (1999); and Noah Feldman, "Orthodox Paradox," *New York Times Magazine*, 22 July 2007 (CP)

THUR April 23: *Religion in American Life*, 395-426; Fawaz A. Gerges, "Islam and Muslims in the Mind of America," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (Jul., 2003), (CP); and Richard Hughes Seager "Discovering the Dharma: Buddhism in America," *Historically Speaking* (Sept/Oct 2008), (CP).

WEEK 14: STUDYING RELIGION IN MODERN AMERICA

TUES April 28: Stephen Prothero, "Worshiping in Ignorance," *Chronicle Review*, 16 March 2007 (CP); selection from Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*; "Jacob Needleman Discovers the Appeal of Eastern Religions, 1970" (CP); and "J. Stillson Judah Explains Why Hippies Join the Hare Krishnas, 1974" (CP)

THUR April 30: Stephen Prothero, "Belief Unbracketed: A Case for the Religion Scholar to Reveal More of Where He or She Is Coming From" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 33:2 (Winter/Spring 2004); and Robert Orsi's and R. Marie Griffith's responses to Prothero (CP).

WEEK 15: MAJOR THEMES SUMMARY AND PAPER PRESENTATIONS

TUES May 5: Robert Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life," *Religion and American Culture* (CP); Robert N. Bellah, "Is There a Common American culture?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Autumn, 1998), (CP).

THUR May 7: Paper presentations

Final Exam