

American Religious History

REL 241 | SPRING 2018

T/TR 9:30-10:45 PM | MANLY 210

Dr. Michael J. Altman

maltman2@ua.edu

205-348-7223

Office: 205 Manly Hall

Office Hours: Monday 10-11am or by
appointment

Dept. Office: 212 Manly Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a survey of religious themes and movements in American culture from the period before European colonization to the present.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will analyze primary sources in American religious history.
2. Students will recall important figures and events in American religious history.
3. Students will critique historical narratives of religion in America.
4. Students will analyze constructions of “religion” in American history.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Griffith, R. Marie, ed. *American Religions: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Gaustad, Edwin and Leigh Schmidt. *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*. New York: HarperOne, 2004.

READINGS

Readings are listed underneath each date on the schedule. **Complete the readings before you come to class that day.**

Readings under *American Religions* (AR) and *The Religious History of America* (RHA) come from the required book. The rest are posted in the course’s UA Box folder:

<https://alabama.box.com/v/REL241SP18>

ASSIGNMENTS

3 Quizzes- 45% (3 X 15%)

The quizzes will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blank, and short essays (1-2 paragraphs). The focus of the quizzes will be the **key events, figures, documents, and ideas from the readings**. Relevant content from **class discussions** is also testable material.

Primary Source Reflections- 25%

Throughout the semester you must complete 10 “Reading Reflection Grids” on the primary source documents that we read. Each reflection should focus on one document. These are the readings from the *American Religions* anthology or the additional primary sources assigned from UA Box. These reflections are due the day the reading is listed

on the syllabus schedule. Because you have multiple opportunities to complete the assignment, no late reflections will be accepted. You may complete reflections on more than one document on a given day. You will find the Reading Reflection Grid as a .doc file in the UA Box folder.

Primary source reflections are graded based on how much engagement and detail they demonstrate. Be specific, be clear, be thoughtful. Show you not only read the document but engaged with it. Put it into larger context, connect it to other readings and documents. Ask interesting and insightful questions of the source. It's a matter of both quantity of engagement and quality of thought.

Final Project - 30%

Drawing on everything we have covered this semester, what do you think is the major theme, trope, pattern, conflict, or argument in the history of religion in America? To put it another way, how would you sum up the big story of religion in American history? Give three specific examples or case studies that support your claim, drawing on the secondary and primary sources we read this semester. Conclude your essay by explaining what your claim means for the future of religion in America and whether you see your claim holding true into the future.

Option 1: An Essay

You do not need to do any research or use any sources beyond what we read this semester. Feel free to use chapters or sources we did not read in the textbooks if you find them helpful. **The essay should be 1500-2000 words (5-7 pages) in length, double-spaced, in 12pt readable font.** You may use whatever citation style you are comfortable with as long as you are consistent and I can tell which of our course materials you are citing.

Option 2: [An Unessay](#) (must meet with me by April 3rd)

This is your opportunity to break open the corral of the traditional essay. Be creative. Find alternative ways to answer the prompt. Consider your strengths, talents, and skills and think about how to apply them. In other courses students have turned in ceramics projects, paintings, 3-D and 2-D collages, drawings, original song lyrics presented as an album, a bond financing deal for a faux 501(c)(3), a video, a play, even a couple fitness routines. Some have simply adopted an alternative writing format, such as a letter. There are numerous other ways to approach the assignment as well. Don't feel constrained by this list of possible unessays. Play to your strengths. If the concept of the unessay intrigues you, **it is required that you meet with me in advance to talk through your idea.** This way we can make sure that you meet the assignment requirements. **Unessays turned in without a prior meeting will receive no greater than a D.**

You can find [more information](#) about the unessay option in the course Box folder.

Final Project Discussion

Whichever option you choose, you should be prepared to give a brief (5 minutes) presentation summarizing the main arguments and points as part of our discussion of the final projects on the last day of class.

GRADE SCALE

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
C+	75-79	F	below 50

GROUND RULES

Attendance

You are expected to attend class. I will take attendance. Your attendance is expected unless there is an emergency outside of your control. You may miss up to 4 classes during the semester without penalty. **Every missed class after 4 will result in a 2-point reduction of your final grade.** I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences except in the case of the three quiz days (see below).

Excused Absences During Quizzes

Evidence of your legitimate absence must be presented to the professor in a timely fashion if you wish it not to count against you in the course. If you miss a quiz, you must contact the professor immediately to explain your absence; make-up quizzes are not an option in this course; instead, for quiz absences that the professor deems legitimate, the portion of the grade dedicated to the missed quiz will be completely transferred to the next quiz.

At this point, I'd like to try a little experiment to see how many of you have made it this far into the syllabus. This is worth 5 bonus points on the first quiz: Find a book written by one of the professors in the Department of Religious Studies (check the faculty page on our website) on the shelf in the stacks at Gorgas library. Snap a picture with your phone and email it to me.

Late Work/Missed Quizzes

I do not accept late work. I do give extensions in the case of extraordinary circumstances, but I expect that you will ask for the extension promptly. Do not email asking for an extension unless it is under extreme circumstances outside of your control (like a relative died over the weekend and you need to leave immediately. See technology policy regarding technological "emergencies.") I allow for make-up quizzes in extraordinary circumstances and only with appropriate documentation that a student missed the exam for reasons outside of their control.

Technology policy

Let's face it: technology breaks. Servers go down. Transfers time out. Files become corrupt. The list goes on and on. These are not considered emergencies. They are part of the normal production process. An issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work. You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work.

Turn your cell phone on silent when you come into class. Do not text in class.

If you bring a laptop to class, use it for class. I reserve the right to ask anyone with a laptop or tablet to use it to Google something or lookup something to amend our class. At times I will ask that we put all technology away so we can focus on one another.

Accommodations

Students with a documented physical and/or learning disability should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

In Case of Emergency/Weather

UA's primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at www.ua.edu. In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. In the event of an emergency, I will use Blackboard to provide additional course information.

Honor Code

Academic misconduct is a serious offense and is taken very seriously at UA and in the class. Suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. You are bound by UA's [Honor Code](#) in this class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**1/11 Introductions****1/16 “Religion” and “America”**

Catherine Albanese, “Introduction: An Elephant in the Dark”

Thomas Tweed, “Expanding the Study of U.S. Religion: Reflections on the State of a Subfield”

I. BRINGING “RELIGION” TO AMERICA**1/18 Spanish Colonies**

The Religious History of America (RHA) Chapter 1

Primary sources

“Franciscans in New Mexico”

American Religions: “The Bull *Sublimus Deus*” (2-3)

1/23 Early English Exploration

RHA Chapter 2

Primary sources

England Anew: Virginia

1/25 Puritans in New England

RHA Chapter 3

Primary sources

American Religions: John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (16-19)

Increase Mather, “Sleeping at Sermons is a Great and Dangerous Evil” (20-21)

Anne Hutchinson, “The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson” (37-63)

Roger Williams, “Letter to the Town of Providence on the Limits of Religious Liberty” (75-76)

1/30 The Middle Colonies

RHA Chapter 4

Primary Sources

American Religions: William Penn, “A Persuasive to Moderation to *Church Dissenters*, in Prudence and Conscience” (76-80)

“The Petition of the Philadelphia Synagogue to Council of Censors of Pennsylvania” (148-150)

2/1 The Southern Colonies

RHA 5

Primary sources

North Carolina and South Carolina Documents

American Religions: Charles Woodmason, "1 Cor. 14 v. 40 Let All Things Be Done Decently and in Order" (109-114)

2/6 Colonial Slaves

Jon Butler, "Slavery and the African Spiritual Holocaust"

Primary sources

"Episcopal Frustration, 1730"

American Religions: Phillis Wheatley (121-127)

2/8 Review Day

2/13 Quiz 1

II. POWER, IDENTITY, NATION

2/15 "Religion" in a New Republic

RHA Chapter 6

Primary sources

American Religions: Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" (150-152)

James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (152-156)

2/20 National Revivalism

RHA Chapter 7

Primary sources

American Religions: Alexis de Toqueville, "from *Democracy in America*" (245-262)

2/22 The Black Church

Albert Raboteau, "The Independent African Church Movement"

Primary sources

American Religions: Jarena Lee, "from *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*" (197-213)

2/27 Slave Religion

Raboteau, "'The Invisible Institution': Religion Among the Slaves"

Primary sources

Nat Turner, "from *The Confessions of Nat Turner*"

American Religion: Frederick Douglas, "from *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*" (213-220)

3/1 Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism

Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Expansion of the Roman Catholic Church" & "Anti-Catholicism and the Nativist Movement"

Primary sources

Nativism Documents

3/6 Review Day

3/8 Quiz 2

SPRING BREAK

III. PROTESTANTISM AND ITS OTHERS

3/20 Christian Slavery and Christian War

RHA Chapter 9

Primary Sources

American Religions: Angelina Emily Grimké, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" (220-235)

George D. Armstrong, "From the Christian Doctrine of Slavery" (239-244)

"Christ in the Camp"

John Brown

Abraham Lincoln

3/22 The Protestant Establishment

Ahlstrom, "The Protestant Establishment and the New Nativism"

Primary sources

Reynolds v. United States

American Religions:

Josiah Strong, "from *Our Country*" (365-382)

3/27 "World Religions" in America

Richard Hughes Seager, "General Introduction" from *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*

Primary sources

United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind

Asian Exclusion Act

American Religions: Mabel Potter Daggett, "The Heathen Invasion of America" (384-389)

James Freeman Clarke, "The Ten Religions and Christianity" (389-402)

Swami Vivekananda, "Hinduism as a Religion" & "Farewell" (402-411)

3/29 Religion in the "American Way of Life"

RHA Chapter 15

Primary sources

American Religions:

Will Herberg, "from *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*" (517-533)
Cold War

4/3 The Race of Religion in America

Paul Harvey, "Religion and Civil Rights: The Color of Power"

Primary sources

American Religions: Howard Thurman, "What We May Learn from India" & "Howard and Sue Bailey Thurman Meet with Mahatma Gandhi" (492-502)
Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (502-514)
Malcolm X, "Letters from Abroad" (514-517)

4/5 Pluralism, Protestantism, Nationalism

RHA Chapter 18

Primary sources

Religion and the Public Order

4/10 New Thought, New Age, Prosperity

Albanese, "Fundamentals of the New Age: Present-time Pluralism and Postpluarlism"

Primary sources

American Religion: Ralph Waldo Trine, "from *In Tune with the Infinite*" (323-328)
H.P. Blavatsky
Peace and Prosperity

4/12 What is the story of American religious history?

Albanese, "Many Centers Meeting"

Tracy Fessenden, "The Objects of American Religious Studies"

4/17 Review Day

4/19 Quiz 3

4/24 NO CLASS

Work on your final project.

Walk-in office hours in 205 Manly Hall

4/26 NO CLASS

Work on your final project.

Walk-in office hours in 205 Manly Hall

5/1 Exam Day (meet at 9:30am)

Final Project Due

Final Project Discussions