

American Religious History

REL 241 | Spring 2020

T/TR 2:00-3:15 PM | MANLY 207

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Office Hours: Monday 10-11 am or by
appointment

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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

Gaustad, Edwin S., Mark A. Noll, and Heath W. Carter. *A Documentary History of Religion in America*. 4th edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2018.

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 *A Documentary History of Religion in America* (DHRA) 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/REL241-SP-2020>

Bring the reading with you to class every day.

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 Grids- 30%

Throughout the semester you must complete “Primary Source Grids” on the primary source documents that we read. Each reflection should focus on one document from the set of readings for the day. These are the readings from *A Documentary History of Religion in America*. These grids are due **at noon** the day the reading is listed on the syllabus schedule and are turned in via Blackboard. **No late grids will be accepted.**

You will find Primary Source Grid as a .doc file in the UA Box folder. Fill it out, save it, and then upload it through Blackboard. You will find the place to upload each grid assignment in the “Primary Source Grid Assignments” folder on the Course Home Page.

Primary source grids are graded on a five-point scale 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.**

I will drop the lowest 3 grid grades.

Final Project - 25%

The Prompt:

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 March 12th)

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

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

If you miss a quiz, you must contact the professor immediately to explain your absence. Evidence of your legitimate absence must be presented to the professor in a timely fashion if you wish to make up the quiz. Quizzes need to be made up as soon as possible. No makeup quizzes will be offered once quizzes are graded and returned to students.

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 percentage 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.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest [Severe Weather Guidelines](#) in the Online Catalog.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the [UAct website](#).

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at [Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines](#).

UAct Statement

The [UAct website](#) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**1/9 Introductions****1/14 What is “religion”?**

Russell McCutcheon, Chapters 2-4 of *Studying Religion*

1/16 What is “American religious history”?

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

I. BRINGING “RELIGION” TO AMERICA**1/21 Bringing the Catholic Church to the New World**

The Religious History of America (RHA): Chapter 1

A Documentary History of Religion in America (DHRA): “New Spain” pp. 13-18

Primary Source Grid 1 due

1/23 Anglican Establishment in Virginia

RHA: Chapter 2

DHRA: “England Anew: Virginia” pp. 26-33

Primary Source Grid 2 due

1/28 Puritan Establishment in New England

RHA: Chapter 3

DHRA: “England Anew: Massachusetts” pp. 33-36

“Anne Hutchinson” pp. 49-50

Primary Source Grid 3 due

1/30 Experiments in Freedom of Conscience

RHA: Chapter 4

DHRA: “Special Cases: Maryland, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania” pp.37-43

Primary Source Grid 4 due

2/4 Backwoods Backlash to the Establishment

RHA: Chapter 5

DHRA: “Back Country Baptists” pp.60-62

“Coming to Hear Whitfield” & “Stephen Bordley, Opposer” pp.83-87

Primary Source Grid 5 due

2/6 Colonial Slavery

Jon Butler, “Slavery and the African Spiritual Holocaust” (Box folder)

DHRA: “Episcopal Frustration” pp. 72-73

“Sanctifying the Slave System” pp. 75-76

Primary Source Grid 6 due

2/11 Review Day

2/13 Quiz #1

II. POWER, IDENTITY, NATION

2/18 “Religion” in a New Republic

RHA: Chapter 6

DHRA: “Aftermath of Revolution: Religious Liberty Guaranteed” pp. 103-113

Primary Source Grid 7 due

2/20 National Revivalism

RHA: Chapter 7

DHRA: “The Voluntary Societies and Society’s Reform” pp. 125-128

“Charles Finney” pp. 130-133

“Baptist Conversion” pp. 134-135

“Methodist Circuit” pp. 140-142

Primary Source Grid 8 due

2/25 Antebellum Sectarianism

DHRA: “Complex Marriage” pp. 186-187

“Alexander Campbell” pp.199-202

“Millennialism” pp.202-207

“Spiritualism” pp. 208-209

Primary Source Grid 9 due

2/27 The Black Church

Albert Raboteau, “The Independent African Church Movement” (Box folder)

DHRA: “Toward Black Methodism” pp.135-138

“Jarena Lee’s Call to Preach” pp. 138-139

Primary Source Grid 10 due

3/3 Slave Religion

Raboteau, ““The Invisible Institution’: Religion Among the Slaves” (Box folder)

DHRA: “Black Religion and Slavery” pp. 211-224

Primary Source Grid 11 due

3/5 Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism

Sydney Ahlstrom, “The Expansion of the Roman Catholic Church” & “Anti-Catholicism and the Nativist Movement” (Box folder)

DHRA: “Nativism” pp.177-181

Primary Source Grid 12 due

3/10 Review Day

Must talk to me about Unessay projects before Spring Break

3/12 Quiz #2

SPRING BREAK**III. PROTESTANTISM AND ITS OTHERS****3/24 Christian Slavery and Christian War**

RHA: Chapter 9

DHRA: "Harriet Beecher Stowe" pp. 245-248

"James Henley Thornwell" pp. 254-255

"The Baptists" pp. 260-263

Primary Source Grid 13 due

3/26 The Protestant Establishment

Ahlstrom, "The Protestant Establishment and the New Nativism" (Box folder)

United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind (Box folder)

Asian Exclusion Act (Box folder)

DHRA: "Liberty" pp. 323-325

"Unsafe for Democracy" pp. 457-465

Primary Source Grid 14 due

3/31 Old-Time Religion or Modern Culture?

RHA: Chapter 14

DHRA: "Billy Sunday" pp. 397-398

"Dispensationalism" pp. 402-405

"Protestantism" pp. 442-447

Primary Source Grid 15 due

4/2 Religion in the "American Way of Life"

RHA: Chapter 15

DHRA: "Cold War" pp. 501- 502

"Federal Council of Churches" pp. 519-521

"A Catholic President" pp. 545-547

Primary Source Grid 16 due

4/7 The Race of Religion in America

Paul Harvey, "Religion and Civil Rights: The Color of Power" (Box folder)

DHRA: "Fighting for Liberation: African Americans" pp. 568-579

Primary Source Grid 17 due

4/9 Pluralism, Protestantism, Nationalism

RHA: Chapter 18

DHRA: "Religious Freedom" pp. 632-636

"Ronald Reagan" pp. 636-639

"President George W. Bush" pp. 717

"Interview with Eric Metaxas" pp. 746-748

Primary Source Grid 18 due

4/14 Review Day

4/16 Quiz #3

4/21 NO CLASS: Work on your final projects

4/23 Final Projects due

Essays should be uploaded via UA Box link on Blackboard before class

Unessays should be brought to class