



**REL 245.001**  
**HONORS HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA**

FALL 2020

Instructor: Richard Newton, PhD

(v. 8/24/20)

**Class Meetings:** Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:15pm Lloyd Hall 131  
(First initial meetings will be remote. Please see below for further details.)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Office Location:** MA 204, but office meetings will be remote via Zoom

**Phone Number:** 205-348-9994

**Email:** [rwnewton@ua.edu](mailto:rwnewton@ua.edu)

**Prerequisites:** n/a, Permission for enrollment in University Honors Courses

**Course Description and Credit Hours:**

This Honors course offers a survey of religious themes and movements in American culture from the period before European colonization to the present. **UH, 3 Credit Hours**

We will examine how the history of religion shapes debates on American culture, memory, and institutions. In addition to surveying key moments in American history, the course will focus tensions present around issues of race, sexuality, class, and liberty. Students will have the opportunity to create their own sustained argument about problematics in the study of American religious history.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze primary sources in American religious history.
2. *Recall important figures and events in American religious history.*
3. *Critique historical narratives of religion in America.*
4. *Analyze constructions of “religion” in American history.*

### **Required Course Materials**

BIBLIOGRAPHY (available at the SupeStore)

Bryan F. Le Beau, *A History of Religion in America: From the First Settlements through the Civil War* (Routledge 2017).

Bryan F. Le Beau, *A History of Religion in America: From the End of the Civil War to the Twenty First Century* (Routledge 2017).

These two volumes survey the themes, examples, and issues that revolve around “religion” in the history of the United States. We will read both volumes in their entirety in the course of our class. Le Beau and Routledge have produced a [companion website](#) which I encourage you to use in the course of your preparation--specifically the chapter summaries.

### **Course Meetings**

Given numbers of new infections in the state and elsewhere in the country along with UA’s response (e.g., mandated social distancing in all classrooms, thereby reducing each room’s capacity by 80%) and concerns student have expressed regarding the risks associated with in-person meetings, we will begin this course in a remote fashion, using weekly Zoom videoconference sessions that will take place during the class’s regularly scheduled time. All students are therefore required to have sufficient technological resources and competencies to participate fully in each weekly class. Should the risks of in-person meetings lessen sufficiently at a later point in the semester then we will discuss, as a class, whether to shift to in-person meetings.

### **Class Resources**

ZOOM+ BOX + SLACK

We will be using a variety of online platforms for our course. Each student will be invited to a digital workspace called Slack. There we will share links for our Zoom meetings, course announcements, pertinent media, and written communication. Zoom integrates with Slack, so you will be able to access course meetings through this platform. Please make sure to download the app and set notifications so that you see all communications. We will use Box as the container for course files--including readings and assignments. While this does not integrate seamlessly with Box, you will be able to see links to various Box folders and files in Slack. You'll be prompted to use your Crimson/MyBama credentials to access Box.

## COURSE FLOW

### WEEKLY UNITS:

This course is divided into units to be completed weekly. In every unit/week, you can expect to do the following:

#### Tuesday (Session 1)

1. **Review** the course announcement I send you with notes and objectives about the reading for the week.
2. **Skim for Tuesday** the assigned chapter from LeBeau, taking notes on issues, questions, and events that seem central to the reading. To help you, I would first listen to the chapter summary on the companion website.
3. **Study the Review Questions at the End of the Chapter.** These questions will be central to our Tuesday discussions. Go back and read the chapter more closely and amend your notes so that you can put forward answers to these questions. Your notes should also include 1-3 questions or conclusions that emerged from your reading of the class. At the beginning of class, you will write a 250 word memo that lists the questions and your thoughts on them.
4. **Participate in Class Discussion.** This class is discussion-based. Your participation will be measured by your attendance, submission of your memo, and your engagement during the session.

#### Thursday (Session 2)

5. **Review** the course announcement.
6. **Read the assigned materials for the day.** Taking notes on issues, questions, and events that appear central to the reading.
7. **Integrate your notes.** Use your understanding of these materials to build upon your initial memo (adding ~250 words with 1-3 questions or conclusions).

- 8. Participate in Class Discussion and Seminar.** We will look closely at the whole of the week's materials, along with some others to reflect on issues in the study of religion in America.

#### EXAMS:

This course has three open-note/book exams. I will provide you with an essay prompt and you will write a 1000-1250 word essay answering it. Your essay must use a parenthetical reference format of your choosing, along with a bibliography/works cited page.

Exam 1 will cover the first of Le Beau's books; Exam 2, the second book. Exam 3 is a wildcard exam that incorporates both.

\*To reward improvement, if your Exam 3 essay scores higher than either Exam 1 or 2, I will replace the lower score with Exam 3. Otherwise, your overall exam grade will be the average of the three.

#### FINAL EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS:

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 parenthetical reference citation style you are comfortable with as long as you are consistent and I can tell which of our course materials you are citing through parenthetical references and bibliography/works cited.

**Option 2: An Unessay** (must meet with me by October 23) 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 REL 245 FALL 2020 idea. This way we can make sure that you meet the assignment requirements.

## GRADES

### *Assignment Breakdown*

| <b>Assignment Type</b>   | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| Memos<br><br>(15 must be completed for 100% credit--any beyond that will be used as a weighted bonus to your exam grade) | 25%               |
| Exams I, II, and III   | 45%               |
| Final Project  | 30%               |

*Grading Scale* --\*(Final Average is Rounded up at .5)

|           |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 59 > =F   | Unacceptable Performance |
| 60-63 =D- | Insufficient Performance |
| 64-66 =D  | Needs Improvement        |
| 67-69 =D+ | Adequate Performance     |
| 70-73 =C- | Acceptable Performance   |
| 74-76 =C  | Satisfactory Performance |
| 77-79 =C+ | Promising Performance    |
| 80-83 =B- | Good Performance         |
| 84-86 =B  | Commendable Performance  |
| 87-89 =B+ | Great Performance        |
| 90-93 =A- | Advanced Performance     |
| 94-96 =A  | Excellent Performance    |
| 97-100=A+ | Superior Performance     |

COURSE DUE DATES:

Below you'll find a course calendar with due dates for each assignment. **Please keep up with the Slack channel for updates on scheduling, meetings, etc.**

| Unit Focus  | Monday *Schedule Amended to Reflect COVID-19 Remote Sessions  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Unit 0</b><br/><i>Course Orientation</i></p>  | <p><b>Classes start on 8/20.</b></p> <p><i>After class:</i><br/>Please review the syllabus.<br/>Be on the lookout for your Slack and Box invitations.<br/>Ask any questions on Slack.</p>   |
| <p><b>Unit 1</b><br/><i>Native American Religion and Its European Encounter</i></p>       | <p><b>Tuesday 8/25</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p>August 26 is the last day to add or drop a course without a grade of “W” for the fall term.</p> <p><b>Thursday 8/27</b><br/><a href="#">Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators</a> (see Iroquois Confederacy)<br/><a href="#">Lost Colony of Roanoke-Found?</a></p> |
| <p><b>Unit 2</b><br/><i>British Colonization and the Origins of American Religion</i></p> | <p><b>Tuesday 9/1</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 9/3</b><br/><a href="#">George Whitefield- Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (excerpts)</a><br/><a href="#">John Winthrop-A Model of Christian Charity (excerpts)</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Unit 3</b><br/><i>Religion and the American Revolution</i></p>                      | <p><b>Tuesday 9/8</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 9/10</b><br/><a href="#">Declaration of Independence</a><br/><a href="#">Thomas Paine- “Slavery in Africa”</a><br/><a href="#">Washington’s Farewell Address</a></p>  |

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| <p><b>Unit 4</b></p> <p><i>Religion and the Early Republic</i></p> | <p><b>Tuesday 9/15</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 9/17</b><br/><a href="#">Mother Emanuel AME</a><br/><a href="#">John Wesley- “A Calm Address to Our American Colonies”</a><br/><a href="#">Circuit Riders in Alabama</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Unit 5</b></p> <p><i>Religion and the Age of Reform</i></p>  | <p><b>Tuesday 9/22</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 9/24</b><br/><a href="#">Ralph Waldo Emerson--Idealism</a><br/><a href="#">Shakers-Simple Gifts</a><br/><a href="#">The Amish and Riddles</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Unit 6</b></p> <p><i>A People Apart</i></p>                  | <p><b>Tuesday 9/29</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 10/1</b><br/>Muslims in Early America-<a href="#">Memoir of the Life of Job</a>, <a href="#">Memoir of Abdul Rahhaman</a> (and <a href="#">summary</a>),<br/>Latter Day Saints- <a href="#">Chapter 1 of First Nephi (excerpts)</a></p> |
| <p><b>Unit 7</b></p> <p><i>Civil War and the Churches</i></p>      | <p><b>Tuesday 10/6</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 10/8</b><br/>Frederick Douglass: <a href="#">“What to the Negro is the Fourth of July?”</a><br/><a href="#">The Emancipation Proclamation</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Unit 8</b></p>   | <p>Tuesday 10/13 (No Meeting)<br/><b>Exam 1 - Due at 11:59pm</b></p> <p><b>Thursday 10/15</b></p>  |

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| <p><i>The Challenges of Immigration and Diversity</i></p>   | <p>LeBeau</p>  |
| <p><b>Unit 9</b><br/><i>Industrialization, Urbanization, and the Social Gospel, here and Abroad</i></p> | <p><b>Tuesday 10/20</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 10/22</b><br/><a href="#">Swami Vivekananda- Welcome to the Parliament of World Religions</a><br/><a href="#">Mary Baker Eddy-The People’s God: Its Effect on Health and Christianity</a><br/><a href="#">Dr. Julie Byrne and Thinking about Catholicism</a></p> |
| <p><b>Unit 10</b><br/><i>Science Versus Religion: Action and Reaction</i></p>                           | <p><b>Tuesday 10/27</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p>Last day to drop a course with a grade of “W” for the full Fall term.</p> <p><b>Thursday 10/29</b><br/><a href="#">The Historical Jesus</a><br/><a href="#">Pentecostalism-Testimony About Azusa Street</a><br/><a href="#">Sociological View of Fundamentalism</a></p>      |
| <p><b>Unit 11*</b><br/><i>Religion in America between the World Wars</i></p>                            | <p><b>Tuesday 11/3</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 11/5</b><br/><a href="#">The Pledge of Allegiance</a><br/><a href="#">Elder Lightfoot Michaux, the FBI, and MLK (listen to the podcast and skim the article)</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Unit 12*</b><br/><i>Religion in post-World War II America, 1945 to 1960</i></p>                   | <p><b>Tuesday 11/10</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 11/12</b><br/><a href="#">“Give us the Ballot” Martin Luther King Jr.</a><br/><a href="#">“The Bullet or the Ballot”-Malcolm X</a><br/><a href="#">-Spiritual Perspective on Cesar Chavez</a></p>  |

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|---|--|
| <p><b>Unit 13*</b><br/><i>Religion in an age of Turmoil- the 1960s and 1970s</i></p>                              | <p><b>Tuesday 11/17</b><br/>*Memos for Unit 11, 12, and 13 due.</p> <p><b>Thursday 11/19</b><br/><b>Exam 2 by 11:59pm/TBD</b></p>  |
|   | <p>No Class</p>  |
| <p><b>Unit 14</b><br/><i>An Equal and Opposite Reaction: Conservative Retrenchment in the 1980s and 1990s</i></p> | <p><b>Tuesday 12/1</b><br/>LeBeau</p> <p><b>Thursday 12/3</b><br/><a href="#">Chick Tracks</a><br/>Asian American Evangelicals <a href="#">Part 1</a> and <a href="#">Part 2</a><br/><a href="#">Yoga and Cultural Appropriation</a><br/><b>Exam 3</b></p> <p>December 4 is the last full day to withdraw from the Fall Full Term.</p> |
| <p><b>Final-Unit 15</b><br/><b>Whither Religion in the twenty First Century?</b></p>                              | <p><b>Final Project Due December 10, 10:30AM</b><br/><a href="#">Donald Trump and the (Mis)Uses of the Bible</a><br/><a href="#">Spiritual But Not Religious</a><br/><a href="#">Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright</a> and <a href="#">Barack Obama</a></p>   |

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

### Attendance and Active Participation

You are expected to attend class. I will take attendance. 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.

This course is taught from the perspective that higher education is a professional endeavor that you've chosen. Just as there are ramifications for not completing assignments at a job, there are

ramifications for not completing assignments in the class. Your participation is assumed as they are central to the course. While there are measures in place to allow for some flexibility (i.e. Memo Assignment), **there is no late work offered in this class except in emergency and/or life and death situations (not to be confused with pass or fail situations)**. Should you find yourself in such a position, contact the instructor within **48 hours or as soon as possible**. The instructor reserves the right to make or not make any alterations in accordance with university policy. If you are not making progress toward the completion of our SLOs and not showing satisfactory improvement or effort, I will recommend that you retake or drop the course.

I generally do not offer incompletes except in the most extreme circumstances. Should you find yourself considering an incomplete or dropping the class, **come see me first to discuss your progress**. I can only work with you if you are doing your part to work with me and with the class.

### **Office Hours and Communication**

Office hours are an opportunity for you to get one-on-one assistance with the course. I invite you to come prepared with questions and to take advantage of the opportunity. I don't worry about students who come to office hours. I worry about those who never do. Do not be afraid to ask for help learning something you don't know well. That's precisely what we're here to do.

Online communication is a wonderful convenience, but it can give a false impression of engagement. Please note that I will generally respond to emails within 48 hours of receipt during the work week. I may not see emails during the weekend or otherwise noted occasions, so please be patient. Similarly, my communications with you will happen primarily during the work week. Please use the discussion board for information not of a personal/private nature as others may have similar questions.

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

#### **COVID-19 Adjustments**

Given numbers of new infections in the state and elsewhere in the country along with UA's response (e.g., mandated social distancing in all classrooms, thereby reducing each room's capacity by 80%) and concerns student have expressed regarding the risks associated with in-person meetings, this large enrollment course has become a fully online course offering. All students are therefore required to have sufficient technological resources and competencies to participate fully in each weekly class.

All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at <https://studentaccounts.ua.edu/> and <https://financialaid.ua.edu/>.

All students must be familiar with and abide by the requirements outlined in the UA Return Plan | UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan. Students must (1) wear a mask or face covering at all times while participating in face-to-face class; (2) adhere to social distancing standards; and (3) comply with all other health and safety restrictions. If a student refuses to comply with the requirements, the student will be asked to leave the class and reported for a conduct violation. Unless a student has an exemption from the requirement to wear a face covering, (more information can be found at <http://ods.ua.edu/covid-19-disability>), the student will be reported to Student Life for further disciplinary action. More information on these requirements and UA Healthcheck system and screening can be found at [healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan](http://healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan). You are expected to visit the site and comply with all noted requirements related to in-person class attendance.

### **Notification of Changes**

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students via Blackboard and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

### **Statement on Academic Misconduct**

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Code of Academic Conduct](#) 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.