
History 34705

History of Religion in America

Instructor: Dr. Deborah Fleetham

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Office: UNIV 126

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-11:30 or by appt.

Course Description

This course examines the history of religion in the United States from the colonial period to the present. It traces the evolution of religious life in America, and religion's influence on American politics, society, and culture.

Course Requirements

- **Short Essays** (3 essays @ 15% each) – Write three short essays (3 - 4 pages) out of five options. The essay for **November 13 is required**. You may select any **two** of the other five options for other two essays. Questions for each essay (based on lectures, textbook, handouts, and discussion material) will be handed out a week before the due date. You may submit an additional essay to drop a lower grade. (*Exception: The essay on November 13 cannot be dropped.*)

Due Dates (with probable topic), all Wednesdays:

- Option 1: September 18 (Colonial America)
- Option 2: October 9 (Antebellum America)
- Option 3: October 16 (African-American Religion)
- Required: November 13 (*The Madonna of 115th St.*)
- Option 4: December 4 (20th Century)

- **Textbook Notes** (10%) – The main text (Butler, Wacker, and Balmer *Religion is American Life: A Short History*) complements lectures. It covers some topics I will not cover in class and expands on others. For this assignment, submit notes on each assigned chapter, according to a provided template. The templates and submission links are available in the *Textbook Notes folder on Blackboard*. Due at **Noon on Blackboard**.

Due-Dates: (Mondays, * notes an exception to bi-weekly pattern)

- *Sept 2: (Chapters 1-3) *extension to Wed. 9/4 because of Labor Day*
- Sept 16: (Chapters 4-6)
- Sept 30: (Chapters 7-9)
- Oct 14: (Chapters 10-12)
- *Oct 21: (Chapters 13-14) *deadline moved ahead a week*
- *Nov 18: (Chapters 15-19)
- *Nov 25: (Chapters 20-23)

Pro-tip: This assignment will likely feel less burdensome if you read shorter segments across the semester instead of waiting until the deadline to complete the reading and notes.

- **Discussion** (25%) – Discussion will be a regular part of the class. In particular, most Fridays (see exceptions on course schedule below) will be dedicated to discussion of (usually) primary texts highlighting themes of the week. Your discussion score will be based on:

Textbooks

Butler, Wacker, and, Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2011)

ISBN: 978-0-19-983269-9

(*Make sure to use the second edition of this book.*)

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th St.* 3rd Edition (New Haven: Yale, 2010)

ISBN: 978-0300157529

(*You can download an e-book version through Purdue libraries.*)

Additional Readings: on Blackboard (free)

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, hiring another to do your work, copying and other activities defined by the OSRR) is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in this course. Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered. See also *academic honesty links in Purdue Resources tab on Blackboard*.

Announcements

- Reading Questions: Your reading of the assigned texts (available on Blackboard with exception of *The Madonna of 115th St*). Questions on the readings will be posted prior to each Discussion period. Questions must be completed and submitted to Blackboard **by noon on the day of the discussion**.
- Participation: Your participation in class discussion.
- Attendance: The purpose of the reading questions is to prepare for the discussion itself; skipping the discussion defeats the purpose. *You will not receive credit for the Reading Questions if you do not attend the class discussion period.* Any exceptions to this policy require advance approval and are at my discretion.

Discussion Dates: (Fridays)

- Sept 6 (Colonial America)
- Sept 13 (Great Awakening)
- Sept 20 (Founding and Religious Liberty)
- Sept 27 (Antebellum)
- Oct 4 (African-American Religion)
- Oct 18 (Slavery Debates and Civil War)
- Oct 25 (Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, first part)
- Nov 1 (Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, second part)
- Nov 22 (Civil Rights Movement)

- **Historical Figure/Movement Paper** (20%) – A survey course cannot adequately cover all aspects of American religion and will leave out important and interesting topics. This assignment allows you to investigate a topic of your own choosing in greater depth. For this assignment, read a historical monograph about an American religious figure or religious movement, and evaluate its significance for American religion in a 4-to-6 page paper. You will also give a short oral presentation on your book during the final exam period. More information will be provided in a separate handout.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

- August 19 – Introduction
- August 21 – American Religion
- August 23 – Religion in the Old World

Butler Reading: Chapter 1

Week 2: Old World Religion Comes to the New

- August 26 – The Religious Geography of the New World
- August 28 – Religion in the Colonies
- August 30 – Religion in the Colonies, *continued*

Butler Reading: Chapters 2, 3

Week 3: Old World Religion Comes to the New World, *continued*

- September 2 – LABOR DAY
- September 4 – Non-Protestants in Colonial America
- September 6 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)

Butler Reading: Chapters 4, 5

Any changes to the syllabus (e.g. lecture theme, reduction of reading assignments, class cancellation, due dates etc.) will be announced in class and on Blackboard. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard announcements and email.

Attendance

Attendance in this course is required. Attending class is essential for understanding the material and developing analytical skills. Because illnesses and extracurricular obligations do occur, absences will not count against your course grade (one point per absence) until the fifth absence. You do not need to inform me of an absence unless:

- You will miss a Discussion class.
- You will be absent for an extended period.

Obtaining missed material is the responsibility of the student.

Computer Use Policy

Use of computers/tablets/cell phones for notetaking or other activities is **prohibited** in this class (except for a documented disability as detailed Letter of Accommodation from the DRC).

Why? Recent research ([links on Blackboard](#)) suggests that computer notetaking is a distraction and that it *decreases* learning and comprehension.

Exceptions: E-Readers/tablets/phones are permissible to access readings for discussion although paper copies are preferred and recommended.

Contingency Disclosure

In the event of a major campus emergency (such as a natural disaster, epidemic, campus shutdown etc.) the requirements, deadlines, and grading policies/percentages as detailed in this syllabus are subject to changes that may be required by an officially revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course site on

Week 4: Reviving American Religion
September 9 – The Great Awakening
September 11 – The South
September 13 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)
Butler Reading: Chapter 6

Week 5: Religion and the American Founding
September 16 – Was the US founded as a Christian nation?
September 18 – The New Frontier: the Midwest
September 20 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)
Butler Reading: Chapters 7, 8

Paper Option #1 – due on Wednesday, September 18

Week 6: The Second Great Awakening
September 23 – Revivalism and its Geography
September 25 – Voluntary Societies, Colleges, and Missionaries
September 27 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)
Butler Reading: Chapter 9

Week 7: African-American Religion
September 30 – African-American religion
October 2 – Songs of Bondage and Freedom
October 4 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)
Butler Reading: Chapter 12

Week 8: Religious Life in Antebellum America
October 7 – FALL BREAK
October 9 – The Latter-Day Saints
October 11 – (NO discussion) Geography: Sacred Spaces
Butler Reading: Chapters 10, 11

Paper Option #2 – due on Wednesday, October 9

Week 9: Civil War as Theological Crisis
October 14 – The Bible in American Life
October 16 – The Civil War as Theological Crisis
October 18 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)
Butler Reading: Chapter 13, 14

Paper Option #3 – due on Wednesday, October 16

Week 10: New Arrivals: Catholics and Jews
October 21 – Jews
October 23 – Catholics
October 25 – DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, Readings: Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th St.* pages TBA)
Butler Reading: None

Week 11: The City
October 28 – Working-Class Religion

Blackboard or can be obtained by contacting the instructor.

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments may be turned in before the assigned deadline. Late assignments will NOT be accepted, except for in cases of *documented* emergencies (death, hospitalization, etc.), as determined by the instructor. Please alert me to any problems as far in advance as possible. Leaving assignments to the last minute and encountering unexpected problems does not constitute an emergency. *Late assignments will be treated as uncompleted and receive no points.*

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Summarize and compare American religious movements, and analyze their significance in American history and society.
- Distinguish between secondary and primary sources, and critically read both types of sources.
- Synthesize information and arguments from both types of sources.
- Engage in independent historical analysis with the use of primary and secondary sources.
- Compose analytical essays in fluid English prose with thesis statements, clear organization, and appeals to concrete evidence.
- Research a historical religious figure, movement or event, and evaluate its influence on American religious history.

Purdue Resources and Policies

The university requests that we provide reminders of university resources and policies regarding *academic integrity, diversity and inclusion, emergency procedures, freedom of expression, mental health resources, grief absences,* and *accessibility and accommodation.* In order to provide ease of access and the most up-to-

October 30 - The Great Migration

November 1 - DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, Readings: Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th St.* pages TBA)

Butler Reading: Chapters 15-17

Week 12: The Country

November 4 - Religion in the Bible Belt

November 6 - Pentecostalism

November 8 - (NO discussion) Religion and Media

Butler Reading: Chapters 18, 19

Week 13: 1950s

November 11 - Tri-Faith America and Suburban Religion

November 13- Billy Graham

November 15 - (NO discussion) The Bible Belt Meets the Sun Belt

Butler Reading: Chapters 20, 21

Required Paper - due on Wednesday, October 16

Week 14: Religion and the Civil Rights

November 18 - Martin Luther King and Fannie Lou Hamer

November 20 - Malcolm X and Muhammed Ali

November 22 - DISCUSSION (Questions due at noon, readings on BB)

Butler Reading: Chapters 22, 23

Week 15: Religion and the Civil Rights *continued*

November 25 - Religious Ecumenism and Protest

November 27 - THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 29 - THANKSGIVING BREAK

Butler Reading: None

Week 16: 21st Century: New Immigrants and the NONES

December 2 - New Immigrants: Latin America, Asia, and Africa

December 4 - The NONES

December 6 - The Geography of American Religion in the 21st Century

Butler Reading: Butler, Chapters 24, 25

Paper Option #4 - due on Wednesday, December 4

Final Exam Period (TBA): Discussion of historical movement/figure papers

date information, I have created a folder on Blackboard (*Purdue Resources tab, left-hand column*) with descriptions, web links, and contact information for these resources. Please feel free to contact the Office of the Dean of Students, your advisor, or me with particular questions or concerns.

Grading Scale

94-100 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-73 = C-

67-69 = D+

63-66 = D

60-62 = D-

0-59 = F