

AMERICAN CULTURAL & RELIGIOUS HISTORY



SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

HIST 5378

Graduate Reading Seminar

Thursdays, 6:00-8:50pm

Location: AB4 302

Professor: Dr. Benjamin E. Park

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Uncovering America's Religious Past

The United States is often described as a "Christian Nation." Is that true? And if so, how long has it been that way?

This semester we will dig into some of the most important questions, episodes, and tensions throughout America's history. You will not only learn how religion has been intertwined with many of the nation's crucial issues, but also how diverse America's religious ideas and practices have been.

Though we will take a generally chronological trajectory, we will be discussing books that cover different themes, people, and approaches. Therefore, I hope you will learn as much about the historical craft as you will about America's various religions.

This class will primarily be based around reading scholarly monographs and writing your own historiographical analysis. And there will also be a little bit of primary research and even one instance of field work. But everything will pivot on our Thursday night discussions.



“...thus building a wall of separation between Church & State...”

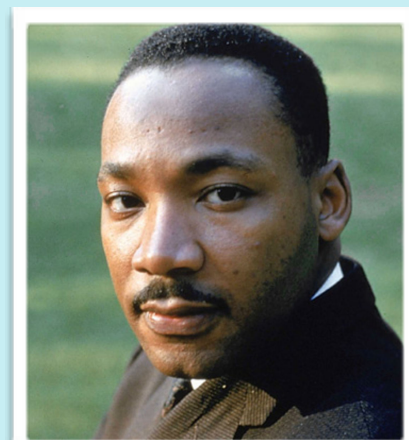
Though I know it can be uncomfortable for some, I expect everyone to participate in our seminar, which will make up a substantive portion of your grade. Further, I reserve the right to adjust borderline grades based on committed participation.

This course will cover a lot of reading. A lot. This is your warning. But I have been careful in selecting books that I think are most useful for your development and education. So buckle up and be excited for a rigorous, exciting seminar!

BOOK RESPONSES

You will be reading a different book every week, and you will be writing a very brief response to each text. Your answers should be printed out and brought to class; they will be graded on a pass/fail basis. You will write a paragraph response to each of these four questions (4 paragraphs total):

1. What is the author's primary argument?
2. What kind of sources does the author use?
3. What were the book's strengths and weaknesses?
4. How does this book add something new to the topic?





REQUIRED BOOKS

Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*

Catherine Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America*

Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*

Nathan Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*

David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*

Sylvester Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom*

W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness*

Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom*

Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*

David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*

Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*

Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*

Kathryn Lofton, *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*

LEAD HISTORIAN

Every student will have one opportunity to be the “lead historian” for the week. The “lead historian” will read not only the book assigned for everyone, but also one other book of their choice that is listed under the “suggested readings.” They will then write a 1,000-word review essay comparing the two books—their overlapping source material, competing arguments, or different approaches. The lead historian will provide a copy of their review to the entire class and digest the information for 15 minutes at the beginning of the seminar.

The goal is for every student to have a pile of comparative essays at the end of the semester, which should help in your preparation for comps.



HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPER

A large percentage of your grade will be based on a 12-15 page paper due at the end of the semester. This paper should demonstrate your mastery of the material we covered as well as your ability to connect them to broader questions and themes. Though I do expect you to engage and critique the books we discuss in the seminar, the essay should be framed around a particular question like, “Is ‘Evangelical’ a useful and coherent term when examining American religious history?” “How has race played a role in the development of American religion?” Or, “how has religion influenced American politics since the founding?” We will discuss more possible questions throughout the semester.

WORSHIP SERVICE

At some point in the semester each student will attend a worship service for a religion they have never personally attended. They can attend in a group or alone, in Huntsville or anywhere else. However, it must be a church that the student is not familiar with. After the visit students will write a two-page report that addresses the following questions:

1. How did this religion cultivate a sense of worship?
2. What broader cultural or political anxieties were displayed within the service?
3. What elements of the service related to tensions we've discussed in the semester?

This visit can happen at any point in the semester, but the report must be turned in before the final seminar.

ARCHIVAL DIGGING

Whenever we are not engaging a **big** book in class, we will also be digging into primary sources related to that week's topic. Students are expected to read the sources before the seminar, and we will discuss them during the seminar's final hour. This material could be printed texts that has been digitized, holograph sources that have been transcribed and excerpted, photographs, videos, and even physical objects.

This exercise should accomplish two things: 1) give you a better understanding of that week's topic, and 2) develop your own interpretive skills. They will also be useful sources for your written assignments.

Active engagement during this portion of the seminar will weigh heavily on your participation grade.

GRADING RUBRIC

Attendance/Participation	100pts
Book Responses	100pts
Lead Historian	50pts
Worship Service	50pts
Historiography Paper	200pts
Total	500pts

A NOTE ON CIVILITY

You may have noticed, but religion can be a divisive topic. Rather than skirting the controversial issues, however, we will be addressing them head-on. Therefore I expect our discussions to be rigorous yet respectful. Do not take aim to give offense through your comments, and try not to take offense in return. I will play referee and moderate our conversations, so don't take it personal if I tell you that you've gone too far.

Further, while you are encouraged to bring the fruits of your own religious background to the table, it would be inappropriate to expect your fellow students to partake of them in the same way. That is, this is a proselytizing-free zone. Try your best to approach these religious issues through the responsible prism of a professional, detached scholar.



SCHEDULE

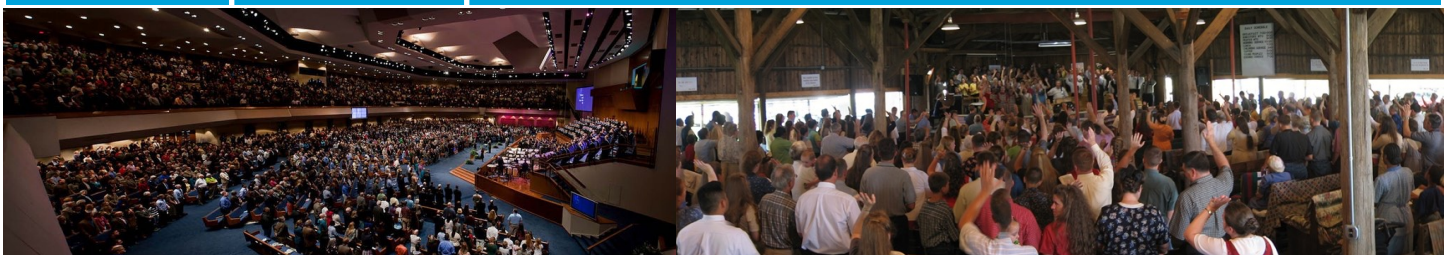
R: Required

AD: Archival Digging

SG: Suggested

BB: Blackboard

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
8/25	Introduction	R: Kevin Schultz and Paul Harvey, "Everywhere and Nowhere: Religion in the Historiography of Modern America" (BB)
9/1	Puritans	R: Elizabeth Reis, <i>Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England</i> AD: Excerpts from Anne Hutchison's Trial (BB) S: David D. Hall, <i>Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England</i> ; Mark Valeri, <i>Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America</i> ; David Hall, <i>A Reforming People: Patriotism and the Transformation of Public Life in New England</i>
9/8	The Great Awakening(?)	R: Catherine Brekus, <i>Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America</i> ; Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried" (BB) S: Thomas Kidd, <i>The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America</i> ; Linford Fisher, <i>The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America</i>
9/15	Religion and the Founding	R: Frank Lambert, <i>The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America</i> AD: Thomas Jefferson, "Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom" (BB); James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," Thomas Jefferson, "Query XVII" (BB), Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, 1803 (BB) S: John Fea, <i>Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction</i> ; Steven Green, <i>Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding</i> ; Thomas Kidd, <i>God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution</i>



Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
9/22	The Hothouse of Religion	<p>R: Nathan Hatch, <i>Democratization of American Christianity</i>; Chris Grasso, "The Religious and the Secular in the Early American Republic" (BB)</p> <p>AD: Selections from 1790s Thanksgiving Sermons (BB)</p> <p>S: Amanda Porterfield, <i>Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation</i>; Jon Butler, <i>Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People</i></p>
9/29	Religion and the Constitution	<p>R: David Sehat, <i>The Myth of American Religious Freedom</i></p> <p>S: Philip Hamburger, <i>Separation of Church and State</i>; Steven Green, <i>The Bible, the School, and the Constitution: The Clash that Shaped Modern Church-State Doctrine</i></p>
10/6	African-American Religions	<p>R: Sylvester Johnson, <i>African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom</i></p> <p>S: Albert Raboteau, <i>Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South</i>; Curtis Evans, <i>The Burden of Black Religion</i>; Laurie Maffly-Kipp, <i>Setting Down the Sacred Past: African American Race Histories</i></p>
10/13	Religion and Race	<p>R: W. Paul Reeve, <i>Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness</i></p> <p>AD: Jared Farmer, ed., <i>The Image of Mormons</i> (BB)</p> <p>S: Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, <i>The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America</i>; Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, <i>Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America</i></p>
10/20	Boundaries of Religion	<p>R: Tisa Wenger, <i>We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom</i></p> <p>S: Spencer Fluhman, <i>Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America</i></p>
10/27	Capitalism	<p>R: Kevin M. Kruse, <i>One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America</i></p> <p>S: Darren Dochuk, <i>From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism</i>; Bethany Moreton, <i>To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Enterprise</i>; Darren Grem, <i>The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity</i></p>

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
11/3	Civil Rights	<p>R: David L. Chappell, <i>A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow</i></p> <p>AD: Sermons from Martin Luther King Jr. (BB)</p> <p>S: Charles Marsh, <i>God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights</i>; Fay Botham, <i>Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, and American Law</i>; Carolyn Dupont, <i>Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975</i></p>
11/10	Modern Evangelicalism	<p>R: Matthew Avery Sutton, <i>American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism</i></p> <p>AD: youtube videos (TBD)</p> <p>S: Molly Worthen, <i>Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism</i>; George Marsden, <i>The Twilight of the American Enlightenment: The 1950s and the Crisis of Liberal Belief</i>;</p>
11/17	Religious Practice	<p>R: Robert A. Orsi, <i>Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes</i></p> <p>S: Colleen McDannell, <i>Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America</i>; John Corrigan, <i>Emptiness: Felling Christian in America</i>; Amy Koehlinger, <i>The new Nuns: Racial Justice and Religion Reform in the 1960s</i></p>
12/1	Modern Society	<p>R: Kathryn Lofton, <i>Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon</i></p> <p>AD: youtube videos (TBD)</p> <p>S: Kate Bowler, <i>Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel</i>; Jonathan Walton, <i>Watch This!: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism</i>; David Chidester, <i>Authentic Fakes: Religion and Popular Culture</i></p>
12/8	Judgement Day	FINAL PAPER DUE

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. A copy of the University policy is available on the Sam Houston State University website. If you need clarification about what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask or see me during office hours.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

SKILL OBJECTIVES

Critical Thinking: Students will be taught to think critically and analytically, and to ask appropriate questions about different historical societies and cultures, integrating and synthesizing knowledge they gain in the course, forming conclusions, and building an informed belief system from the complex of information presented in the course content.

Communication: To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication. Communication skills will be addressed in this class through class participation, the reading and discussion of historical texts, attending lectures, and/or watching films. Students will learn through the use of historical materials to critically evaluate the time periods in which these materials originated.

Personal Responsibility: To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making. Personal responsibility will be addressed in this course as students articulate how to make sound ethical judgments based on the development of their personal value system. By studying how individuals in the past drew upon their cultural belief systems to make ethical choices students will learn how their personal choices based upon ideas, values, and beliefs influence their larger society and culture today.

Social Responsibility: To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities. Social Responsibility will be addressed in this course as students learn about the ways in which individuals and groups in the past made decisions aimed at promoting civil discourse, civic participation, and other social values so as to improve society for all. Students will thus learn about their own social responsibilities in improving current American society.