

CH 462: Introduction to American Religious Histories
Spring 2008
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
John D. Gustav-Wrathall, instructor

Purpose of the course: The United States is the most religiously diverse nation in the world. This course is designed to acquaint students with the rich histories of the many communities that compose the American religious landscape, the role these communities have played in America's history, and the contributions they have made to American life, culture and spirituality.

Expectations of the course:

1. *Attendance and readings.* Students are expected to attend all classes and complete all reading assigned for each class and to be prepared to discuss what they have read with their classmates.
2. *Class discussions.* Each student is required to write brief "discussion points" related to the monograph readings assigned for each week, that will be turned in to the instructor at the start of each class session and that you may be called upon to share with the class. Written discussion points will include:
 - a) a one-sentence summary of the central argument of the text
 - b) a one-sentence evaluation of the argument
 - c) three questions/observations about the text
3. *Term papers.* Each student may
 - a) EITHER write three 1,500 – 2,000-word essays based on the required readings,
 - b) OR write a single 3,000 – 4,000-word term paper based on a text or texts chosen from the course bibliography
4. *Final exam.* Successful completion of a final, open-notebook exam at the end of the semester is necessary to receive a passing grade in the course. Final exam questions will be essay questions, and will test students' mastery of core themes of the course and ability to synthesize readings, lectures, and class discussions in discussing those core themes.
5. *Field trip.* At least once during the term each student will be required to experience worship in a religious community other than the one with which you are currently or have been affiliated, and report briefly to the class on your experience. The religious community you choose to visit will have a significantly different history or spiritual outlook from ones with which you have had personal experience. For instance, if you are a liberal Presbyterian, attending worship at a liberal Methodist or liberal UCC church will not fulfill this requirement. But attending worship at a Jewish synagogue or a Hindu Temple or a fundamentalist Presbyterian church will. In fulfilling this requirement, please show respect for the community you visit. It may be advisable, for instance, to contact the community's leader in advance, explaining the assignment, asking permission to attend, and inquiring about what etiquette visitors should observe. The report to the class can be informal and does not need to be written out, but should demonstrate some effort to relate your worship experience there to what you have learned about that community in the context of this class. This assignment will not be graded, but is required for successful completion of the course.

Required Texts: (all students must work from the same editions)

Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*

Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*

Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*

Alfred Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*

Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion*

Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America*

George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*

Note on Papers: Papers will be graded in part on the quality of the writing. Papers are to be written in accordance with the proper academic style as set forth in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Course Schedule:

Class 1) Feb. 7: *Introduction: The Challenge of Pluralism*

Class 2) Feb. 14: *Church and State in American History*

READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapters 11 & 12 (pp. 256-299); Hatch, chapters 1-4 (pp. 3-122)

Class 3) Feb. 21: *The Evangelicals*

READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 5 (pp. 109-133); Hatch, chapters 5-8 (pp. 125-219)

Class 4) Feb. 28: *Deism/Humanism/Atheism*

READINGS DUE: Paine, *Age of Reason*

FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE (or)

TERM PAPER PROPOSALS DUE

Class 5) Mar. 6: *Native American Religion*

READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 1 (pp. 19-39); Raboteau, chapters 1-3 (pp. 3-150)

READING WEEK: Mar. 13 (No class)

MAUNDY THURSDAY: Mar. 20 (No class)

Class 6) Mar. 27: *African-American Religion*

READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 6 (pp. 134-152); Raboteau, chapters 4-6 (pp. 151-322)

Class 7) Apr. 3: *Utopianism/New Age/the "New Religions"*

READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 8 (pp. 178-197); Givens, Introduction & chapters 1-4 (pp. 3-116)

SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE (or)

TERM PAPER THESIS STATEMENT AND PROSPECTUS DUE

Class 8) Apr. 10: *American Restorationism & the Latter-day Saints*
READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 7 (pp. 154-177); Givens, chapters 5-9 (pp. 117-246)

Class 9) Apr. 17: *The Immigrant Experience and American Catholicism*
READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapters 3 & 9 (pp. 59-80; 200-226); Staub, Introduction & chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-152)

Class 10) Apr. 24: *The Immigrant Experience and American Judaism*
READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 2 (pp. 40-58); Staub, chapters 5-8 (pp. 153-308)

THIRD SHORT ESSAY DUE (or)
TERM PAPER DUE

Class 11) May 1: *Christian Liberalism*
READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 4 (pp. 81-108); Marsden, Introduction & chapters I-XIV (pp. 3-123)

Class 12) May 8: *Christian Fundamentalism*
READINGS DUE: Albanese, chapter 5 (pp. 109-133); Marsden, chapters XV-XXV & Part 5 (pp. 124-257)

Class 13) May 15: *Final Exam*

Basis for Grades

- Course attendance – 10%
- Weekly written “discussion points” and discussion participation – 20%
- Short papers OR term paper – 30%
- Final Exam – 40%

Expectations for Auditors: Auditors are not expected to write papers or take the final exam. Auditors are invited to participate in class discussions if they have read the assignments for the day.

Extension Policy: Performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of work submitted by the end of the final class session. Extensions will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances include: serious illness on the part of the student, or serious illness or a death in the student's family. The instructor must agree to an extension by the final class session. If critical health issues prevent the student from negotiating an extension with the instructor by the final class session, the student is responsible to notify the instructor as soon as possible and negotiate an extension promptly.

If no exception is granted, a grade will be submitted based on the work submitted by the last class session. If an exception is granted, a formal petition for extension will be filled out by the student and must be submitted in lieu of a grade no later than the deadline to submit grades for the course. The period of extension is not to exceed six months from the end of the term. Any renewal of an extension must be approved by the instructor and filed with the registrar prior to the due date on the original petition. No extension or its renewal will exceed six months from the end of the term in question.

