

Religion and American Culture

Instructor

James Treat, Assistant Professor
Department of American Studies
University of New Mexico
Ortega Hall 311
Albuquerque, NM 87131
E-mail: treaty@unm.edu

Course level and type

graduate seminar

Hours of Instruction

2.5 hours/week; 16 week term

Enrollment and year last taught

8 students in 1998

Course Description

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the role of religion in American culture and of religious studies in American culture studies. It is designed for students enrolled in the American Studies graduate program or the Religious Studies graduate program, and for graduate students affiliated with other departments in the humanities or social sciences who are working on projects involving American and/or religious topics.

The course is organized in two parts, historical and thematic. Part I takes a historical approach to the study of American religion; it provides students with a brief introduction to American religious studies, an essential background in American religious history, and a basic understanding of recent debates over American religious historiography. Part II takes a thematic approach to the study of American religion; students explore the role of religion in American culture, and of religious studies in American culture studies, by reading representative scholarship selected in light of the area rubrics of the American Studies graduate program: Gender Studies; Race, Class, Ethnicity; Southwest Studies; Popular Culture; Environment, Science, Technology. Throughout the semester, we attempt to evaluate the significance of religion as descriptive marker and as analytical category in the scholarship of American culture studies.

Students are expected to participate in class on a regular basis, submit several short papers, design a syllabus for a topical undergraduate course in American religious studies, and make a public presentation on their research. Students also have the opportunity to visit selected religious communities in the Albuquerque metropolitan area by participating in two optional day-long tours. Students in this course learn to think critically about religion in American culture, engage in religious scholarship that is historically and methodologically informed, and contribute to the ongoing public conversation about religion. Students who pass the course will possess a basic competency to conduct scholarly research on American religion and to teach an introductory college-level course in American religious studies.

Course Readings

These texts are available at the UNM Bookstore and are also on two-hour closed reserve at the Reserve Desk

in Zimmerman Library:

Thomas A. Tweed, ed., Retelling U.S. Religious History (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

Peter W. Williams, America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

David G. Hackett, ed., Religion and American Culture: A Reader (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995).

Ferenc M. Szasz and Richard W. Etulain, eds., Religion in Modern New Mexico (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

Catherine L. Albanese, Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Course Requirements

Final grades will be assigned according to the schedule below. Any assignment submitted after its due date will receive a lowered grade.

Class Participation 50%

Preparation, Attendance, Discussion

Position Paper #1 (due January 27)

Position Paper #2 (due February 3)

Research Proposal (due March 10)

Position Paper #3 (due April 28)

Course Syllabus (due May 5) 25%

Public Presentation 25%

Course Schedule

January 20 Course Introductions

Film "American Visions: The Promised Land"

Position Paper #1 assigned

I. American Religion in Historical Perspective

January 27 American Religious Studies

Position Paper #1 due

Position Paper #2 assigned

Hughes, "American Visions" (handouts)

Williams, "Preface" and "Bibliography"

Tweed, "Acknowledgments" and "Introduction: Narrating U.S. Religious History"

Frankiel, "Ritual Sites in the Narrative of American Religion" (Tweed)

Finke, "The Illusion of Shifting Demand: Supply-Side Interpretations of American Religious History" (Tweed)

February 3 Religion Before "America"

Position Paper #2 due

Student Discussants

Williams, "The Traditions"

Hackett, "Introduction"

Gutiérrez, "The Pueblo Indian World of the Sixteenth Century" (Hackett)

Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England" (Hackett)

Westfall, "Voices from the Attic: The Canadian Border and the Writing of American Religious History" (Tweed)

February 10 Religion in Colonial America

Student Discussants

Williams, "Colonial America: Europeans, Colonials, and Traditional Peoples Before the Revolution"

Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience" (Hackett)

Martin, "Indians, Contact, and Colonialism in the Deep South: Themes for a Postcolonial History of American Religion" (Tweed)

Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim" (Tweed)

February 17 Religion in the American Republic

Student Discussants

Williams, "Religious Community Formation in the New Republic"

Martin, "From 'Middle Ground' to 'Underground': Southeastern Indians and the Early Republic" (Hackett)

Hackett, "The Social Origins of Nationalism: Albany, New York, 1754-1835"

Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840" (Hackett)

Shippo, "The Genesis of Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition" (Hackett)

February 24 Religion in Modern America

Student Discussants

Research Proposal assigned

Williams, "The End of the Frontier and the Rise of the City"

Frankiel, "California Dreams" (Hackett)

Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920" (Hackett)

DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account" (Hackett)

Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens" (Hackett)

March 3 Religion in Contemporary American Life

Student Discussants

Williams, "The Twentieth Century: Further Encounters with Modernity and Pluralism"

Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life" (Hackett)

Moore, "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles" (Hackett)

Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism, and the Pentecostal Character" (Hackett)

Deck, "The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism" (Hackett)

Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter: The Meeting of East and West in America since the 1893 World's Parliament of Religion" (Hackett)

Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History" (Tweed)

FRIDAY, March 6 American Religious Diversity

OPTIONAL Tour of Older Religious Communities in Albuquerque

March 10 Research and Teaching

Research Proposal due

Research Strategies Presentation

Teaching Strategies Presentation

Mid-Semester Evaluations

March 17 Spring Break Week

II. Religion and American Culture Studies

March 24 Gender Studies: Women and Religion

Guest Discussant

Course Syllabus assigned

Taves, "Sexuality in American Religious History" (Tweed)

Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History" (Tweed)

Sarna, "The Debate over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue" (Hackett)

Carnes, "Manmade Religion: Victorian Fraternal Rituals" (Hackett)

Brown, "The Power to Heal in Haitian Vodou: Reflections on Women, Religion, and Medicine" (Hackett)

March 31 Race, Class, Ethnicity: African American Religion

Guest Discussant

Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel" (Hackett)

Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1863" (Hackett)

Joyner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity" (Hackett)

Higginbotham, "The Feminist Theology of the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1900" (Hackett)

Cone, "Malcolm and Martin: Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History" (Hackett)

April 7 Southwest Studies: Religion in New Mexico

Guest Discussant

Jensen, "Roman Catholicism in Modern New Mexico: A Commitment to Survive" (Szasz and Etulain)

Walker, "Protestantism in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

Tobias, "The Religious Culture of the Jews in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

Arrington, "Mormons in Twentieth-Century New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

Szasz, "The United States and New Mexico: A Twentieth-Century Comparative Religious History"

April 14 Popular Culture: Popular Religion

Guest Discussant

Public Presentation assigned

Schmidt, "The Easter Parade: Piety, Fashion, and Display" (Hackett)

McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity, 1860-1960" (Hackett)

Schuetz, "A Rhetorical Approach to Protestant Evangelism in Twentieth-Century New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

Fox, "Boomer Dharma: The Evolution of Alternative Spiritual Communities in Modern New Mexico" (Szasz and Etulain)

April 21 Environment, Science, Technology: Religion and Nature

Guest Discussant

Position Paper #3 assigned

Albanese, Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age

FRIDAY, April 24 American Religious Diversity

OPTIONAL Tour of Newer Religious Communities in Albuquerque

April 28 Course Conclusions

Position Paper #3 due

Semester Evaluations

May 5 Symposium on Religion and American Culture (part 1)

Course Syllabus due

Class Presentations

FRIDAY, May 8 Symposium on Religion and American Culture (part 2)

Public Presentations

Course Problematics and Key Themes

Course Problematics

What is the content of American religious history?

How are current debates over historiography changing this?

How does a regional or local focus change our understanding of American religious history?

Where are the intersections of religion and American culture, of religious studies and American culture studies?

What is the role of subjectivity and reflexivity in scholarship on religion?

What is the relationship between research and teaching in American religious studies?

Key Themes

Americanization -- immigration, assimilation, diaspora

Nativism -- nationalism, prejudice, exceptionalism

Disestablishment -- pluralism, religious freedom, civil religion

Competition -- voluntarism, denominationalism, missions, conversion

Innovation -- revivalism, sectarianism, syncretism, ecumenism

Modernity -- secularization, fundamentalism, materialism, individualism

Politics -- social reform, pacifism, human rights, citizenship

Diversity -- language, ethnicity, regionalism, migration, gender

Sample Tour Itinerary

8:30

Grant Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

7920 Claremont NE @ Texas

293-1300

Rev. John McGee

10:15

Calvary Chapel

4001 Osuna NE @ I-25

344-0880

Rev. Bob Church

11:45

Lunch

1:00 St. Augustine Catholic Church

Isleta Pueblo

869-3398

Maria Roybal

3:00

Iglesia Cristiana Vida Abundante/Abundant Life Christian Church

2851 Arenal SW @ Coors

877-7772

Rev. Gary Troyer

Academic Integrity

The American Studies faculty has adopted a formal policy on academic integrity, which is based on the "Policy on Academic Dishonesty" adopted by the University President:

Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

I will be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about academic and professional ethics, either during class or in an office appointment.

Special Accommodations

Please notify me as soon as possible if you experience any personal circumstances that might affect your

participation in this course: medical conditions, physical limitations, learning disabilities, academic problems, emotional crises, family difficulties, or religious obligations. I will be happy to make reasonable accommodations when appropriate, provided that you notify me in a timely fashion. All personal information will be kept in strict confidentiality. Several important campus offices that you may find helpful are listed below:

Learning Support Services

Zimmerman Library 339, 277-8291

Mental Health Service

Student Health Center, 277-4537

Disabled Student Services

Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506

Agora Crisis Center

Student Union Building basement, 277-3013