

Dr. Mark Hulsether
University of Tennessee
Spring Semester 2010

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Blackboard site: <http://online.utk.edu>
Office hours: W 11:00–12:30, McClung 507

Religion and Society in North America (Religious Studies 233)

This course explores the intersections among religion, culture, and society in North America, especially in recent years. It highlights religious diversity and conflict—not by attempting to touch on every issue, but by studying the interactions among representative groups. We will work through a survey text, documents from the Scopes Trial, the memoir *Black Elk Speaks* by a Lakota spiritual leader, and shorter articles and films that touch on many dimensions of religious thought and practice—including personal spirituality, community ritual, doctrines, institutional structure, activism, and religion in the media. Our objectives are:

- To gain basic knowledge about key people, dates, and concepts that are needed to understand the place of religion in the history of North America, especially in the past century
- To understand how people from representative religions have responded to key sociopolitical issues such as empire, race and gender contestation, and consumerism.
- To explore two case studies in sufficient depth to appreciate the internal dynamism and complexity of religious responses to major social changes.
- To analyze how claims commonly made about US religion—both in debates internal to religious groups and in analyses by scholars and pundits—valorize consensus, celebrate pluralism, and/or are part of larger struggles for cultural hegemony.

Readings:

Mark Hulsether, *Religion, Culture, and Politics in the Twentieth Century United States*

Jeffrey Moran, Ed. *The Scopes Trial: a Brief History with Documents*

John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*

Supplementary Readings for Religious Studies 233

(All books are in the bookstore; other readings will be available at <http://online.utk.edu>)

Expectations and Evaluation:

The course has two core expectations. The first is coming to class regularly, having prepared the assigned readings. Classroom activities will *presuppose* a reading of these assignments, not *substitute* for it. I will evaluate whether you are keeping up through discussions in which I will call on students randomly, as well as by unannounced quizzes or short reflection papers I will assign about once a week. The second expectation is completing mid-term and final exams that test your mastery of key concepts and ability to write comparative analyses.

Due to distractions introduced by text messaging and internet browsing, cell phones and laptops may not be used in our classroom. After three unexcused absences, each additional absence lowers your course grade by 2%. Grades for late papers are lowered 10% per class meeting. You are responsible for understanding UT policies on plagiarism; plagiarized work receives a zero for the assignment plus a penalty of 20% applied to the final course grade.

Assignments are weighted as follows:

Week to week engagement with required readings	50%
Approximately five or six unscheduled reading quizzes (20%)	
Approximately five or six short reflection papers (20%)	
(Lowest two or three of the above grades will be dropped)	
General course participation (10%)	
Midterm Exam	25%
In-class segment (12.5%)	
Take-home Analytical Essay (12.5%)	
Final Exam	25%
In-class segment (12.5%)	
Take-home Analytical Essay (12.5%)	

Agenda and Assignments (subject to revision.)

1/14	R	First day.
1/19	T	RCP introduction, 1-19.
1/21	R	RCP chapter 1a, 20-26; Nabokov, “Between River and Fire”
1/26	T	Begin <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> (focus on pages of puff selection; skim the rest)
1/28	R	Finish <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> (focus on pages of pdf selection; skim the rest)
2/2	T	RCP chapter 7, pp. 226-229; Laderman, “Shamanism in the New Age”
2/4	R	RCP chapter 1b, pp. 26-32; Raboteau, “African Americans and Exodus”
2/9	T	RCP, chapter 1c, 32-48.
2/11	R	RCP, chapter 2a, 50-61; Myerhoff, “Needle and Thread”
2/16	T	RCP, chapter 2b, 61-67
2/18	R	RCP, chapter 2c, 68-76; Stein, “Religious Innovation at the Edges”
2/23	T	RCP, chapter 3a, 78-88
2/25	R	RCP, chapter 3b, 88-98; Tompkins, from <i>West of Everything</i>
3/2	T	RCP chapter 3c. 98-107
3/4	R	<i>Midterm Exam</i>
3/8 to 3/12		<i>HAPPY SPRING BREAK</i>

3/16	T	RCP chapter 4a, 108-117
3/18	R	RCP chapter 4b, 117-125 and pp. 212-217; Fitzgerald, “Jim and Tammy”
3/23	T	RCP chapter 4c, 126-137
3/25	R	Moran, part 1 (introduction)
3/30	T	Moran, part 2 (transcripts, focus on pages of pdf selection)
4/1	R	RCP chapter 7, pp. 204-209; Harding, “The Creation Museum”
4/6	T	RCP chapter 5a, 138-149 and 218-233; Eck, “Frontiers of Encounter”
4/8	R	NO CLASS (<i>Dr. Hulsether out of town</i>).
4/13	T	RCP chapter 5b, 150-159.
4/15	R	RCP chapter 5c, 159-171; Reitman, “Inside Scientology”
4/20	T	RCP chapter 6a, 172-190; West, “Crisis of Christian Identity”
4/22	R	RCP chapter 6b, 190-203
4/27	T	RCP, remaining parts of chapter 7; Bageant, from <i>Deer Hunting With Jesus</i>
4/29	R	RCP conclusion, 235-240
5/7	F	Final Exam Period, 8:00 to 10:00.

A Note on Technology

Our course requires use of <http://online.utk.edu/>, or blackboard, for distributing readings and sharing information. You need a UT username and password to access blackboard, and *Acrobat Reader* (free at www.adobe.com) to open files. If I email you through blackboard, the message goes to your university account, the one ending in utk.edu or tennessee.edu. You are responsible for checking this account regularly and/or forwarding your mail.

Supplementary Readings for Religious Studies 351 (Full Citations)

This page is designed to use as a *table of contents* for a binder dedicated to our readings. Please print a full set and bring copies of readings to class. You will learn far more and do much better on quizzes and exams if you underline and write marginal notes in a hard copy.

- Peter Nabokov, "Between River and Fire," from *Where the Lightning Strikes : the Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (New York: Viking, 2006), 52-69.
- Gary Laderman, "Shamanism in the New Age," in *Religion of the United States in Practice* ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton University Press, 2001), 268-283.
- Albert Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel," in *Religion and American Culture: a Reader* ed. David Hackett (New York: Routledge, 1996), 73-87
- Barbara Myerhoff, "Needle and Thread: the Life and Death of a Tailor," from *Number Our Days* (Simon and Schuster, 1978), 40-78.
- Stephen Stein, "Religious Innovation at the Edges" in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture: a Reader* ed. Peter Williams, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), 22-33.
- Jane Tompkins, "Death," in *West of Everything: the Inner Life of Westerns* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 23-45.
- Frances Fitzgerald, "Jim and Tammy," *New Yorker* (4/23/90), 45-87.
- Susan Harding, "The Creation Museum," *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 210-228.
- Diana Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter" and "Is Our God Listening?" from *Encountering God* (Beacon Press, 1994), 22-44, 166-170, and 190-99.
- Janet Reitman, "Inside Scientology," *Rolling Stone*, Feb 23, 2006, accessed at <http://www.rollingstone.com/>
- Cornel West, "The Crisis of Christian Identity in America," from *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (Penguin, 2004), 145-172.
- Joe Bageant, excerpts from *Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War* (Crown, 2008).