

# SYLLABUS

RLST 4030/5030, Sec. 002  
RELIGION AND U.S. NATIONALISM

Fall, 2009  
Prof. Ira Chernus

This course will focus principally on the relation between religion and nationalism in the history of the United States. We will look particularly at the the question of how a self-styled “chosen people” understands itself and its mission and deals with other peoples. The course will focus mainly on dominant cultural traditions created by elites, though we will also look at alternative interpretations of nationalism. We will understand the words and symbols of nationalism, not as fixed entities, but as contested and constantly changing products of historical processes.

The material in this course can be studied both for its intrinsic historical interest and for the way it illuminates contemporary U.S. culture and policy and the U.S. role in the world today. You are encouraged to enjoy both approaches. If you think of any way to improve the course as we go along, please share your ideas with the instructor and the other students.

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

These books have been ordered through the CU Bookstore:

Anders STEPHANSON, *Manifest Destiny*

David CAMPBELL, *Writing Security*

Richard T. HUGHES, *Myths America Lives By*

Wilbur ZELINSKY, *Nation into State* -- can be purchased only on line at Amazon.com

Additional readings will be linked directly to the ONLINE SYLLABUS, which can be accessed from the course web page:

<http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/chernus/4820-Nationalism/index.html>

YOU SHOULD USE THE ONLINE SYLLABUS TO CHECK FOR EACH WEEK’S READING ASSIGNMENTS, because some assignments may be added to or deleted from this hard copy version.

## OFFICE HOURS:

I will be in the office (Humanities 284) before each class from about 5:30 – 6:30,  
or by appointment: 492-6169; [chernus@colorado.edu](mailto:chernus@colorado.edu)

If you need any special accommodations to enable or enhance your learning in this course, I will be glad to discuss that with you.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 31: BASIC CONCEPTS

WEB: [ZELINSKY 1 - 19](#); John F. Wilson, “[The Shape of the National Covenant](#),” (from *Public Religion in American Culture*);

Ira Chernus, "[RELIGION AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM](#): The Theory of Clifford Geertz"; CAMPBELL, 1 - 13, 35 - 51, 191-205;

## [Summary of Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, Chapter 1](#)

Sept. 14: THE PROBLEM OF “AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION”; THE COLONIAL ERA

On civil religion: ZELINSKY 232 - 245; Ira Chernus, “[American Civil Religion](#)”; John F. Wilson, “[Religious Meanings of Community](#)” (from *Public Religion in American Culture*); Ira Chernus, [review of \*Myths America Lives By\*](#); HUGHES ix-xii, 1 - 15, 191 - 195

On colonial era: STEPHANSON xi - 12; HUGHES 19 - 34, 91 - 97; CAMPBELL, 91 - 119; WEB: “[The Pagan Pilgrim](#)”

Sept. 21: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW REPUBLIC

STEPHANSON 12 - 27; CAMPBELL 119 - 132, HUGHES 34 - 35, 45 - 89; ZELINSKY 225 - 232

Sept. 28: MANIFEST DESTINY

HUGHES 35 - 43, 98 - 123; STEPHANSON 28 - 65

Oct. 5: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION OF U.S. NATIONALISM

Walt Whitman, [Leaves of Grass](#) (scroll through list of titles to find each poem--or better yet buy a cheap edition of the book and read it outside on the grass): Song of Myself, Song of the Open Road, I Sing the Body Electric, Passage to India, Song of the Exposition, Song of the Redwood Tree, Song of the Universal, Pioneers! O Pioneers!, With Antecedents, A Broadway Pageant, By Blue Ontario's Shores, Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood, Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps, The Centenarian's Story, Come Up From the Fields Father, Vigil Strange I Kept, Over the Carnage Rose, Spirit Whose Work is Done, Adieu to a Soldier, Turn O Libertad

Oct. 12: THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

HUGHES 126 - 150; STEPHANSON 66- 121; CAMPBELL 133 - 136, bottom of 141 - 147

Oct. 19: THE COMING OF WORLD WAR II

HUGHES 153 - top of 170; WEB: Ira Chernus, “[National Insecurity, Homeland Insecurity: The Wartime Discourse of Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)”;

David Zietsma, “Imagining Heaven And Hell: Religion, National Identity, And U.S. Foreign Relations,” [Abstract](#) and Chapter IV, “[Sin Has No History](#)”

Franklin D. Roosevelt, [Third Inaugural Address](#); FDR, [Four Freedoms speech](#); FDR acceptance speech 1940 [conclusion](#)

Oct. 26: THE COLD WAR

STEPHANSON 121 - 129; HUGHES 170 - 186; CAMPBELL 15 - 33, 136 - 141, 147 - 168 (war on drugs 169 - 189 optional);

WEB: Ira Chernus, “[Eisenhower: Faith and Fear in the Fifties](#)”; Ira Chernus, "[President Eisenhower and Dr. King on Peace and Human Nature](#)"

Nov. 2: THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Ira Chernus, *Monsters To Destroy*, chapters [6](#), [8](#), [10](#), [11](#), [13](#); Ira Chernus, “[Apocalypse in the White House: From FDR to Obama](#)”;

Barack Obama, [Inaugural Address](#)

Nov. 9: ZELINSKY, chapter 2 and 3

Nov. 16: ZELINSKY, chapters 4 and 5

Nov. 30: STUDENT REPORTS

Dec. 7: STUDENT REPORTS

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Attending each class well prepared to discuss the assigned reading.
2. Two brief essay exams. The first exam will be due on October 5; the second on November 2.
3. A research paper based on research project to be explained in class. Research papers are due on Wednesday, December 16