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*Religion in the United States (Religious Studies 351)*

On issues from A to Z, abortion to Zionism, it is impossible to understand US culture without attention to religion. This course explores the intersection of religion, culture, and politics in US history. It highlights religious diversity and conflict—not by attempting to touch on every important issue, but by studying interactions among representative groups. For breadth, everyone will read a survey text and a set of common readings touching on many dimensions of religious practice: e.g., community ritual, religious-political activism, personal prayer, theology, and religion in the media. For depth, each student will explore one subtopic in more depth. Throughout the course we will highlight how religious practices relate to socio-historical change and power conflicts. Our most sustained attention will be to relations between women and men and among different racial-ethnic communities. Through this study, we will gather a set of conceptual building blocks and critical tools that we will use to map the US religious landscape and to explore how this landscape has changed over time.

*Objectives:*

- To gain a basic understanding of key people, dates, and concepts needed to understand the place of religion in US history with special attention to the past century.
- To study a few selected religious groups in enough depth to appreciate their internal dynamism complexity.
- To compare and contrast how people from representative religions have responded to cultural themes such as empire, race and gender contestation, religious freedom, and consumerism.
- To analyze common claims about US religion—as used in both debates internal to religious groups and in “mapping” strategies by scholars—in terms of how these claims relate to the patterns of valorizing consensus, celebrating pluralism, and/or struggling for hegemony.

*Readings*

Mark Hulsether, *Religion, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century United States*  
Paul Harvey and Philip Goff, *Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1945*  
Supplementary articles (distributed via <http://online.utk.edu>)

A set of three required books in *one* of the following four groups (see below for specifics)

- Religion and Popular Culture
- Religious Diversity in the Americas
- Religion in the South
- Christian Right Versus Christian Left

(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 a careful reading of texts assigned for Monday and Wednesday meetings. Lectures and discussions will *presuppose* a reading of these assignments, not *substitute* for it; exams will test your mastery of key concepts and ability to write comparative analytical essays on them. The second expectation is for each student to study a selected aspect of US religion in reasonable depth, primarily through a focus group.

Beyond these minimum goals we reach a crossroads. Consistently throughout the history of this course, many students have enrolled primarily for Upper Level Division credit, with a goal of doing the bare minimum amount of work required to pass. Such students' relative lack of motivation has been in tension with the goals of other students (especially majors in religious studies, American Studies, and history) who need a more ambitious and engaged approach to the subject. We will attempt to please both kinds of students by offering two alternative routes through the course. Students who prefer a lower level of engagement may chose a basic track. Its maximum final grade is B+, and many students in the track will probably earn Cs, but in exchange its workload is lighter. It does not require working on group projects, attending class on Fridays, or being tested on articles assigned for these Friday meetings. If you are looking for the easiest way to pass and/or do not wish to participate in discussions, this is your best choice.

The preferred route, for fully engaged students, includes Friday sections that emphasize discussion; it also requires working in small groups to prepare book reports for the class. The key goal of our two-tier system is to defend the quality of Friday meetings and groups. Readings assigned on Fridays are not included on the regular exams, but rather graded through Friday quizzes and reflection papers. Students in this track have an excellent chance of performing better on exams, especially in essays that require higher-level analytical skills.

Assignments are weighted as follows, depending on which track each student chooses. Both use the same standard UT grading scale: 90s = As, 80s = Bs, 70s = Cs, and so on. You are responsible for understanding UT policies about plagiarism; plagiarized work receives a zero for the assignment *plus* a penalty of at least two letter grades for the course.

Basic Track		Full Engagement Track	
First exam	30%	First exam	20%
Second exam	30%	Second exam	20%
Final exam	30%	Final exam	20%
Quizzes and reflections on readings for Friday sections	N/A	Quizzes and reflections on readings for Friday sections	20%
Class Participation (not including Friday attendance and groups)	10%	Class participation (includes Friday attendance and major penalties for group slackers)	20%
Adjustment so that top grade is B+	-11%		
Maximum Total	89%	Maximum Total	100%

An honors-by-contract track is also available for students who wish to write a research paper in addition to other course assignments; such contracts may be negotiated individually.

*Agenda and Assignments (subject to revision)*

- 1/9 W Read: Hulsether, introduction  
1/11 F Read: Goff and Harvey *Documentary History*, 3.12, 6.7, 7.10, and 9.2-3

*Section One: Before the Late 1800s*

- 1/14 M Read: Hulsether chapter 1a, pp. 20-32; Joyner, “Believer I Know”  
1/16 W (Are you on pace to finish your focus group book?)  
1/18 F Read: McNally, “Religion and Culture Change in Native North America”  
1/21 M MLK HOLIDAY BREAK  
1/23 W *Book Reports*: Martin, *Sacred Revolt* and Murphy, *Santeria*  
1/25 F Read: Maffly-Kipp, “Eastward Ho”  
1/28 M Read: Hulsether chapter 1b, pp. 32-48; Butler, from *Religion in American Life*  
1/30 W *Book Report*: Moore, *Godless Constitution*  
2/1 F Read: Stein, “Religious Innovation at the Edges”  
2/4 M Hulsether chapter 2; Documents 1.3, 1.6, 6.1  
2/6 W *Book Report*: Moore, *Selling God*  
2/8 F *First Exam*

*Section Two: Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*

- 2/11 M Read: Hulsether 3a, 77-97; Tompkins, from *West of Everything*  
2/13 W (Read your focus group book)  
2/15 F Read: Braude, “Women’s History”; Ruether, “Searching Scripture”  
2/18 M Read: Hulsether 3b and 4a, 98-116; Weaver, “Catholics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century”

- 2/20 W (Read your focus group book)
- 2/22 F Read: Orsi, "Religious Boundaries of In-between People"; Documents 5.1, 7.7
- 2/25 M Read: Hulsether 4b, 117-139; Documents
- 2/27 W *Book Reports: Pinn, Noise and Spirit; Covington, Salvation on Sand Mountain*
- 2/29 F Read: Documents TBA

*Section Three: Since the 1940s*

- 3/3 M Hulsether 5a, 139-150; Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter"
- 3/5 W *Book Reports: West, Democracy Matters; Eck, New Religious America*
- 3/7 F NO CLASS: DR. HULSETHET AT SECSCOR CONFERENCE
- 3/10 M Read: Hulsether 5b, 150-172; Ammerman, "Golden Rule Christianity"
- 3/12 W *Second Exam*
- 3/14-21 F-F HAPPY SPRING BREAK
- 3/24 M Read: Hulsether 6a, 172-182; Documents TBA
- 3/26 W *Book Reports: Pike, New Age and Neopagan; Harvey, Freedom's Coming*
- 3/28 F Read: Documents TBA
- 3/31 M Hulsether 6b, 182-203; Documents TBA
- 4/2 W *Book Report: McAlister, Epic Encounters*
- 4/4 F Read: Documents TBA
- 4/7 M Hulsether 7a, 204-217; Harding, "Creation Museum"
- 4/9 W *Book Report: Harding, Book of Jerry Falwell*
- 4/11 F Read: "Minkowitz, "Name of the Father"; Documents TBA

4/14	M	Read: Hulsether 7b, 218-234; Documents TBA
4/16	W	(Open for Catch-up and/or Spring Fever)
4/18	F	Read: Documents TBA
4/21	M	Read: Hulsether, conclusion; West, "Crisis of Identity"; Documents TBA
4/23	W	(Open for Catch-up and/or Spring Fever)
4/25	F	Read: Documents TBA
5/2	F	Final Exam Period, 10:15 to 12:15

*More on Focus Group Books and Presentations*

In order to explore one aspect of religion in depth and create a structure for small group discussion, each student will join a set of students working in a focus area. Each student must:

(1) Read three books to provide a basis for group reflection: one of these sets, one book per unit.

*Religion and Popular Culture*

R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*  
 Anthony Pinn, *Noise and Spirit: the Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music*  
 Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East*

*Christian Right Versus Christian Left*

R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: a Moral Defense of the Secular State*  
 Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*  
 Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*

*Religious Diversity in the Americas*

Joseph Murphy, *Santeria: African Spirits in America*  
 Diana Eck, *A New Religious America*  
 Sarah Pike, *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*

*Religion in the South*

Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: the Muskogee's Struggle for a New World*  
 Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption*  
 Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South*

(2) Write on these books in unit exams. You will be expected to (a) identify key people and themes, (b) offer an X-ray analysis of the books' core arguments with specific examples, (c) compare the approaches of your three books as the semester builds, and (d) identify points of contact between your books and the common readings of our class. Such points of contact may involve comparisons, contrasts, or critical questions; they may address specifics or explore questions at the level of overall method. You are not responsible for every detail in each book, but must be able to summarize their arguments and relate them explicitly to common readings.

(3) *Engaged track students* will introduce your group's books to the class, in three subgroups. Each subgroup presentation should last 20-25 minutes and must include a brief X-ray analysis of its book's argument and one explicit point of contact with common readings (as described in the previous paragraph) as a springboard for discussion. All members of the focus group (not simply the subgroup presenting on a given day) are expected to help lead class discussion after the presentations; if possible please try to prepare as a group of the whole rather than as subgroups.

(4) *Students in the basic track* read the books and take the exams, but do not participate in the group book reports and are expected not to use group meetings to prepare for exams.

### *Grading Group Work*

The *default* grade for your group presentation is the same as your individual exam grade for the unit in which your subgroup reports. This will be your individual participation grade if your group's overall performance and your personal contribution to your group are average. However, this default participation grade may be *adjusted* by up to 50% based on (1) the quality of the group presentation and (2) whether you were a group leader or slacker. On the day of your group report, please send me a confidential email estimating the contributions of group members. For example, if it had three people who were equally prepared and hard working, write: Person A, 33%; Person B, 33%, Person C, 33%. Use a narrative if you prefer. Do not rank everyone the same in cases where I can tell from personal observation that this is not credible.

### *A Note on Technology and Communication*

The course requires use of <http://online.utk.edu/>, or blackboard, for accessing readings, taking quizzes, and sharing information. You need a UT username and password to access blackboard, and *Acrobat Reader* software (free at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)) to open files posted there. When 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 and/or forwarding your mail if you use a personal account such as hotmail.

*Supplementary Readings for Religious Studies 351 (Full Citations)*

This page is designed to use as a *table of contents* for a loose-leaf binder dedicated to our readings. Please print a full set and bring copies of current readings to class. Articles from *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter Williams (Blackwell, 1999), *Religion and American Culture: a Reader*, ed. David Hackett (Routledge, 1995) and *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Tom Tweed (Callifornia, 1996) are cited as *PARC*, *RAC*, and *RURH*.

Charles Joyner, "Believer I Know: the Emergence of African-American Christianity" in *RAC*, 185-208.

Michael McNally, "Religion and Culture Change in Native North America," in *PARC*, 270-286

Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim," in *RURH*, 127-48.

Jon Butler, "Religion in the First Colonies" and "Reviving Colonial Religion" from *Religion in American Life: a Short History* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Stephen Stein, "Religious Innovation at the Edges" in *PARC*, 22-33

Jane Tompkins, "Death," from *West of Everything: the Inner Life of Westerns* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 23-45.

Ann Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History," in *RURH*, 87-107.

Rosemary Ruether, "Searching Scripture for a Model of the Family," *Voices of the Religious Left*, ed. Rebecca Alpert (Temple University Press, 2000), 231-38.

Mary Jo Weaver, "American Catholics in the Twentieth Century," in *PARC*, 154-168.

Robert Orsi, "The Religious Boundaries of an In-between People" in *Gods of the City: Religion and the Contemporary American Landscape* (Indiana University Press, 1999), 257-288

Diana Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter: the Meeting of East and West in America Since the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions," in *RAC*, 495-513.

Nancy Ammerman, "Golden Rule Christianity: Lived Religion in the American Mainstream," *Lived Religion in America* ed. David Hall (Princeton University Press, 1997), 196-216.

Susan Harding, "The Creation Museum" from *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 153-66, 179-81.

Donna Minkowitz, "In the Name of the Father," *Ms.* (November/December 1995), 64-71.

Cornel West, "The Crisis of Christian Identity in America," from *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (Penguin, 2004), 145-172.