

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE

American Studies 5101
Fall Semester 1999
M., W., F., 12:20-1:10 p.m.
Scott Hall 4

Professor Gayle Graham Yates
University of Minnesota
204 Scott Hall
graha001@maroon.tc.umn.edu
(612) 624-5076
Office hrs.: T, W 1:30-3:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course on the role of religion in shaping contemporary and historical U.S. cultures. It will treat major world religions--Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism--feminist spirituality and nature religion, African-American and Native American religions, and religions such as Hinduism which were originally national religions, as they are manifest today in American people's lives, in American history, in contemporary spirituality, in both public institutions and religious organizations and in today's multicultural, multireligious American society. The class will study historical world and national religious life as background for the present day. For research into present-day religious life, field study and interviewing will be a part of class where Twin Cities synagogues, churches or mosques may be visited and their leaders interviewed. Art experiences with museums and architecture featuring spirituality and religion will be a part of the class, as well. Current local, U.S. and international events will be analyzed in their religious context and for their religious significance.

COURSE MATERIALS AND REQUIREMENTS

Books:

Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*
Ignatia Broker, *Night Flying Woman*
Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America*
Robert N. Bellah et. al., *Habits of the Heart*
Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

Reading:

Read "Faith and Values" section of the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* every Saturday

Semester-Long Research Project:

1. Each student is asked to choose a major or well-known U.S. national religious organization, group or movement
 - in which the student has been a practicing member herself or himself
 - or has close family members (parents or grandparents or older generation family members) who have been practicing members
 - or has been taught for a long period by practicing members (such as in Catholic school)
 - in other words, in which the student has a close connection,

AND, ALSO,

2. Each student is asked to choose one group about which she or he knows nearly nothing at the present time, for example

- Roman Catholicism (or one of its branches such as the Jesuits or the Polish-American Catholic Church)
- Eastern Orthodox Christianity (or one of its branches such as Greek Orthodoxy in the U.S.)
- Protestant Christianity (or one of its branches such as the American Baptist Church denomination)
- Buddhism (or one of its branches such as Tibetan Buddhism)
- Hinduism
- Islam
- New Age religion
- Native American religion
- African-American religion
- Feminist religion
- or another major, well-known U.S. national religious organization or group,

AND

3. Study by research, conversations, reading and other methods, the following of both those "religions" in the United States:

- A. The historical founding and origin of the group, its country and time
- B. The organizational structure of the religion and changes over time
- C. The people who brought that religion to the United States
- D. The manifestation today of the religion as a group in the U.S.
- E. The beliefs and practices of the group
- F. The group's holidays and celebrations
- G. The ethical system of the group, its affirmations about human behavior and its prohibitions
- H. Some art work of the group and how it uses art forms religiously

4. Keep a notebook of one's finding about the group and turn in a written report about one of the religions every third Friday (the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th weeks of class), 8-10 pages typewritten, double-spaced.

5. Do two class presentations--a panel discussion, a talk or a slide or music presentation on each of the religions you are doing research about during the semester

6. Write a 20-page finished paper, typewritten, double-spaced, comparing and contrasting some aspect of your two religions, elaborating analytically one piece of one of them that interests you or expounding on one or the other in the way you have learned about it through your research. Due the last day of class.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS

(Reading assignments, due dates for papers and projects, and dates for videos, museum and other visits and guest lecturers will be worked out later.)

First Week -- Sept. 8, 10

- Organization and orientation
- What is religion?

Read Albanese, Introduction, pp. 1-21

Second Week -- Sept. 13, 15, 17

- What is American/United States? What is American about religion? -- What is the difference between :
- What is religious art? Religious literature? Sacred literature and art?
- What are spiritual and religious norms, values, ethics?
- Judaism in America

Read Albanese, Ch. 2, pp. 49-72 on Judaism

Third Week -- Sept. 20, 22, 24

- The Abrahamic World Religions
- Eastern Religions
- Orthodox Christianity
- Islam

Read Albanese, Ch. 9, "East Is West: Eastern Peoples and Eastern Religions," pp. 281-323

Read Haddad, Chs.1,2,11, and 14, pp.3-36,157-174, and 205-216

Fourth Week -- Sept. 27, 29, Oct. 1

- More on Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism

September 27: First report due

September 27: Guest lecture on Islam by Nahid S. Khan

September 29 and October 1: Huston Smith videos on 1) Confucianism and 2) Hinduism and Buddhism

Fifth Week -- Oct. 4, 6, 8

- Buddhism and Hinduism continued
- Catholicism
- Protestantism
- Conservative, Moderate, Liberal, Radical across Religious Lines

Review Albanese, pp. 301-322, on Buddhism and Hinduism

Read Albanese, Ch. 3, on Catholicism, pp. 73-100; Chs. 4 & 5 on Protestantism, pp.102-189

Oct. 8: Oral student presentations

Sixth Week -- Oct. 11, 13,15

- Native American Religion

Read Albanese, Ch. 1, on Native American religions, pp. 24-47

Read Ignatia Broker, *Night Flying Woman*

October 13: guest lecture on Ojibwe spirituality and *Night Flying Woman* by Pauline Brunette Danforth

October 15: Second report due

Seventh Week -- Oct. 18, 20, 22

- African-American Religions

Read Albanese, Ch. 6, pp. 191-215, on African American religions

Read in Haddad, Ch. 4, pp. 53-61 on the Nation of Islam

October 22: Oral student presentations

Eighth Week -- Oct. 25, 27, 29

- New Age Religion and Its American Predecessors
- 1990s Spirituality
- New Evangelism

Read Albanese, Ch. 8 on 19th century spiritual movements, pp. 250-280; Ch. 11, pp. 350-394 on New Age
Oct. 29: guest lecture by Dr. Jeanne Halgren Kilde on "New Evangelism"

Ninth Week -- Nov. 1, 3, 5

- American Civil Religion

Begin reading Robert Bellah et. al, *Habits of the Heart*

Read Albanese, Chs. 12 & 13 on public Protestantism and civil religion, pp. 395- 461

Nov.5: Oral student reports

Nov. 5: Third written report due

Tenth Week -- Nov. 8, 10, 12

- American Civil Religion

Finish reading and discuss in class *Habits of the Heart*

Nov. 10: Oral student reports

Eleventh Week -- Nov. 15, 17, 19

- The U.S. and Religion in Foreign Policy and International Affairs

Begin reading Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

Read in Haddad, Ch.15, 217-235

Possible museum visit

Twelfth Week -- Nov. 22, 24

- Continue U.S. and Religion in Foreign Policy and Int'l Affairs

Finish reading Huntington

Nov. 24: Fourth written report due

Nov. 24: Oral student reports

Thirteenth Week -- Nov. 30, Dec. 1, 3

- Religious Diversity in Present-day America
- Feminist Religiousness
- Nature Religions

Read Albanese, Chs. 14 & 15 on cultural religion and oneness vs. manyness, pp. 463-532

Read Haddad, Chs.12,13, pp.177-204

Dec. 3: Oral student presentations

Fourteenth Week -- Dec. 6, 8, 10

- More on Religious Diversity in Present-day America

Dec. 8 & 10: Oral student presentations

Fifteenth Week -- Dec. 13, 15

Dec. 13: Oral student presentations

Dec. 15: Last day of class

Dec. 15: Turn in final paper

No exams, no midquarter, no final exam.

GRADES AND GRADING

Grades in the class will be based on class attendance and participation, evidence in discussion of having done all of the reading, and, most heavily, on the writing. The class will be conducted like a seminar, and there will be no exams. The breakdown of percentages for final grades is the following:

Class participation--10%

Writer's notebook assignments--5% each, 20% total

Small papers--10% each, 30% total

Oral presentation in class--10%

Final paper--30%

Attendance is expected at every class. Papers are due at the beginning of the class hour of their due date, and late papers will not be accepted unless a prior arrangement has been made with the instructor or an emergency like a serious illness with a medical validation is the cause. All papers must be finished to receive a grade in the class. No papers will be rewritten or revised for better grades--there are several of them, so they are likely to get better through the quarter.

The following are the standards for assigning final course grades:

A Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements

B Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements

C Represents achievement that meets the basic course requirements in every respect

D Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements

F Failure to complete the work in the manner expected by the instructor.