

Religion in America / [course number]

George Faithful
[institutional email]

[times]

[dates]

Location: [TBA]

Office: [TBA]

Office Hours: [TBA]

Course Description

An examination of the impact of religious values and institutions on American history. Special attention is given to the rise, decline, and legacy of mainstream Protestant culture, immigrant Catholicism, religious pluralism in the 20th century, the religious origins of social and cultural exchange, the continuing importance of civil religion, and the implications of the First Amendment for religious expression in America.

Driving Questions

How has America's past shaped its present, especially in terms of its peoples' religious beliefs? How have various cultures shaped the religious landscape of America? How does the religious experience of people in the U.S. compare to that of people elsewhere?

Skills Cultivated

Historical thinking

Critical reading

Coherent and structured writing with a clear thesis

Persuasive speaking

Formulation of pertinent questions

Cooperation and coordination in the context of group work

The ability to find, cite, and analyze appropriate primary and secondary sources

Core Course Values (basis for written work, in-class discussion, and presentations)

Clarity of self-expression

Accuracy

Relevance

Respect

Honesty

Compassion (especially as expressed in openness and empathy toward opposing viewpoints)

Readiness to listen

Inquisitiveness

Creativity

Diligence

Contacting the Instructor

Email: I typically respond to email between 9am and 5pm, and primarily on weekdays.

In person: Office hours by appointment or immediately after class.

Academic Assistance

Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course as outlined in the syllabus due to the presence of a disability should contact the Student Disability Services. Confidentiality will be observed. [INSERT WEB ADDRESS HERE.] Other tutoring is also available at the Tutorial and Academic Skills Center. [INSERT WEB ADDRESS HERE.]

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to complete their work in keeping with the university's Academic Honor Code. For more information: [INSERT WEB ADDRESS HERE.]

Texts

Lane, Belden C. *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. New York: Penguin, 1985.

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

Format

Interactive lecture
Large- and small-group discussion
Student presentations

Attendance Policy

Every absence beyond two unexcused absences will result in the loss of one full letter grade; every additional two unexcused absences will result in the loss of an additional letter grade.

Coursework

20%	Team presentation	You may choose to be on a team presenting the history of any non-Christian religion or non-mainstream religious group in America.
15%	Reflection paper	Trace your personal religious genealogy, noting the people and places that have influenced you and laid the foundation for your current beliefs.
40%	Research paper	Suggested Topic: (religiously significant group or individual) in (American region) during (any period). Must use at least five primary sources and five secondary sources. 15-20 pages double-spaced. Proposals due on [date] Bibliography drafts due on [date] Please email as an MSWord file to the instructor by [date].
25%	Final exam	Administered on [date] Objective (fill-in, multiple choice, etc.) and essay.

Grading Scale [TBA]

Course Schedule

[assumes an approximately 15 week semester; flexibility with frequency of course meetings.]
(Recommended readings in parentheses.)

Week 1 – Introductions; Native-American religions

Marty viii-10

Lane 3-99

Week 2 –Catholicism in New Spain and New France (c.1500-1800)

Marty 11-40

Lane 100-130

Week 3 – Protestantism in early New England (c.1550-1650)

Marty 41-72

Lane 131-153, (154-159)

Week 4 – Dissent and revival in the British colonies (c.1630-1760)

Marty 75-89, (91-105), 106-128

Lane 160-188

Week 5 – Revolution and expansion (c.1750-1820)

Marty 130-187

Debate: “The monuments of Washington D.C.: For reflection or worship?”

*Research paper proposals due.

Week 6 – American innovations and utopias; racial prejudice (c.1820-1890)

Marty 188-269

Week 7 – Immigrant Catholicism; Protestantism in crisis (c.1860-1900)

Marty 270-317

Lane 189-211

Week 8 – *Gilead* (Part I)

Robinson 3-122

Week 9 – *Gilead* (Part II)

Robinson 123-247

*Reflection papers due.

Week 10 – Therapeutic spiritualities; mainstream Protestantism in ascendancy (c.1880-1920)

Marty 318-371

(Lane 213-228)

Week 11 – Controversy and conflict; the division of Protestantism (c.1920-1965)

Marty 372-426

(Lane 229-237)

Week 12 – Pluralism and progressivism; American civil religion (c.1965-present)

Marty 428-477

(Lane 238-255)

Debate: “Can you be an atheist and a Republican? An evangelical and a Democrat?”

*Research paper bibliography drafts due.

Week 13 – Judaism and Islam in America

Student presentations.

Debate: “Is ‘Judeo-Christian culture’ an American invention or a two-thousand year-old tradition?”

Debate: “How much freedom of religion does the Constitution guarantee? (Should there be a mosque at Ground Zero?)”

Week 14 – Hinduism and Buddhism in America

Student presentations.

Debate: “Can you mix religions?”

Debate: “Are New Age and secular adaptations of Eastern religious practice authentic expressions of those faiths? (Should Hindus reclaim Yoga from Christians?)”

Week 15 – Closing reflections.

Debate: “How religious is America? How religious should America be? (Is this or has this ever been a Christian nation?)”

*Research papers due.

*Final exam on [date]