

Religions in America
AMST 168b, Spring 2006
Location: Swig Intercultural Center Conference Room 103
MWR 10:10 - 11 am

Professor Tona Hangen
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Hours: W/Th 11-1:30 and by appt

WHY THIS COURSE?

In his book, Modern Times, Paul Johnson wrote: "What is important in history is not only the events that occur but the events that obstinately do not occur. The outstanding non-event of modern times was the failure of religious belief to disappear." The United States began, it might be argued, with religious motives at its core and in its founding. Religions in America inspire cultural expression of all kinds from art to literature to poetry to song, film, and mass media throughout the nation's history. Religions inspire cultural conflict and clash, too; and we can read in our nation's past a troubling legacy of collision between belief systems and ways of practicing (or refusing to practice) religious faith.

In the twentieth century the Protestant consensus in American culture fractured apart. In many ways, Brandeis University itself is a product of the new religious climate of postwar America. Such fragmentation and decentralization opened up opportunities for new religious movements, new ethnic denominations, and new religious meanings in public discourse. Yet the U.S. remains, by almost any measure, a highly religious country, what religious scholar Diana Eck calls "the world's most religiously diverse nation."

This course will explore that diversity, its past and its present, emphasizing the multiplicity of voices, traditions, and kinds of cultural texts. Our main objective will be to round out the sometimes highly polarized and caricatured portrait of religiosity in America, to take it seriously as a topic of scholarly study. Topics to be introduced include: defining what religion is, understanding the sacred texts of major world religions in the US, Native American religion---practice and legal status, Catholicism, Protestantism, Christian sects and American religious entrepreneurship, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, revivalism, religion in education, Judaism, religion in politics and the public sphere, new trends in religious organization ("megachurches"), media and televangelism. Regardless of your personal beliefs, this course can help you make sense of the richly varied and contentious religious context in which we all find ourselves. I hope that search will be meaningful for each of you.

REQUIRED READINGS: (* indicates it is also on library reserve)

*Peter W. Williams, America's Religions From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century.

*Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology.

*Diana Eck, A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation.

*Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony.

*Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley, Autobiography of Malcolm X

Additional readings: articles and primary documents on WebCT or handed out in class

This course utilizes WebCT Vista (a new platform). All registered students are automatically enrolled in an email discussion list, which I will use occasionally for posting discussion questions, announcements or notes on the week's reading. Each class session has a "background reading" and a "primary

documents" reading. Readings are assigned from the above texts, handed out in class, or (most often) posted as pdf files on WebCT Vista. The online readings can be accessed from any internet-connected computer and read, downloaded, and printed in part or in whole as you please. You will be responsible for the content of all readings for our class discussions, so I encourage you to take the time to read them carefully, make notes, and bring ideas and questions to class. Some classes have a lot of reading, others less, so plan accordingly.

SACRED TEXTS (Choose ONE for a 5-page paper due on 2/16 and obtain or purchase on your own):

Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Christ

The Koran (specify which translation you choose)

NIV Women's Devotional Bible (Zondervan)

Bhagavad Gita (specify which translation you choose)

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your grade depends on your active presence and prepared, passionate participation in class meetings and discussions.

This course is designated "writing intensive" and fulfills the requirement for all writing intensive courses. Coursework involves several different kinds of writing, revision, and presentation of your writing.

- First, you will write six two-page (double-spaced) response papers throughout the term, each one engaging your choice of a reading or something we have discussed in class. A few of these will "directed" responses to a question. These will be due on class meeting days labeled with [RP] - these are 2/2, 2/9, 3/1, 3/15, 3/22, 4/3 and 4/12. You will notice there are seven of these, so you can opt out of any ONE response paper. You can take that option any time during the term, but only once. If you write all seven, you will receive extra credit.
- You will also write and present a short (5 minute) oral and/or audiovisual presentation on a designated day, reporting on your visit to a religious sanctuary or worship service.
- Finally, you will write three formal papers ranging in length from 4 to 8 pages (guidelines for each to be given later and also posted on the course website). There will be a final exam during finals week. Here's the breakdown:

Class participation	10%
Oral/Audiovisual Presentation	8%
Response Papers	12%
Narrative paper	10%
Sacred text paper	20% (10% initial grade, 10% revised grade)
Research paper	20%
Final exam	20%
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	100%

OF NOTE:

* If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

** I will expect you to follow the policies on academic honesty outlined in the Brandeis student handbook. Plagiarism or cheating has no place at Brandeis and will be reported to the Student Judicial system. Besides, it's against the teachings of every religion.

Summary of Readings and Assignments

*W = denotes it is posted on WebCT for your reading and/or downloading pleasure

AMST168b Religions in America

Spring 2006 Professor Hangen

#	Date	Day	Topic	Due:	Background Reading*	Primary Documents*	Notes
1	1/18	Wed	Introductions		None	None	
2	1/19	Thu	Religion, working definition		Williams Intro pp. 1-10	James, Varieties 2&3 (W)	
3	1/23	Mon	The 1950s Moment	1950s rel document	Hudnut-Beumler, Ch 2 (W)	Bring your own (1 copy for each person in the class)	
4	1/25	Wed	The Herberg Hypothesis		None	Herberg, Chapters 1-5 (to p. 98)	
5	1/26	Thu	Colonial Overview		Williams Ch 12-19 as needed	Virginia's Cure, Modell of CC, Puritan Poets, Salzburgers, Episcopal Order v. Chaos (W)	
6	1/30	Mon	Colonial Part 2	Personal narrative	Same as above	Dartmouth 1769, Backcountry Baptists, Edwards Divine & Supernatural Light (all on W)	shopping ends
7	2/1	Wed	Religion in the New Nation		Williams Ch 22	Deism, Jefferson, Mather (W)	
8	2/2	Thu	Herberg's Protestants	RP #1	Herberg Ch 6, Williams Ch 23-26	Personal Clerical Struggles, Battle Hymn, Lyman Beecher, Millerites, Frontier Religion (W)	
9	2/6	Mon	Protestant Nation, or not?		Williams Ch 31-35, 42	Revivalism, In His Steps, Scopes Monkey Trial (W) and document packet on Chatauqua (handout)	
10	2/8	Wed	Herberg's Catholics		Herberg Ch 7, Williams Ch 20, 36 (Ch 6-7 for background if needed)	Ethnicity, Spalding Religious Mission (W) and Orsi, "Days and Nights of the Festa" (handout)	
11	2/9	Thu	Vatican II, or what Herberg didn't know	RP #2	Williams Ch 48-49	Vatican II, Ecumenism, Uprooting and Rerooting, No Time for Tying Cats (W)	
12	2/13	Mon	Catholics Today		Williams Ch 50	Virgin of El Barrio, Trappists (W)	
13	2/15	Wed	Herberg's Jews		Herberg Ch 8, Williams Ch 20, 28 (Ch 3-4 for background if needed)	Rabbi Wise in Albany, Jewtown, Rise of David Levinsky (W)	

#	Date	Day	Topic	Due:	Background Reading*	Primary Documents*	Notes
14	2/16	Thu	Contemporary Judaism	Sacred text paper version 1	Williams Ch 46-47	Judaism American Style (W), and Irene Sege, "A Clean Start," <i>Boston Globe</i> 5 June 2004 [Search using NewsBank].	
--			<i>2/18-2/26 February break</i>				
15	2/27	Mon	Extending the Vision Out		Eck pp. 1-80	Herberg Ch 9-11 (pp. 211-272)	
16	3/1	Wed	African American Religion 1	RP #3	Williams Ch 2, 27	Methodism (Black), Doth Ethiopia Stretch..., and spirituals (W)	
17	3/2	Thu	African American Rel 2		Williams Ch 40, 51 Cleage, "Black Messiah," and Pleck, "Kwanzaa" (W)	Malcolm X Part 1 (Ch 1-9)	
--	3/2	Thu	<i>Evening screening of Spike Lee, "Four Little Girls"</i>	<i>Lee, "Four Little Girls"</i>	<i>Little Girls</i>	<i>Location and Time TBA</i>	
18	3/6	Mon	Prophets and Visionaries		Williams Ch 29, 30	Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Shaker vision texts (W)	
19	3/8	Wed	Modern Mormons	Revised sacred text paper	Shipps, "Difference and Otherness" (W) Williams Ch 45	Mormonism for Dummies, Cummings letter (handouts)	
20	3/9	Thu	Worlds Fair 1893		Williams Ch 53, Ziolkowski "Heavenly Visions" (W)	Vivekananda East Meets West (W)	
21	3/13	Mon	Library intensive session	Meet at the library		*note: complete religious site visit by this date	
22	3/15	Wed	American Hindus	RP #4	Eck Ch 3	Thoreau (W)	
23	3/16	Thu	American Buddhists		Eck Ch 4		
24	3/20	Mon	Revival & Restoration		Williams Ch 34, Blumhofer "A Fresh Look" (W)	McPherson (W), Azusa Street centennial documents (handout)	
25	3/22	Wed	Revival on Film & Radio	RP #5	None	None	
	3/22	Wed	7 pm Spingold Theater		Talk by Sister Helen Prejean		
26	3/23	Thu	Religion and Politics since Reagan	Rsch biblio & abstract	Williams Ch 44	Brickner Stand in the Gap, Reed (W)	
	3/23	Thu	<i>Evening screening of</i>		<i>"The Eyes of Tammy Faye"</i>	<i>Location and time TBA</i>	

#	Date	Day	Topic	Due:	Background Reading*	Primary Documents*	Notes
27	3/27	Mon	Televangelism		Erickson, "Religious Radio and Television" (W)	Bakker packet (handout)	
28	3/29	Wed	Native Americans: Return to Beginnings		Williams Ch 1, 21, 39	None	
29	3/30	Thu	Native American Religion		Employment Div v. Smith 4/17/1990. No. 88-1213. 494 U.S. 872; 1990 U.S. LEXIS 2021.	Silko, Ceremony	
30	4/3	Mon	Ceremony/Ceremonies	RP #6	Williams Ch 39	Silko, Ceremony	
32	4/5	Wed	In-class oral presentations		None	None	
31	4/6	Thu	Islam 1		Williams Ch 40, 52	Malcolm X, Part 2 (Ch 10-end)	
33	4/10	Mon	Nation of Islam, Islam in the Nation		Eck Ch 5		
34	4/12	Wed	Dealing with Conflict	RP #7 web Assignmnt	None	Web-based assignment using 9/11 Archive: http://911digitalarchive.org/	
---	4/13	to	4/23 <i>Spring/ Easter/</i>	<i>Passover/ Solstice</i>	<i>Break, no classes in session</i>		
35	4/24	Mon	Harmonialism 1		Williams Ch 41, Silberger "Mary Baker Eddy" (W)	Peale Power of Positive Thinking (W)	
36	4/26	Wed	Harmonialism 2	Research paper	Williams Ch 55	None	
37	4/27	Thu	Religion in Education and Higher Education	Campus web assignmnt	None	Grove, "Reading, Writing and Right Wing Politics," <i>Boston Globe</i> 15 August 2004; Neil Swidey, "God on the Quad," <i>Boston Globe Magazine</i> 30 November 2003; and Naomi Schaefer Riley, "What Would Jesus Do at Harvard?" <i>Boston Globe</i> 28 November 2004. [Search using NewsBank]	

#	Date	Day	Topic	Due:	Background Reading*	Primary Documents*	Notes
38	5/1	Mon	Religion Today - Whazzup?	Megachurch web assignment	Williams Ch 43, 55	G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "Higher Power Point Presentation," <i>Boston Globe</i> 2 Jan 2006 [Search using NewsBank]	
39	5/3	Wed	Final Fire: Waco		Ammerman "Waco..." (W)	1995 PBS Frontline documentary, "Waco: The Inside Story," (60 minutes long) posted at: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/view	This is a Brandeis Thurs
---			<i>Final exam scheduled</i>	<i>during</i>	<i>Exam week - date TBA</i>		