

Religions in America
AMST 168b, Spring 2005
Brown 218
MWR 11am - noon

Professor Tona Hangen
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Hours: M/W/Th 12-1 and by appt

ABOUT THE 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 have inspired cultural expression of all kinds from art to literature to poetry to song, film, and mass media throughout the nation's history. Religions have inspired cultural conflict and clash, too; and we could read in our nation's past a troubling legacy of collision between belief systems and ways of practicing (or refusing to practice) religious faith.

The twentieth century saw the fragmentation of the fragile dominant Protestant establishment in American culture. Its dis-establishment 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. Out of these fragments has come 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, and to provide opportunities to explore relationships between the "sacred" and the "secular." 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)

- *Catherine Albanese, America: Religions and Religion.
 - *Randall Balmer, Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America.
 - *Lynn Schofield Clark, From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural.
 - *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

SACRED TEXTS (Choose ONE for a 5-page paper due on 2/17):

Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures
The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Christ
The Koran
NIV Women's Devotional Bible (Zondervan)
Bhagavad Gita

ALSO ON RESERVE AT THE LIBRARY (FOR FURTHER READING OR REFERENCE):

Mark Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada. BR515. H57 1992
Rosetta Ross, Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights [BR563. N4 R67 2003]
Robert Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950 [BT660. N44 O77 1985]
C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in the African American Experience. BR563. N4 L55 1990
Marc Lee Raphael, Judaism in America. BM205. R37 2003
Leonard Sweet, Communication and Change in American Religious History BR 517 .C655 1993

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 a reading or something we have discussed in class. These will be due on class meeting days labeled with [RP] – these are 2/3, 2/10, 3/2, 3/16, 3/23, 4/4 and 4/14. 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 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). There will be a final exam during finals week. Here's the breakdown:

Class participation	20%
Response Papers	10%
Narrative paper	10%
Sacred text paper	20% (10% initial grade, 10% revised grade)
Research paper	20%
Final exam	20%

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.

SYLLABUS

Intro Unit: Defining religion in America

- Thurs 1/13 First class
- Mon 1/17 No classes
- Wed 1/19 Discussion. Reading: Albanese 1-18

- **Thurs 1/20** Reading: Albanese Chapter 4; Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702); Thomas Jefferson, "An Act Establishing Religious Freedom in the State of Virginia" (1786) and "Letter to the Danbury Virginia Baptists" (1802) [WebCT]
- **Mon 1/24** Reading: Diana Eck 1-79; Jacob Riis, "Jewtown," in *How the Other Half Lives* [WebCT]

Religion and Higher Education

- **Wed 1/26 [4 page personal narrative due]** Reading: Steve Grove, "Reading, Writing and Right Wing Politics," *Boston Globe* 15 August 2004 [Search on Louis using NewsBank] For further reading, see the bibliography online at the Baylor Institute for Faith and Learning: www3.baylor.edu/IFL/bib.htm
- **Thurs 1/27 [Mini-reports on campus religious life due for in-class discussion]** Reading: Neil Swidey, "God on the Quad," *Boston Globe Magazine* 30 November 2003; and Naomi Schaefer Riley, "What Would Jesus Do at Harvard?" *Boston Globe* 28 November 2004. [Search using NewsBank]

Native American Religious Practice

- **Mon 1/31** Reading: *Employment Division v. Smith* 1990 [Search using Lexis Nexis]; Albanese 24-47
- **Wed 2/2 and Thurs 2/3** Reading: Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*. **[RP #1 due on Thurs 2/3]**

The Mainstream

- **Mon 2/7** Reading: Albanese 102-149 and Jonathan Edwards, "He That Believeth Shall be Saved," (1751) [WebCT]
- **Wed 2/9** Reading: Albanese 149-190.
- **Thurs 2/10 [RP #2 due]** Reading: Albanese 396-431

Religious Upstarts

- **Mon 2/14** Shakers and Mormon. Reading: Albanese 191-249; Julie Nicoletta, "The Gendering of Order and Disorder," Stephen Stein, excerpts from *The Shaker Experience*; Jan Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream." [WebCT]
- **Wed 2/16** Christian Science, Metaphysics, and New Age. Reading: Julius Silberger, "Mary Baker Eddy" and Albanese 233-238, 260-279 and 350-368. [WebCT]
- **Thurs 2/17 [Sacred text paper version 1 due]** Pentecostalism, Culture Wars & Anti-Abortion. Reading: Albanese 170-174 and 369-389; Blumhofer, "A Fresh Look at Legend and Reality, 1901-06" in *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (1993); anti-abortion documents on WebCT; and browse websites as listed in the handout/WebCT.

2/21 – 2/27 February Break, No Classes

Jews, Hindus and World Religions

- **Mon 2/28** Judaism in American religious history. Reading: Albanese Chapter 2; Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, excerpts [WebCT].
- **Wed 3/2** Contemporary American Judaism. Reading: Shapiro, "Judaism American Style" [WebCT] and Irene Sege, "A Clean Start," *Boston Globe* 5 June 2004 [Search using NewsBank]. **[RP #3 due]**
- **Thurs 3/3** The World Parliament and American Hinduism. Reading: Thoreau, journal excerpts; Ziolkowski, "Heavenly Visions and Worldly Intentions: Chicago's Columbian Exposition and the World's Parliament of Religions"; and Swami Chetanananda, "Vivekananda: East Meets West" excerpts [all on WebCT]; also Eck Chapter 3; Albanese 301-310.

Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism

- **Mon 3/7** Catholics in American religious history. Reading: Albanese 73-100; Robert Orsi, *Madonna of 115th Street*, Chapters 1 and 7, "The Days and Nights of the Festa" and "The Meanings of the Devotion to the Madonna of 115th Street" [on library reserve]
- **Wed 3/9** **[revised sacred text paper due]** Reading: Timothy Sarbaugh, "John F. Kennedy and the West" w/ 1960 presidential campaign documents; Chuck Colson, "The Last Acceptable Prejudice;" James Martin, "The Last Acceptable Prejudice," Phillip Jenkins, "Some Prejudices are More Equal Than Others," and Suzanne Sataline, "Catholic Schools Turn to Marketing to Survive" [WebCT]
- **Thurs 3/10** Library intensive session with Leslie Homzie. Meet in the Vershbow Training Room on the Goldfarb Mezzanine level during our usual class time.
- **Mon 3/14** The Cloister and the Jail. Reading: Ann Patrick Ware, *Midwives of the Future: American Sisters Tell Their Story*, excerpts, and Michael Downey, "Trappist: Living in the Land of Desire" and handout article "Sister Ann Builds Her Dream School" [WebCT] **[Please complete your religious site visit by this date]**

Mass Media, Race, and Controversy

- **Wed 3/16** The Radio Experience. Reading: Hal Erickson, intro to *Religious Radio and Television in the United States* [WebCT], discussion of in-class screening of sound clips. **[RP #4 due]**
- **Thurs 3/17** Reading: Jill Watts, "In This Living Room," from *God, Harlem, USA: The Father Divine Story* [WebCT] and *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Part One.
- **Mon 3/21** Reading: Martin Luther King, selected speeches [WebCT]; Further reading: Rosetta Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying* Chapters 3 and 6 [library reserve].

- **Wed 3/23** in-class screening of Spike Lee, *Four Little Girls* (1997). No reading. **[RP #5 due]**
- **Thurs 3/24 (Brandeis Monday)** Militancy and Black Nationalism. Reading: Cleage, "Black Messiah," and Elizabeth Pleck, "Kwanzaa: The Making of a Black Nationalist Tradition, 1966-1990" [WebCT]. **[Turn in research topic prospectus and bibliography]**
- **Mon 3/28** in-class screening, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
- **Wed 3/30** Media Ministry. Readings on Bakker scandal, TBA.

Music and Pop Culture

- **Thurs 3/31** Case study: *The Passion of the Christ*. Readings: TBA document packet.
- **Mon 4/4** Gayle Wald, "From Spirituals to Swing" [WebCT]. **[RP #6 due]**
- **Wed 4/6** Reading: Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Further reading: R. Marie Griffith, "Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters" [WebCT]
- **Thurs 4/7** in-class oral presentations on sanctuary/worship service site visit. Reading: Lynn Schofield Clark, *From Angels to Aliens*.

American Muslims, Pre and Post 9/11

- **Mon 4/11** Reading: Eck Ch. 5-6; Albanese 293-300
- **Wed 4/13** Reading: *Autobiography of Malcolm X, Part II*.
- **Thurs 4/14** Assignment: narratives from 9/11 Memory Project. **[RP #7 due]**

Final Fire: Politics, Waco

- **Mon 4/18** Megachurches, PK, Christian Coalition, and the Moral Majority. Reading: Patrick Morley, "The Next Christian Men's Movement;" Bryan Brickner, "Stand in the Gap;" and Barbara Bradley, "Old-Time Religion" [WebCT]
- **Wed 4/20** Religion/Politics. Case Study: George W. Bush. In-class screening of excerpts of PBS Frontline, "The Jesus Factor." Reading: handouts. **[Research paper due]**
- **Thurs 4/21 Final class**. Reading: Eck Ch. 4 & 7; Nancy Ammerman, "Waco, Federal Law Enforcement and Scholars of Religion;" and Rich Cohen, "Welcome to the Conspiracy" [WebCT]. Assignment: Outside of class, find an hour to watch the 1995 PBS Frontline documentary, "Waco: The Inside Story," posted at: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/view

[Final exam to be scheduled during exam week]