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.
*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):
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:

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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Response Papers</td>
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<td>Narrative paper</td>
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<td>Sacred text paper</td>
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<td>Research paper</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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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


### 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


• **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.
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 Levensky*, excerpts [WebCT].

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]
- **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].


• 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**


• Mon 4/4 Gayle Wald, "From Spirituals to Swing" [WebCT]. [RP #6 due]


• 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


• Thurs 4/14 Assignment: narratives from 9/11 Memory Project. [RP #7 due]

**Final Fire: Politics, Waco**


• 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]