

REL 3102: AMERICAN CATHOLIC HISTORY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the historical experiences of Catholics in North America from the colonial period to the present. This course is not only an institutional history of the American Catholic Church, but also a study of popular manifestations of Catholicism which tries to uncover the diverse experiences of American Catholics in different places and times throughout the history of the United States. We will use a variety of primary and secondary sources to achieve these goals, including traditional monographs, novels, memoirs, films, papal documents, correspondences, essays, speeches, poetry, political writings, sermons, advertisements, liturgies, and works of art. Over the course of the semester we will learn about the major developments, persons, institutions, and ideas that shaped the experiences of Catholics at different moments in American history. We will also learn how to listen to and understand the voices of people from the past and the present, perspectives that are embedded in historical artifacts and available to us in the persons of Catholic adherents today.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

In the classroom, I consider it my responsibility to conduct myself as both a teacher *and* a student of religion. I value the messiness of making sense of religion and encourage my students to join me in the business of interpreting the worlds of others by using historical and ethnographic methods. It is also my responsibility to create an environment of learning that balances the amount of information covered in lectures and reading assignments with critical reflections and group discussions about topics related to Catholic experiences in America. In light of these expectations, students are required to (1) write 3 book reviews, (2) complete a midterm exam and final exam, and (3) come to class prepared to discuss pre-assigned questions about reading assignments.

CLASS PROTOCOL

Consideration and Respectfulness – The study of religion often leads to the discovery of religious traditions and practices that differ significantly from what is familiar to students. It is essential that students approach the rich history of religion with a perspective that will allow them to understand those differences. Accordingly, all discussion in this course must be carried out with respect for the views of those with whom one might differ. There will be no proselytizing in class.

REQUIRED BOOKS

James Fisher, *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America*
Mark Massa and Catherine Osborne, eds., *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*
Matthew Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*

Leslie Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception*
Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Book Reviews (300 pts., 100 pts. each)

Students will be required to answer questions related to three (3) book reviews for this class. Writing guidelines will be provided.

Midterm Examination (100 pts.)

Students will be tested on their ability to apply analytical theories and methods to the study of American Catholicism.

Final Examination (100 pts.)

Students will be tested on their ability to apply analytical theories and methods to the study of religion.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Welcome and Expectations

Week 2: Introduction to Roman Catholicism in the United States

What do you want to get out of this class? What types of approaches are we going to take when we try to understand the history of Roman Catholicism in the United States? What do we mean when we say “American Catholicism”?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Preface

Week 3: Spanish and French Colonialism in the Americas

What impact did Spanish and French Catholics have on the lives of Native Americans and future European colonists to the “New World”? How did Catholicism change in the face of a diversity of colonial experiences? What is the legacy of these early Catholic settlements in what would become Canada, Mexico, and parts of the United States?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 1
- Documentary Reader
 - Meeting of a Spanish Missionary with a Navajo Apache Chief (1630)
 - Jean de Brebeuf, S.J., “Instructions to the Fathers of Our Society Who Shall Be Sent to the Hurons” (1637)
 - Louis Hennepin’s “Description of the Missionary Difficulties in Converting the Native Americans” (1697)

Week 4: English Colonialism and Frontier Catholicism in Early America

How were the experiences of English Catholics in Maryland and other American colonies different from the experiences of French and Spanish Catholics of the same period? What was life like for Catholics of many ethnic and national backgrounds on the American frontier? Should we consider the English Catholic settlement of Maryland to be the starting point for a history of Catholic experiences in the United States?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 2

- Documentary Reader
 - The First American Catholic Bible (1790)
 - John Carroll's Letter on Lay Trusteeship in New York City (1786)
 - Mother Theodore Guerin Travels to Indiana (1840)

Week 5: Immigration and Anti-Catholicism in the 19th Century

How did European Catholic immigrants change the religious landscape of the United States during the 19th century? Did immigrant groups assimilate or resist American culture? How did Protestant Americans respond to the immigration of Catholics to the United States? How did these and other issues change the ways in which Catholics believed and practiced their understanding of Catholicism?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 3
- Documentary Reader
 - Lyman Beecher, "A Plea for the West" (1835)
 - Archbishop John Hughes Condemns the Public School Society of New York (1841)
 - The St. Raphael Societies' Memorial (1891)

Week 6: Catholic Culture of Devotion

What is Catholic devotional culture? What is the role of the Virgin Mary and the saints in the lives of some Catholics? What do you know about "lived religion" and how does this affect the way you think about Catholic experiences in the United States?

- Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*
- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4
- Documentary Reader
 - James Cardinal Gibbons, "The Invocation of the Saints" (1876)
 - The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1897)

Week 7: Catholic Labor Tradition and the Americanist Crisis

The latter half of the 19th century saw many Catholics engaged in American culture, as seen most evidently in the Catholic composition of the American workforce and Catholic higher education. How did the American experience put stress on the relationship between Catholics in the United States and Europe? How did some popes respond to the changes that were taking place in the American Catholic church? Where do these papal encyclicals fit into our larger discussion of American Catholic history? Did you know that "Americanism" was a heresy? Yep, I didn't think so.

- **BOOK REVIEW #1 DUE**
- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 4
- Documentary Reader
 - Cardinal Gibbons Defends the Knights of Labor (1887)
 - John Ireland, Introduction to *The Life of Father Hecker* (1891)
 - *Testem Benevolentiae* Condemns "Americanism" (1899)
 - Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin Found the Catholic Worker (1933)

Week 8 (Midterm): World Wars and Public Catholicism in the 20th Century

At what point do we see Catholics entering into “mainstream” American society? Is the term “mainstream” useful or confusing? What do we mean by “public Catholicism”? What is the relationship between war and religion, and, particularly, how and why do American Catholics engage in the world wars of the 20th century? How does their service in the war efforts change their status in American society?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 5, Chapter 6
- Documentary Reader
 - John A. Ryan and the Bishops’ Program for Social Reconstruction (1919)
 - The American Citizenship Curriculum (1946)
 - Patrick Peyton and the Family Rosary Crusade (1951)

Week 9: African Americans and Racism in the Catholic Church

How did people of color influence the history of Catholicism in the United States? Specifically, how did people of African descent experience their Catholicism in light of the many racial prejudices both inside and outside the Catholic church? Does racism exist in the Catholic Church? Is the Catholic Church a racist institution? What is “white Catholicism”?

- Matthew Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic*
- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 6
- Documentary Reader
 - Bishop John England on Slavery (1840)
 - John LaFarge, S.J., *The Catholic Viewpoint on Race Relations* (1956)
 - Mary Peter (Margaret) Traxler, S.S.N.D., “After Selma, Sister, You Can’t Stay Home Again!” (1965)
 - Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (1968)

Week 10: JFK and Vatican II

What were some of the major changes that came as a result of the Second Vatican Council? How did these changes affect the lives of Catholics in the United States? Why did some people embrace while others resist these changes? How did the coincidence of the election of John F. Kennedy facilitate these larger changes in the American Catholic church?

- **BOOK REVIEW #2 DUE**
- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 6, Chapter 7
- John F. Kennedy, “Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association,” <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/johnfkennedyhoustonministerialspeech.html>
- Documentary Reader
 - John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960)
 - “How the ‘People of God’ Want to Worship” (1964)
 - Father Gommaer De Pauw, J.C.D., “The Catholic Traditionalist Manifesto” (1964)
 - Thomas Merton, “Fourth and Walnut Vision” (1966)

Week 11: Latinx Catholicism and Immigration in the 20th Century

It is estimated that the Catholic Church in the United States will be a “minority majority church” by the mid-twenty-first century. What does this mean for white Catholicism in the United States? How is the history of Catholic immigration in the twentieth century different from and similar to Catholic immigration of the twenty-first century?

- *Communion of Immigrants*, Chapter 7
- Documentary Reader
 - “Report on the Religious Conditions of Puerto Ricans in New York City” (1951)
 - Catolicos por la Raza Demands a Commitment to the Poor (1969-1970)
 - Richard Rodriguez Recalls His Childhood (1982)
 - Socorro Duran, “A Great Sign Appeared in the Sky” (2005)

Week 12: Women, Sex, and Sexuality in the Catholic Church

How have ideas and practices of sex affected internal and external debates about Catholicism? Celibacy, abortion, contraception, married priests, women priests—these and other issues are important questions having an impact on the present and future state of Catholicism in the United States. What does power and religious authority have to do with how Catholics practice their understanding of Catholicism? How have LGBTQ people experienced Catholicism?

- Leslie Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception*
- Documentary Reader
 - Patty Crowley Addresses the Papal Birth Control Commission (1965)
 - “Statement by Catholic Theologians” on *Humanae Vitae* (1968)
 - Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?” (1972)
 - ACT UP and WHAM! Protest at St. Patrick’s Cathedral (1989)

Week 13: Catholicism in Crisis

Is Catholicism in crisis today? How has the sex abuse scandal of the priesthood affected the reputation of the Catholic Church? How have survivors of sex abuse criticized the Catholic Church and what has the Catholic Church done to and for those who have been abused. What is the place of Catholicism in American life during the 21st century?

- **BOOK REVIEW #3 DUE**
- Documentary Reader
 - Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, “A Consistent Ethic of Life” (1983)
 - U.S. Catholic Bishops, “The Challenge of Peace” (1983)
 - R. Scott Appleby, “The Church at Risk” (2002)
 - Pope Francis Addresses the United States Congress (2015)

Week 14: Review/Concentrated Study Period

Week 15: Final Exam