

Religion in Early North America

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Course Description

This writing-intensive course introduces undergraduates to the joys and challenges of studying religion historically. How should we study what people in the past believed? What happened when people from different faith backgrounds met and interacted? How can understanding beliefs help us understand their motivations and actions? How should we think about belief historically? And what can understanding religious belief in the past help us understand about the present? Students will examine these questions through reading and writing about four episodes in the religious history of colonial North America.

Rationale

I see the purpose of this class as twofold: first, it provides a basic introduction to thinking historically about religion in the context of early North America, and second, it helps students learn to write and research at the college level. Because I place so much emphasis on the second goal, I have sacrificed comprehensiveness. We do **not** study every religious experience nor do we examine every major development in American religious history. Inevitably, those reading this syllabus may feel uncomfortable about what I leave out. Yet what the course lacks in comprehensiveness it makes up in attention to close reading of primary and secondary sources and in writing and research instruction.

Rice University has an undergraduate population of approximately 3000 students. Of these, some 350 major in the humanities, and the history department serves some 150 majors in their junior and senior years. Undergraduate class sizes are small; I have taught surveys of fifteen and upper division seminars of three to eight. I anticipate enrollment in this course would be no more than fifteen. (Rice's small class sizes allows me to offer a course in which I would read first and final drafts of four papers.) This course would be the only class in the history department to focus on religion in the Americas. It would likely also attract religious studies majors; the religious studies department at the moment does not have a specialist in early American religious history. This course is geared towards freshmen and sophomores.

A quick note on writing assignments in this course: writing assignments from section to section will increase in length and difficulty. The first writing assignment will involve critiquing Anderson's argument after reading many of the primary sources she uses from the *Jesuit Relations*. By the third writing assignment, students will work on identifying one or two primary sources on black Christianity on their own, and the fourth writing assignment will be a mini-research paper. I will assign topics for this final paper, probably various religious groups in eighteenth-century North America (i.e., Quakers,

Moravians, the small community of Jews, the Pietists at Ephrata, etc.) and students will go through the steps of writing a research paper from consulting the reference room, to identifying sources and writing an annotated bibliography, generating a research questions, formulating an argument, and producing a proposal and final paper.

Texts:

Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (2007)
Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (2009)
Allan Greer, ed., *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (2000)
David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (1990)
Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (2006)
Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (2005)

Grading and Expectations:

First paper draft.....	5%
First paper final.....	10%
Second paper draft.....	5%
Second paper final.....	15%
Third paper draft workshop.....	10%
Third paper final.....	15%
Fourth paper bibliography.....	5%
Fourth paper proposal.....	5%
Fourth paper presentation.....	10%
Fourth paper final.....	20%

You will note that there is no percentage for participation. This does not mean, however, that your presence in class and active involvement in our discussions is not expected. Many aspects of your work rely on collaboration with your classmates, and so unexcused absences harm everyone in the class, not just yourself. I take attendance at each class; after three unexcused absences your final grade, based on the percentages listed above, will fall by one letter grade. Your grade will fall by another letter grade for each unexcused absence after the third. That means even the perfect A student will fail the course after six absences. So, the moral of the story is...come to class!

If you are sick, or if you have a personal emergency that requires your absence from class, please provide appropriate documentation and I will excuse you. You should come to my office hours or make an appointment with me to discuss material you missed.

As a matter of fairness, I do **NOT** accept late papers. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date (unless otherwise noted)...not halfway through the class, not at the

end of class, not slipped under my office door sometime after the start of class. Only illness and personal emergency are suitable excuses for turning in a paper late with no penalty. Papers turned in late without verification of illness or personal emergency will receive a grade of **ZERO**.

If you are traveling on the day a paper is due for an athletic event or other college event, you must make arrangements with me to turn in your paper before you leave. I do not accept emailed papers (as we all know, attachments sometimes go astray—there is no substitute for a hard copy!).

All assignments in this course are covered by the honor code. You may NOT work together on research or writing assignments, unless otherwise noted.

I. French Catholics and the Innu

- August 25: introduction
*What is religion? How should we think about religious belief in the past?
- August 27: Native American religions
*Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith*, 1-62.
- August 29: *BF*, 63-164.
- September 1: No class, Labor Day.
- September 3: *BF*, 164-234, *Jesuit Relations*, 1-19.
*first paper assignment
- September 5: *JR*, 20-36.
- September 8: *JR*, 37-69.
- September 10: *JR*, 113-132.
- September 12: DRAFTS DUE.
*Evening movie: *Black Robe*.
- September 15: DRAFT DISCUSSION.
- September 17: FINAL DRAFT DUE.
*Discussion of *Black Robe*.

II. Errands in the Wilderness

- September 19: England's Radical Protestants in America
*Edmund Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*, ix-85.
- September 22: *PD*, 86-160.
- September 24: *PD*, 161-190, David D. Hall, ed., *Antinomian Controversy*, 43-77.
*second paper assignment
- September 26: *AC*, 78-151.
- September 29: *AC*, 199-310.
- October 1: *AC*, 199-310 (finish discussion), 311-330.
- October 3: *AC*, 311-395 (finish discussion).
- October 6: DRAFTS DUE. Bring two copies, one for me and one for your partner.
- October 8: DRAFT DISCUSSION.
- October 10: FINAL DRAFT DUE.
*introduction to thinking about African-American Christianities and conversion

III. African-American Christianities

- October 13: no class (midterm recess)
October 15: Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 1-132.
October 17: *RR*, 133-201.
October 20: *RR*, 202-248; Letters of Francis Le Jau (available via Owlspage)
*third paper assignment
October 22: Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (1980), 3-94. (available via Owlspage)
October 24: Raboteau, 3-94 (finish discussion); documents relating to Mary Aggie (available via owlspage).
October 27: Letters of Reverend Samuel Davies (available via Owlspage)
October 29: *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785), available via Owlspage.
October 31: DRAFTS DUE.
November 3: ROUGH DRAFT WORKSHOP
*bring a copy of your rough draft and a copy of your evaluation of your draft to class with you.
November 5: FINAL DRAFTS DUE.
*Thinking about toleration: documents on the execution of Quakers in New England.

IV. Toleration and Religious Diversity

- November 7: paper topics, reference room exercise.
November 10: Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 1-65.
November 12: *PE*, 65-127.
November 14: *PE*, 128-158.
November 17: *PE*, 159-265. (The reading will be split up among students according to their paper topics)
November 19: Presentations
November 21: Presentations, concluded, library annotated bibliography exercise.
November 24: primary sources through Evans American Imprints, Shaw-Shoemaker, and America's Historical Newspapers
November 26: sources, sources, sources.
November 28: no class (Thanksgiving Break)
December 1: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE.
*questions, problems, and arguments, writing proposals.
December 3: formulating arguments.
December 5: PROPOSALS DUE; proposal workshop.

Proposals with comments and grades will be available outside my office door by 9am Monday 8 December. I will read any drafts given to me before 5pm on Friday December 12 over the weekend and return them to you by 9am Monday December 15. This is optional and **not** required.

FINAL DRAFTS DUE to my office by 5pm Wednesday 17 December.

Dr. Goetz's Quick Guide to Writing History Papers

Structure

1. Have a thesis

The single most important part of a history paper is the thesis. The thesis is the central argument of your paper. In general, your thesis statement should be 1-2 sentences long and located in your first paragraph.

a. Come with a question.

Theses are usually the answers to questions. (For our first two papers, we'll create our questions together in class. For the final two papers, you'll be thinking up your research questions all on your own. Remember, a good thesis is usually your answer to your research question!)

b. Theses are by nature debatable.

A fact is not a thesis. Although all are true, none of the following are acceptable theses: "Some of the Innu went to France." "Anne Hutchinson was exiled from Massachusetts." Although theses must be supported by evidence, the thesis itself is your interpretation of that evidence.

c. Theses are specific.

Avoid broad generalizations that tell your audience little about your subject. For instance, the sentence "religious freedom was a good thing" is much too vague to make an effective thesis.

d. Avoid Counterfactuals.

A counterfactual is an argument based on events that did not happen. For instance, one might be tempted to argue that "Pastedachuan had lived, the story of French colonialism would have been different." Although it is tempting to make use of counterfactuals to prove a point, historians are limited to analyzing what did happen as opposed to what might have happened.

2. A Well-Organized Body

You flesh out your thesis and present your evidence in the body of your paper. Most people find it helpful to outline before beginning to write, but however you organize yourself, it is important that you move logically from point to point as you move from paragraph to paragraph. Each of your paragraphs should contain a central idea expressed in a topic sentence, usually in the first or second sentence of the paragraph.

3. Introductions and Conclusions

Papers that lack coherent introductions and conclusions tend to start in the middle and trail off at the end. It is important that you bracket your paper with an introduction that sets out your thesis and a conclusion that sums up your argument.

Content

1. History papers have to do with the past.

This may sound obvious, but often students are tempted to critique historical actors in light of modern values or to point out where people in the past went wrong. Thus, a student might feel compelled to write, "Trying to convert the Indians was wrong." Although a comparison of modern and historical practices can sometimes be useful, in general, historians try to take the past on its own terms. We are primarily interested in understanding the past rather than critiquing it.

Details, details

1. Writing in the past tense.

Unlike many other disciplines, historians follow the convention of writing in the past tense. There is one exception to this rule: when a document or a book is the subject of your sentence, you should use the present tense. The rationale is fairly simple: the people you are writing about acted in the past. They are now dead. The documents they produced, however, survive and continue in the present. Therefore: “Anderson WROTE about the Innu and the French.” BUT: “Anderson’s book IS about the Innu and the French.” When in doubt, always use the past tense.

2. Those pesky footnotes.

Footnote superscripts should be placed at the end of sentences rather than at the end of quotations. Please use the examples below for proper footnotes.

3. Avoid the passive voice.

Sentences written in the passive voice contain only half as much information as those in the active voice. They tell readers about the object of the sentence but avoid conveying information about the subject. Readers need to know who did what to whom.

4. Remember to proofread!

The point of writing is to convey information to a reader. It is important, therefore, to write clearly so that the reader can understand your arguments. Spelling and grammatical errors are distracting to the reader. Spell-check is useful, but there is no substitute for proofreading with your own eyeballs.

CITATIONS:

1. you must use footnotes when:

- a. you directly quote from one of the readings.
- b. you use an idea or interpretation paraphrased from one of the readings.

2. you do not need footnotes when:

- a. you relate a fact found in other books or sources (i.e., “George Washington was born in Virginia” does not require a footnote).
- b. You relate your own interpretation. In this case, you’ve used evidence to create your own argument, one that cannot be found anywhere but in your own head. Thus, the thesis statement of your paper should not need a footnote!

3. You should use the Chicago Manual of Style or Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Or you may follow the example below:

“The American Constitution is the final and climactic expression of the ideology of the American Revolution.”¹

Subsequent references to the same book need only the author’s last name and the page number. Bailyn argued that sovereignty had two elements.²

(This handout is based upon the handout originally made by Michelle Morris.)

¹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967, 1992), 321.

² Bailyn, 198-199.