

MORMONISM & AMERICAN CULTURE

Religious Studies–R397 (30993) | American Studies–A303 (32642)

Indiana University School of Liberal Arts | IUPUI | Spring 2017
Tue/Thu, 10:30–11:45 p.m. | IT 273

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Office Hours: Tue/Thu 12:00–1:00 or by appointment

Course Description



The Latter-day Saint tradition, or Mormonism, is the most remarkable of the new religious movements born during an explosion of denominational energy in the early American republic. The tradition traces its roots to the first vision received by its founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, in 1820, when he was only 14 years old. Three years later, an angel revealed to Smith the location of a trove of ancient scriptures, engraved on gold plates and buried in a hillside in upstate New York. Smith's translation of these plates became the Book of Mormon (1830), a uniquely American sequel to the Bible and the basis of the fundamental Mormon principle of ongoing revelation. Smith's martyrdom in 1844 in Carthage,

Illinois, at the hands of an angry mob foreshadowed the hostility the Saints would encounter as they trekked to the Great Basin to establish their American Zion in Utah. Yet despite the animosity between the Saints and the wider society, the LDS Church would go on to become a major institution that today claims some 15 million members worldwide. This course will explore the reasons for Mormon success and will wrestle with the meaning of the Latter-day Saint experience for American history and culture.

Learning Outcomes

Because of its relatively recent origins, the Mormon tradition is an ideal case for studying a religion in the making. The Latter-day Saints also offer a unique window on how religions evolved under the U.S. Constitution's system of the separation of church and state. Accordingly, this course will focus not only on the basics of Mormonism itself—its history, beliefs, and practices—but also on questions of wider significance in the study of American religion. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Discuss the major issues in Mormon studies, including the question of whether the Latter-day Saint tradition is a form of restorationist Christianity, an entirely new religion, or some combination of the two.
- Distinguish between the four parts of the Mormon canon of scripture and show how the idea of ongoing revelation, or prophecy, has shaped the tradition.
- Apply theoretical concepts in religious studies to understanding the Book of Mormon's role as scripture.
- Summarize Mormonism's principal doctrines—i.e., the main points of LDS theology.
- Explain how the early Mormon experiment with plural marriage (polygamy) tested the limits of “free exercise” (the U.S. Constitutional guarantee of religious freedom from government interference).

- Recount the evolution of Mormon participation in U.S. public life, from the aborted presidential campaign of the prophet Joseph Smith in 1844 to the presidential campaign of Mitt Romney in 2012.
- Describe the religious worldviews of contemporary American Latter-day Saints, including their attitudes toward family, gender, sexuality, and the afterlife.

Note about Faith Perspectives and Religious Studies

The academic field of Religious Studies neither requires nor excludes any particular faith perspective on your part. Our goal is to understand religious traditions (in this case, Mormonism) as historical phenomena in all their fascinating complexity. *We will not—indeed, cannot—tackle questions of ultimate religious truth.* The only thing required of you is open-mindedness—that is, a willingness to consider perspectives other than your own.

Principles of Undergraduate Learning

All Religious Studies courses are taught in accordance with IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning <<http://www.iport.iupui.edu/selfstudy/tl/PULs>>, with particular emphasis on PUL #5, "Understanding Society and Culture."

Required Course Texts (Available at the IUPUI Barnes & Noble)

- The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price (LDS triple combination edition, 1981).
- Claudia L. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America* (Praeger, 2006).
- Richard Lyman Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2008).
- Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
- Terryl L. Givens, *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2009)
- Various articles or book chapters (all available as PDFs on Canvas).

Grades and Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined by the following components:

Midterm Exam (March 2)	30%
Final Exam (May 4)	35%
Quizzes and Reading Responses (8 required; see below)	20%
Service Visit Report	5%
Class Participation	10%

Exams

The exams will include a mixture of question types; the format will be discussed in greater detail in class. Please mark the exam dates on your calendar; make-up exams will not be given.

Quizzes and Reading Responses

Reading the assigned material is VERY important for your success in the course. To help ensure that you come prepared, certain classes will begin with a short quiz on the reading assigned for that day. On certain other days, a short reading response will be due in class. The question(s) for each reading response will be announced in class (and posted on Canvas) during the previous class meeting. For the dates of quizzes and

reading responses, see the course schedule below. **You must do a total of 8 of the 10 quizzes and reading responses.** If you choose to do all 10, your lowest two grades will be dropped. It is your responsibility to keep a running total of how many quizzes and reading responses you have completed. All quizzes and reading responses will be graded on a 10-point scale. **Late, make-up, or extra-credit quizzes or reading responses will not be accepted.** Also, please note that you are still responsible for the readings even on days when there is no quiz or response paper due. Your participation grade (see below) will be determined by how well you contribute to class discussion throughout the semester.

Service Visit Report

To give you the opportunity to observe “lived” Mormonism, an opportunity will be scheduled to attend a Sabbath (Sunday) morning meeting at a local Mormon chapel (meetinghouse). (You are also welcome to attend a service on your own rather than with the class group.) Your brief report on the service (2 pages) will be worth 5% of your final grade and will be due in class on April 28. Detailed instructions about this assignment will be provided in class.

Class Participation

Because the class format will be a mixture of discussion and lecture, faithful class participation is crucial for your success. Attendance will be noted, and every absence *after the second unexcused absence* will result in a 2-point deduction from your final 10-point participation grade. Regardless of whether an absence is excused, it is your responsibility to get missed lecture notes from a classmate, *not* from the professor, and to find out about any changes or additions to the course schedule.

Late Arrivals, Early Departures, and Cell Phones

It is disruptive—and highly discouraged—to arrive to class late or leave early. Yet if you know that you must arrive late or leave early because of extraordinary circumstances, please notify the professor in advance. Also, please be sure to silence cell phones during class, and *absolutely no web browsing in class!*

Other Course Policies:

- For statements on academic conduct and student rights/responsibilities, please see: <http://www.indiana.edu/~code>
- Students needing accommodations because of physical or learning disabilities should contact Adaptive Educational Services, Joseph Taylor Hall (UC), Room 137: <http://aes.iupui.edu>
- For other problems you don't know how to solve, including difficulties affecting your class attendance, the Student Advocate Office offers objective, impartial, and confidential assistance: <http://studentaffairs.iupui.edu/student-rights/student-advocate/>

Don't Forget! Important Spring 2017 Deadlines

- Last Day to Withdraw through One.IU (with no record on transcript) Jan. 15
- Pass/Fail Option Deadline (5:00 p.m.) Jan. 27
- Last Day to Withdraw with Automatic Grade “W” (*advisor approval required*) Mar. 12

COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to revision as necessary)

- Tue., Jan. 10 Introduction to the Course
Reading for today: None—but it's VERY important to come and listen!
- Thu., Jan. 12 Background to Mormonism, Part I: Biblical Themes
C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 13-35; R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 1-15
- Tue., Jan. 17 Background to Mormonism, Part II: Protestant Primitivism/Restorationism
Jan Shippo, "The Reality of the Restoration and the Restoration Ideal in the Mormon Tradition," pp. 181-195 (PDF #1 on Canvas)
Quiz in class
- Thu., Jan. 19 Background to Mormonism, Part III: Religion in the Early Republic
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," pp. 183-204 (PDF #2 on Canvas)
- Tue., Jan. 24 The Making of a Prophet: Joseph Smith's First Vision
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 16-19; Pearl of Great Price: Joseph Smith—History 1:1-26
- Thu., Jan. 26 The Book of Mormon, Part I
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 19-24; Givens, *The Book of Mormon*, pp. 90-101; Book of Mormon: 2 Nephi 27-29; Pearl of Great Price: Joseph Smith—History 1:27-54
Quiz in class
- Tue., Jan. 31 The Book of Mormon, Part II
Reading for today: Givens, *The Book of Mormon*, pp. 3-46; Book of Mormon: 1 Nephi 1-4; 2 Nephi 2-3; 3 Nephi 1, 11-12, 15-17
- Thu., Feb. 2 The Book of Mormon, Part III
Reading for today: Givens, *The Book of Mormon*, pp. 105-122; Book of Mormon: 4 Nephi 1, Moroni 1-8, 10.
- Tue., Feb. 7 Building Skills in Religious Studies: Applying Theory to the Book of Mormon
Reading for Today: Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 1-16 (PDF #3 on Canvas)
Reading Response due in class
- Thu., Feb. 9 Further Revelations, Part I
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 24-34, 49-63; Doctrine & Covenants 107

- Tue., Feb. 14 Further Revelations, Part II
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 64-80; Doctrine & Covenants 76, 93
Quiz in class
- Thu., Feb. 16 Further Revelations, Part III
Reading for today: Doctrine & Covenants 89; selections from the Joseph Smith Translation (to be distributed in class)
- Tue., Feb. 21 Locating Zion
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 35-48
- Thu., Feb. 23 Interpreting Joseph Smith, Part I
Reading for today: Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, "Tracking the Sincere Believer," pp. 28-36 (PDF #4 on Canvas)
- Tue., Feb. 28 Interpreting Joseph Smith, Part II
Reading for today: Jan Shipps, "Richard Lyman Bushman, the Story of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, and the New Mormon History," pp. 498-516 (PDF #5 on Canvas); and R. L. Bushman, "What's New in Mormon History: A Response to Jan Shipps," pp. 517-521 (PDF #6 on Canvas)
Reading Response due in class
- Thu., Mar. 2 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Tue., Mar. 7 Interpreting Mormonism
Reading for today: Jan Shipps, selections from *Sojourner in the Promised Land* (PDF #7 on Canvas)
- Thu., Mar. 9 "Mountain" Mormons versus "Prairie" Mormons
Reading for today: R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, pp. 81-102; William D. Russell, "The LDS Church and Community of Christ: Clearer Differences, Closer Friends," pp. 177-190 (PDF #8 on Canvas)
Quiz in class
- Tue., Mar. 14 NO CLASS — Spring Break
- Thu., Mar. 16 NO CLASS — Spring Break
- Tue., Mar. 21 Latter-day Saints and the State, Part I
Reading for today: Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, pp. 1-55
Reading Response due in class
- Thu., Mar. 23 Latter-day Saints and the State, Part II
Reading for today: Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, pp. 56-108
- Tue., Mar. 28 Latter-day Saints and the State, Part III
Reading for today: Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity*, pp. 109-177
Reading Response due in class

- Thu., Mar. 30 The Family in Mormonism
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 37-55; Terry L. Givens, "Mormonism and the Family," pp. 1-8 (PDF #9 on Canvas)
- Tue., Apr. 4 Temples and Temple Ritual
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 37-55
- Thu., Apr. 6 Missionaries and the Global Church
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 57-74
- Tue., Apr. 11 Race, Ethnicity, and Class
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 91-109
Quiz in class
- Thu., Apr. 13 Gender and Sexual Orientation
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 111-129; Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Mormonism and Gender Issues," pp. 15-22 (PDF #9 on Canvas)
- Tue., Apr. 18 Gender, Part II: The Mother in Heaven
Reading for today: Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," pp. 64-77 (PDF #10 on Canvas)
Reading Response due in class
- Thu., Apr. 20 The Public Faces of Mormonism
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 131-146; Patrick Q. Mason, "Mormonism and Politics," pp. 22-29 (PDF #9 on Canvas)
- Tue., Apr. 25 Mormon Intellectual Life & Mormonism in Popular Culture
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 147-161; Kathryn Lofton, "Mormonism and Popular Culture," pp. 9-14 (PDF #9 on Canvas)
Service Visit Report due in class
- Thu., Apr. 27 Into the Future (& Review for the Final Exam)
Reading for today: C. Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism*, pp. 177-188
- Thu., May 4 **FINAL EXAM** (10:30 a.m. in our regular classroom)