

American Religion in Space and Place

Department of History and Art History / Department of Religious Studies
George Mason University, Spring 202X

Course number: HIST 389 / HIST 395 / RELI 376 (3 credits)

Meets: Twice per week, TBD

Classroom: TBD

Instructor: Lincoln Mullen <lmullen@gmu.edu>

Office and office hours: Research Hall 484 <<https://lincolnmullen.com/page/office-hours/>>

Course description

This class is an introduction to the history of American religion through space and place. In this class you will encounter the broad sweep of American religious history, told with an attention to urban, rural, regional, national, continental, transoceanic, and domestic geographies. For example, you will learning about the encounters between colonizing and indigenous religious traditions in North America, the conflict between regional variations of Christianity over slavery, the diffusion or concentration of immigrant religious traditions across the United States, and the manifestations of religious observance in the streets of American cities. In addition to learning the history of American religion, you will gain a familiarity with conceptual and methodological approaches to studying history and religion, including space and place and selected concepts from religious studies.

This cross-listed course can fulfill requirements in American history, religious studies, the digital history track for the history major, or the digital humanities minor.

Learning goals

After taking this course, you will be able

1. to understand the broad overviews of American religious history, including its connections to the history of politics, immigration, race, and culture in the United States;
2. to analyze complex religious and historical events through the lens of space and place.
3. to apply theoretical and methodological approaches to study of American religion from the discipline of religious studies.
4. to articulate key concepts in American religious history and religious studies in both writing and in new media.

Essential information

This class is structured around an individual and shared research project in which you will create a spatial history of an American religious tradition. The schedule below details how we will be covering the overview of American religion together in class. But you can also expect in nearly every class period to work on applying what we have learned to your religious tradition. This might take the form of finding sources, writing brief reflections, or creating sketches of maps or visualizations.

This class will include a combination of lecture, discussion, and in-class assignments. Doing the reading is absolutely essential. Attend class having read any assigned material and be prepared to discuss those readings in class. You must have a copy of the texts assigned for each day available to you during class (electronic copies are fine).

Before the start of class each week, I will send you a message about what to expect. This will help guide your participation in class each week. Please read it carefully and note any actions you should take.

You are always welcome to talk with me during office hours. You can find the details on my website and book an appointment. If the scheduled times don't work for you, email me and suggest a few other times that would work for you.

Required readings. These books are required. All other readings will be available on Blackboard or through the GMU libraries.

- Best, Wallace D. *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915–1952*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0691133751.
- Carroll, Bret E. *The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America*. New York: Routledge, 2000. ISBN: 978-0415921374.

Assignments

Class participation (10%). In addition to participating in class discussions, specific opportunities for participating in class (in person or online) will be explained prior to class sessions. For example, you may be asked to bring in a primary source related to the topic of discussion.

Reading quizzes (10%). Assume that any class will include a brief quiz over the assigned readings.

The *midterm exam* (15%) and *final exam* (15%) will include essay and identification questions about the history of American religion and the conceptual material we have covered.

Module assignments (4 x 10% = 40%). For each of the modules in the class, you will be asked to complete an assignment (about the same amount of effort as a short paper) that demonstrates what you have learned. At the start of the semester you will choose some religious group or tradition to work on for the whole course. Your assignments will be thematically linked across that tradition, as you examine it in different spatial contexts. You will receive a handout with instructions for each assignment, and I will teach you how to complete the assignment in class. See the schedule below for due dates.

Final project (10%). Your module assignments and those of your classmates will be compiled into an online atlas. Your work integrating your assignments into the class project will count as your final project.

Final grades will be calculated using the typical percentage-based grading scale (A = 93–100, A- = 90–92, B+ = 88–89, B = 83–87, B- = 80–82, ... F = 0–59). Turn in all assignments on Blackboard.

Schedule

Week 1, class 1: Introduction

- In class: Overview of U.S. religious history; approaches to the study of religion.

- Exercise: The history of our campus. We will review Claudio Saunt's *Invasion of America* and Jessica Mack's *Mapping the University* to review the history of GMU's campus from before European colonization through the founding of the university.

Week 1, class 2: Atlases

- Reading: Carroll, *Routledge Atlas*, introduction.
- Reading: Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, "If It's South Dakota You Must Be Episcopalian: Lies, Truth-Telling, and the Mapping of U.S. Religion," *Church History* 71, no. 1 (2002): 132–42.
- In class: We will go over a number of print and online atlases of American religion.

Week 2, class 3: Overview of class project

- Reading: Gaustad, *New Historical Atlas*, introduction.
- Class participation: Before class write two pages about the atlases we went over in class. Answer these questions: What is the overarching narrative these atlases tell? What is the narrative or spatial means by which that narrative is told?

Week 2, class 4: Space and place

- Reading, Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, ch., 1, 5.
- In class: Pick religious group or tradition for the semester. Select from the handout of options (and potential sources) *or* pitch me a tradition not on the list.

Week 3, class 5: Cities: Chicago

- Reading: Best, *Passionately Human*, introductions, chs. 1–2.

Week 3, class 6: Cities: Chicago

- Reading: Best, *Passionately Human*, introductions, chs. 3, 4, 6.

Week 4, class 7: Methods: Mapping city locations

- Reading: Carroll, *Routledge Atlas*, pt 6.
- Reading: Kilde, Jeanne. "Approaching Religious Space: An Overview of Theories, Methods, and Challenges in Religious Studies." *Religion and Theology* 20 (2013): 183–201.

Week 4, class 8: Cities: early New York

- Reading: Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham*, ch. 7.

Week 5, class 9: Cities: modern New York

- Reading: Butler, *God in Gotham*, ch. 3.
- Reading: Mapping Religion and Cities (especially Kayla Renée Wheeler, "Mapping Malcom's Boston"), Center for the Study of Religion and the City, Morgan State University, <https://www.religionandcities.org/maps>.

Week 5, class 10: Methods: Georectifying maps

- Reading: Tutorial on georectification from Spatial Humanities course.
- In class: work on mapping city locations for first module.

Week 6, class 11: Transoceanic/mobility: Colonizing indigenous religions

- **Due:** Map of your religious tradition in urban space for module 1.
- Reading: Carroll, *Routledge Atlas*, pts. 1–3.
- Reading: Graber, *Gods of Indian Country*, introduction, ch. 6.

Week 6, class 12: Methods: Narrative maps

- Class participation: Come to class with ideas for three narrative “stops” on the map you will create about your religious tradition in motion. You will add these in class, and others later.
- Reading: Tutorial on narrative maps from Spatial Humanities course.

Week 7, class 13: Transoceanic/mobility: Race and empire

- Sylvester Johnson, “Religion, Race, and American Empire,” in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History* (Oxford University Press, 2018), ch. 3.

Week 7, class 14: Transoceanic/mobility: American Jews

- Reading: Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier*, ch. 5.

Week 8, class 15: Transoceanic/mobility: Railroads and Mormons

- Reading: Walker, *Railroading Religion*, ch. 2.

Week 8, class 16: Midterm exam

- See study guide distributed in class.

Week 9, class 17: Transoceanic/mobility: Pacific Ocean immigration

- **Due:** Narrative map of your religious tradition in motion, with accompanying prose for each “stop.”
- Reading: Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation*, ch. 4.

Week 9, class 18: Nation: Expansion

- Reading: Carroll, *Routledge Atlas*, pt. 4, 7.
- Reading: Excerpts from *Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains*.

Week 10, class 19: Nation: Immigration policy

- Reading: Eck, *New Religious America*, ch. 2, 7.

Week 10, class 20: Methods: Data visualization

- Reading: Tutorial on data visualization from Spatial Humanities course.
- Healey, *Data Visualization*, ch. 1.

Week 11, class 21: Nation: Census of Religious Bodies

- Reading: Volume 1 of 1926 Census of Religious Bodies. (You can skim the tables!)
- Reading, Finke, *Faithful Measures*, ch. 10.
- Reading: Judith Weisenfeld, “space, place,” *The Immanent Frame*, February 28, 2020: <https://tif.ssrc.org/2020/02/28/space-place-weisenfeld/>.

Week 11, class 22: Nation: Census of Religious Bodies

- Reading: Relevant sections for the religious tradition you are studying in volume 2 of 1926 Census of Religious Bodies, as well as schedules from that tradition: <<http://omeka.religioussecologies.org>>.
- Judith Weisenfeld, *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity during the Great Migration* (NYU Press, 2016), ch. 1.
- Susan Schulten, *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America* (The University of Chicago Press, 2012), ch. 2.

Week 12, class 23: Domestic/institutional spaces

- Reading: Thomas Carter, “Living the Principle: Mormon Polygamous Housing in Nineteenth-Century Utah,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 35, no. 4 (2000): 223–51, <https://doi.org/10.1086/496829>.
- Reading: Jannelle Legg, “A Church for ‘a ongregation that listens with the eye and not with the ear’: Sacred Deaf Space and Place,” ch. 5 of “‘With Eloquent Fingers He Preached’: The Protestant Episcopal Mission to the Deaf” (PhD dissertation, George Mason University, 2021).
- Reading: Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons & Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), ch. 1.

Week 12, class 24: Region: South

- **Due:** Data visualization or map from Census of Religious Bodies data with accompanying prose.
- Reading: Williams, *God’s Own Party*, ch. 5.
- Reading: Jones, *End of White Christian America*, ch. 5.

Week 13, class 25: Region: Midwest

- Reading: Curtis, *Muslims of the Heartland*, introduction and ch. 1.

Week 13, class 26: Region: West

- Reading: Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, ch. 4.

Week 14, class 27: Final project working session

- **Due:** Comparative map: either regional differences within the tradition you are studying, or regional differences between your tradition and some other tradition. You may use any of the mapping techniques previously taught.
- Class participation: Provide substantive feedback on two other classmate's assignments.
- In class: Collaborative work on final class project.

Week 14, class 28: Conclusion

- In class: Wrap up discussion and preparation for final exam.

Final exam, TBD

- **Due:** Final project due before final exam.
- See study guide distributed in class.

Fine print

This syllabus may be updated online as necessary. The online version of this syllabus is the only authoritative version.

You are expected to attend each class and to participate actively (exceptions made only for health reasons, religious holidays, and other university-approved excuses). Whether or not students attend class consistently is the best indicator of how well they will do in the class. Grades may be reduced due to repeated absences.

As a courtesy to you, I may from time to time share slides, course recordings, or other such materials to enable a hybrid course. These are intended to supplement, not replace, attendance in class. By accessing these materials, you agree not to distribute them to anyone outside the course.

Computers, phones, and the like are to be used only for course work while class is in session.

Complete all the readings before the start of each class. Late work will be accepted only if you make arrangements with my prior to the due date. No work will be accepted after the last day of class unless specifically assigned. I will discuss grades only in conversation during office hours, not over email.

Class communications will be sent to your GMU email account, which you must check.

Unless otherwise specified, you should work on your own for assignments. In general, every source that you use should be acknowledged in a note or bibliography entry. Sources must be adequately paraphrased, meaning (at a minimum) that word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and the order of ideas must be made your own. Whenever you use others' exact words, you must mark them as such by quotation marks or block quotations with accompanying citations. Plagiarism consists of presenting the writing, research, or analysis of others as one's own. It applies not only to using the text of another author's work verbatim without quotation marks and accurate citations but also to the taking of specific information, analysis or opinions—even if not in the exact words of the author—and presenting them without citation in one's own paper. Any instance of plagiarism

will result in, at minimum, the student receiving a grade of 0 on this paper, and the student will not be given the opportunity to rewrite the paper.

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

See the George Mason University catalog for general policies, as well as the university statement on diversity.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's website.)