

# Yvonne Chireau Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

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The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Harry S. Stout of Yale University. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

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## I. Syllabus Justification

Religion 26 is a course that was developed for students in the Religious Studies major and for those with preparations in specialized concentrations (e.g., black studies, women's studies, ethnic studies) as well as others who would want to pursue a religion course that speaks to the themes of diversity and cultural pluralism in American society. The course reflects the personal and scholarly interests of the professor: as an Americanist with a specialty in African-American religion, I believe that I am responsible for teaching subjects that reflect the needs and interests of individuals living in a pluralistic society, and enabling students to think critically about some of the issues they will face within that society. I also seek to expand the boundaries of the discourse on American religious history, while fostering an authentic interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge and methodology. I have long believed that sociologists, anthropologists, literary critics and artists, theologians and historians all have something to say and much to offer to each other on the subject of religion.

Swarthmore is a selective liberal arts college with about 1200 undergraduates, and a low student-to-faculty ratio. Classes are often very small. Religion 26 typically enrolls no more than 15 students per semester. These intense, often dialogical sessions can make for an simultaneously engaging and challenging teaching environment.

The course is designed for students with some minimal background in either American history or religion, although I have found that Religion 26 also draws students from outside of the humanities, including science majors who may want an extra elective, or students from other fields who find the themes to be useful for their own courses of study. The Department of Religion offers many specialized, mid-level courses for those who may wish to pursue intermediate or advanced study in a particular field. Accordingly, the Department's sense of itself as a disciplinary unit reflects a bias toward the Comparative/History of Religions perspective. There are two American religious historians on the faculty.

I have found that many students who take religion courses at Swarthmore view themselves as seekers who want to question and resolve their own faith commitments. Many desire resolution to burning spiritual issues in their lives by rigorous intellectual engagement. Keeping in mind the diversity of backgrounds, interests and levels of preparation, I remind students that this course does not substitute for a comprehensive survey in American history or a methods course in religious studies (both which are offered at the College), only that it pursues select topics, exploring current ideas on the issues of race, gender, sexuality, class, and authority in American religion that have historical precedents.

I have purposefully chosen to omit certain mainstream religions and religious institutions from my syllabus, aiming for a non-exhaustive overview. The course subverts expectations of what constitutes the meta-narrative of American religious history, and is constituted as a religious history of others. The operative model is the interaction between margin and center. Questions of power and identity in religion and society are at the fore in our conversations and in our investigation as a class.

Finally, I have since last year sought to integrate recent technological innovations with curricular development, with promising results. As in my other courses on religion, I often find myself moving away from the text as a primary pedagogical tool, and more to alternative media - including film, material artifacts, audio, and visual narrative. Being in close proximity to Philadelphia, a vital center of American history and religious life, our class has availed itself of the rich resources of local museums, churches, and historical collections. I now find that we are able to bring together these resources with other textual, aural and visual resources by use of interactive computer technologies that are presently available for classroom and instructional use. I encourage and require students to avail themselves of these technologies in order to produce their own interactive projects and to conduct research; for example, students can now create their own CD-ROM disks using available documentary, audio and visual materials. All of the students in Religion 26 are required to format their own web pages on the internet as a final project, in lieu of a paper, on any topic in American religion, chosen in consultation with myself.

## **II. Introductory Course Syllabus**

### **Rel. 26: RELIGION IN AMERICA: A MULTICULTURAL APPROACH**

This course is intended to acquaint you with some of the major themes in American religion from the perspective of actors/subjects who are traditionally underrepresented in the study of religious history. Our goal is to explore the relationships between religion and society by considering the interaction of its various participants - including women, ethnic and racial minorities, and religious "outsiders" - in shaping American culture.

Sessions will be divided equally between lectures and discussion. On occasion, guest lecturers will also be invited to class.

It is necessary that you prepare before each session so that you will be able to participate in the discussions. Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot attend class for any reason, you are responsible for advising me prior to the class session.

All texts for the course are on reserve at McCabe Library. Where available, texts may also be obtained at the College bookstore. Readings marked with an asterisk are xeroxed and on General Reserve in a course binder.

You are also expected to have access to a computer and to acquire some familiarity with a web browser such as Mosaic, Netscape, MacWeb, etc. For assignments, acquaint yourself with an online search index such as Yahoo! (Society and Culture: Religion Link), Lycos, GNN, or the Internet Public Library/Humanities Ready Reference (<http://ipl.sils.umich.edu/ref/RR/HUM>).

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- Attendance and participation
- Midterm examination
- Oral reports
- Final project

1/17 - Introduction to course, assignment of projects and class presentations

### **THE ROOTS OF RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES: COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS: NATIVE AMERICANS, AFRICANS AND EUROPEANS**

1/19 - Annemarie Shimony, Iroquois Religion and Women in Historical Perspective, in Yvonne Haddad, **WOMEN, RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE** Jacqueline Peterson, American Indian Women and Religion, in Rosemary Ruether, **WOMEN AND RELIGION IN AMERICA**, pp. 1-41

1/24 - Albert Raboteau, **SLAVE RELIGION**, pp. 96-128  
Mechal Sobel, **THE WORLD THEY MADE TOGETHER**, pp. 3-20, 71-99

1/26 - \*James Ronda, " We Are Well as We Are : An Indian Critique of Seventeenth Century Missions," **WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY**, 3rd series, 34, 1977  
Henry Bowden, **AMERICAN INDIANS AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS**, pp. 96-133  
Film: Black Robe  
Internet assignment: Explore web sites for topics related to Native American religions and report your findings. Two starting places: Fourth World Documentation Project (<http://www.halcyon.com/FWDP/fwdp.html>), and the Aboriginal Resources Web (<http://www.io.org/~jgcom/abor1.htm>)

### **WOMEN, WITCHES AND SPIRITUAL DIVERSITY**

1/31 - \*Mary Maples Dunn, Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period, **AMERICAN QUARTERLY** 30, 1978, pp. 233-259.  
Ben Barker-Benfield, Anne Hutchinson and the Puritan Attitude Toward Women, **FEMINIST STUDIES** 1, FALL 1972  
Lyle Koehler, The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation During the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1640, **WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY** 3rd series, 31, 1974

2/2 - \*Jon Butler, "Magic, Astrology and the Early American Religious Heritage, 1600-1760" **AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW** 84, April 1979

David Hall, *WORLDS OF WONDER, DAYS OF JUDGMENT*,  
Introduction and Chapter Two

### **REVIVALISM IN AMERICA: A GREAT AWAKENING?**

2/7 - \*Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Decried and Described: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,"  
*JOURNAL OF AMERICAN HISTORY* 69, September 1982

\*Joan Gunderson, *The Non-Institutional Church: The Role of Women in Eighteenth century Virginia*,  
*HISTORICAL MAGAZINE OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH* 51, 1982, pp. 347-357  
Albert Raboteau, *SLAVE RELIGION*, pp. 128-150

2/9 - \*Mary Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York,  
1800-1840," in James, *WOMEN IN  
AMERICAN RELIGION*  
Nancy Cott, *Young Women in the Second Great Awakening*,  
*FEMINIST STUDIES* 3, 1975

Internet assignment - Interrogating primary figures: find at least two 17th or 18th century classic documents  
related to American/Christian religious history. You may choose, for example John Wesley's Sermons, or  
George Fox's Autobiography, in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://ccel.wheaton.edu>) or  
Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, or any others that you deem appropriate to this  
period. The Institute for Christian Learning is a good online site for these kinds of materials,  
(<http://iclnet93.iclnet.org/>), as is Yale's American Studies  
Web (<http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~davidp/amstud.html>)

### **METHODISTS, MORMONS AND MILLERITES**

2/14 - Nathan Hatch, *THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMERICAN  
RELIGION*, chapters One and Two

Internet assignment - Review and research the Restoration Movement (Stone-Campbellites) and its present  
day manifestations at <http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~mcmillan/Restlit/rlindx.html>

2/16 - Hatch, *THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMERICAN RELIGION*,  
chapters Three and Four

\*Gordon Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *NEW  
YORK HISTORY* 61, 1980, pp. 359-386

Internet assignment - browse Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon and  
report on the current situation of Mormon studies, at  
(<http://www.npl.com/ldsirc.html>).

2/21 - Midterm review

2/23 - Midterm examination

3/2 NO CLASS - enjoy the break!!!!!!

3/14, 3/16 STUDENT REPORTS

### **OCCULTISM, HETERODOXY AND RELIGIOUS OUTSIDERS**

3/21 -Margaret Washington, ed., *NARRATIVE OF SOJOURNER TRUTH* (selections)

\*Mary Farrell Bednarowski, "Outside the Mainstream: Women's

Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth Century America," JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION 67, 1980

3/23 - Steven Walker, "Vivekananda and American Occultism," in Howard Kerr, THE OCCULT IN AMERICA, pp. 162-176

Richard Turner, The Ahmadiyya Mission to Blacks in the United States, JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT 44, Winter, 1988

3/28 - Jean Humez, ed., GIFTS OF POWER (selections)

Ann Braude, Spirits Defend the Rights of Women, in Yvonne Haddad, WOMEN, RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

### **REVIVALISM II: FUNDAMENTALISM**

3/30 - Films: Holy Ghost People/ "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory"

\*James Tinney, "William J. Seymour, Father of Modern Day Pentecostalism," in David Wills and Richard Newman, BLACK APOSTLES AFRO-AMERICAN CLERGY CONFRONT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

\*William McLoughlin, "Aimee Semple McPherson: Your Sister in the King's Glad Service," JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE 1, 1967, pp. 193-217

### **CATHOLICISM and JUDAISM: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES**

4/4 - Richard Rodriguez, HUNGER OF MEMORY, Chapter Three, Credo  
Rosemary Curb, LESBIAN NUNS: BREAKING SILENCE  
(selections)

4/6 - Ellen Umansky, Feminism and the Re-evaluation of Women's Roles within American Jewish Life, in Haddad, WOMEN, RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE  
Evelyn Beck, NICE JEWISH GIRLS, Introduction, and pp. 34-50, 51-72, 192-207, 298-302

4/11 - Robert Orsi, THE MADONNA OF 117TH STREET (selections)

### **RELIGION AND HEALTH**

4/13 - Albert Raboteau, The Afro-American Traditions, in Ronald Numbers, CARING AND CURING, pp. 539-562

Ruth Dodson, The Life of Don Pedro Jaramillo, PERSPECTIVES IN MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES, 1988, pp. 61-74

4/18 - Robert Fuller, ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AND AMERICAN RELIGION(selections)

Internet assignment - What is Christian Science?

<http://www.vicnet.net.au.vicnet/religion/cop/CSMenu.html>

### **RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

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4/20 - Rita Nakashima Brock, *On Mirrors, Mists and Murmurs: Toward an Asian-American Theology*, in Judith Plaskow, *WEAVING THE VISIONS*  
Film: *Meeting the Buddha in Los Angeles*

4/25 - Cynthia Eller, *Twentieth Century Women's Religion as Seen in the Feminist Spirituality Movement*, in Catherine Wessinger, *WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN MARGINAL RELIGIONS*  
Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *EN LA LUCHA*, Introduction, Chapters Two, Four and Six

4/27- Yvonne Haddad, *MISSION TO AMERICA*, Chapters Two and Three Joseph Murphy, *SANTERIA: AN AFRICAN RELIGION IN AMERICA*, pp. 39-100  
Film: *Legacy of the Spirits*  
Internet assignment: Browse and report on any site or group related to Neo-African religions, including vodun, santeria or candomble. Some examples: The Vodun pages (<http://www.vmedia.com/shanon/voodoo/voodoo.html>) and the Caribbean Resource Center (<http://www.nando.net/prof/caribe/caribe.com.html>).

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE BEFORE END OF READING PERIOD**