

CHARLES ISRAEL—HIST 3040: HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA

Background on Auburn and the Course:

Auburn University, one of the state's two flagship institutions of higher education, is a Land Grant University located in Auburn, a town of roughly 40,000 located in a rural section of east-central Alabama. On the edge of the black belt, it is a university town of noticeable wealth that has in the past 30 years been a magnet for white flight from Montgomery (50 miles away), Tuskegee, and a number of other surrounding towns. The student body of 24,000 is primarily drawn from the state, though a number of wealthy out-of-state primarily southern students attend, some attracted to the diverse offerings in pharmacy, engineering, and agriculture, others drawn to apply by the notoriety of the football program and the promise of cheap tickets. In terms of religion, the town of Auburn is squarely in the southern Protestant Bible Belt. My predecessor has referred to Auburn as "the largest Baptist university in America"; extrapolating from Alabama's census information and the students I have met so far I am inclined to agree with him.

The class has 38 students pre-enrolled (and a lengthy waiting list); nearly all of them are seniors, roughly a third of them are history majors, a quarter secondary education-social science, a quarter philosophy, and the rest scattered among a variety of disciplines. It meets 3 days a week in a business school classroom with tables and chairs bolted to the floor in arcing amphitheater arrangement. Listed by the History department, this course has no prerequisites and is required by no program. History and Secondary Ed. majors are required to take 4 of history courses at the 3000 level, though most 3000s are populated with sophomores and juniors.

Why this approach?

I have found developing this syllabus an enlightening, yet in the end, maddening process. At various points over the past couple of weeks this syllabus has looked radically different than it does now; I was somewhat disappointed to look at it now and realize that it is not all that different from when I have taught the course previously. I have taught the course twice, both on a TR schedule, once at Texas A&M and once at Sewanee: The University of the South (in a 14 student seminar). The major changes since those courses are the switch to MWF, the drastic reduction in books with most reading coming in articles assembled from multiple sources, the longer chronological reach of this course than previous ones that generally stopped in the early 20th century, and the hybrid efforts to include thematic units that will disrupt a neat chronology.

One earlier draft worked from the present backward, using current controversies over religion, politics, and public life c 2004 as a starting point. Another draft was more purely thematic, with sections on Religion & State, Pluralism and the ‘Christian Nation,’ Religions and (and of) Science, Regional Religion, and Consuming Faith. The version you will see below emerges because of a few key concerns I have about the course. It is thematic, yet broadly chronological, a concession to my disciplinary predisposition to consider time and development as integral to understanding.

Christian Nation: I have long had an interest in arguments over whether or not America is and/or has been a “Christian Nation.” I find the question often wrong-headed, but it has had great staying power throughout American history. In particular, Alabama may be subjected to gubernatorial campaign by Roy Moore (the “10 Commandments Judge” removed from the Alabama Supreme Court in 2002 after he installed a granite monument of the Decalogue in the court building under the cover of darkness and then refused to remove it) in which the state and nation’s religious identity is sure to be a frequent theme. Since most discussions of America’s religious status quickly turn to history, I think it appropriate to use an historical approach to understand the complexity of the Constitutional period and the developing relationship of religion and the state(s) since the 1780s.

Regional Religion: Most of the students are drawn from Alabama or contiguous states, which might provide an argument to hit them with material from vastly different regions of the country and different faith traditions than they practice or even recognize. While much of the course is intentionally focused on pluralism and the tension with Protestant expectations of majority status and rights (and the articles for all but 2 weeks I think show a definite bias for the unfamiliar in religion and region), I think a special unit on southern religion will give us a chance to test-drive the concepts from the rest of the semester in a region they know—or think they know—better. Of course, Alabamians have traditionally congratulated themselves for a tradition of religious diversity and tolerance—just look at the wide variety of ‘Baptists’ in the state! (I think here of a *Forrest Gump* style litany of the various Baptist permutations: Southern Baptists, Old Regular Baptists, Primitive Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, Two-in-the-Seed Baptists....) Such ‘tolerance’ has rarely extended beyond Protestantism; Alabama in the 1920s was one of the hotbeds of anti-Catholicism and spawned Cotton Tom Heflin’s outrageous claims on the floor of the US House about the Pope planning to sail up Mobile Bay to begin his invasion of America. My goal with the Tweed article is to suggest the diversity in many cases right under their noses, but also how religion and history are so tightly intertwined in the region that many southerners almost make a religion out of that history.

Religion and Popular/Mass Culture: In 1941 Wilbur Cash described ‘the southerner’ as embodying in one personality both religious piety and hell-of-a-fellow frontier swagger; in many ways modern Americans reflect this dualism. Surveys show strong self-identification with religion in general and Christianity in particular among modern Americans, while other studies of worship attendance or more detailed questions reveal people identifying a greater number of American Idol finalists than Ten Commandments. But beyond pointing out the problems with knowing what we mean when we refer to someone as “religious” I want much of the course to force students to recognize the long relationship between things religious and things they are far less likely to think of as religious. My thinking here is shaped by folks like Finke and Stark, Laurence Moore, Jack Lears, Susan Curtis, and Leigh Eric Schmidt. We will start with David Chidester’s article on analyzing religion in popular culture, as a means of introducing this theme and providing some theoretical frameworks and language for analyzing religion. Other articles on various topics subtly and other times explicitly note the interpenetration of religion and the market in 20th century America (Frank Lambert on George Whitefield’s marketing, the Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk as pornography, Warren Susman on Babe Ruth and Bruce Barton, and on and on...). Because Auburn was rocked around Christmas for what we called the Christmas/Holiday tree, I look forward to Leigh Eric Schmidt’s article on commercializing religious holidays as a timely topic (I would have used a section from the book on Christmas but it was so long I could not decide which parts I could do without and decided to settle on Easter instead).

Length of Readings: One of the most significant alterations for this course, in part required by the shift from a senior-level seminar to a 3000-level class of 40, but mostly stemming from a desire to include more perspectives and provoke more conversation, is a shift from scholarly books to articles and primary documents. The only book-length assignment is Harold Frederic’s *The Damnation of Theron Ware or Illumination* a fictional account of the spiritual and marital struggles of an American Methodist minister at the end of the 19th century. Students in the past have really enjoyed (*and engaged!*) the book, and I find the fiction brings some of the tensions of the ‘Protestant Crisis of Faith,’ conflict over immigration and non-Protestants, church and democracy to a level students grasp.

Thoughts on Assignments and Assessments:

In addition to essay examinations, the major forms of evaluation in this course will be two papers and assessment of participation/preparation.

Religious Genealogy Paper: I cannot claim originality here, I think I stole it from a YSAR syllabus a few years back. But I found that this has

been in the times I have taught the course, the project that students find most engaging and thus, to one school of thought, the most useful of assignments. Students eager to understand their own history do have the danger of telescoping all of history into their own personal experience, but I think a close study of the traditions they encounter in their families and the usually surprising to them revelations of religious diversity and changing/lack of/questionable religious commitments gives them an opportunity to study where or if their particulars match up with general trends in American history. In an effort to confront regionalism, I have arranged for a cooperative experiment, pairing Auburn students with students in YSAR fellow Eve Stern's class at the University of Rhode Island. Since both our classes are researching and writing the same assignment, they should be able to explore some notions of regional distinctiveness or similarity and add to our study of the importance of place and identity in understanding religion in America. This cooperation will happen via email and chat; with time near the end of our course to discuss their findings with other students.

Critical Review: In most of my 3000/5000 level classes I require a critical review of a book for the semester, with a "counterpoint" article assigned to give them a perspective to critique the book under review. But since I am assigning very few books, I have adapted this assignment to a class unit, hoping therefore to have the students engage at least one set of readings especially well. And, since their papers are due the same day we discuss the articles and documents, I expect to create some students especially prepared for discussion.

Discussion Days and Discussion Leaders: While each class is generally an interactive lecture format, I do designate about 10 days a semester, generally at the end of a unit, as discussion days. I have experimented with this format of discussion days and student discussion leaders in the past few semesters as a means to get students, through peer pressure if nothing else, to participate in discussions. My optimism that having to experience the uncomfortable silence of asking a question to which no student responds because they did no reading would make students more conscientious in their reading and participation has not been borne out by experience. For this course I will continue the tradition of student directors for specially designated discussion days, for I have found that the students in charge, though in consultation with me, do approach the readings in new and often enlightening manners that I had not considered. Between us, we come to a good plan for discussion that I think is far better than I would create just on my own. But I am adding the index cards described in the syllabus, with the hopes that forcing preparation with the stick of a preparation grade assigned to their index cards (containing both answers to pre-circulated questions and 2-3 additional questions/thoughts of their own) will result in broader and

more substantive discussions. To deal with the large class size, we will break into smaller groups for some or all of most discussion days.

Preparation/Participation self-assessment: At the end of discussion # 3 I have the students evaluate their own performance in discussion, first assigning a single grade and then on a second line assigning a separate grade for preparation and participation. This is both to give me room to point out the difference between their perception and where I have them so far, and with the thought that self-awareness may inspire better performance in the future. We do some similar short response paragraphs as pedagogical check-ups throughout the semester, and repeat the prep/part self-evaluation again at the end of discussion #7.

Testing: There are three in-class examinations; they will combine short-answer identifications and longer essay questions forcing students to draw on many of the sources they read. Each examination counts more than the previous one, aiming to reward students for improvement. The final examination is cumulative; it asks students very specific questions only on the material after exam 2, but requires essays encompassing themes from throughout the semester. I like to consider the final examination and the process of studying for it an integral part of the course learning experience, so I provide clear guidance on what themes students should review for the final.

History 3040
HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA
Fall Semester 2006

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Class Meets: MWF 1:00 – 1:50 PM
Classroom: Lowder 0152
Office Hours: MW 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Introduction: *no prerequisites.*

Alexis de Tocqueville, perhaps the most famous 19th Century foreign observer of the early American republic, noted "upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention." Religion was not just incidental: "in America, the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom were intimately united . . . Religion in America takes no direct art in the government of society, but nevertheless, it must be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country."

In this course we will explore in both broad scope and some more focused case-studies the role religion has played in North American social, cultural, and even political history. The object is to explore religion both as an extraordinary experience or abstract idea and as an important component of individual and group social identity in the American past. We can all agree that there were churches, congregations, and denominations in the American past; but how did religion operate in American history? What was the interaction between otherworldly faiths and present, worldly, and temporal interests of humans?

The course is organized in a generally chronological manner, beginning with European colonization, but focuses on specific themes along the way. Though it should prove obvious as we go through the course, themes (like gender and religion, religion and government, religion and popular culture) are no less relevant to understanding the history of American religion in any other period.

Required Reading:

The majority of your reading for this course will consist of articles and documents accessible online through the WebCT course management portal (<https://webct.auburn.edu>). The following required book should be available at the University and off campus bookstores:

Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware* or *Illumination*. 1896; rpt. New York: Random House, 2002.

OPTIONAL TEXT: I have not assigned a textbook for this course. But if you would be more comfortable with a text to provide a unifying narrative, check details from some lectures, or any other reason, I would suggest you seek a copy of the following; it should be widely available online.

George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* 2nd edition Thomson/Wadsworth, 2001.

Assignments:

Reading: As an upper-level course, this course demands that you carefully read and engage a significant amount of material. You are expected to complete all reading when assigned, to attend class every day it meets, and to be an active participant in classroom discussion. Much of your and my learning will occur as we are exposed to differing (past and present) viewpoints on the role and place of religion in America. Reading assignments are detailed below on the chart

headed "Class Schedule." Beware that these assignments may change, so you should always consult WebCT for the most current schedule and access to most readings.

Discussion Days: Although there will be room within each class meeting for discussion, there are eleven specially designated "discussion days" on which discussion of the assigned articles and documents will be the primary mode of teaching and learning. Teams of 3-4 students will be designated discussion organizers for each scheduled discussion; their responsibilities are to meet as a group with the instructor in the week prior to the discussion, to post 4-6 questions about the readings to WebCT no later than 48 hours before the discussion meeting (e.g.: by 1 PM Wednesday in advance of a Friday discussion), take an especially active role in directing and redirecting the discussion, and writing a summary of the discussion for WebCT at the conclusion of the discussion. All students should come to discussion prepared, having read the assignments, considered the questions posed by the discussion leaders, and sketched out questions of their own. To encourage your diligence in this duty, I require you to bring a 4x6 note card to discussion with notes to respond to the WebCT questions and at least two additional questions you would pose to your classmates about the issues raised in the readings. I will periodically collect these cards on discussion days and evaluate them as a component of your participation/preparation grade.

Writing. Students will write two papers for History 3040: (1) a research paper on religious genealogy, due December 1; and (2) a short *critical* essay of (3–6 pp.) addressing the articles, documents, and themes from any one Unit of the course, due on the discussion day for that unit. I strongly urge students to start early on all writing projects, discuss topics and drafts with me, and make use of the peer reviewers at the University Writing Center. See the specific writing assignments on WebCT.

Testing: You will have three written examinations: two mid-terms and one final. The examinations will consist of short answer, identification, and essay questions. There will be no make-ups unless (a) arrangements have been made BEFORE the scheduled exam date or (b) the student has a valid university excused absence for illness or similar reasons.

Attendance: Attendance is expected every day class meets and will be rewarded with engaging material and discussion and, I assume, with high performance on examinations and other assessments. Poor attendance will be directly penalized in your Participation/Preparation grades.

Late Work: All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be accepted but will be assessed a 10 point deduction for each day they are late. You cannot pass this course without completing all assignments.

Grading:

Your final course grade will be calculated from your performance as follows:

Preparation & Participation	10%
Religious Genealogy Paper	20%
Critical Essay	17.5%
Mid-Term Examination 1	15%
Mid-Term Examination 2	17.5%
Final Examination	20%

You can check your grades anytime on WebCT.

Office Hours:

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns about this course. I will hold office consultation at the times listed above. If you need to meet at another time, you can contact me by e-mail (cisrael@auburn.edu) or by phone (844-6768) and we can set an appointment.

Honor Code

The instructor strongly supports Auburn’s honor code and expects class participants to abide by its standards at all times. Plagiarism on assignments, cheating on examinations, and any efforts to present someone else’s work as your own —whether or not they are intended—will, at the least, result in a grade of 0 for the assignment. All suspected breeches of the code will be turned over to the Academic Honesty Committee. For further information, consult the appropriate sections of the *Tiger Cub*, the Provost’s office regulations on academic honesty (<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/story.html?1149111436000133>), and the history department’s guidelines for Academic Honesty.

In an effort to remind you of the importance of academic honesty on all assignments, I require all students to print, read, sign, and attach the statement of academic honesty to all papers they submit for this course. The statement is available as a pdf form on the class WebCT pages. I will not accept any assignment without this cover sheet *and* an electronic copy of the assignment submitted as an email attachment to me.

Special Needs and Accommodations:

Students with special needs shall discuss them with the instructor, arranging to meet within the first two weeks of class during office hours. To set up a confidential meeting, contact me by email or telephone. If you have not already done so, you should contact the Program for Students with Disabilities, located in 1244 Haley Center, before we meet. They will provide you with an Accommodation Memo to discuss with me.

Class Schedule:

Unit	Class Dates	Topic	Readings
I.	8/16–8/18	Introductions: “What is at stake?”	Chidester, “Church of Baseball”
II.	8/21–8/25	Colonial Encounters of the Atlantic World	Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls” Ronda, “We Are Well as We Are” Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) Excerpt from <i>The Jesuit Relations</i>
	Fri. 8/25	Discussion #1	
III.	8/28–8/30	Awakening and Diversity	Lambert, “Peddler in Divinity” Tennent, “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry” (1742) William Penn, “Defense of Freedom of Religion” (1686)
IV.	9/1–9/8	Religion and the Revolution; Revolution in Religion?	Hatch, “Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics” Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty” (1773) 3 Religious Approaches to the Revolution (1775–76) Va. <i>Statute for Religious Freedom</i> & Madison’s <i>Memorial</i>
	Fri. Sept. 8	Discussion #2	
V.	9/11–9/15	Revival, Reform, & Religious Experiments	Moore, “How to Become a People: the Mormon Scenario” Gifford, “Temperance Songs and Hymns” Finney, “What a Revival of Religion Is” (1834) Mahan, “Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection” (1839)
	Fri. Sept. 15	Discussion #3	

Unit	Class Dates	Topic	Readings
VI.	9/18–9/20	Religion and the Civil War	
			Fredrickson, “The Coming of the Lord” Theodore D. Weld, “The Bible Against Slavery” Stringfellow, “The Bible Argument [for slavery]” (1860) A. Lincoln, “Second Inaugural” (1865)
	Fri. Sept. 22	Test #1	
VII.	9/25–9/29	Old Religions in New Contexts	
			Joyner, ““Believer I Know”” A. Cahan, <i>Yekl</i> (1917) R. Orsi, “The Days and Nights of the Festa”
	Fri. Sept. 29	Discussion #4	
VIII.	10/2–10/6	Religion and Mass Culture	
			Gardella, “American Anti-Catholic Pornography” Susman, “Babe, Barton, Ruth” Crowell, <i>Acres of Diamonds</i> Schmidt, “The Easter Parade”
	Fri Oct. 6	Discussion #5	
IX.	10/9–10/18	The Religious and the Modern	
			H. Frederic, <i>The Damnation of Theron Ware</i> G. Wacker, “Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish” Fosdick, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” (1922) A.A. Hodge, “The Inspiration of the Bible” (1928)
	Mon. Oct. 16	Discussion #6	
	Fri. Oct. 20	Test #2	
X.	10/23–10/27	Religion and Gender	
			Bednarowski, “Women in Occult America” Lienesch, “Paradox of Power through Powerlessness” Higginbotham, “Feminist Theology of the Black Baptist Church” Daly, “Beyond God the Father”
	Fri. Oct. 27	Discussion #7	
XI.	10/30–11/10	Regional Religion: Inside the Bible Belt	
			Samuel S. Hill, from <i>Southern Churches in Crisis</i> W.E.B. DuBois, from <i>Souls of Black Folk</i> Harvey, “God and Negroes and Jesus and Sin and Salvation” Wilson, “Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion” Tweed, “Our Lady of Guadalupe Visits the Confederate Memorial”
	Fri. Nov. 3	Discussion #8	
	Fri. Nov. 10	Discussion #9	
XII.	11/13–11/27	Religion and Multicultural America since 1945	
			Eck, “From Many, One” Kassam, “Daily Prayer of Shi’a Isma’ili Muslims” McAlister, “Rite of Baptism in Haitian Vodou” “Atheists Identified as America’s Most Distrusted Minority” Compare: Anti-Al Smith writings: Tom Heflin & Atlantic Monthly with JFK 1960 Houston Address and Jimmy Carter’s “born again” campaign
	Mon. Nov. 27	Discussion #10	

Unit	Class Dates	Topic	Readings
XIII.	11/29–12/6	Religion and the State	
			Ralph Reed on Separation as a myth “Is America a Christian Nation?” Evolution Readings: Bryan’s last speech, Darrow’s Opposition, <i>Dover</i> ID ruling Diamond, “The Long March” RFRA
	Fri. Dec. 1	<i>Religious Genealogy Papers Due!</i>	
	Mon. Dec. 4	Discussion #11	
	Wed. Dec. 6		Discuss Religious Genealogy Papers
	Tue. Dec. 12	Final Examination	

Concluding Caveat: The above schedule, policies, and assignments in this course are subject to change; be sure to check WebCT for the most recent versions of the syllabus.