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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. Katherine Albanese of the University of California, Santa Barbara. 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

The Johnny Cash song "One Piece at a Time" tells the story of an assembly line worker who builds and desires, but cannot afford a Cadillac. Pilfering parts over the course of several years, he constructs his own car at home in his garage. The result resembles no known model. A monstrous hybrid, one side has fins, the other side doesn't; one side has dual head lamps, the other doesn't; and so on. Nevertheless, the thing runs.

Like the car in the song, this course is being built one piece at a time. Like Cash's worker, as I construct my vehicle of desire I do not hesitate to borrow useful parts or ideas, take them back home, and integrate them into my syllabus. My course has benefited greatly from conversations my colleagues in the Indiana Young Scholars' group. From them I have borrowed assignments, readings, and teaching strategies. The result is a hybrid. What is most important, however, is that the course works well, and transports my students with some comfort and style.

My course promotes appreciation of the diversity of religions in North America and emphasizes religious interactions in history. Lectures and readings center on the theme of cultural and religious contact. Through lectures I develop a grand historical narrative of contact stretching from 1492 to the present. The narrative begins with the encounter of Old and New Worlds, discusses the collapse of Mississippian societies, depicts the incorporation of America, Africa, and Europe into the Atlantic World, describes the various waves of immigration from Old to New, and concludes by speaking of contemporary transnational flows of peoples and religions in an era of technological late capitalism. As I develop this narrative, I give primacy to the theme of exchange. No religion is viewed in isolation from the others or envisaged in pure continuity with its past. Each religion is challenged and enlivened by contact in the New World. These points are conveyed through lectures and assigned texts. Books such as Lis Harris's *Holy Days* and my own *Sacred Revolt* foreground the contact between a minority religious community and an enveloping, hostile population.

Although the main text for the course, Catherine Albanese's *America: Religions and Religion*, tends toward a celebration of religions as discrete ethnicities, conveying through its seriatim

presentation of traditions more a sense of raw pluralism than of relationality and exchange, contact is by no means ignored in her text. In America, each religion is depicted as being shaped by the fact that it occupies a space surrounded by many other religions. Each religion, it is implied, needs to be understood in light of its metonymic or contiguous relations to those traditions that stand beside it. Second, each religion is depicted as having to come to terms with the one dominant Protestant religion that stands over all religions in America.

Along with this dual emphasis on contact, America possesses methodological sophistication, comprehensive scope, and coherent writing. The text does not assume for "religion" a self-evident referent or common sense meaning. With admirable evenhandedness, the text introduces us to the great variety of religions in America. Its portrait of a modern cultural religion stimulates discussion and provides a good way to end the course. Students find the book a pleasure to read. Since the chapters are self-contained, I feel free to assign them in an order different from the one offered by Albanese. We read the first chapter on Native Americans, then begin jumping all over the place, taking a chapter here, a chapter there, to weld the text to the lectures.

In depicting the traditions of the first Americans, my major concern is to show that these traditions responded dynamically to the historical challenges of contact, colonialism, and nascent capitalism. Since Native American history has usually been depicted as one of inevitable disappearance, I emphasize that native peoples weathered demographic holocausts, recreated polities, and assimilated much from non-native newcomers. Since the study of Native American religion has valorized only what looks like "traditional" Native American spirituality, pristine forms of religion uncontaminated by incoming religions and peoples (the Black Elk Speaks school), I emphasize how Native Americans showed (and continue to show) religious creativity. I discuss how Apalachees responded to the Spanish mission system, Algonquians embraced the French fur trade, and Delawares and Cherokees interacted with the English. This year I will also require students to read my book, *Sacred Revolt*, a case study of one of the largest anti-colonial movements to have ever occurred in North America. Unlike the great bulk of religious studies texts on Native Americans, this book does not view Indians' religion through an ahistorical, spiritualizing lens, but argues that sacred myths and rituals provided the Muskogees with the very way to live their revolt. To remind students that Native Americans did not disappear and that their religions are ongoing, I screen *Pow-Wow Highway*, show slides of Colleen Cutschall's art, give each student a copy of the *Lakota Times* to read, and try to bring a Native American scholar to class.

By treating African-Americans next, I introduce a second paradigm of what it means to be American. If Native Americans are peoples who bear witness to the ongoing invasion of their lands, African-Americans are descendants of peoples who were ripped away from their ancestral lands and categorized as racial others. How did African religious traditions handle the violence of colonialism and New World terror? These questions are raised in lectures and addressed in readings (*America*, chapter 6; selections from Charles Joyner's *Down By the Riverside* and Sernett's *Afro-American Religious History*). This year students will have the option to write a paper on Bell Hooks's and Cornel West's *Breaking Bread*. It is my hope that the dialogue format of this book will make accessible the critical thought of two of America's leading intellectuals. I also require students to visit a local Baptist church and write a report. The minister is an alum of the college and the congregation warmly welcomes students.

To complete my rough portrait of the Atlantic World, I turn to European Protestants. I focus on the huge English migration to the colonies. Lectures introduce Barbadian sugar planters, Carolina deerskin traders, Virginia tobacco planters, Pennsylvania farmers, Massachusetts merchants, and Newfoundland fishermen. This introduces a third paradigm of what it means to be American, i.e., to be descended from people who freely chose to leave the land of their ancestors.

In interpreting the experience of European Protestants in America, scholars have become absorbed in evaluating their religion in relation to its European roots. We've tracked how elite

theology changed; studied how established forms of polity became distended and reworked; and traced the transatlantic flow of folk magic. What has been neglected is the study of relations between Euro-Protestant immigrants and other Americans. I try to address this imbalance by attending to the relations of Euro-Protestant immigrants to Native Americans and African Americans. No more or less than anyone else, Euro-Protestants in America are depicted as shaped by contact. They too were caught in the vast circuits of exchange uniting Old and New Worlds. They too had to deal with exposure to other peoples' religions. I discuss Puritans in relation to the Pequot; Quaker dealings with the Delawares; Anglican relations with Powhatans and Africans; Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist missions among the Cherokees. Instead of spinning a simple morality tale of innocent Indian victims and bad English invaders, I describe the complex forms of mutual accommodation and exchange that evolved in the interior as well as the massive intercultural violence that characterized Indian-white relations in Massachusetts and Virginia.

While on the subject of Protestants, I go ahead and finish telling their story. I bring the treatment of Protestantism up to date by splicing in Albanese's chapter on "Public Protestantism" and her discussion of contemporary evangelicalism. To give evangelical Protestantism a human face, I show the white fundamentalist segment from the Long Search series and we take a field trip to the Amish countryside. I would like to assign a supplemental case study text, but have not decided what to use. I am looking at Balmer's *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, Lawless's *Handmaidens of the Lord*, and Gardella's *Innocent Ecstasy*.

Albanese's provocative argument, that Protestantism provided the de facto master code controlling public discourse on religion in America, serves as a useful foil against which to introduce Judaism and Catholicism, traditions that became much more strongly represented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as new waves of European immigrants crossed the Atlantic. To give students an idea of how these imported traditions dealt with American realities, I give those interested the option of writing on Holy Days, Robert Orsi's *The Madonna of 115th Street*, or Colleen McDannell's *The Christian Home in Victorian America*. The first two texts respectively deal with Jewish and Catholic immigrant communities in New York. McDannell's book has the merit of tracing a key theme, nineteenth century domesticity, in both its Protestant and Catholic contexts. It has the disadvantage of not being available in paperback. Jumping to the west coast, I show a Barbara Myerhoff film that provides an ethnographic portrait of a contemporary Russian Jewish neighborhood in L.A. Since most of my students are either Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant, I also ask them to write on their family religious history in their journals at this point in the course. Finally, to round-out the treatment of non-Protestant immigrants, I have invited an ethnographer to visit the class and tell us about a contemporary immigrant Muslim community in New York.

In the final section of the course, we turn our gaze toward the contemporary sacred culture that cuts across ethnicities and classes and tries to unify all Americans. The goal is to learn how to perceive religion even when it is not labeled as such. We begin with Albanese's chapter on civil religion, the religion of the chosen nation state. The cultus, creed, and code of the civil religion are fleshed out through readings on the Vietnam memorial, the twin theodicies of the JFK assassination and the Challenger disaster, Harak on S.D.I., Linenthal on battlefields, and, just before Thanksgiving, if feasible, a field trip to the Gettysburg battlefield (60 miles from our college).

Although students become convinced that an American civil religion exists, most find Albanese's concept of cultural religion nebulous. They say she sees religion everywhere and groan when I report Elvis sightings. Even the skeptics, however, are persuaded by supplemental readings that disclose mythic meanings in Hollywood films (Gordon's *"Star Wars"* and Hill's *Illuminating Shadows*). The course concludes with references to post-modern formations and the sanctification of technology.

II. Course Syllabus

RELIGION IN AMERICA

Joel W. Martin

Fall 1992, T/Th, 12:30-1:50

Office Hours: T 3:30--5:00 & by appointment (291-3929)

Course Description

This course traces how religious traditions from America, Africa, Europe and Asia changed in the post-Columbian New World context. Each tradition and revision of tradition is taken seriously as a profound attempt to provide orientation in light of changing New World realities. A final section of the course traces contemporary developments reshaping cultural religion in America.

Course Objectives

1. to gain an overview of the variety of religions practiced in America
2. to explore the interactions of these religions through time and across cultures
3. to learn to recognize and describe contemporary religious phenomena and expressions, even when they are not institutionalized or explicitly identified as religion
4. to test and critique received notions concerning specific religions and religion itself

Required Texts

Catherine Albanese, *America: Religion and Religions* (second edition)
Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World*

Recommended Texts

- Bell Hooks and Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectuals*
- Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture*
- Lis Harris, *Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family*
- Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem*
- Geoffrey Hill, *Illuminating Shadows: The Mythic Power of Film*

Texts are for sale in the college bookstore. All other readings on reserve in Shadok-Fackenthal Library.

Evaluation:

- A. Critical Journal 30%
- B. Two Book Critiques 30%
- C. Mid-term and Final 40%

SYLLABUS

September 3 Orientation: What is Religion?

Reading: Albanese, America, 1-19

Native American Religions

September 8 Encountering Europeans

Reading: Albanese, America, 21-48

September 10 Encountering the Sacred

Reading: Martin, Sacred Revolt, ix-84

September 15 Anti-Colonial Movements

Reading: Martin, Sacred Revolt, 87-186

September 17 Present Prospects

Reading: a copy of the Lakota Times (to be distributed in class)

Reading: Harjo, "I Won't Be Celebrating Columbus Day," Newsweek

African-American Religions

September 22 History of the Atlantic World; African Religions

Reading: Albanese, America, 193-217

September 24 Slave Religion

Reading: Joyner, "Come By Here, Lord," in Down By the Riverside

September 29 Conjure and Churches

Reading: Sernett, Afro-American Religious History 69-80;135-49.

October 1 Recent Expressions

book critique option West and Hooks, Breaking Bread

European-American Protestants

October 6 A New European Religion

Reading: Albanese, America, 102-120

October 8 The Great Awakening and The American Revolution

Reading: Albanese, America, 219-248

October 13 Public Protestantism

Reading: Albanese, America, 395-430

Reading: Clinton, "Acceptance Speech," Democratic Convention 1992

October 15 Contemporary Expressions

Reading: Albanese, America, 369-392

book critique option Balmer, Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

Non-Protestant Immigrants

October 27 Catholicism: The Religion

Reading: Albanese, America, 74-100

October 29 Catholicism in the United States

Reading: McDannell, "Catholic Domesticity," in *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900*, 52-75

November 3 Catholicism: Contemporary Expressions

Reading: TBA

book critique option Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*

November 5 Islam

Reading: Albanese, America, 281-322

November 10 Judaism: The Religion and Its Social History in the United States

Reading: Albanese, America, 50-72

November 12 Judaism Reading: Sarna, "Is Judaism Compatible With American Civil Religion?" in *Religion and the Life of the Nation* (Urbana, 1991), 152-167.

Reading: "Side by Side," *U.S. News and World Report*, Nov.4, 1992

book critique option Harris, *Holy Days*

The Religion of Contemporary American Life

November 17 Civil Religion

Reading: Albanese, America, 432-461

November 19 Civil Religion

Reading: Linenthal, Sacred Ground, 1-7, 87-126

December 1 Cultural Religion

Reading: Albanese, America, 311-342

December 3 Cultural Religion

Reading: Gordon, "Star Wars"

book critique option Hill, Illuminating Shadows

December 8 Techno-religion

Reading: Zukin, "Disney World: The Power of Facade," in Landscapes of Power (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Reading: Kasson, "The Invention of the Past" in Technological Change and the Transformation of America, 37-52.

December 10 Techno-religion

Daly, Gyn/Ecology-, 51-72

Critical Journal

You should write at least two pages a week in response to anything that illumines religion in America. If you respond to readings or lectures, do not recapitulate other people's ideas or arguments. Instead, you should explain what you found convincing, interesting, troubling, exciting, amusing, confusing, etc. The short articles I have assigned should give you plenty to discuss. You can also respond to religious events, works of art, or religious issues of the day. I will collect the journals periodically for review. Grading will be determined by what your writing reveals about your efforts to understand the material and to think carefully about religion.

In addition to your individualized entries, every journal must also include the following three items. Be prepared to read what you have written on the indicated dates.

1. Sept. 29 one page description of a worship service at Brightside Baptist Church Visit a regular service of Bright Side Baptist, 215 S. Queen St. (295-9431). Dress respectfully. Allow at least two hours. Do not take notes during service. You should address the following questions: What seemed familiar? unfamiliar? What general mood was evoked during the service? What was the most striking visual feature of the experience? What moment or sound or action impacted you and/or the community most strongly? What aspects of the worship center make it sacred space?
2. Oct. 27 one page description of your family's religious history; include the following, but not necessarily in this order:
 - a. religious affiliations of your parents, your grandparents and if possible, your great-grandparents (need not be biological kin)
 - b. date of immigration of at least two forebears (where did they come from, why? where did they enter the U. S.?)

- c. any significant religious changes made by an individual
 - d. describe your current religious status, noting your relationship to a community and its code, creed, and cultus.
 - e. has your family history (items 1, 2, and 3) affected you?
3. Nov. 17 one page analysis of religion and politics as exemplified in the 1992 Presidential campaigns

During September and October you should pay attention to how the Bush and Clinton campaigns invoke the name of God, use religious themes or narratives, or appeal to religious values, including those of the American civil religion (American as chosen, special nation). Collect as many examples of such usages as you can. Write a one page analysis of the way religion and politics were intertwined by the candidates.

Book Reviews

You will write two book reviews, each 3-4 pages long. Select one book from group A and one from group B. Before writing your analysis consider the following questions: Which religious tradition does the book describe? How does the author approach the tradition? What sources and methods are used to gather information or shape interpretations? Describe the author's relationship to the tradition studied. Would you say the author is an insider, an outsider, or somehow in between? What did you find most interesting in the book? What would you like to learn more about? What are the book's strengths? weaknesses? Would you recommend it to your classmates? Why? Why not? Papers should be turned in to the Religious Studies secretary Ms. Tana Pratt in Stager 322 by 4:30pm on the date indicated in the right column. Note: The due dates do not coincide with regular class meetings. Late papers will not be accepted.

A.

Bell Hooks and Cornel West, *Breaking Bread* September 30
Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* October 14

B.

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* November 2
Lis Harris, *Holy Days* November 11
Geoffrey Hill, *Illuminating Shadows* December 2