

Kathleen Riley Course Syllabus

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

Kathleen Riley
Department of History
Ohio Dominican College

The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Philip Gleason of the University of Notre Dame. 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.

I. Syllabus Justification

"History of Christianity In the United States"
Ohio Dominican College(ODC)

ODC is a small (1,700 students) Catholic liberal-arts college located in Columbus, Ohio - and steeped in the Dominican tradition of the order of nuns who founded the institution as "St. Mary of the Springs" in 1911. The College's Mission Statement is taken very seriously here, and can be quoted chapter and verse by most of the faculty; we are all encouraged (strongly) to incorporate it onto our syllabi, and reflect upon the Core Humanities Program in all of our classes. St. Thomas Aquinas is a lingering presence here - spiritually (in the prayer I often recite before class) and more concretely in the college's annual Academic Convocation/St/ Thomas Aquinas Day celebrated every January. It meshes well with my traditional Catholic sensibilities.

From a more pragmatic point of view, many of our students are "first-generation" college students, and they come to ODC with weak educational foundations in reading and writing. Now that I am better acclimated to the institutional climate here, I have taken it as my personal mission to try to raise standards, and to require our students to read more and take more responsibility for their own education. This syllabus reflects a somewhat idealistic notion of this endeavor, and I hope that it will survive in its present form when I teach the course in the future.

Since my arrival at ODC, the college has been preoccupied with the impending NCA visit to campus in the Fall of 1997; a mania for technology (the "Dominican Learning Network" I referred to in the syllabus), assessment, and multiculturalism has fueled the administrative machinery for years. Humorous references to the "Syllabi Police" in the Dean's Office are fact-based; all syllabi are tightly structured, along the I.-VI. divisions/format of my syllabus. I have resisted the pressure to conform to the "Knowledge-Skills-Attitudes" requirements - I prefer a narrative style and quotations to the simple lists used by most faculty members - imposed by the Education Department. My choice of the Richard Rodriguez memoir, *Hunger for Memory*, reflects the annual selection of a college-wide "Diversity Text" (which the President distributes as a Christmas "bonus" with the expectation that it will show up on the syllabi) --Rodriguez is wishful thinking on my part at this point in time. I think it is a wonderful example of a "coming of age in college"

autobiography, and it fits in well with the Immigration and Americanization themes I focus on, and the Catholic emphasis of my course as well.

Finally, a word about the "Catholic emphasis". ODC remains a Catholic institution, but the majority of our students are now non-Catholics; hence, the focus of the class is on "Christianity in the United States". As such, the course is structured as a chronological overview of the role played by Christianity in the history of the United States.

So, at the beginning of the class I offer the students a verbal disclaimer, explaining where I am coming from, and how we will proceed to study many Christian denominations, with a focus on Catholicism -both as an interesting case study, and from the perspective of the Instructor. My own vocation as a scholar/teacher has been based upon the belief that History and Religion are inextricably related; just as the study of religion cannot escape history, history cannot escape religion. But I have perceived a certain dissonance in many academic settings, where the life of learning and religious sensibilities seem to have come unraveled. The forsaking and forgetting of such a valuable tradition - the "soul of the American university"- is a lamentable loss, and I am dedicated to the "good fight" of trying to restore religious sensibilities to a more prominent position in the educational environment, and striving to reunite intellectual, moral, and spiritual values as part of a community of scholars swimming against the tide of secularization.

II. Introductory Course syllabus

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE UNITED STATES

History/Theology 242 Dr. Kathleen Riley
OHIO DOMINICAN COLLEGE Erskine 303 annex, X4628

I. Course Description and Goals

This course is a survey of the major thoughts, movements and personalities of American Religious History, from the colonial era to the present day. A special emphasis will be placed on Catholicism, and its place in the religious landscape of the United States.

Among the topics to be explored during the course of the semester will be: the religious motives for settling the New World; Awakenings, Revivals and Reform; Immigration and Nativism (Protestant-Catholic tensions); twentieth century "Isms" (Fundamentalism, Liberalism, Modernism and the "heresy" of Americanism); the Post Work War II Religious Revival; the crisis of the Sixties and the Second Vatican Council; and "Civil Religion" (the Religion of the American Republic) as a persistent force in American life and politics.

From the particular perspective of Catholicism, two persistent and pervasive themes will predominate: Immigration and Americanization. Our focus will be on the internal evolution of American Catholicism as it met and absorbed divergent social and ethnic groups, and that of the external relations between the Catholic community and the greater Protestant national community. This focus will allow us to explore, with historical evidence, the more theoretical issues of diversity/pluralism/multiculturalism in American history, and the relations between elites and subordinates - Insiders and Outsiders. Few communities in American History have sustained in such large numbers and over such a long period of time the varieties of peoples as American Catholicism. The Catholic Church should prove to be of special interest here at Ohio Dominican College, "guided in its educational mission by the Dominican motto: to contemplate truth and share with others the fruits of that contemplation".

Christopher Dawson, one of the truly great historians of Western Culture, put it quite simply when he said that "Religion is the key to History" - this maxim will be our guiding rationale. For in the American context, our national religious heritage has all too often gone unappreciated and even unknown. A major goal of this course will be to correct that oversight, and to demonstrate that Religion is an essential to unlocking the truth about American History - a necessary foundation upon which the story of the United States must rest if it is to be accurately understood and properly appreciated.

II. Instructional Objectives: Knowledge, Skills, Values

As students discover the rich heritage of the American nation and its people, they should develop a better sense of the central role that religion has played in the course of American History, as a source of both unity and diversity, consensus and conflict. Also, irrespective of our individual beliefs/faith, we should all strive to grow toward a greater sensitivity to the multiplicity of religious, ethnic and theological traditions that are a part of the American experience.

A course in American Religious History might be considered both timely and even a bit controversial, given the current academic discussion about the "Culture Wars", and the historical anomaly present on many college campuses in the United States today: the separation of the very idea of the university from its religious foundations. According to Historian George Marsden of the University of Notre Dame, a remarkable revolution has occurred, from an age when Christianity was a leading force in higher education to an era when it is either excluded from serious discussion or merely tolerated as a peripheral enterprise. In an effort to restore the "Soul of the American University", he has suggested that: ... it is fanciful to think about going back to Christianity, even of the most liberal sort, as providing the basis for a general moral consensus. The demands of justice in a pluralistic society preclude that...{but} religious perspectives, if responsibly held and civilly presented, are as academically respectable as other perspectives...One might expect that a truly pluralistic society would encourage faith-oriented higher learning as well as the various secular alternatives.

The Secularization of the Academy

So, we shall proceed to study Christianity as a leading force in higher education and American History, from the perspective of past participants, observers, and contemporary historians. Some preliminary "words of wisdom" for inspiration:

Thanks to the genuine spirit of christianity! The United States have banished intolerance from their systems of Government, and many of them have done justice to every denomination of christians...conferring an equal right of participation in national privileges.

-John Carroll, first US. Catholic Bishop, 1783

Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention, and the longer I stayed there the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things.... In America, the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom were intimately united...they reigned in common over the same country...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...I do not know whether all the Americans have a sincere faith in their religion (for who can search the human heart?). But I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions...

-Alexis DeTocqueville, Democracy in America (1835)

Prophets of both despair and hope foresaw a coming secular age, yet the majority of Americans found reasons to convince themselves that they were a religious people in a nation 'under God' ...It is more likely that the people's passion to make sense of things and to find company with others who share their visions will prevail into indefinite tomorrows...But if the actors remain somehow free, their dreams will prod them on to more restless pilgrimages.

-Martin Marty, *Pilgrims In Their Own Land* (1986)

III. Instructional Procedures

The basic style and substance of the course will consist of lectures, discussion, and media/video presentations. A six part series on "CATHOLICS/AMERICANS", covering the History of the Catholic Church in the U.S. from 1492-1989 and produced by the Paulist Press, will be shown during the course of the semester. We will also enjoy video clips of two prominent figures from the 1950s Religious Revival, the Rev. Billy Graham and Bishop Fulton Sheen, and some good overviews on "The Soul of a Nation" (Religion in American Life) produced by Golden Dome Productions at the University of Notre Dame.

Reading is essential, and the key to success in this course. In addition to the required texts, there is a collection of books on Reserve in Spangler Library: texts on American Catholicism by Hennesey, Dolan, Crews and Martin Marty (*An Invitation to American Catholic History*); readers in American Religious History, edited by Hackett, and Mulder and Wilson; and collections of Documents by Edwin Gaustad and Monsignor John Tracy Ellis. We shall make use of these items in Cooperative Learning Group assignments after the Mid-Term Examination period.

Grading Criteria

The following guidelines indicate how the final grade for the course will be determined:

- Examinations (Mid-Term and Final) - 40%
- Writing Assignments/Essays -40%
- Oral Presentations - 10%
- Participation (discretion of Instructor, attendance) -10%

IV. Student Requirements

Regular attendance and informed participation is required of all students. It is the responsibility of the individual student to explain all absences, and to make the necessary arrangements to complete missed coursework.

In addition to the regularly scheduled exams, quizzes may be administered on occasion to ascertain how well the students are completing and understanding the reading assignments. The articles from the "Capco" Xeroxed collection, and the monographs, will be discussed in detail in class. Evidence that the reading has been completed, and the class lectures and discussions comprehended, will be expected on the tests.

Two formal written assignments will be required (more details and deadlines will be forthcoming):

1. a book review/critical essay of *The Kingdom of Matthias*
2. a research paper on a leading personality from American Religious History. We will spend one class period choosing a figure, aided by two reference works: *The*

Dictionary of Christianity in America (Daniel Reid, Editor), and Dictionary of American Catholic Biography (John Delaney, Editor). Monographs and Autobiographies are especially recommended. Technologically resourceful students are also encouraged to employ the Dominican Learning Network in their quest/search for sources.

Some possible subjects: Jonathan Edwards, John Carroll, Isaac Hecker, Orestes Brownson, Charles G. Finney, John Hughes, John Ireland, James Cardinal Gibbons, Dwight Moody, Dorothy Day, Reinhold Niebuhr, Thomas Merton, Daniel Berrigan.

The paper should summarize the facts of the person's life, and place him/her in the context of American Religious History, relating the life to issues/themes we've explored in the, course.

V. Textbooks

- Marty, Martin, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* (Penguin)
- Carey, Patrick, *American Catholic Religious Thought* (Paulist)
- Johnson, Paul & Wilenz, Sean, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford)
- Orsi, Robert, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community In Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (Yale)
- Rodriguez, Richard *Hunger for Memory* (Bantam)
- Capco Reader - collection of xeroxed articles

VI. TOPICS/ Weekly Assignments & Class Schedule

Introduction Reconsidering the American Past

Week # 1

*Butler: "Historiographical Heresy: Catholicism as a Model for American Religious History"
*Dolan: "Immigrants and Their Gods: A New Perspective in American Religious History"

"In the Beginning ... European Context & Evangelization of America

Week #2

Marty: 1. The First Migrants 2. A Crowned Cross 3. The Conqueror vs. The Missionary" 4. Holy Wars and Sacred Piracies"

*Rodriguez: "The Missions"

"Colonial Background, Awakening, and Revolution"

Week #3

Marty: 5. Establishing Colonies 6. Pilgrimages of Dissent 7. The End of the Catholic Missionary Road

Week #4

Marty 8. A Matter of Choice 9. Three Revolutions
Carey: Introduction, pp. 3-15 Part 1: The Enlightenment
JOHN ENGLAND

"New Nation: Revivalism and the Immigrant Church"

Week #5

Marty: 10. Into the West and the World 11. Beyond Existing Bonds 12. A Century of Exclusion
*Hatch: "The Democratization of Christianity"
*Raboteau: "African Americans, Exodus and American Israel"
Johnson & Wilenz: THE KINGDOM OF MATTHIAS

Week #6

Marty: 13. Adapting to America
Carey: Introduction, pp. 15-30 Part II: Romantic Catholicism
ORESTES BROWNSON
ISAAC THOMAS HECKER
*Welter: "From Maria Monk to Paul Blanshard: A Century of Protestant Anti-Catholicism"

Week #7

Carey: Introduction, pp.30-46 Part IV. "Americanism and Modernism" JOHN IRELAND
*Gleason: "Immigrant Past, Ethnic Present"

Mid-Term Examination

"Transitional Years: Social Gospel & Rise of Fundamentalism"

Week #8

Marty: 14. Crises in the Protestant Empire" 15. Healing the Restless
Carey: Part V. "Social Justice"
JOHN HUGHES
EDWARD MCGLYNN

Twentieth Century Challenges: War, Depression, Adaptation

Week #9

Orsi: The Madonna of 115th Street
Focus on The Immigrant Experience
Class Presentations

Week #10

Marty: 16. The Dream of One Kingdom
Carey: JOHN RYAN

Week #11

Carey: Introduction: pp. 46-63
Part VI: "Neo-Thomism and Catholic Culture"
DOROTHY DAY
*Gleason: "The Search for Unity and Its Sequel"
*Orsi: "He Keeps Me Going: Women's Devotion to St. Jude"
""The Post World War II Era: Religious Revival??"

Week # 12

Marty: 17. A Season of Conflicts" 18. The American Way of Life"
Carey: JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY
*Wuthnow: "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life"

Week # 13

Research Papers Due
Marty: 19. Always a Horizon"
*Bellah: "Civil Religion in America"

Week # 14

Marty: 20. New Paths for Old Pilgrimages"
Rodriguez: Hunger of Memory
Wrap-Up and Further Reconsiderations

Week # 15

*Bellah: "Competing Visions of the Role of Religion in American Society"
*O'Brien: "American Catholicism and American Religion"