

**Religion in America, 1600-1865**  
HIUS 372  
Spring 1998

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Department of History  
University of Virginia

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## RATIONALE

This course enrolls about twenty students, ranging from first year to fourth year history majors, at the University of Virginia. I teach it like an undergraduate seminar, focusing on discussion, careful reading, and intensive writing and with minimal lecture.

I approach religious history as a social and cultural historian. I want to strike a balance between content and interpretation. I am aware that many students enrolled in this class to find out 'what happened,' but also I want to demonstrate that all 'facts' about the past must be interpreted, and to make them aware of the interpretive approaches taken by the authors that we read.

Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, which we read in the first week of class, sets the stage for the course. The book demands a self-conscious approach to religious history. I give the students a list of questions to consider while they read which stress equally what happened and how Butler interprets these events.

Then we move into a more careful chronological consideration of religion in American history as presented in other readings. Many of these challenge Butler's interpretation; others concur with him. This approach has the advantage of allowing students to revisit events and periods (learning what happened) while seeing how they are interpreted differently by historians (asking what it means).

Writing is central to the course. Students write weekly on the readings. These are informal assignments that vary from critiques of books to simple essays to responses to the readings. They are not graded for grammar or style, but are intended to help the student work over the readings through the writing. I grade them on a five-point scale. I ask students to bring a copy to class in addition to the one they turn in prior to class, as these assignments are often the basis for class discussions and even lectures.

A short research paper (5-7 pages) gets students into the sources. I offer them a selection of sources (manuscript diaries and letters, microfilmed newspapers and church records) I have found in the collections of Alderman Library on which to write. If they have interests beyond these sources, they are free to explore others. Throughout the term, they turn in thesis statements, outlines, and rough drafts and meet with me to discuss their writing.

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### ***Course Requirements***

- Students will write a midterm and a final exam. These will be take-home essays that will broadly address the readings and class discussions. The final exam will include a comprehensive essay.
- Students will also write weekly informal assignments on the readings prior to class meetings. These may be submitted electronically. These will not be graded so much for grammar and style as for content. These writing will be graded on a five-point scale. They are intended to help you work through the readings. Please bring a copy to work over in class discussions in addition to the one turned in for credit. Late work will not be accepted.
- Students will write one formal paper. It will be brief (approximately 5-7 pages) and will require research into sources in the collections of Alderman Library. Late papers will not be accepted.

All written assignments should be typed in 12-point type, black ink on white paper. Please refer to Strunk & White's *Elements of Style* on matters of style and grammar.

### ***Grading***

Exams, weekly writing assignments, and the paper will be weighted equally in calculation of the final grade. They will each count for one-quarter of the grade.

Attendance will not be recorded, but will be taken into account in the calculation of the grade for weekly assignments.

### ***Required Books***

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Yale, 1991.

David G. Hackett, *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*, Routledge, 1995.

Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, Oxford, 1986.

Patricia R. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, Oxford, 1986.

Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt, Knopf, 1997.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852.

### ***On Reserve at Clemons Library***

Colin G. Calloway, New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America, Johns Hopkins, 1997.

Mechal Sobel, Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith, Princeton, 1979.

Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom, Oxford, 1997.

James McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, Oxford, 1997.

### ***Class Schedule (Subject to Change)***

#### **1. January 15, Thursday: Introduction**

The Problem of an "American Religious" History

- Begin reading Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith.
- WRITE a brief informal statement (approximately one page) on why you are taking this class and what you think it should be about. Why should we study this? Why is it important?

#### **2. Week of January 20: New Narratives of American Religious History**

- Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, entire book
- WRITE a two to three-page informal critique of Butler. 1. What events and people does he emphasize (what is the story he tells?) 2. Did you learn anything? 3. Did anything here surprise you? 4. How does Butler's account accord with what you said this course should be about? Due Thursday, 1/22, by 9 a.m. in my box in Randall Hall.

#### **3. Week of January 27: Before the New World: Pre-Colonial North American Religions, Reformation Europe, and African Religions**

- Religion & American Culture (hereafter R&AC), Gutierrez, "The Pueblo Indian World in the Sixteenth Century"
- Sobel, Trabelin' On, Part I (RESERVE)

- Revisit Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, Chapter One

#### **4. Week of February 3: Encounters**

- Calloway, Introduction, “The Kaleidoscope of Early America,” and Chapter One, “A World of Dreams and Bibles” (RESERVE)
- R&AC, Raboteau, “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel”
- R&AC, Richter, “The Iroquois Experience”
- WRITE a paragraph description of your research paper, setting out the sources and a question you might like to answer. Due in class, Thursday 2/5.

#### **5. Week of February 10: New England**

- Stout, New England Soul, entire book
- R&AC, Hall, “A World of Wonders”

#### **6-7. Week of February 17 and February 24:**

- Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven, entire book
- Revisit Stout, New England Soul, Parts IV and V
- Revisit Butler, Awash in a Sea, Chapters Six and Seven

#### **8. Week of March 3: MIDTERM**

**Take home exam, due Thursday, March 5 at noon in my box, Randall Hall.**

=====Spring Break=====

#### **9. Week of March 17: Second Great Awakenings: The North**

- R&AC, Hackett, “Social Origins of Nationalism,” Martin, “From Middle Ground to Underground”; Ryan, “A Woman’s Awakening”
- WRITE an outline of your paper, setting out your thesis. Due in class Thursday, 3/19.

#### **10. Week of March 24: Second Great Awakenings: The South**

- Heyrman, Southern Cross, entire book

#### **11. Week of March 31: Writing the History of Religion**

NO CLASS this week. Individual meetings with the instructor concerning first drafts of research papers. Due in my box in Randall Hall at 9 a.m. Tuesday 3/31.

## **12. Week of April 7: Slave Religion**

- R&AC, Gravelly, “Dialectic of Double Consciousness,” and Joyner, “Believer I Know”
- Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness, Parts I and II (RESERVE)

## **13. Week of April 14: Alternative Traditions**

- R&AC, Shipps, “The Genesis of Mormonism,” and Frankiel, “California Dreams”
- Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, first half

PAPERS due in class, Thursday, 4/16.

## **14. Week of April 21: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Antebellum America**

- Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, second half

## **15. April 28: Religion and the Civil War**

- McPherson, “Religion is What Makes Soldiers Brave” in For Cause and Comrades, (Clemons RESERVE)
- Revisit Butler, “Conclusion: Lincoln and the Almost Chosen People”
- R&AC, Wilson, “The Religion of the Lost Cause”

FINAL EXAM: Essays due in my box by noon, Tuesday 5/5.