

RS 700 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN NORTH AMERICA

Renison University College/University of Waterloo

Wednesdays, 1:30-4:20pm, PAS 1053 (UWaterloo main campus)

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INSTITUTIONAL SETTING:

The University of Waterloo is a large public university located in Waterloo, Ontario. It has about 26,000 undergraduate and 4,000 graduate students.

CURRICULAR CONTEXT:

At the University of Waterloo we have a joint Ph.D. program with Wilfrid Laurier University, also located in Waterloo. The program has only one track: religious diversity in North America. RS 700 Religious Diversity in North America is one of our two core seminars (the other core course, offered by WLU, is RS 710 Approaches to the Study of Religion in North America). Students also take two additional elective courses (frequent offerings include Sociology of Religion, History of Religion in North America, and Case Studies in Religious Diversity in North America). They also do language study, general and field comprehensive exams, and of course the dissertation.

RS 700 Religious Diversity in North America is the first course students take in the program, so they arrive fresh from their master's degrees. Some of the students enter with minimal background in North American religion. Enrollment in RS 700 is typically 5-6 Ph.D. students, and sometimes we allow 1-2 M.A. students as well from WLU's M.A. program or one of the related UW programs (such as sociology, theological studies, etc).

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

There are 2-3 instructors who offer RS 700 on a rotating basis. This version focuses on monographs rather than articles, edited anthologies, or primary sources. The course meets weekly for just under three hours. It begins with a discussion of professional issues in the academy before moving to a student-led discussion of assigned books.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

North America is one of the most religiously diverse regions in the history of humanity; it is also one of the most monolithically Christian places on Earth. Scholars of religious history in North America must deal with this tension between the so-called mainstream and fringes, recognizing how a dominant tradition itself produces plurality while simultaneously exerting pressure on outside groups to lose elements of their distinctiveness. This course will therefore explore diversity within and outside of the Christian tradition(s), examining forces of change, diversification, and conformity, and consider how immigration, gender, race, class, theology, praxis, and other forces have produced and been shaped by the religious ferment of North American society.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Beaman, Lori G. *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008.
- Bowen, Kurt. *Christians in a Secular World: The Canadian Experience*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004.
- Breton, Raymond. *Different Gods: Integrating Non-Christian Minorities into a Primarily Christian Society*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.
- Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Dannin, Robert. *Black Pilgrimage to Islam*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Flake, Kathleen. *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Hutchison, William. *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- James, William Closson. *God's Plenty: Religious Diversity in Kingston*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011.
- Joselit, Jenna. *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.
- McCloud, Sean. *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Laugrand, Frédéric B. and Jarich G. Oosten. *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010.
- Peña, Elaine A. *Performing Piety: Making Sacred Space with the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
- Reimer, Sam. *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Tweed, Thomas. *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Wenger, Tisa. *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Wilson, Jeff. *Dixie Dharma: Inside an American Buddhist Temple in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance is mandatory. Failure to attend a class without an accepted excuse will result in the loss of 10% off your final mark. Failure to attend a second class without an accepted excuse will result in failure of the course.

There are three basic areas of assignments for this course. First, classroom assignments. Every student will read each book for the day on which it is assigned, and come to class

prepared to engage in discussion of the material itself, its presentation, and what you can take from it in guidance for conducting your own projects. In addition, each student will choose three books for which they will serve as discussion leaders. Discussion leaders will prepare the lesson plan for their chosen books—you may want to do additional research about the background of the book and/or author, how the book was received, etc. The discussion leader will raise useful topics for conversation and moderate the discussion. Combined discussion leadership of three books and general class participation are 40% of your final mark.

Next, students will choose one book from the outline to write a full review for submission to the *Journal of Religious Diversity in North America* (fictitious). You may choose one of the three books you are presenting in class, if you wish. You will go through the normal steps of academic submission. First, you must query the editor about whether he wishes to receive a review from you on the chosen book, using a formal query letter. You will receive notice as to whether the editor wishes to receive your review or not. Second, you will write and submit the review just as you would an article to an actual journal: i.e. the copy needs to be clean, all the citations in place, write a cover letter, etc. This submission is due by December 15. You will receive comments just as you would for an actual submission. This assignment is worth 10% of your final course mark.

Finally, term papers. You will research and write an article on a topic of your choosing that relates to North American religion, for submission to the *Journal of Religious Diversity in North America* (fictitious). You will go through the normal steps of academic submission. As with the book review assignment, you must query the editor about the suitability of your paper topic and you will receive notice as to whether the editor wishes to receive your article. Second, you will write and submit the paper just as you would an article to an actual journal: i.e. follow the style sheet of the journal, include an abstract, write a cover letter, etc. This submission is due by December 15. You will receive comments just as you would for an actual submission. This assignment is worth 50% of your final course mark.

READING SCHEDULE:

September 12: Diversity vs. Pluralism

Religious Pluralism in America

September 19: Early Forces of Diversification

Awash in a Sea of Faith

September 26: Class

Divine Hierarchies

October 3: Aboriginal Peoples and Religious Diversity

We Have a Religion

Inuit Shamanism and Christianity

October 10: Culture and/or Religion?

The Wonders of America

October 17: Islam in North America

Black Pilgrimage to Islam

October 24: Law and Religion

The Politics of American Religious Identity

Defining Harm

October 31: Class and Religion

Divine Hierarchies

November 7: Transnational Immigrant Contributions

Our Lady of the Exile

Performing Piety

November 14: Transnational and Regional Religious Subcultures

Evangelicals and the Continental Divide

Dixie Dharma

November 21: The Study of Diversity

God's Plenty

November 28: After Christianity?

Christians in a Secular World

Different Gods