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RELI250: American Christianities

Gonzaga University

Young Scholars of American Religion, 2015–2017

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Gonzaga University is a Jesuit institution in the Inland Northwest in Spokane, Washington. Gonzaga's total enrollment for the academic year 2016–2017 was about 7,491 students, with 5,041 of those being undergraduates. In addition to the College of Arts & Sciences, Gonzaga University has six other schools, including: the School of Business Administration, the School of Education, the School of Engineering & Applied Sciences, the School of Law, and School of Nursing and Human Physiology, and the School of Professional Studies. Graduate degrees are offered by a variety of departments and programs across these schools. The average class size is 22 students. About twenty-five percent of undergraduates are students of color or from foreign countries. Many students come from states that would be considered the West (Washington, Oregon, California, and Colorado being the primary home states of students). The average Gonzaga student is incredibly busy as most have work-study or off campus part-time jobs, many are heavily involved in student clubs and organizations, and intermural sports are very popular. In March, everything is about basketball.

Most professors in the College of Arts & Sciences at Gonzaga teach a 3-3 load with 75 students per semester spread across those three courses. The majority of my courses have a 25-student enrollment cap, though a typical fall/spring semester course has on average 27 students. In addition to teaching a 3-3 Gonzaga expects a high level of service from its faculty.

Gonzaga is a very mission-driven institution. According to its mission state, the university "educates students for lives of leadership and service for the common good" and "cultivates in its students the capacities and dispositions for reflective and critical thought, lifelong learning, spiritual growth, ethical discernment, creativity and innovation." Perhaps it is best summed up this way, "The Gonzaga experience fosters a mature commitment to the dignity of the human person, social justice, diversity, intercultural competence, global engagement, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet." Many Jesuit schools focus on developing students to become women and men for others, as such "women and men for others" is a phrase commonly uttered on campus. This mission powers the core curriculum of the university, much of which is offered by the College of Arts & Sciences.

CURRICULAR CONTEXT

The core curriculum includes two mandatory Religious Studies courses, though courses in our department can fill other core designations (such as Ethics or Social Justice). These two core curriculum courses are: *Christianity/Catholic Tradition* and *World or Comparative Religion*. Courses that meet a core curriculum requirement must achieve the learning outcomes for that core requirement and list those learning outcomes on the syllabus. The World or Comparative Religion courses also must fulfill a Global Studies designation, which requires at least fifty percent of course content to cover places other than the United States. This means that American religions courses must either: be hemispheric/have heavy tribal sovereignty (such as my Native American Religions course) or focus almost exclusively on Christianity (as this one does).

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PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

American Christianities includes a variety of lecture, small-group discussions, full-class discussions, short film screenings, and archival work. Many Gonzaga students come in thinking they have a "clear" sense of what is Christianity. One of the goals of my course is the old Religious Studies adage to "make the strange familiar and the familiar strange." We focus on the diversity of Christianity in America and the divisions, conflicts, and compromises that comes with that diversity.

Though previous iterations of this course often include another text alongside Marie Griffith's edited documentary reader, *American Religions* (for example, the previous semester had Dennis Covington's *Salvation on Sand Mountain* assigned as well; other semesters I have used Brian Moore's novel *Black Robe*), this next semester only has the one text. With our text and our trip to the archives, primary sources are a big part of this course. Students turn in a number of short primary source worksheets during the semester as well as construct/write two faux primary sources. Through analysis and contextualization of primary sources, I introduce students to the *doing* of American religious studies.

Your Professor

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How This Course Helps You Graduate

This course fulfills your Christianity/Catholic tradition [core curriculum requirement](#).

Course Texts

Marie Griffith, ed., [American Religions: A Documentary Reader](#) (Yale University Press, 2005).

The book is required.

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard. Please always bring your readings to class.

AMERICAN CHRISTIANITIES



Course Description

Americans frequently debate on whether or not this is a Christian nation. Those same Americans have different understandings of what a “Christian nation” is. In America, it seems there is no one way to be Christian. From initial encounters and exchanges between European colonists and Native Americans to the serpent-handling churches in rural Appalachia, we will build a thematic and chronological framework for understanding the diversity of Christianities in American history and culture. Christianity has been a dominant force in American history, and it has been a very diverse force. During the course, we will investigate the powerful social, cultural, political, and intellectual role Christianity plays in our nation’s past.

Historically speaking, how one is Christian in the United States is closely related to one’s social status. Thus race, politics, and gender are key themes in this course. This course will equip you with knowledge, tools, and resources to analyze arguments about Christianity in America’s past, present, and future.

Christianity/Catholic Tradition Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify the sources of Christian traditions: scripture, doctrines, historical developments, leading thinkers, or practices.

In American Christianities, we'll map various themes, trends, texts, and people in American religious history across different time periods.

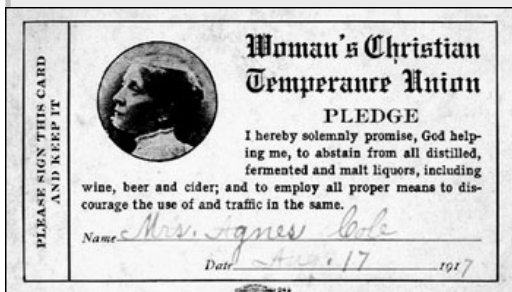
2. Students will be able to interpret and analyze sources of Christian tradition critically and creatively by employing contemporary scholarly methods that relate sources to historical contexts, to other sources, and to the experiences of faith.

In American Christianities, we'll analyze and contextualize primary sources about American religious history and culture. Additionally, we'll compare and critique how various Christian groups have related to one another and found their place in American culture.

3. Students will be able to articulate how the sources of Christian tradition and methods of interpretation and analysis promote cultural transformation and social justice.

In American Christianities, we'll assess how religion, power, and identity have intersected in American history and culture.

How to Succeed in this Course



1) Come to class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire meeting. Make-up quizzes will only be offered for documented University approved activities, major illness (doctor's note), or family emergencies.

2) Regularly check your email. I frequently email about grades, housekeeping issues, and more.

3) Complete assigned readings, in their entirety, on schedule.

Engage with your reading. Consider coming to class with 3 Qs about the reading (a rich **q**uote to unpack, a discussion **q**uestion for the class, and a **q**uandary that the reading left with you.) And **bring** the readings to class.

4) Contribute to class discussions. You should come to class with questions and comments, prepared to participate in a lively discussion.

5) Complete all assignments, in a timely manner. Due dates are firm but I allow requested extensions if requested 12 hours before due date. Otherwise late papers will be deducted a full letter grade for every day it is late.

6) Ask for help when you need it. I am happy to assist you in your attempts to master course materials and successfully complete course assignments (Really, I am). Come to my office hours and I am always available via email.

Course Policies

RESPECT FOR MATERIAL, OUR SUBJECTS, AND YOUR PEERS

This course is not confessional in nature; that is, we are not here to promote a particular religious viewpoint or to debate religious “truth.” Rather, we will be engaging religious materials in order to understand their meanings for the people who have produced and used them. You may have your own religious commitment; if so, throughout this course you will likely encounter opinions and religious beliefs and activities with which you do not agree. This does not make them unworthy of your study, consideration, and respect. I ask you to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone else whose practices and beliefs may differ from your own and yet carry immense meaning and value for that person. Furthermore, you will be expected to communicate in a civil manner at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified way. Treat your peers and the subject material with respect.

COURSE POLICY ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

This class and classroom is one that respects and welcomes each other. Many of my classes cover topics related to race, colonialism, religion, and racism. These conversations and readings are difficult for some students, and I encourage you to live in that space of productive discomfort and allow yourself to be challenged. Gonzaga’s [Mission Statement](#) emphasizes a commitment to intercultural competence, diversity, and social justice. Let’s live that mission in the classroom. Through these sometimes-uncomfortable conversations, we will learn and grow together.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

I do not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. We are an intellectual and academic community, and all of us are responsible to act with integrity. All violations of the Gonzaga Academic Honesty Policy will result in a zero on the assignment. Plagiarism is the act of passing another’s work off as your own. Whether intentional or not, all plagiarized assignments will receive a zero. If you have questions or concerns about plagiarism, consult the guide on blackboard. [Click here for more on Academic Citizenship at Gonzaga.](#)

SCREEN POLICY

You are welcome to use your computer or tablet in class to take notes and refer to pdf readings you did not print out. Screens are **not** to be allowed for other purposes during class. If you have your screen open, you have agreed that I can cold-call on you at any time. The only exceptions to this rule are those with relevant disability accommodations.

DISABILITY ACCESS POLICY

Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should:

1. Register with and provide documentation to the Disability Access.

2. Bring a letter to me from the [Disability Access Office](#) indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done within the first two weeks of class. The sooner I know, the sooner we can work together.

For more information about services available to GU students with disabilities, contact: disability@gonzaga.edu; 313-4134; Foley Library 209.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

According to the [Gonzaga University attendance policy](#), if you miss more than 6 class meetings (so 7 or more), you will receive a “V” for this class, which is the same as a “F”

A NOTE ON HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Consistent with its mission, Gonzaga seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and Gonzaga’s policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Gonzaga encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in [Gonzaga’s Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy](#).

As a faculty member, I want get you connected to the resources here on campus specially trained in and experienced in assisting in such complaints, and therefore **I will report all incidents of gender-based harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct to Title IX**. A representative from that office will reach out to you via phone and/or email to explore options for support, safety measures and reporting. I will provide our Title IX Director with all relevant details, including names and identifying information, of the information reported. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following websites: Equity and Inclusion and Title IX. If you would like to directly make a report of harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct directly, you may contact our Title IX coordinator (Stephanie Whaley; 509-313-6910; Business Services Building 018; whaleys@gonzaga.edu). For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit our [Title IX](#) website or the website for [Equity and Inclusion](#). My office is a safe space but I am legally required to report sexual misconduct.

Assignments and Grading

- 1) Reading Quizzes. There will be 11 pop quizzes each worth 20 points. These quizzes will cover the day’s reading assignment. At the end of the semester your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and your total quiz score determined from the remaining quizzes. Make up quizzes will only be offered for students with excused (documented) absences. Worth 200 points.
- 2) Primary Source Worksheets: Over the course of the semester, you will be required to fill out 5 primary source worksheets. The worksheet is due the class period the reading was assigned. Each worksheet is worth 50 points. **At least two** should be completed before the first faux primary source is due. Only three worksheets will be accepted after February 16.
- 3) Take Home Midterm: This essay has you reflecting on the most significant reading so far in the

semester and why. Full prompt posted to blackboard. Worth 200 points. (A general rubric for essays in this class is on blackboard in the Prompts/Guides area.)

4) Faux Primary Sources: You will need to write two 300-word faux primary sources about any 2 events/persons/communities/themes of your choosing from the semester's material. Each is worth 75 points. Their due dates are on the schedule.

5) Jesuit Archive Assignment: We will spend a week in the archives of the Jesuits of the Oregon Province. In groups of 4, you will examine a small collection of material and write a group reflection on the material and the experience. More information will post to blackboard. Worth 150 points.

6) Final Essay/Unessay: You will write a 1500 word essay in reflection of the semester or complete an [unessay](#). Worth 300 points.

7) In-Class Participation: The least boring and most effective way to learn is to participate fully in the process. You are expected to contribute to the success of this course by: Reading the assigned materials, attending every class, taking notes, listening respectfully, staying on task, and **actively contributing** to class discussions. Worth 150 points. (A rubric for class participation is on blackboard in the Prompts/Guides area.)

Reading Quizzes: 200 points	A range: 1400-1255 points	D range: 975-837 points
Worksheets: 250 points	A/A- cutoff at 1297	D+/D cutoff at 920
Midterm: 200 points	B range: 1254-1115 points	D/D- cutoff at 876
Faux Sources: 150 points	B+/B cutoff at 1200	836 and below: F
Archive Project: 150 points	B/B- cutoff at 1158	
Final Essay/Unessay: 300 points	C range: 1114-976 points	
Participation: 150 points	C+/C cutoff at 1060	
Total: 1400 points	C/C- cutoff at 1019	

Course Schedule

Important: You need to come to class having already read the assigned reading for that day; in other words, readings are due the date listed.



Week 1: Course Introduction

Wednesday, Jan 17: What are American Christianities?

Friday, Jan 19: Why American Christianities?

Reading: "The Color of Christ" on blackboard

Week 2: Colonial Encounters

Monday, Jan 22: Native American Religions

Reading: "Pueblo World of the 16th Century" on blackboard

Wednesday, Jan 24: New Spain

Reading: *Sublimis Deus* in *American Religions* (AR); "El Requerimiento" on

blackboard

Friday, Jan 26: New France

Reading: “Jesuit Relations” on blackboard

Week 3: Colonial Encounters

Monday, Jan 29: New England

Reading: Winthrop “A Model of Christian Charity” in *AR*

Wednesday, Jan 31: Puritans

Reading: Mather “Sleeping at Sermons is a Great Evil” and Mather “Wonders of the Invisible World” in *AR*

Friday, Feb 2: The First Great Awakening

Reading: Edwards, “*Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion*” in *AR*



Week 4: Making Early America

Monday, Feb 5: Religion and the Atlantic Slave Trade

Reading: Armstrong “The Christian Doctrine of Slavery” in *AR*

Wednesday, Feb 7: Slave Christianity

Reading: Douglass “From *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*” in *AR*

Friday, Feb 9: Religion and America’s Founding

Reading: Jefferson “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom” and Madison “Memorial and Remonstrance” in *AR*



Week 5: 19th-century Christian Diversity

Monday, Feb 12: The Second Great Awakening

Reading: Reading: Finney “From *Memoirs*” in *AR*

Wednesday, Feb 14: Antebellum Spiritual Hothouse

Reading: “Evidence from Scripture and History” on blackboard

Friday, Feb 16: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Reading: Smith “Articles of Faith” and “Revelation” in *AR*

Faux Primary Source Due by 5pm

Week 6: 19th-century Christian Diversity

Monday, Feb 19: No Class. Presidents’ Day.

Wednesday, Feb 21: Nineteenth-century Utopianism

Reading: “The Oneida Community” on blackboard

Friday, Feb 23: Strong Bodies

Reading: “The Living Temple” on blackboard

Week 7: Catholicism and ImmigrationMonday, Feb 26: Catholic ImmigrationReading: *Toth Meeting with Archbishop John Ireland* in *AR*; and “The Italian Problem” on blackboardWednesday, Feb 28: Anti-CatholicismReading: Strong “From *Our Country*” (section on “Romanism” only) in *AR*; and “Maria Monk” on blackboardFriday, March 2: Catholicism and Race

Reading: “A Black Woman’s Letter to Pope Pius IX” on blackboard

**Week 8:****Christianity and Violence in the 19th Century**Monday, March 6: Religion and the Civil War

Reading: “Second Inaugural Address” on blackboard

Wednesday, March 7: Indian WarsReading: Black Elk “From *Black Elk Speaks*” in *AR*Friday, March 9: Massacre at Wounded Knee

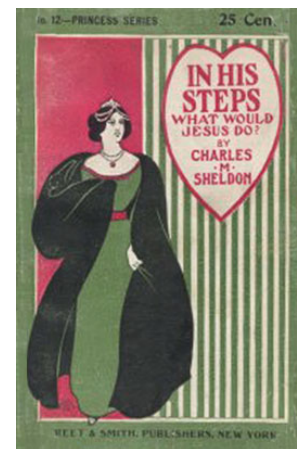
Reading: “Ghost Dance Religion” on blackboard

Take-Home Midterm Due by 5pm**March 12-16: Spring Break!!!****Week 9: Modern America**Monday, March 19: World’s Parliament of ReligionReading: Clarke “The Ten Religions and Christianity” and Daggett “Heathen Invasion” in *AR*Wednesday, March 21: Pentecostalism

Reading: “Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish” on blackboard

Friday, March 23: Father Divine and the International Peace Mission Movement

Reading: “The Realness of God To You-wards” on blackboard

Week 10: Modern AmericaMonday, March 26: Social GospelReading: Rauschenbusch “From *A Theology for the Social Gospel*” in *AR* (and optional additional reading: Day “From *The Long Loneliness*” in *AR*)Wednesday, March 28: Fundamentalists & ModernistsReading: Fosdick “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” in *AR***Faux Primary Source Due by 5pm on Thursday March 29**Friday, March 30: No Class. Good Friday.

Week 11: Christianity and Japanese Incarceration

Monday, April 2: No Class. Easter Monday

Wednesday, April 4: Japanese Incarceration

Reading: “Road to the Camps,” “Home and Family,” and “Religious Practice” in [Prisoners at Home \(DPLA\)](#)

Friday, April 6: Japanese Incarceration

Reading: “Religion and the Japanese American Incarceration” on blackboard



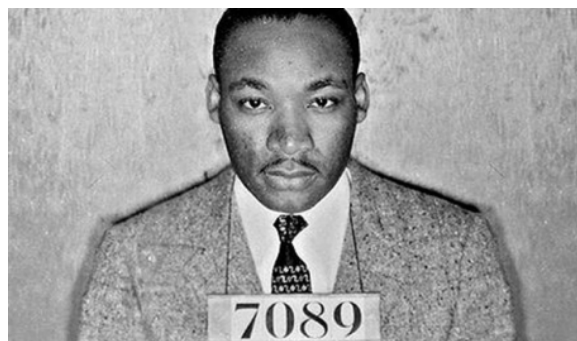
Week 12: Jesuit Archives, a field trip [into the Archives!](#)

Monday, April 9: Jesuit Archives

Reading: “Sacred Encounters in the Pacific Northwest” on blackboard

Wednesday, April 11: Jesuit Archives

Friday, April 13: Jesuit Archives



Week 13: Civil Rights Crusades

Monday, April 16: The Black Church

Reading: DuBois, *Credo* and *Litany of Atlanta* in AR

Wednesday, April 18: The Black Church and Protest

Reading: “How Far the Promised Land?” on blackboard

Friday, April 20: Religion and Rights

Reading: King “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in AR

Jesuit Archive Reports Due by 11:59pm

Week 14: Catholicism Exploration

Monday, April 23: Gender and Catholicism

Reading: “Gender and Siekmann Advice for Boys and Girls” on blackboard

Wednesday, April 25: Protest and Catholicism

Reading: “Sisters in Selma” on blackboard

Friday, April 27: Borderlands Catholicism

Reading: “*Fe* (Faith), *Familia* (Family), and *Comunidad* (Community)” on blackboard

Week 15: Christianity and the Culture Wars

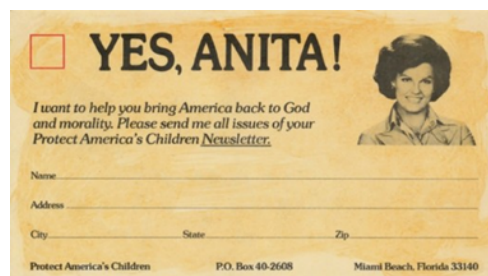
Monday, April 30: Culture Wars and the Religious Right

Reading: Hauerwas “Gay Friendship” in AR

Wednesday, May 2: Culture Wars and the Religious Freedom

Reading: U.S. Department of Education “Religious Expression in Public Schools” in AR

Friday, May 4: So what is/are American Christianities?



[Final Exam Week](#)

Thursday, May 10: 10:30 am - 12:30 pm