

David Yoo Course Syllabus

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

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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. 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 153/Religious Studies 138, American Religious History, is a seminar that complements an introductory course on American religion. While the traditions, regions, and time periods covered are relatively broad, the seminar is less concerned about comprehensive coverage than it is about critically exploring how individuals, families, and communities have drawn upon religion to give meaning to self, group, and nation. Readings and discussion, fieldwork, and research/writing form the core of the course and together suggest the breadth and diversity of the religious history of the United States. The readings consist of historical monographs, articles (reader), biography, fiction, and journalistic accounts. In addition, primary documents will supplement the assigned readings. The fieldwork component encourages students to engage religious communities as living traditions and to ask questions about how the past informs the present. Working in teams, student will visit four sites (Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) that have been selected to draw upon campus and local community resources. The research project enables a more sustained study of religious history, involving primary research and the challenges of writing narrative history. Although there is a preference for students to have some background in American religious history (e.g., the introductory course), there is no formal prerequisite. Some material in each class session, moreover, will provide an brief overview and set the context for the selected reading.

The class is taught as a history seminar (also cross-listed with religious studies), and as such, there is an emphasis upon asking how the readings relate not only to the historiography of American religion, but also to the larger contexts of American history. Students are asked to critically explore why it is that so much of American history is written and taught as if religion did not exist. How would our understanding of central themes in our collective past be altered if we paid more attention to religion?

Claremont McKenna College along with Harvey Mudd, Pitzer, Pomona, Scripps, and Claremont Graduate University collectively comprise the Claremont Colleges, a consortium of five undergraduate colleges and a graduate school, located in southern California. The total student population is about 6000 students on contiguous campuses with many shared facilities and programs. The Claremont Colleges combine the advantages of a small college within a university setting, and students cross-register for courses at the other schools. Claremont McKenna College is a selective, residential liberal arts college with an enrollment of 1000 students. Approximately forty percent of the students come from Asian American, Latino, African

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American backgrounds and from outside the United States. The male-female ratio is 55:45, and the student-faculty ratio is 11:1. Many of the students at Claremont McKenna are pre-professional with a large number of graduates moving on to law-related and business careers. Classes are small, and this seminar will likely enroll fifteen-to-twenty students. The Claremont Colleges have no religious affiliation.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

History 153/Religious Studies 138 *American Religious History*

Tuesdays, 7:00-9:30 PM

Claremont McKenna College
Spring 1998
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Course Requirements

Preparation & Participation (15%)

This seminar requires students to prepare carefully and thoughtfully for assignments that are outlined below. Active participation in class discussion and projects will be a key component of the learning process.

Fieldwork Reports

The religious traditions we are studying are not only part of American history, but also extend into the present. In an effort to contextualize our reading and research, students teams will report on their visits to Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant, and Roman Catholic religious sites. A handout will provide further details and guidelines. Students presenting fieldwork reports will be exempted from the reflection paper (see below) for that week, but will be expected to draw on the reading in the report and also to help lead discussion.

Athenaeum Events

Class will be held at the Athenaeum on Weeks 04 and 13 and include a video screening (Week 13).

Research Presentation

At the end of the course, each student will present a summary of his or her research findings with the class and respond to questions and comments. A handout will be provided.

Mid-Term Exam (25%)

The exam will be in-class Week 08 and consist of brief identification items and essay questions. A list of essay questions will be handed out in advance, and questions for the exam will be taken from the list.

Papers/Written Work (60% total)

Reflection Papers (15%)

These papers, not to exceed one typewritten page, are based on the readings for the course. The papers will vary in topic, but will consistently address: 1) the central argument(s)/theme(s) of the book, and 2) include at least one question/issue that will contribute substantively to class discussion. We will spend time each class assessing the reflection papers for content and structure. In addition, students should be prepared to pose their question/issue to the class and to facilitate discussion accordingly. Students presenting fieldwork reports (see above) will be exempted from the reflection paper for that week, but will be expected to draw on the reading and to help lead discussion. Due Tuesdays by 4:30 PM in Faculty Support Center, Pitzer Hall - Rm 6. NOTE: You must bring an extra, working copy to class. Late papers will not be accepted. Students may skip one (1) reflection paper of their choosing, but must submit a note to the instructor as notification.

Introduction (10%)

A one-to-three page draft of the introduction to the term paper. The introduction should state a clear argument, place the paper within the historiography of the given topic, address the kinds of sources employed, and offer an overview of the structure of the paper. Due Week 11.

Term Paper (35%)

The term paper, approximately twenty (20) pages in length, should address the theme of how religion has played a role in the formation of community for a given group in the United States. Research should begin early in the term and focus your work to not only document the group at hand, but also to ask how their experience fits in the larger contexts of American religion and American history. Primary sources should be incorporated into the paper. Choice of topic is open, but you must discuss your topic with the instructor in advance. Due Week 16.

Required Readings

(at Huntley Bookstore and on reserve at Honnold Library)

- Balmer, Randall *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*
- Blumhofer, Edith Aimee *Semple McPherson*
- Covington, Dennis *Salvation on Sand Mountain*
- Hackett, David *Religion and American Culture*
- Leonard, Karen *Making Ethnic Choices*
- Orsi, Robert *Madonna of 115th Street*
- Potok, Chaim *The Chosen*
- Raboteau, Albert A *Fire in the Bones*
- *Reserve Rdgs Honnold Library

Recommended Readings

- Albanese, Catherine America: Religion and Religions
- Gaustad, Edwin A Documentary History of Religion in America, Vol. 2
- Tweed, Thomas Re-Telling U.S. Religious History
- Williams, Peter America's Religions

Weekly Assignments

Week 01/(01/20): Introduction to the Course

Week 02/(01/27): American Religious History - *Albanese; Raboteau (Prologue); *Tweed

Week 03/(02/03): Native Americas - Hackett, 3, 17, 22

Week 04/(02/10): An American Egypt -Raboteau (Athenaeum)

Week 05/(02/17): Emergent Nationalisms - Hackett, 5, 6, 7

Fieldwork report (Protestant)

Week 06/(02/24): American Saints: Mormonism - Hackett, 9; *Bushman; *Foster

Week 07/(03/03): Exploring the festa - Orsi

Fieldwork report (Roman Catholic)

Week 08/(03/10): Mid-Term Exam

Week 09/(03/17): Spring Break

Week 10/(03/24): Jewish America - Potok

Fieldwork report (Jewish)

Week 11/(03/31): Sister Aimee - Blumhofer

Introduction Due

Week 12/(04/07): Punjabi Sikhs/Mexican Catholics - Leonard

Fieldwork report (Buddhist)

Week 13/(04/14): Evangelical Subcultures - Balmer (Athenaeum - video)

Week 14/(04/21): People Denied a History -Covington

Week 15/(04/28): Student Presentations

Week 16/(05/05): Student Presentation & Course Conclusion

Term Paper Due

* Reserve readings at Honnold Library

Fieldwork Guidelines

The purpose of the fieldwork project is two-fold. The first is to realize that religions and communities we are studying are not historical artifacts, but living traditions. By attending religious sites, we further our research and reflection about American religious history, adding to the readings and to the other aspects of the seminar. The second goal is to learn more about working together in teams, about collaborative projects and how learning can be enhanced through this interaction.

Attend the service/site as a team and be respectful of the people and practices. At the same time, keep in mind that you are visiting these sites as an observer engaged in critical research. Most of the work will come from your observations, but many organizations make printed materials available to visitors. Pamphlets and bulletins can offer helpful information and such materials can also be shared with the other members of the class during your report. Some categories to help you in your observations:

Leadership: Who are the leaders?

Are they set apart by clothing, physical location?

What kind of role(s) does the audience play?

What is the nature of interaction between the leadership and audience?

Message: Is there a message?

How long was it?

Was it central to the service?

Is a "scripture" or reading involved?

Ritual: How intricate was it? (e.g., sitting, bowing, standing, etc.)

Was the service difficult to follow for those uninitiated?

How important was the ritual to the overall experience?

Singing: Was there much or any singing?

If so, was it somber, lively, dead?

What kind of instruments, if any, were used?

Was there a choir or group of singers?

Architecture: How would you describe the building (physical characteristics)?

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Does the structure come into play at all in the service?

What kinds of religious symbols were there (e.g., candles, cross, banners)?

Was there a central platform or stage?

How is the space organized for the service (e.g., seating)?

While it is best not to take notes during the service, it is critical that the members of the team write down their observation immediately afterwards (if feasible) since much of the detail and richness will be lost even after several hours. At the minimum, set your thoughts to paper as soon as you return to campus.

Prepare the report for class, drawing upon the readings, and plan to present and to lead discussion in class for a total of about 30 minutes. While a portion of the presentation should give the class a summary of your experience, it is also important to draw students into the larger conversation.