

# Religion & Latinx Traditions Teaching Resources

This episode will cover three new directions at the intersection of religion & Latinx traditions. First, panelists will reflect on politics and voting, offering insight from the 2024 election. Second, they will discuss emerging patterns in religious conversion or switching. Finally, the panelists will offer insight into new research directions in the field of US Latinx religion. Join us for an enlightening conversation where we explore Religion & Latinx Traditions.

**Host: Lloyd Barba** is an Assistant Professor of Religion and Core Faculty in Latinx and Latin American Studies at Amherst College. Along with Sergio González of Marquette University, he is the co-writer and co-host of the recently released, seven-episode podcast series “Sanctuary: On the Border of Church and State.” He is the author of the award-winning book “Sowing the Sacred: Mexican-Pentecostal Farmworkers” in California (Oxford University Press, 2022; paperback 2023) and editor of the newly-released volume “Latin American and US Latino Religions in North America” (Bloomsbury, 2024).

## Panelists:

**Sujej Vega** is Associate Professor of Women and Gender Studies and Director of the Community Collaborative Initiatives program at Arizona State University. Her research explores the lived experiences of Latina/os in the U.S. Using ethnography, oral history and archival analysis, Professor Vega’s research includes race/ethnic studies, social networks, gendered experiences, and ethno-religious practices. Her first book, *Latino Heartland: Of Borders and Belonging in the Midwest* (2015, NYU Press), places in dialogue Mexican Hoosiers and non-Mexican (mostly white) Hoosiers of Indiana as they both come to terms with living in the same communal space.

**Gastón Espinosa** is Arthur V. Stoughton Professor of Religious Studies at Claremont McKenna College. He has directed nine major surveys on Latino religions, politics, and activism from 1998–2022. He is the author or co-author of nine books; fifty refereed articles, book chapters, and reviews; sixty encyclopedia entries; 200 scholarly keynotes and presentations around the world; has made numerous television, radio, and media appearances; and has served as the director of eight major conferences.

**Jonathan Calvillo** is Assistant Professor of Latinx Communities at Emory University. His work examines how distinct Latinx populations build communities of belonging through faith and creativity, often in the face of systemic exclusion. His current projects focus on how churches shape Latinx civic engagement, how lived religion influences Latinx ethnoracial identities, and how young Latinx creatives have responded to urban inequalities through artistic resistance. The author of numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, Calvillo published his first monograph, *The Saints of Santa Ana: Faith and Ethnicity in a Mexican Majority City* (Oxford University Press), in 2020.

## [Resources from Panelists](#)

## [Show Notes](#)

## Questions & Comments from Audience

1. “Mindfulness” and meditation practices are markedly popular. “Centering prayer” has some following in contemporary Christian congregations. My impression is those groups are predominantly Caucasian. Spain’s 16th century teachers, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, have a prominent place in contemplative theology. Are there contemplative and meditative movements in today’s Latina/o communities?
2. Do you think the Catholic for Trump group the use of La Virgen de Guadalupe and Latino tv personalities helped to bring voters to Trump?
3. Was there an intentional political drive to convert Latinos to Evangelicalism?
4. Dr. Vega usefully observes that many of converts to new religious traditions were previously “nones.” There seems to be a renewed attraction to ritual, tradition, and institutional authority beyond Latinos (example: the growth of “trad” Catholicism). Do you all see this within Latina/o communities as well? Does it have particular forms of expression within Latina/o communities?
5. Would the Nones also account for those that are culturally Christian? More so culturally Catholic?
6. I think this is very correct. Dominant society in the US thinks Latinos see themselves as immigrants and as “criminals”, but we don’t see ourselves that way - or at least not in the same way we are viewed. And then members of the dominant society don’t understand us.
7. What can account for the shift towards conservatism in Protestantism within Latin America within the last 15-20 years, any connections to US evangelicalism or missionary work inside of Latin America?
8. Do you have a breakout between the various Latino populations? How do Mexican Americans/Chicanos compare vs. Cuban Americans and others these days?
9. Dr. Calvillo's new book would be so interesting to put in dialogue with Christopher Michael Jones's new book, "A Sacred Storm: When God Speaks through Radical Disruption," also about hip-hop in L.A. area in the 1990s and the intersection with faith.

## Assignment Prompts and Ideas

1. Using the information provided by panelists and data from Dr. Espinosa, what can we begin to conclude about the 2024 election? What does it tell us about the past years? What can it possibly foreshadow?
2. Looking at the data, how does this change or challenge stereotypes about Latinx communities?

3. Discussion: “nones” v. “dones”. Dr. Barba makes a statement, “*Some might even argue that 'nones' don't really mean no religiosity but can be better understood as 'dones' in that they're done with institutional religion.*” Use this quote and the video to discuss what this means and how it can impact our understanding of “nones”.

## **Recommended or Related Books and Articles**

[Latinx Blue Wave or Religious Red Shift? The Relationship between Evangelicalism, Church Attendance, and President Trump among Latinx Americans](#) by Brandon C. Martinez and Gerardo Martí

- Contrary to expectations of a leftward “blue wave,” there is now a largely unanticipated “red shift” of Latinx-identifying people toward Republican Party candidates. To examine this shift, data from the 2020 Cooperative Election Study, which features a robust sample of Latinx (Hispanic) Americans, are analyzed to study how religion contributes to the discussion of Latinx politics. Multivariate analyses reveal that Latinx Evangelical Protestants voted for President Trump and opposed his removal from office on the grounds of both articles of his first impeachment more so than other religious orientations. A positive correlation between Trump support and church attendance was also found. Both patterns indicate a religious right push for Latinxs. Scholars building on these findings are urged to more consistently distinguish Latinx voters by religious orientation and embeddedness, as they likely will have a significant impact on future political outcomes.

[In the Time of Sky-Rhyming: How Hip Hop Resonated in Brown Los Angeles](#)

- Jonathan E. Calvillo explores the rise of Hip Hop on the West Coast and the integral role the Los Angeles Latine community had on the movement - and in turn, Hip Hop's impact on Latines as it became a space for community, expression, and coping with inequality. Building his narrative around interviews and oral histories, he explores how incoming migrants, local-born Latines, and other minoritized populations joined Black Americans in the 1980s to build early underground sites of Hip Hop innovation, contributing to the genre's global expansion. The book details how Hip Hop's deep impact on Latines was based in part on the inequality, marginalization, and injustice that many Latines of this era faced - themes which were addressed in the movement.

[Latinx LGBTQ People and Their Families: The Role of Latinx Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Traditions](#) by Roberto L. Abreu, Julio A. Martin & Koree S. Badio

- Family support is one of the most important protective factors of emotional and physical health and resilience for LGBTQ people. However, there is paucity of research about family dynamics, support, and acceptance within communities of color. Specific for Latinx families, cultural values, beliefs, and traditions both facilitate and challenge support of Latinx LGBTQ people. This chapter will provide an overview of the current state of the literature about what support for Latinx LGBTQ people looks like within Latinx families. Cultural values and beliefs such as familismo, gender norms (machismo, caballerismo, marianismo), and religion and spirituality, among others, will be highlighted. In addition, we provide an overview of Intersectionality Framework, Latinx critical theory (LatCrit), and the minority stress model for readers to better understand how privilege and oppression play a role in understanding the experiences of Latinx LGBTQ people within their families. We discuss strength-based, culturally appropriate approaches for working with families of Latinx LGBTQ people.

Nones, No Religious Preference, No Religion and the Misclassification of Latino Religious Identity by Gastón Espinosa

- There has been an explosion of popular and scholarly literature over the past twenty years on the rise of the “nones”, or those Americans that reportedly have abandoned religion and report having no religion on national surveys.<sup>1</sup> This work is insightful and has raised important questions about the saliency and creativity (or lack thereof) of religion in contemporary American society.

A Comparison in the Importance of Religious and Spiritual Beliefs among Latinx Parents of Children with Disabilities by Leah Holle, Emily Longo & Cristina Mogro-Wilson

- This paper focuses on exploring the differences in the importance of spiritual/religious beliefs and practices (SRBP) between Latinx parents who have children with emotional, physical, and cognitive disabilities. Previous research has focused on looking at individual disabilities, such as autism—comparison in differences in importance of SRBP among Latinx parents needs to be further explored. Data from 154 Latinx parents in the United States was collected from an online survey, and a multiple linear regression was used with several predictor groups. Results indicated statistical significance between parents who have children with emotional disabilities and the importance of SRBP.

Latinx Emerging Adults’ Religious Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Psychological Well-Being by Isabella Nicole Schiro, Carolyn McNamara Barry, Mary Jo Coiro and Emalee J. W. Quickel

- The current study examined associations among religious and ethnic identity exploration and commitment, and psychological well-being (PWB) among 683 Latinx emerging adults. A subset of data collected in the Multi-Site University Study of Identity and Culture was analyzed, focusing on three measures: (a) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), (b) Religious Identity Measure (adapted from MEIM), and (c) Scales of Psychological Well-Being–Short Form. Correlations indicated that PWB was positively related to religious and ethnic identity commitment, not exploration. Regression analyses indicated that commitment to religious or ethnic identity were positively associated with PWB, while exploration of religious or ethnic identity were not associated with PWB. In addition, religious identity exploration moderated the relation between ethnic identity exploration and commitment and PWB. These findings have implications for efforts to support the development of ethnic and religious identity among Latinx emerging adults.

Latina/o/x Pilgrimage by Daisy Vargas

The Oxford Handbook of Latinx Christianities in The United States edited by Kristy Nabhan-Waren

- The United States is in the midst of a demographic revolution. It is estimated that by 2050 Latinx Americans will make up thirty percent of the nation's total population. Most Latinx Americans today are Christian. And while, historically, most of those Latinx Christians have been Catholics, that is changing as well, as more Latinx Americans embrace Protestantism or other traditions and practices. Even within the U.S. Catholic Church the demographic changes are being felt, as more than half of young American Catholics are Latinx. *The Oxford Handbook of Latinx Christianities in the United States* provides an introduction to U.S. Latinx Christianities, helping readers better understand the largest minority group in the United States. The chapters are written by specialists in U.S. Latinx Christianities from fields such as history, theology, and sociology and organized by theme. The essays, taken individually and collectively, pay attention to both historical and contemporary aspects of major Christian denominations and movements. This handbook provides in-depth coverage of specific national groups, denominations, geographies, and theologies, and also attends to themes of gender, sexuality, empire, migration, diaspora,

borderlands, and transnationalism. This volume is a go-to source for anyone interested in the role that religion, specifically Christianity, plays in the lives of U.S. Latinxs.

*Faith and Power: Latino Religious Politics Since 1945* by Felipe Hinojosa, Maggie Elmore, Sergio M. González

- Too often religious politics are considered peripheral to social movements, not central to them. *Faith and Power: Latino Religious Politics Since 1945* seeks to correct this misinterpretation, focusing on the post–World War II era. It shows that the religious politics of this period were central to secular community-building and resistance efforts. The volume traces the interplay between Latino religions and a variety of pivotal movements, from the farm worker movement to the sanctuary movement, offering breadth and nuance to this history. This illuminates how broader currents involving immigration, refugee policies, de-industrialization, the rise of the religious left and right, and the Chicana/o, immigrant, and Puerto Rican civil rights movements helped to give rise to political engagement among Latino religious actors. By addressing both the influence of these larger trends on religious movements and how the religious movements in turn helped to shape larger political currents, the volume offers a compelling look at the twentieth-century struggle for justice.

*La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.–Mexican Borderlands* By Luis D. León

- Luis D. León's compelling, innovative exploration of religion in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands issues a fundamental challenge to current scholarship in the field and recharts the landscape of Chicano faith. *La Llorona's Children* constructs genealogies of the major traditions spanning Mexico City, East Los Angeles, and the southwestern United States: Guadalupe devotion, *curanderismo*, *espiritualismo*, and evangelical/Pentecostal traditions. León theorizes a religious poetics that functions as an effective and subversive survival tactic akin to crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. He claims that, when examined in terms of broad categorical religious forms and intentions, these traditions are remarkably alike and resonate religious ideas and practices developed in the ancient Mesoamerican world.

*Latinx Protestants and American Politics* *Sociology of Religion*, Volume 83, Issue 1, Spring 2022 by Gerardo Marí

- The rise in the proportion of Latinx Protestants in the United States may be coinciding with an increased alignment with neoliberal political agendas—a rising Christian *Latinidad* aligning with white Christian priorities—which benefits a long-established hierarchy of whiteness and further accentuates racial and economic inequalities. The significance of this still-strengthening religious identity is that any prolonged intensity of this alignment will likely affect the near future of American politics. This brief essay indicates a way to thread together several analytical narratives and to heuristically suggest an approach to emerging patterns of evidence.

*Latina/o Religious Studies Since the 1970s* chapter by Felipe Hinojosa

- This article provides an overview of the field of Latina/o religious studies since the 1970s. Motivated by the political tenor of the times, Latina/o religious studies began as a political project committed to contextualizing theological studies by stressing racial identity, resistance to church hierarchy, and economic inequality. Rooted in a robust interdisciplinary approach, Latina/o religious studies pulls from multiple fields of study. This article, however, focuses on the field's engagements with ethnic studies in the last fifty years, from the 1970s to the contemporary period. It argues that while the field began as a way to tell the stories, faith practices, and theologies of religious insiders (i.e., clergy and religious leaders), recent

scholarship has expanded the field to include the broader themes of community formation, labor, social movements, immigrant activism, and an intentional focus on the relationships with non-religious communities.

[There Is No Such Thing as Latinx: Race, Intersectionality, and Immigration in Clinical Work and Supervision With Latin American Communities](#) by Daniel Gaztambide, Psy.D.

[Latinx Religions and American Politics: Cold War through Trump's Presidency](#) chapter by Lloyd D. Barba, Jonathan Calvillo, and Gerardo Martí in Book [\*The Routledge History of Religion and Politics in the United States Since 1775\*](#)

[Latinx Muslim Studies](#) article by Madelina Nuñez

- There is a relatively small yet emerging community of scholars working toward the development of Latinx Muslim studies. While the field itself is in its early development, Latinx Muslims across the Americas are, in fact, not new populations to these regions. Transnationally, both Islam and Muslims in the Americas have held influence on both the cultural and religious lives of Latinx peoples, including impacts on material and cultural practices such as food, language, architecture, and the like. These transnational cultural exchanges and developments are not limited to one-way interactions, as Muslim peoples in the Americas have equally been influenced by their social, cultural, and geographical surroundings.

[Introduction to the U.S. Latina and Latino Religious Experience](#) edited by Hector Avalos

RealClearPolitics.com

## **Syllabi**

[Latina/o Religions Syllabus](#) by Brett Hendrickson

[WST345: Gender, Religion, and Violence Syllabus](#) by Sujey Vega

[Sociology of Latinx Religions in the U.S Syllabus](#) by Johnathan Calvillo

[History of Race and Religion in the American West/Mexico Borderlands Syllabus](#) by Lloyd Barba