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RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE (HI410)

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SYLLABUS

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY (HI410)

EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

Instructor: Dr. Randall Stephens	Office: Cameron Center, Room 104
Fall, 2007	Office Phone: (617) 847-5815
Tu Th.: 1:45-3:00	Office Hours: Tu, Th, 10:00-12:00; or by appt.
Credits: 3	Email: randall.stephens@enc.edu
Location: Old Colony room 203	Web: www.enc.edu/history/rel_cult.html

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

This readings seminar offers upper division students a broad knowledge of religion and American culture from the pre-colonial period to the present. Special attention will be given to the work of historians, filmmakers, religious studies scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists who grapple with the complexities of American religious life. This course will pay close attention to the wide-ranging religious diversity of America—from 19th century Lakota spiritualism to 20th century Catholic devotion; from modern serpent-handling Appalachian pentecostals to covenant-making early American Puritans. A sample of other topics to be covered include: the religious dimensions of gender and sexuality, race and religion, the development of a distinctively American theology, and the recent fusion of religion and politics.

REQUIRED READING
(Available on Amazon.com and at the ENC college bookstore)

* Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (2003)

* David G. Hackett, *Religion and American Culture: A Reader* (2003)



* Black Elk, John Gneisenau Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (reprint, 2000; [on-line at the Univ. of Nebraska Press site](#))

* Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware: Or Illumination* (1896, [available in full on the Univ of Virginia's Electronic Text site](#))

* Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (2004)

* Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (reprint, 1994)

* Additional reading to be handed out in class or posted to this page

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will be evaluated on how well they identify and critique the significance events, terms, and individuals covered and on the basis of their reading, writing, and thinking skills. You must read every assignment and come prepared to discuss these in class. Since this is designed as a seminar/discussion course, your participation will be critical. Always be prepared; I may call upon you at any time. While going over each week's assignment, identify the major themes, challenge or affirm the



key arguments, and offer a clear analysis of the material covered. Those who fail to keep up with the reading will do poorly in this course. Participation and attendance is absolutely mandatory for each individual in this class and will figure largely into your overall grade. (Obviously, if you don't attend or read the assignments, you can not participate.) Two tests will be administered over the semester involving short answer questions and essays. In addition, unannounced pop quizzes may be administered occasionally at the beginning of class. These quizzes will cover the most recent reading assignments and our in-class discussions. Those who arrive late or fail to attend class will not be allowed to retake quizzes or tests, unless, of course, a written medical excuse can be provided.

In addition to a satisfactory evaluation of this work based on content, you are expected to demonstrate competence in writing, argumentation, and English composition and grammar. You must submit a total of 8, 1.5 to 2 page double-spaced, typed answers to discussion questions [posted on-line](#).



These will be graded on a scale of 1-10 points. Students will also review any two of the following: *Black Elk Speaks*, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, *American Jesus*, and *Killers of the Dream*. These reviews must be typed, 2 pages long, and double-spaced. They will be graded on a scale of 1-100.

Students will also write one major research paper. You may choose to write either an 8-10 page paper reviewing some aspect of the





historical literature or an 8-10 page primary source research paper. (A bibliography and abstract is required.) I will offer guidance and suggestions on your topics. Each student will present his/her final research at the end of the course.

Students are encouraged to attend lectures on

American religious history topics in the Boston area. Extra credit points will be given to those who do so and turn in a 2 page summary of the talk. A number of lectures are [listed here](#), marked with #.

Finally, a note on proper behavior and academic honesty. Talking with fellow classmates, eating, doing other work, reading newspapers, leaving cell phones on, walking out early or arriving late all reflect poorly on you as a student and will hurt your overall grade. Cheating and plagiarism are even worse and will not be tolerated. Be advised: ANY instance of cheating on tests, essays, or other assignments will result in immediate failure of the course. For more on this fascinating topic, please refer to the [ENC history dept. guidelines concerning academic honesty](#). Those who are guilty will be caught. Incriminating evidence is only a Google™ search away.

GRADING

Attendance and pop quizzes = 10%
Participation = 15%
8 short response Papers = 15%
2 short book reviews = 10%
Bibliography for research paper (at least 8 published works) = 5%
Abstract for research paper (no more than one page) = 5%
1 Research essay = 20%
2 Exam – 10% each = 20%

A = 100-94; A- = 93-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-84; B- = 83-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-74; C- = 73-70; D = 69-60

Failure to complete any of the assignments will obviously result in a significant lowering of your total grade. If this all seems too daunting, remember that the last day to drop a course with no penalties is Sept 18.



[SCHEDULE OF READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS](#)

(All readings are to be completed on the day they are listed.)

[On-line Resources](#)

Final Exam: Friday, December 14, 10:30am - 12:30pm. [Final exam studyguide](#)



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY (HI410)

[syllabus](#)

Over the course of the semester you must complete all of the response papers. Each reading response requires a 1.5 to 2 pages, double-spaced, typed paper. You may go over that length if you so choose. These will be graded on a 1-10 point scale.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(All readings are to be completed on the day they are listed.)

WEEK 1: COURSE INTRO

THUR Sept 6: Introduction, review syllabus, course guidelines

WEEK 2: RELIGION IN EARLY AMERICA, 1500-1750

TUES Sept 11: Religion in American Life, ix-75; David D. Hall, "A World of Wonders: The Mentality of the Supernatural in Seventeenth-Century New England" in Religion and American Culture, 27-47.

Set 1: Select 3 questions from section A and two from section B.

Section A

1. In the introduction to Religion and American Life, what do the authors mean by the claim "the story of religion in America, then, is not an aberrant story"? (xi)
2. What role did dreams play in the religion of Algonquian Indians?
3. The authors use Henry Fielding's fictional character, Reverend Thwackum, to make a point regarding religion in early America. What do they make of Thwackum's statement: "When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England"?
4. How did the religious worldviews of Africans and Indians differ from those of European settlers?
5. How did Indians receive missionaries in both New Spain and New France? How did native Americans in what is now California and

Canada resist the incursions of missionaries? For those native Americans who were receptive to the newcomers, what would their adopted Christianity look like?

6. How did Jesuits in French Canada conduct their missions? Were they a successful?

7. Why do the authors contend that the "importance of religion in New England was not unique among England's American colonies"? (53) What roles would religion play in the southern colonies? How would religion differ in the North and South?

8. What are some of the myths concerning Puritanism? How should we understand the Puritans? What was the basis of their beliefs?

9. In what ways was New England "spiritually diverse" during the late 1600s?

10. What advice did the Puritan John Winthrop offer to those intrepid souls heading to Massachusetts? (74-75) What does this say about the Puritan vision of America?

Section B

11. How does historian David D. Hall counter the idea that Puritan religion in the 17th century was a rational and coherent, Christian intellectual system?

12. What does Hall mean when he states that the people of New England lived in an enchanted universe, or a "world of wonders"?

13. How did Puritans read the signs of nature as spiritual events?

14. Did Puritans' peculiar beliefs mean that they were in some ways not Christian?

THUR Sept 13: Religion in American Life, 76-117; Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," 53-67, and Albert J. Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus and the American Israel," 73-86, in Religion and American Culture.

Set 2: Select 1 question each from sections A, B, C, and D for a total of 4 questions.

Section A

RELIGION IN AMERICAN LIFE, CHAPTER FOUR

1. Butler, Wacker, and Balmer write that "New York prefigured the religious future of 18th-century America"? (77). What do they mean by that statement?

2. What kinds of religious communities migrated to America? Why did these groups settle in the regions they did?

3. Describe the first Jewish community in colonial America.

4. How did the American religious landscape change after the 1690s?

5. After reading the letter on pages 96-97, describe why Abigail Franks was disturbed by her daughter's decision.

Section B

RELIGION IN AMERICAN LIFE, CHAPTER FIVE

6. What do the graves of African Americans and Indians tell us about their religious beliefs?

7. The authors assert that the "outright disappearance of many distinctive Indian societies . . . constitutes one of the most distressing facts of early American religious history"? (101). Those natives who did survive would find a number of ways to resist and adapt to Christianity. Explain how they did this.

8. Why did English efforts to convert slaves meet "with little success before the American Revolution"? (109)

9. What did Reverend David Brainerd discover about Indian religion? (116-117) How did Indian beliefs differ from those of whites?

Section C

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE: DANIEL K. RICHTER, "WAR AND CULTURE: THE IROQUOIS EXPERIENCE," 53-67

10. What does Daniel Richter say about Iroquois motives for going to War? How did whites tend to perceive Indian warfare?

11. What affect would widespread European settlement have on the Iroquois's "mourning war"??

Section D

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE: ALBERT J. RABOTEAU, "AFRICAN AMERICANS, EXODUS AND THE AMERICAN ISRAEL," 73-86

12. According to Albert J. Raboteau, how did African Americans use European Christianity to make sense of their enslavement?

13. How would black Christians interpret the Exodus story?

WEEK 3: EARLY AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL HISTORY

TUES Sept 18: Religion in American Life, 118-162; Selection from George Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (2003) course pack (CP); Allen C. Guelzo, "America's Theologian," in [The Christian Century, October 4, 2003, pp. 30-31 and 34-35](#); selection from Mark Noll, America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln, course pack (CP).

Set 3: Select two questions to answer from section A and one question each from sections B, C, and D.

Section A

Religion in American Life, 118-162;

1. What were the basic differences between those Americans who supported revivalism in the 18th century and those who opposed it?

2. During the 1700s, how did American religious groups start to diverge from religious groups in Europe?

3. What were revivalists' core Christian beliefs? How did Jonathan Edwards (pgs. 138-39) and Sarah Osborn Leads (pgs 140-41) embody this revivalistic evangelicalism?

4. The American Revolution, the authors note, was a truly secular

event. Yet it would also profoundly impact society. What affect did the American Revolution have upon denominations in the former colonies?

5. In what ways did the First Amendment to the Constitution represent the American religious situation?

Section B

Selection from Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (2002)

6. Mark Noll states that he is interested in a social history of American theology. How does Noll try to connect social movements with religious beliefs? From Noll's perspective, how would events in American history influence Christian theology?

7. Why does Noll compare American religious beliefs with those in Europe? What conclusions can he draw from such comparisons? Was American religion unique, exceptional?

8. What is the meaning of Noll's concept of an "American Synthesis"??

Section C

Selection from George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (2003)

9. In George Marsden's opinion Jonathan Edwards proved to be an extraordinary American. Why? Why does Edwards deserve to be studied so thoroughly?

10. Marsden asserts that to "make sense of Edwards' life, one must take seriously his religious outlook on his own terms" (4). What does Marsden mean by that?

11. How does Marsden admit that his own personal views shape how he interprets his subject? Can a believer, such as Marsden, be a truly dispassionate, objective historian and critic?

12. What influence did George Whitefield have on Edwards? Describe the relationship between them.

Section D

[Allen C. Guelzo, "America's Theologian," in *The Christian Century*, October 4, 2003, pp. 30-31 and 34-35](#)

13. Allen C. Guelzo argues that few of the complexities and contradictions of Jonathan Edwards' life "ruffle the surface of Marsden's chunky new biography." What is Guelzo implying here?

14. Why does Guelzo state that Marsden's own evangelical prejudices taint his biography? From what you have read of Marsden, do you think that is a fair criticism?

THUR Sept 20: Francis J. Bremer, ["Faith and Society: The Making of a Christian America," in *Reviews in American History* 32:1 \(March 2004\): 8-13](#); David L. Holmes, "A Layperson's Guide to Distinguishing a Deist from an Orthodox Christian," in *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (2006) (CP); David D. Kirkpatrick, "Putting God Back Into American History," *New York Times*, February 2, 2005, pg 4 (CP).

Set 4: Answer one quest from sections A and C and 2 questions from section B.

Section A

Francis J. Bremer, "Faith and Society: The Making of a Christian America," in *Reviews in American History*, Volume 32, Number 1, (March 2004): 8- 13

1. What does Francis J. Bremer say is the central thesis of Noll's work? What basic criticism does Bremer offer concerning Noll's basic contentions?
2. What aspects of American religion does Bremer think Noll overlooks? Are these valid criticisms?

Section B

David L. Holmes, "A Layperson's Guide to Distinguishing a Deist from an Orthodox Christian," in *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (2006) (CP)

3. Explain the argument that has developed over the faith of the founding fathers.
4. According to David Holmes, in what sense were the founders religious?
5. How can scholars determine the extent of the founders' devotion or lack thereof?
6. Describe the reservations a Deist might have had concerning Christianity.

Section C

David D. Kirkpatrick, "Putting God Back Into American History," *New York Times*, February 2, 2005, pg 4 (CP)

7. Who is David Barton?
8. How has the controversy over the founders' religious views shaped America's conservative culture?
9. What does David Kirkpatrick mean when he writes: "But academic historians, including some conservative and evangelical scholars, give the Christian conservative veneration of this history about a B-minus"?

WEEK 4: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

TUES Sept 25: Religion in American Life, 165-226; and selection from Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (CP).

Set 5: Answer one question from sections A, B, and D and two questions from section C.

Section A

Religion in American Life, "Prophets for a New Nation," 165-181

1. Describe the state of organized religion in the years

immediately after the American Revolution.

2. Summarize the arguments against "established" religions. What was Thomas Jefferson's opinion concerning the matter? In the founders' view, should religion play any public role in American society?

3. According to the authors, what is "civil religion"? Does it still exist in contemporary America? How so?

4. How did some early Americans resist traditional Christian religion? Is this set of religious circumstances similar to religion in America today?

Section B

Religion and American Life, "Awakeners of the Heart," 182-196

5. Explain the difference between the First Great Awakening (1730s-40s) and the Second Great Awakening (1800-1860s). How would these differences affect the outcomes of each of these revivals?

6. Why is Francis Asbury often called the "founding father" of American Methodism? Describe his activities, strategies, and religious views.

7. What was innovative about Charles Grandison Finney's "new measures"? How would his views change American Christianity? Do his views still influence American Christians?

8. What do the authors suggest is the legacy of evangelicalism?

Section C

Religion and American Life, "Reformers and Visionaries" 197-212; and "Restorers of Ancient Ways," 213-226.

9. Explain this statement: "In the early nineteenth century a new approach to poverty and human suffering began to emerge" (198).

10. Describe some of the "visionaries" that captured the attention of Americans in these years. What did these individuals hope to accomplish?

11. Why did the reform impulse take root among English Protestants?

12. What accounts for the "restorationist" element in early 19th century America?

13. What led Joseph Smith to start a new religious movement?

Section D

Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1990)

14. Historian Nathan Hatch asserts that American Christianity underwent a dramatic change between the American Revolution and 1845. What were the most significant features of this transformation?

15. What does Hatch mean by the term the "democratization of American Christianity"? What is "religious populism"? Do most Christians still hold to a form of democratized Christianity?

16. Hatch claims that the leaders of new religious movements in the early 1800s held "convictions that were essentially modern and individualistic"? (14). What does he mean by that?

THUR Sept 27: Ann Braude, "Women's History IS American Religious History," 159-175; and Charles Joyner, "'Believer I know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity," 179-195, in Religion and American Culture.

Set 6: Answer two questions from each section.

Set A

Ann Braude, "Women's History IS American Religious History," 159-175

1. Anne Braude writes "this essay explores how we would tell the story of American religion if we took as our point of departure that fact that women constitute the majority of participants in religious activities and institutions"? (161). That being the case, how does her piece challenge the work of earlier historians?

2. What is Braude's answer to the question "what made each group's teachings and practices meaningful to its female members"? (163)

3. What does Braude mean by "declension"? How does she argue against this motif?

Section B

Charles Joyner, "'Believer I know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity," 179-195

4. Charles Joyner writes that to "underestimate the Africanity of African American Christianity is to rob the slaves of their heritage. But to overestimate the Africanity of African American Christianity is to rob the slaves of their creativity" (181). Explain what these statements mean.

5. How did slaveholders introduce a "selective" version of Christianity to slaves?

6. What were the essential beliefs and worship practices of African American slaves in the years before the Civil War? Do these traditions survive today in black churches?

WEEK 5: NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY & THE CIVIL WAR

TUES Oct 2: Black Elk and John Gneisenau Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks and William K. Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens" (CP).

Set 7: Answer two questions from section A and two from section B

Section A

Black Elk, John Gneisenau Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (first ed. 1932)

1. Why does Black Elk seem to think it important that his story be told? Why does John Neihardt think it is important? Do they both have the same reasons? Analyze "Heyoka Ceremony" as Black Elk's attempt at making a connection with an audience, and comment on how the chapter offers a working definition of the

very process of "raising consciousness."

2. Black Elk's story is much like others in the genre of traditional quest literature. Central characters are usually heroes---from *the Odyssey* to *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*---who need to fulfill his/her goals or unique destiny. To what extent was this largely the tale of Black Elk's quest? What were his goals? What did he try to achieve?

3. At various points in the narrative, Black Elk describes his relationship to Wasichu (whites). What did Black Elk think about these newcomers? What did the presence of whites mean, in a religious sense, to Black Elk?

4. How would religion influence the Oglala Sioux' understanding of nature and animals? Why do you suppose this was such a contrast to the views of American settlers?

5. What role did visions play in Black Elk's religious life? What did these religious experiences tell him about his world, his peoples' past and future? Would American Christians share any of these beliefs with Black Elk and his fellow Indians?

6. Arnold Krupat (in *The Indian Autobiography: Origins, Type, and Function, American Literature*, 1981) writes that "to see the Indian autobiography as a ground on which two cultures meet is to see it as the textual equivalent of the 'frontier.'" How does this statement apply to Black Elk Speaks?

7. Describe Black Elk's role as a traditional healer. How did he take on this responsibility? What public religious duties did he take on and why?

8. In many ways Black Elk lived a traditional life of a Native American medicine man. Yet in many other ways Black Elk lived a very atypical and non-traditional life. How did his travels abroad and throughout the US alter his religious world view and his understanding of different cultures?

9. In the second (1961) edition of Black Elk Speaks, John Neihardt changed the title page of the text from "as told to John Neihardt" to "as told through John Neihardt." Explain the significance of this change, and interpret the relationship it suggests between Neihardt and Black Elk, and between Neihardt and Black Elk Speaks.

Section B

William K. Powers, "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens."

10. Why does William K. Powers argue that Neihardt presented a skewed version on Black Elk's religion? What does Neihardt miss, according to Powers? Why do you think Neihardt would be selective in his account?

11. How does Powers attempt to correct Neihardt's narrative? How does Powers version differ fundamentally from Neihardt's?

12. What were the contents of Black Elk's 1934 letter? Why would he write what he did?

13. Why does "everyone listen"? How can we account for the

popularity of Native American spiritual biographies?

Some of the questions adapted from Paul P Reuben, "Chapter 7: Early Twentieth Century - Black Elk." PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide.

<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap7/blackelk.html>

THUR Oct 4: Religion in American Life, 247-262; Selection from Timothy L. Smith's, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957) (CP); Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920," in *Religion and American Culture*, 205-218.

Set 8: Answer one question from each section, A-C.

Section A

Religion and American Life, 247-262

1. What do the authors find "ironic" about the American Civil War? What do they mean by stating that "Religious beliefs fed the ideologies that fed the war"? (248) How did religion and politics merge in the Civil War?
2. Was abolitionism a moral, Christian crusade? If so, how? As the authors indicate, Southern slaveholders did not take the criticisms of abolitionists "lying down." The South's slavocracy offered a defense of slavery from the bible. How did they use scripture to bolster their arguments?
3. How did American churches foreshadow the division of the union, North and South?
4. What did Frederick Douglass mean by "slaveholding Christianity"? (261)

Section B

Timothy L. Smith, Preface and "The Evangelical Origins of Social Christianity," in *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957).

5. According to Timothy Smith, Thomas Paine would have been astounded had he lived long enough to see New York in 1865. What would he find shocking?
6. Why does Timothy Smith contend that "popular Protestantism" acted as a "mighty social force long before the slavery conflict erupted into war"? (149) What made northern religious leaders such committed social reformers?
7. What was the social impact of "perfectionism" on America?

For a summary of Timothy Smith's work and career at ENC, see [this page I created for the history department website](#).

Section C

Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920," in *Religion and American Culture*

8. How does University of Mississippi professor Charles Reagan

Wilson assert that southerners turned the Civil War into a "holy cause" after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox? In what way was this a secular faith, or a civil religion? Who were the deities, saints, and martyrs of this "faith"?

9. Does the Civil War still animate committed southerners?

WEEK 6: TRADITION AND INNOVATION

TUES Oct 9: TUES Oct 9: Religion in American Life, 279-345; and Duncan Aikman, "The Holy Rollers," The American Mercury (October 1928): 180-191 (CP).

Turn in bibliography for research paper with at least 8 published works.

Set 9: Answer one question from two of the sections and two from the remaining one.

Section A

Duncan Aikman, "The Holy Rollers," The American Mercury (October 1928)

1. Describe Duncan Aikman's experiences at a "Holy Roller" meeting.
2. On page 182 of the article, Aikman sarcastically notes some differences between Baptists and "Holy Rollers." What are these?
3. What are the "three points" Aikman notes that seem to unite holiness and Pentecostal followers? What does this say about his perception of them?
4. According to Aikman, how do adherents worship, and what makes that so different from the way other Protestants worship?
5. Aikman, like his mentor H. L. Mencken, thinks that most holiness leaders are deviants and mountebanks. Why?
6. What does Aikman make of tongues speaking?

Section B

Religion in American Life, 279-310

7. Who are the "innovators" the authors describe in chapter 15?
8. What were some of the questions theological liberals raised in the 19th century concerning the Bible?
9. How did the World's Parliament of Religions (1893) challenge Americans' views concerning religion?
10. "Religious conservatives came in a bewildering variety of species" (292). Explain what the authors mean by that statement.
11. Why did the theology of premillennialism take hold in certain quarters during the late 19th century?

Section C

Religion in American Life, 311-345

12. The authors of your text state that in the 1880s and 1890s health, poverty, alcohol, and missions dominated the attention of religious groups. How was this so?

13. How did healing capture the attention of religious groups in this era? Why did Mary Baker Eddy find an eager audience in Boston?

14. Describe the goals of the Salvation Army and Social Gospelers.

15. What did American missionaries hope to accomplish in the 19th century?

16. What were some of the key beliefs of early pentecostals?

17. Did the religions of new immigrants pose challenges to traditional American Protestants? How so?

THUR Oct 11: Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware: Or Illumination* (1896).

We will be using the questions from [Robin Taylor Rogers' excellent site on *The Damnation of Theron Ware*](#). If you choose to write your book review on the book, provide a general summary and use the questions for general guidance.

WEEK 7: MIDTERM

TUES Oct 16: [Midterm exam studyguide](#)

THUR Oct 18: No class

WEEK 8: THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY

TUES Oct 23: Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (March 2004): 1357-1378 (CP); and ["Beyond the Niebuhrs: A Conversation with Robert Orsi on Recent Trends in American Religious History."](#) conducted by Randall Stephens, *Historically Speaking* (July/August 2006).

Set 10: Answer two from each section.

Section A

1. What has drawn Robert Orsi to the study of devotionalism?

2. Why does Orsi remark that "American religious history, as it is practiced in the universities today, is insistently committed, consciously or not, to Niebuhrian neo-orthodoxy as its moral vision, and this profoundly influences the historiography"? As a result what subjects merit the attention of historians?

3. How does Orsi criticize the arguments of historians like George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Nathan Hatch? Is that a fair critique?

4. How does Orsi treat what he calls figures of "special power"? How might these figures be treated among non-Catholic groups?

5. What are some of the problems historians like Orsi face when writing about children and religion?

Section B

6. Jon Butler suggests that religion “has not fared well in the historiography of modern America” (pg 1 Of 19). Why is it that religion plays such a pronounced role in early American history and such a diminished role in the post-Civil War era?

7. How does Butler answer the question: “What do we mean by religion and secularity?” (pg 3 of 19)

8. What does Butler mean when he states that religion in the post-1870 period often appears as a “jack-in-the-box” in textbooks?

9. Is religion any less significant to Americans now than it was 150 years ago? Provide evidence to support your case.

10. How does Butler answer the question: “Did religion’s powerful influence in the lives of modern children, adolescents, and adults significantly affect public life, especially politics, between 1870 and 2000?” (pg 8 of 19)

THUR Oct 25: Religion in American Life, 346-363.

Set 11: Answer two from each section.

Section A

1. How did American religious groups in the early 20th century begin to split over political and theological issues? Why did this occur when it did?

2. What distinguished fundamentalists from modernists? Why did a minister like Harry Emerson Fosdick fear the power of fundamentalism?

3. In what ways did the Scopes Trial showcase the liberal-conservative divide? What issues were at stake for both parties?

4. Describe some of the modern movements toward Christian unity that stirred believers in these years.

Section B

5. In what sense was the new KKK a kind of religious revival?

6. How did the Great Migration of blacks to northern cities reshape African-American religion?

7. What aspects of American Protestantism did the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr challenge?

8. The author of the selection from *Christian Century* (pg 363) calls for a new, social Christianity. What does that mean?

WEEK 9: RELIGION AND GENDER IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICA

TUES Oct 30: Robert A. Orsi’s “‘He Keeps Me Going’: Women’s Devotion to Saint Jude Thaddeus and the Dialectics of Gender in American Catholicism,” 333-354; and R. Marie Griffith, “Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soldiers: Prayer and Christian Womanhood in Women’s Aglow

Fellowship," 435-460, in Religion and American Culture.

Set 12: Answer one from each section.

Section A

1. Describe St. Jude's role in the lives of devotees. Who benefited from or followed St. Jude? Why?
2. How would women "imagine" St. Jude? What was he like?
3. What did American Catholic women experience as "hopeless"?
4. What did women devotees of Jude believe they could accomplish with the saint's help?

Section B

5. Why did the Catholic church fear "rebellious" women in the 1920s and 1930s? How did church leaders meet that challenge?
6. Orsi claims that St. Jude was not simply imposed on or inherited by women. Women seemed to have "invented" him too (346). How was that so?
7. How might one answer Orsi's question: "Why did the daughters of immigrants turn to Saint Jude in the difficult days of 1929?" (350)
8. What kind of criticism did commentators level against the cult of St. Jude? Were these critiques justified?

Section C

R. Marie Griffith, "Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soldiers: Prayer and Christian Womanhood in Women's Aglow Fellowship," 435-460, in Religion and American Culture.

9. In this selection Marie Griffith focuses on the conservative, charismatic Women's Aglow Fellowship. How does Griffith argue that these women, though conservative about the roles of women, actually championed the power of women?
10. What does Griffith mean by "the power of submission"? What criticisms would these women have of feminist groups?
11. How did the members of Aglow believe women were called by God?

THUR Nov 1: No class

WEEK 10: CONSUMER RELIGION & PERSONALIZED FAITH

TUES Nov 6: Stephen Prothero, American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon (2004).

Set 13: For the question set answer one from each section. For the book review choose question one, two, or three.

Section A

- 1.* Why have various groups and individuals perceived Jesus in so

many different ways throughout American history?

2.* How was the Puritans' Jesus of early America different from the Victorian Jesus, say, as exemplified in the works of Henry Ward Beecher, and later 20th century views?

3.* Explain some of the ways individuals have focused on the humanity and/or divinity of Jesus? How have these two perspectives been at odds?

4. Contrast the "Manly Redeemer" of chapter three and the "Sweet Savior" of chapter two. What accounts for the differences?

Section B

5. How did the counterculture remake the image of Jesus? What does Prothero mean by "dechristianization?"

6. In what sense was America a sacred nation for Mormons and other 19th century religious groups?

7. In what ways did Mormonism diverge from traditional American Christianity?

8. How did Mormons' views of Jesus evolve over space and time?

9. What is black liberation and womanist theology? How have such interpreters imagined Jesus?

10. How have various black artists added to the picture of Jesus?

Section C

11. Describe Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's "A Jew's View of Jesus." What was the public response to Wise's lecture? How does that compare to other representations of Jesus?

12. How did "the locus of Jewish interest in Jesus shift from the synagogue to the university"? (261)

13. What is "Yogi Jesus"? How would this understanding of Jesus differ from that of mainline Christians?

14. Are Americans unique in their devotion to and reworking of Jesus?

THUR Nov 8: Religion in American Life, 423-437; David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch if Rock'n'roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture," 465-479, Religion and American Culture; and Melani McAlister, "An Empire of Their Own," The Nation, September 22, 2003, pgs. 31-36 (CP).

Set 14: Answer one from two of the sections and two from the remaining section.

Section A Religion in American Life

1. What did the Jonestown incident reveal about American religion?

How did it affect the American public?

2. Describe the appeal of televangelists in the 1980s. What did they offer their audiences? Did the help or hinder the cause of Christianity in the US?

3. How and why did Pat Robertson enter politics?

4. According to Paul Weyrich, why did conservative Christians enter politics? Does this counter popular views about evangelicals' politicization?

Section B

David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n' Roll," *Religion and American Culture*

5. How does David Chidester find religion in various forms of pop culture?

6. Is Chidester right? Are these manifestations of popular culture "religious"?

7. How do various definitions of "religion" serve us when we examine religion and popular culture?

Section C

Religion and American Culture; and Melani McAlister, "An Empire of Their Own," *The Nation*, September 22, 2003, pgs. 31-36 (CP).

8. Why does Melani McAlister argue that the *Left Behind* book series "is also a cultural phenomenon that goes well beyond books"? (31)

9. In McAlister's estimation what are some of the connections between evangelical theology and domestic and global politics?

10. Do you agree with McAlister's assessment? Why or why not?

WEEK 11: RACE AND TWENTIETH CENTURY RELIGION

TUES Nov 13: Religion in American Life, 364-384, 404-406; James H. Cone, "Martin and Malcolm," in *Religion and American Culture*, 397-410.

Set 15: Answer one from two of the sections and two from the remaining section.

Section A

Religion in American Life, 364-384, 404-406

1. Describe the "common ground among Jews, Catholics, and Protestants" in the post World War II era (366).

2. What was the course of Roman Catholicism after 1945? How would Catholics become "Americanized"?

3. How did Billy Graham represent the new evangelicalism of the post-war years?

Section B

4. Describe the religious roots of the Afro-American freedom struggle.

5. Why was Thomas Merton drawn to the Trappists? (381-383)

6. Discuss Malcolm X's racialized view of history. According to Malcolm, what role did Christianity play in the history of the West? (404-406)

Section C

James Cone, "Martin and Malcolm," in Religion and American Culture, 397-410

7. Black theologian James Cone contends that Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X represent two broad streams of thought within the black community. What cultural/religious sources did King and Malcolm draw on to form their ideas and agendas?

8. Describe "integrationism" before MLK. Where did this philosophy come from?

9. Describe "black nationalism" before Malcolm X. What were its roots and sources?

THUR Nov 15: Lillian Smith, Killers of the Dream (reprint, 1994).

Set 13: For the question set answer one from each section. For the book review choose question four, eight, or thirteen.

Section A

1. In Lillian Smith's "Foreword" why does she say she is writing this book? What purpose will it serve?

2. In the "Foreword" Smith claims "we live by our symbols." What is she referring to?

3. At the beginning of chapter one Smith claims that "Even its children knew that the South was in trouble." What is the meaning of that statement? Why does she refer to children in this context?

*4. Describe the incident in young Lillian's life (chapter one) that opened her eyes to the inequalities and inconsistencies of southern culture. Why did it have such a powerful impact on her? How would it shape later experiences?

Section B

5. In chapter two, "Custom and Conscience," Smith describes a conversation she had with one of the older campers at Laurel Falls Camp. Why did this young woman lash out at Smith? What complaints did she have of the camp and of Smith's tactics?

6. Smith argues in chapter three that during the period of Reconstruction the "whole white South suffered a moral breakdown." What does she mean by that statement? Is it justified?

7. In chapter one of part two Lillian Smith states that southern white children were taught two lessons: "to love God, to love our white skin, and to believe in the sanctity of both." How did children learn these life lessons? How were these tied to other values concerning

sexuality?

*8. How does Smith describe the strength of the church in the lives of southerners?

9. How did southern white women, as Smith contends, shut out evil?

Section C

10. Why would Smith hold that "Distance and darkness have set the rural South apart from the rest of our nation"? (part three, chapter one)

11. What is the point of Smith's parable of Mr. Poor White? (part three, chapter two)

12. Why does Smith fault the writers, poets, and critics of the "fugitive" movement? (part four, chapter one)

*13. In the final chapter Smith asserts that the problems of the modern South exist because "we have ceased trying to relate ourselves to God. . ." How does that theme appear elsewhere in the book? What does Smith mean by it? Was it true of the South in this era?

For more on Lillian Smith, see her [New Georgia On-Line Encyclopedia bio](#) and the entry on [Killers of the Dream](#).

WEEK 12: OLD TIME FAITH IN A MODERN WORLD

TUES Nov 20: Grant Wacker, "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism, and the Pentecostal Character," in *Religion and American Culture*, 415-434; and ["Interview - In Focus: Mormonism in Modern America"](#)

Wednesday, May 16, 2007.

Set 14: Answer one from each section.

Section A

1. How does Grant Wacker answer this question?: "Exactly who were the Christians who called themselves pentecostals?"

2. What explanations have scholars offered for pentecostalism's growth and reach?

3. "Simply stated," writes Wacker, "pentecostalism flourished because two impulses perennially warred for mastery of its soul." What were those?

Section B

4. Why did early Pentecostals have so little interest in politics?

5. Why did followers discard "inherited orthodoxies whenever it suited their purposes"?

6. What has accounted for the anti-intellectual tendency of believers?

7. Describe some of the lingering tensions between primitivism and pragmatism.

Section C

8. Why has Mormonism received so much negative attention in recent years?

9. Describe what Russell M. Nelson might mean when he comments, “I believe that experience has shown that human nature cannot be changed by reforming public policy.”

10. Nelson and Lance B. Wickman consider the links between Mormonism and politics. What are some of their observations?

11. What do these two leaders have to say about the tensions between evangelicals and the LDS?

12. According to Wickman and Nelson, why do so many Americans when polled characterize Mormonism in ways that are “inaccurate”?

THUR Nov 22: Thanksgiving break, no class

WEEK 13: PLURALISM & AMERICAN RELIGION SINCE THE 1960s

TUES Nov 27: Religion in American Life, 385-422. [Richard John Neuhaus's review of Diana Eck's A New Religious America, First Things \(October 2001\).](#)

Set 15: Answer one from each section.

Section A

Religion in American Life, 385-422

1. How did John F. Kennedy's run for the presidency in 1960 reveal a lingering anti-Catholicism?

2. The authors of the text write: “For some Americans the dawn of this new era demanded a new theology, one that broke with the quaint suspicions and prejudices of bygone days” (388). Explain what they mean here.

3. How did Vatican II change the Catholicism? How did Pope Paul VI later react to some of the innovations of Vatican II and how would his pronouncements affect American Catholicism?

4. Describe the ways the charismatic renewal movement reshaped traditional churches.

Section B

5. The authors of Religion in American Life note that “while science offered glimpses of a brave new world of technological advances, other Americans began to harbor second thoughts, and they used the language of religion and theology to express their discontent” (407). Unpack that statement.

6. How did Chuck Smith respond to some of the challenges of the West Coast counterculture?

7. In what ways did the sexual revolution reshape the American religious scene?

8. “The media were entranced by what they believed was the novelty of an evangelical Christian running for President,” comment the authors of the text. (416) How and why was that so?

9. “Carter was, in a way, then responsible for the rise of the Religious Right” (418). How do the authors make that case?

Section D

Richard John Neuhaus’s review of Diana Eck’s A New Religious America, First Things (October 2001).

10. Richard John Neuhaus remarks that Diana Eck’s A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation “intends to be, and is, a major statement.” What does he mean by this?

11. Neuhaus observes that “Eck’s purpose, as she says many times over, is to explain ‘who we are’ as a people-or at least who we would be if we overcame the ‘hatred and bigotry’ that prevents us from being who we are.” What does he think Eck’s answer to the question of “who we are” is?

12. Why does Neuhaus compare Eck’s work to the 1893 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago?

13. What does Neuhaus mean by “The Muslim Difference”?

THUR Nov 29: Religion in American Life, 438-453; Stephen Prothero, “Belief Unbracketed: A Case for the Religion Scholar to Reveal More of Where He or She Is Coming From” Harvard Divinity Bulletin 33:2 (Winter/Spring 2004); and Robert Orsi’s and R. Marie Griffith’s responses to Prothero.

Set 16: Answer one from all three sections.

Section A

1. Why is Stephen Prothero not satisfied with Robert Orsi’s treatment of southern serpent handlers?

2. Prothero criticizes the field of Religious Studies for “bracketing out” certain issues in the interest of “empathetic understanding.” What is wrong with that in his view?

3. How did Prothero’s experience of writing American Jesus make him rethink serving “up our expertise with a bit of judgment”?

4. Describe how Prothero uses the counter-example of David Chappell. How did Chappell’s work seem to contrast with the writings of religious studies scholars?

Section B

5. Why does Prothero remark: “we Religious Studies scholars have been largely irrelevant to the public debates”? Is that true?

6. In his response to Prothero, Robert Orsi writes, “Prothero has sketched out a vision of the future of religious studies that is in fact the past.” How does Orsi make that case?

7. Orsi contends: “I have never said that scholars of religion should endorse every religious idiom they approach, but I have argued that we need to learn precisely how to pay disciplined attention to the very practices that disturb or repel us, and that we need to do so in a way that holds our own worlds in suspension.” What do you make of his counter to Prothero?

Section C

8. Marie Griffith notes that Prothero’s gendered prose seems oddly like that which he critiqued in his book, *American Jesus*. Is that a fair assessment?

9. Griffith is not convinced by Prothero’s argument about reaching the public: “[A]iring a pithy opinion on the topic du jour—The terrorists did not represent true Islam! Those American Christian prison guards in Iraq were hypocrites!—is not the same as contributing thoughtful insights to public knowledge, and a scholar must draw careful distinctions here.” What do you make of her response on this point?

10. Griffith concludes her response by praising empathy. What can be gained and lost by being empathetic to the subjects we study?

WEEK 14: MAJOR THEMES SUMMARY AND PAPER PRESENTATIONS

TUES Dec 4: Robert Wuthnow, “Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life,” *Religion and American Culture*, 357-371; Robert N. Bellah, “Is There a Common American Culture?” *Religion and American Culture*, 535-545.

Set 17: Answer two questions from each section.

Robert Wuthnow, "Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life," *Religion and American Culture*, 357-37

Section A

1. Robert Wuthnow notes that Americans were once divided into Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Yet by the 1960s, tensions between these three had subsided. After that period, religious groups in America, states Wuthnow, split along liberal and conservative lines. Why did this take place? What factors led to the new alignment?

2. Wuthnow contends that American religion has had a strong “this worldly” orientation. How has that been the case?

3. How did religious conservatives respond to the social upheavals of the 1960s? Did that response differ significantly from how religious liberals responded?

4. American Protestants once viewed both Catholics and Jews disdainfully. How was it, then, that these views were so altered by the 1980s?

5. Wuthnow wrote this piece in 1989. Do his observations still hold true in the early 21st century?

Section B

Robert N. Bellah, "Is there a common American Culture?" Religion and American Culture, 535-545

6. How does a country like the United States compare to France on issues like multiculturalism?

7. Judging from Robert Bellah's work, is there still a common American culture? How are American's divided? What factors, beliefs, and institutions unite them?

8. Why does Bellah contend that Baptists and other sectarians in the colonial period were critical to the development of American ideas and institutions?

9. On page 524, Bellah discusses the role of "individual conscience" in the shaping of American beliefs and political views. How has individual conscience informed American religious culture?

10. How does Bellah argue that "individualism" acts as the common thread in the American religious tapestry? What is individualistic about American religion?

THUR Dec 6: Paper presentations

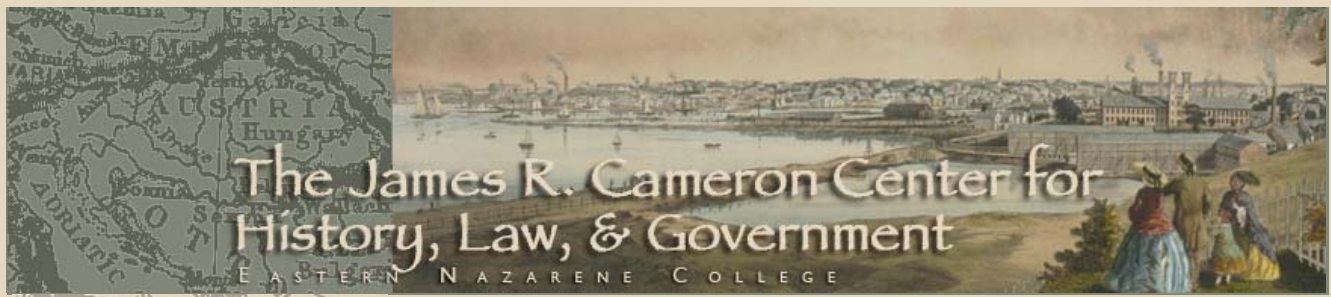
WEEK 15: Final Exam: Friday, December 14, 10:30am - 12:30pm

[Final exam studyguide](#)

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RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN HISTORY (HI410)

Professor Randall Stephens

[syllabus](#)

On-line Resources

Listed below are a number of on-line, easily accessible primary and secondary sources, databases, and other resources for the study of religion and American culture. These should come in quite handy for your final paper.

[EMAIL LISTS & BLOGS](#) | [GENERAL ACADEMIC RESOURCES](#) | [LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES](#) | [MUSIC](#) | [PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS](#) | [PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, CENTERS, & ON-LINE PROJECTS](#) | [PUBLICATIONS](#) | [RELIGION & FILM](#) | [RELIGION IN THE NEWS](#) | [RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS](#) | [STATISTICS & MAPS](#) | [TEACHING AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY](#) | [TELEVISION & RADIO PROGRAMS](#)

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE (HI410)

[Reading Schedule and Discussion Questions](#)

[Professor Stephens' Course Syllabi](#)

EMAIL LISTS & BLOGS

[H-AmRel](#)

A member of H-Net Humanities & Social Sciences OnLine. Engaged in scholarly discussion of religion in American society from pre-colonial times to present, H-AmRel is a premier resource for academics, clergy, and librarians alike.

[H-Buddhism](#)

The Buddhist Scholars Information Network (H-Buddhism) serves as a medium for the exchange of information regarding academic resources, new research projects, scholarly publications, university job listings, and so forth, for specialists in Buddhist Studies who are currently affiliated with academic institutions.

[H-Pentecostalism](#)

H-Pentecostalism serves as an online forum for communication and interaction among scholars regarding all aspects of Pentecostal history.

[H-Southern-Religion](#)

H-Southern-Religion provides an online venue for interaction between scholars in a broad range of fields, from American religious

history to southern religious history, and from African American studies to gender studies.

[Religion in American History Blog](#)

A group blog to foster discussion and share research, insights, reviews, observations, syllabi, links, new books, project information, grant opportunities, seminars, lectures, and thoughts about religion in American history, and American religious history.

[Religion News Blog](#)

Religion News Blog is a non-profit service providing academics, religion professionals and other researchers with religion & cult news.

GENERAL ACADEMIC RESOURCES

[American Women's History: A Research Guide – Religion](#)

Contains bibliographies, primary source information, and a list of internet sites related to women and religion in America.

[The Andover-Harvard Theological Library: Resource Guides](#)

[ENC's Nease Library](#)

Valuable resources at the library include the ATLA Religion Database and JSTOR. The latter contains runs of the American Historical Review, Church History, Harvard Theological Journal of Religion, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Religion and American Culture, and Reviews in American History. Articles can be downloaded as pdfs. Some of these publications run back to the late nineteenth century. See also, the library's countless other resources through Proquest and other portals.

[Puritanism & Colonial Period: to 1700 \(Perspectives in American Literature\)](#)

Contains an extensive bibliography and useful outlines on Puritan religion.

[The Yale University Library Guide to American Religious History](#)

A collection of links, sources, databases, and bibliographies.

LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

[Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

[Church of the Nazarene Archives](#)

[Congregational Library](#)

[Dixon Pentecostal Research Center, Church of God \(Cleveland, Tennessee\)](#)

[Episcopal Church Archives](#)

[Family Search, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints](#)

[The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Assemblies of God](#)

[The General Commission on Archives and History for The United Methodist Church](#)

[International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives and Research Center](#)

[Islam in America Collection, DePaul University](#)

[Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Concordia Historical Institute](#)

[The On-line Swedenborgian Library](#)

[New England Province of the Society of Jesus \(Jesuits\) Archives](#)

[Presbyterian Historical Society](#)

[The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archive](#)

[The University of Notre Dame Archives, Catholic](#)

MUSIC

["Now What a Time": Blues, Gospel, and the Fort Valley Music Festivals, 1938-1943 \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Consists of approximately one hundred sound recordings, primarily blues and gospel songs, and related documentation from the folk festival at Fort Valley State College (now Fort Valley State University), Fort Valley, Georgia. The documentation was created by John Wesley Work III in 1941 and by Lewis Jones and Willis Laurence James in March, June, and July 1943.

[The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip \(Library of Congress\)](#)

A multiformat ethnographic field collection that includes nearly 700 sound recordings, as well as fieldnotes, dust jackets, and other manuscripts documenting a three-month, 6,502-mile trip through the southern United States.

[Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, 1870-1885 \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Consists of over 47,000 pieces of sheet music registered for copyright during the years 1870 to 1885. Included are popular songs, piano music, sacred and secular choral music, solo instrumental music, method books and instructional materials, and music for band and orchestra.

[Hispano Music and Culture of the Northern Rio Grande: The Juan B. Rael Collection \(Library of Congress\)](#)

An online presentation of a multi-format ethnographic field collection documenting religious and secular music of Spanish-speaking residents of rural Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS

[The African American Odyssey \(Library of Congress\)](#)

The exhibition The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship, showcases the incomparable African American collections of the Library of Congress. Displaying more than 240 items, including books, government documents, manuscripts, maps, musical scores, plays, films, and recordings, this is the largest black history exhibit ever held at the Library, and the first exhibition of

any kind of feature presentations in all three of the Library's buildings.

[American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers Project, 1936-1940 \(Library of Congress\)](#)

These life histories were written by the staff of the Folklore Project of the Federal Writers' Project for the U.S. Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA) from 1936-1940. The Library of Congress collection includes 2,900 documents representing the work of over 300 writers from 24 states. Typically 2,000-15,000 words in length, the documents consist of drafts and revisions, varying in form from narrative to dialogue to report to case history. The histories describe the informant's family education, income, occupation, political views, religion and mores, medical needs, diet and miscellaneous observations. Pseudonyms are often substituted for individuals and places named in the narrative texts.

[Boston Public Library Digital Resources](#)

The BPL has a host of tremendous resources on its web page. All you need to access this is a BPL card, which is free and available to all Boston-area residents. The site's History material is particularly convenient. There you can find databases like American History and Life, Archive of Americana, History Resource Center: U.S., and Gale Virtual Reference Library. See also the Newspapers section, where you'll find hundreds of searchable weeklies and dailies, including a number of southern papers going back to the 1860s. In addition this link contains sublinks to full-text academic journals and magazines.

[Early Virginia Religious Petitions \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Early Virginia Religious Petitions presents images of 423 petitions submitted to the Virginia legislature between 1774 and 1802 from more than eighty counties and cities. Drawn from the Library of Virginia's Legislative Petitions collection, the petitions concern such topics as the historic debate over the separation of church and state championed by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, the rights of dissenters such as Quakers and Baptists, the sale and division of property in the established church, and the dissolution of unpopular vestries.

[First-Person Narratives of the American South, 1860-1920 \(Library of Congress\)](#)

This compilation of printed texts from the libraries at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill documents the culture of the nineteenth-century American South from the viewpoint of Southerners. It includes the diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, travel accounts, and ex-slave narratives of not only prominent individuals, but also of relatively inaccessible populations: women, African Americans, enlisted men, laborers, and Native Americans. An award from the Library of Congress/Ameritech National Digital Library Competition supported the digitization of 101 titles published during and after the Civil War. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill supplemented these titles with another forty first-person narratives, many published before 1860.

[Making of America](#)

MoA is a digital library of primary sources in American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction. The collection is particularly strong in the subject areas of education, psychology, American history, sociology, religion, and science and technology. The collection currently contains approximately 9,500

books and 50,000 journal articles with 19th century imprints. For more details about the project, see About MoA. Making of America is made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

[Religion and the Founding of the American Republic \(Library of Congress\)](#)

This Library of Congress exhibition demonstrates that many of the colonies that in 1776 became the United States of America were settled by men and women of deep religious convictions who in the seventeenth century crossed the Atlantic Ocean to practice their faith freely.

[In the Beginning Was the Word: The Russian Church and Native Alaskan Cultures \(Library of Congress\)](#)

The coming together of a renowned scholar and a rich, but relatively unknown and unused archive of historically significant documents is a rare phenomenon. Last winter [1993-1994] the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James H. Billington, asked Dr. Vyacheslav Ivanov, one of the foremost linguists of our day, to review and evaluate the Alaskan Russian Church Archives, and to select some items for an exhibition. This installation is the direct result of that encounter, and it offers a rare opportunity to witness the insights that such an exchange can produce.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, CENTERS, & ON-LINE PROJECTS

[American Academy of Religion](#)

In a world where religion plays so central a role in social, political, and economic events, as well as in the lives of communities and individuals, there is a critical need for ongoing reflection upon and understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values. The American Academy of Religion's mission is to promote such reflection through excellence in scholarship and teaching in the field of religion.

[American Society of Church History](#)

[Beliefnet](#)

Beliefnet has a wide variety of resources--articles, quizzes, devotionals, sacred text searches, message boards, prayer circles, photo galleries and much more. . .

[The Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, Boston College](#)

The goal of the Boisi Center is to create opportunities where a community of scholars, policy makers, media and religious leaders in the Boston area and nationally can connect in conversations and scholarly reflection around issues at the intersection of religion and American public life.

[Buddhist Studies at UC Berkeley](#)

[Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis](#)

A research and public outreach institute devoted to the promotion of the understanding of the relation between religion and other features of American culture.

[Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, Vanderbilt University](#)

“The Center for the Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC) was established in 2003 by the University to develop, promote, and increase faculty research at the intersections of religion and culture.”

[The Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University](#)

The CSR a major academic initiative that aims to encourage scholarly research, teaching, and public discussion about religion through diverse perspectives of the humanities and social sciences.

[Center for the Study of Religion, UCLA](#)

The Center grew out of an informally organized group of faculty and students interested in religion. This group has held a weekly colloquium and mounted annual conferences and evening lecture series since 1990. UCLA has also had for over twenty years an Interdepartmental Degree Program (IDP) offering an undergraduate major in the Study of Religion.

[The Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, Notre Dame University](#)

Provides resources and critical commentary for media coverage of U.S. Catholicism and collaborating with church leaders and pastoral workers to enhance the vitality of Catholic life in the United States.

[The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals](#)

Founded in 1982 to encourage and support research on evangelical Christianity in North America. Read back issues of the ISAE bulletin, find links to a variety of websites related to evangelicalism, and other valuable resources.

[The Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, Trinity College](#)

The Center was established in 1996 to advance knowledge and understanding of the varied roles that religious movements, institutions, and ideas play in the contemporary world; to explore challenges posed by religious pluralism and tensions between religious and secular values; and to examine the influence of religion on politics, civic culture, family life, gender roles, and other issues in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

[The Material History of Religion Project](#)

More than just ideas and institutions, religion in America is a rich mixture of objects, behaviors and people. Working from 1995 through 2001, the Material History of American Religion Project studied the history of American religion in all its complexity by focusing on material objects and economic themes.

[Mormon History Association](#)

[Religion and American Culture Caucus of the American Studies Association](#)

We are pleased to welcome you to the Religion and American Culture Caucus of the American Studies Association. We invite and encourage all ASA members who are interested in exploring the place of religion in American life, and promoting the study and teaching of religion within American Studies, to join.

[Society for Pentecostal Studies](#)

[Wesleyan Theological Society](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Books and Culture

A wide-ranging review, covering the arts, religion, the humanities, music, and film.

The Christian Century

The Christian Century magazine believes that the Christian faith calls Christians to a profound engagement with the world--an engagement of both head and heart. We think Christians can and must articulate their faith in a way that is meaningful and intellectually compelling to those around them.

First Things

Is published by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society.

The Journal of Religion and Film

Examines the description, critique, and embodiment of religion in film.

The Journal of Southern Religion

This is a peer-reviewed academic journal that I co-edit with Bland Whitley, Library of Virginia. It is parked on the Florida State University server. The JSR is entirely online and contains articles and reviews by the leading scholars in the field. It will be especially of use to anyone researching religion in the American South. Topics include Catholicism, civil rights, southern sacred music, violence and southern religion, fundamentalism, pentecostalism, gender, and much more.

The North Star Journal

An on-line journal covering African American religious history and culture.

The Revealer

A daily review of religion and the press.

Sojourners

The publications mission is "to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, and the world."

RELIGION & FILM

The American Academy of Religions Video and Film Page

Gordon Matties' Religion and Film Bibliography

The Journal of Religion and Film

Examines the description, critique, and embodiment of religion in film.

Judith Weisenfeld's Selected Filmography of American Films at the Material History of American Religion Project

[Religion and Myth in the Movies: A Bibliography of Books and Articles in the UC Berkeley Libraries](#)

RELIGION IN THE NEWS

[Beliefnet: News and Blogs](#)

[The Christian Science Monitor: Religion and Ethics](#)

[The Journal of Southern Religion: Southern Religion in the News](#)

[National Public Radio: Religion](#)

[The New York Times: Religion and Belief](#)

[Religion and Ethics Newsweekly](#)

[Religion News](#)

Collects headlines from newspapers and magazines across the U.S. Browsers can sort by category: bioethics, death penalty, gay marriage, religion and politics, religion and public schools...

[Religion News Service](#)

"For over 70 years, Religion News Service has been an authoritative source of news about religion, ethics, spirituality and moral issues. Based in Washington, D.C., RNS has a network of correspondents around the world, providing news and information on all faiths and religious movements to the nation's leading newspapers, news magazines, broadcast organizations and religious publications."

[Washington Post: Religion](#)

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

[Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School: Resources by Topic](#)

"Each topic area includes a brief overview of the CSWR's work in that area, together with related online photo galleries; video and audio presentations of lectures and conferences; papers and publications available online; and books published by the CSWR. Not all topic areas include all types of resources."

[Religious Movements Homepage at the University of Virginia](#)

"In addition to creating a foundation for understanding religion, this site also seeks to promote tolerance and appreciation of all religions without preference for any particular faith tradition."

STATISTICS & MAPS

[The American Religion Data Archive](#)

Providing free access to quality data on religion. The ARDA allows you to interactively explore the highest quality data on American and international religion using online features for generating national profiles, maps, church membership overviews, denominational heritage trees, tables, charts, and other summary reports.

[Glenmary Research Center](#)

Disseminates religious demography in three primary formats: books, maps, and data files. Some of these resources are now available for ordering over the Web.

[Map Gallery of Religion in the U.S.](#)

A series of county-level choropleth maps reveals the distribution of the larger and more regionally concentrated church bodies. The maps are in GIF format.

[The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#)

Seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. The Forum pursues its mission by delivering timely, impartial information to national opinion leaders, including government officials and journalists. As a nonpartisan, non-advocacy organization, the Forum does not take positions on policy debates.

TEACHING AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

[Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture: Young Scholars in American Religion Syllabi \(1991-2006\)](#)

[Divining America: Religion and the National Culture](#)

Designed to help teachers of American history bring their students to a greater understanding of the role religion has played in the development of the United States. Contains helpful overviews of a variety of American religious history topics.

[Indiana Humanities Council: Teaching the Role of Religion in American History](#)

This website offers the results of a five-year project exploring how to teach American religious history.

[The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Theology and Religion](#)

“The Wabash Center supports teachers of religion and theology in higher education through meetings and workshops, grants, a journal and other resources to make accessible the scholarship of teaching and learning. All Wabash Center programs are funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.”

TELEVISION & RADIO PROGRAMS

[Speaking of Faith](#)

Public radio’s conversation about religion, meaning, ethics, and ideas. Each week, Krista Tippett probes the myriad ways in which religious impulses inform every aspect of life and culture, nationally and globally. Hear full broadcasts and read additional content.

[Religion and Ethics Newsweekly](#)

Hosted by veteran journalist Bob Abernethy, this one-of-a-kind television newsmagazine provides insightful coverage and analysis of the news, people, events and trends behind the headlines in the rich world of religion and ethics. Read transcripts and view programs at this companion site.

[Religious Broadcasting Site at the University of Virginia](#)

A gateway to Internet resources about religious broadcasting. We

will begin with the simple goal of creating easy access links to the resources that broadcasters themselves have created. When that task is accomplished, we will attempt to identify other Internet commentary about religious broadcasting....

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Site designed by Randall J. Stephens

[Maps & Directions](#)