

RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE

AMST 402

Spring 2002

Wednesdays 4:00-6:45

EC-11

Wayne Hobson

Course website:

hss.fullerton.edu/amst/courses/wh-amst402.html

Office Hours:

Honors Office (PLN-120): Drop in any time

AMST Office (EC-612): Wed. 3:00-4:00, or by appt.

Messages:

Honors Office: 714-278-7443

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Required Texts:

Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout, eds., *Religion and American History: A Reader*

Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*

Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*

Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*

Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days: Culture & Community Among Elderly Jews in an American Ghetto*

Richard Cimino and Don Lattin, *Shopping for Faith: American Religion in the New Millennium*

Texts are available for purchase at **Little Professor Book Center**, 725 N. Placentia Ave., Fullerton

About the course:

This course examines the interaction between American religious experience and broader patterns of American culture, with a particular focus on religion as a source of meaning, conflict, and community. Our approach will be both topical and historical. Among topics we will consider throughout the course are **religion and gender**, in particular what have been the causes and consequences of the American tendency to code religion as feminine, **religion and cultural power**, in particular the tension between religion as an organized system of belief and ritual and the American cultural emphasis on popular and personal religiosity and the clash between evangelical Protestantism's claim to be the core religious tradition and other religions' insistence on the importance of diversity and tolerance as American ideals, and **religion and identity**, in particular religion as a source of strength and resistance for non-dominant groups.

Throughout this course we will attempt simultaneously to understand religious perspectives from their practitioners' points of view and to interpret them from a cultural studies point of view. Although we will pay some attention to systematic theology and to the history of religious institutions, these will not be our primary concern. Instead, our attention will be directed to the various ways everyday Americans have "practiced" religion and what these religious practices have meant to them. The appeal of religious objects, imagery, rituals, music, and fellowship to the emotions as well as the appeal of religious ideas to the intellect will be part of our concern. Religious doubt as well as religious conviction will gain our attention.

Examinations and Grading:

There will be three medium-length writing assignments in this class: a take-home midterm exam, an inclass final exam, and an ethnography assignment. For the ethnography, you will be asked to observe and analyze religious community life and services in a tradition other than your own. Several visits will be necessary. There will be an alternative critical analysis assignment for anyone who cannot conduct the ethnographic research.

Helpful class participation can significantly improve your grade, although you will not be penalized for failure to participate. In addition, you can improve your grade by completing an optional essay assignment on popular culture images of religion.

In accordance with university and department policies, **graduate students** taking this course for study plan credit will be required to complete an additional assignment: a critical review of a book relevant to your ethnography topic. Please see me about the book you have selected for review. This essay may be turned in any time during the semester, but no later than May 24.

	<u>Undergrads</u>	<u>Grad Students</u>	<u>Grading Scale:</u>
Midterm Exam	30%	25%	A = 90-100
Final Exam	40%	35%	B = 80- 89
Ethnography Essay	30%	25%	C = 65- 79
Critical Book Review	-----	15%	D = 50- 64
Popular Culture Images Essay	up to 5 points	up to 5 points	
Class participation	up to 7 points	up to 7 points	

Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments:

Feb. 6 Introduction: Religion and American Culture

I. POPULAR RELIGION IN THE ERA OF PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY

Feb. 13 Popular Religiosity and Institutional Religion: Definitions and Approaches
 “Material Christianity” ” in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 1-16
 “Piety, Art Fashion: The Religious Object” in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 17-66

Puritan New England and the American Sense of Mission

Miller, “Errand into the Wilderness” in *Religion in American History*, 27-41

Feb. 20 Great Awakening, American Revolution, and Democratization of American Christianity
 Stout, “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution” in *Religion in American History*, 88-102
 Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction” in *Religion in American History*, 108-123

Creating an Evangelical Religious Culture in Antebellum America; Mormons as Outsiders and Insiders

Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism” in *Religion in American History*, 179-194

R. Laurence Moore, “How to Become a People: The Mormon Scenario” (handout)
 “Mormon Garments: Sacred Clothing and the Body” in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 198-221

Feb. 27 Domesticity and the Feminization of Nineteenth-Century Protestant Culture**Mar. 6**

Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion, 1800-1860" in *Religion in American History*, 157-172

"The Bible in the Victorian Home" in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 67-102

"The Religious Symbolism of Laurel Hill Cemetery" in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 103-131

Bednarowski, "Women in Occult America" in *Religion in American History*, 239-251

Mar.13 Religion in the Debate Over Slavery; African American Religious Traditions from Slavery to Freedom: Searching for the Promised Land

Bacon, "A Sermon to Maryland Slaves, 1759" in *Religion in American History*, 73-86

Douglass, "Address on 'Evangelical Flogging,' 1847" in *Religion in American History*, 222-230

Armstrong, "The Christian Doctrine of Slavery: God's Work in God's Way" (1857), in *Religion in American History*, 231-237

Montgomery, "The Preachers" in *Religion in American History*, 293-310

Spillers, "Martin Luther King and the Style of the Black Sermon" in *Religion in American History*, 468-484

Slave spirituals (on CD, played in class)

Take-Home Midterm Exam Due Monday, March 18**II. MODERNITY, RELIGION, AND CULTURAL CONFLICT****Mar.20** Consumer Culture, Religion, and Modernity

Schmidt, "The Easter Parade: Piety, Fashion, and Display" in *Religion in American History*, 345-365

"Christian Kitsch and the Rhetoric of Bad Taste" in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 163-197

"Christian Retailing" in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 222-269

The Scopes Trial and the Debate Over Science and Religion**Mar.27** Fundamentalism, Populism, and Modernity

Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism" in *Religion in American History*, 314-325

Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 3-110

"Inherit the Wind" (video shown in class)

SPRING BREAK

- Apr.10** Scopes Trial – What Really Happened and What Was Its Long-Term Significance?
 Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 111-266
 Handy, “The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935” in *Religion in American History*, 370-381
 Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942” in *Religion in American History*, 384-392

III. IMMIGRATION AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES

A Catholic Community of Devotion, Change, and Support

- Apr. 17** Immigration and Othering: Catholic and Native American Responses
 Dolan, “The Immigrants and Their Gods: A New Perspective in American Religious History” in *Religion in American History*, 152-155
 DeMallie, “The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account” in *Religion in American History*, 255-269
 “Lourdes Water and American Catholicism” in McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 132-162
 Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 1-69
- Apr.24** St. Jude and Popular Catholicism: Issues of Gender, Hierarchy, and Personal Identity
 Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude*, 70-211
 Student Ethnography Presentations

A Jewish Community of Ritual, Debate, and Support

- May 1** Judaism in Modern America: Continuity and Change; “The Wise Man Searches, but Not to Find”: A Jewish Immigrant’s Story
 Sarna, “Seating in the American Synagogue” in *Religion in American History*, 397-408
 Dinnerstein, “Antisemitism in the Depression Era (1933-1939)” *Religion in American History*, 412-433
 Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, xiii-xvii, 1-78
 Student Ethnography Presentations
- May 8** Rituals and Definitional Ceremonies: Popular Religion and Community Crises, Jewish-American Case Studies
 Myerhoff, *Number Our Days*, 79-194
 Student Ethnography Presentations

Predicting the Future from Present Trends

- May 15** Religiosity/Spirituality and the American Self; Religion and Community
 Cimino and Lattin, *Shopping for Faith*, 1-128
 Student Ethnography Presentations

- May 22** Culture Wars and Social Issues: The Politics of Faith
Cimino and Lattin, *Shopping for Faith*, 131-189
Johnson, "Jesus: The Liberator" in *Religion in American History*, 486-497
U.S. Catholic Bishops, "A Pastoral Message: Economic Justice for All" in *Religion in American History*, 498-504
Jerry Falwell, "Imperatives of Moral Involvement" in *Religion in American History*, 504-511
Student Ethnography Presentations

Ethnography due Friday, May 24

Final Examination, Wednesday, May 29 -- 5:00-6:50