

The United States is the most religious country in the Western world.

To know its culture, you need to know its Christianity



Spiritualist Church, New Orleans, 6 months after Hurricane Katrina. Photo by Hillary Kaell

RELG 317
Special Topics in Religion
North American Christianity

Fall 2020
Credits: 3

M.W 12:05-13:25
Classroom BIRKS

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Polls consistently show that the United States is the most religious country in the developed world. What accounts for this and how has religion been conceived and practiced in the U.S.? This course introduces students to the history of Christianity in the U.S. from the 1630s to the present, with an emphasis on the post-Civil War period. We will discuss how religion is practiced by individuals, and how it has shaped the country's laws and public culture. We will pay particular attention to key historical moments and movements, including Puritanism, revivals and awakenings, slavery, modernism and fundamentalism, new religious movements, anti-Communism and Pentecostalism.

This class is built around lectures and discussion. Depending on your field, *you may find it reading and writing intensive.* This is a lecture and discussion course that presumes no prior knowledge of American religious history. Students must, however, be able to read and understand all of the relevant texts for the course. It is recommended that students have prior experience writing university-level papers.

This class uses a participatory model of pedagogy. That means reflections and team meetings throughout the semester to keep you engaged and assessing (and reassessing) relevant issues/problems. This is especially important since Fall 2020 is online. It works out to the same workload as other classes, but it does mean you will need to keep on top of these multiple tasks about which I will also post regular reminders. *Please consider whether this model suits you before taking the class.*

This course has 5 main objectives.

1. To understand how religion exists within the wider culture and how influences run in both directions: from religion to culture, from culture to religion.
2. To evaluate primary source texts through “close readings” – paying attention to the language and ideas that colour a historical document in its own context. You’ll note that almost all our readings are primary sources.
3. To explore what distinguishes American and North American religion (particularly from its European antecedents)
4. To understand the interplay of “public” and “private,” particularly regarding questions about disestablishment and connect this to ongoing debates about whether, for example, the U.S. is a (Protestant) “Christian” country.

5. To explore patterns of movement/migration affecting the growth and development of American religion and evaluate the role of “outsider” groups, such as Catholics, African Americans, Mormons (Latter Day Saints), and NRMs.

Assignments

See instructions and dates below

All written assignments must be submitted through mycourses on the due date.

Late work will be penalized 5% per day and will not be accepted after 7 days. I am happy to give extensions provided you have a medical note or death certificate, as per University guidelines. If this is the case, please do not hesitate to let me know—the earlier, the better—and we’ll work out a new deadline.

Citation formats. For materials I have assigned: Include last name and page number. For outside materials: any citation format is fine (e.g. MLA or Chicago), but please keep it consistent and *always include* the following information: *author, title, publisher, date.* Avoid lengthy URLs. Include a tiny URL if needed.

If you are a student who is registered with the Access Center, it is up to you to come speak to me about possible accommodations. Please don’t hesitate to do so! I’ll try my best to work with you on that score.

Grading

- Participation: 20%
Breakdown: Discussion sessions 10%, Team Assessments (x2) 10%
- Team Teaching Assignments: 20% x 4 (to be handed in twice)
- Online Midterm: 20%
- Independent Paper: 40%
Break down: Proposal 5%; Final Paper 35%

Rights and Responsibilities

The most common offence under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement." This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone. It can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. Or to translating the work of another person into French or English and not citing the source. In short: **DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!**

Technology in Class

You are welcome to have laptop, but please stay off facebook, etc. during class. **You may not have your cell phone out in class.** Please turn it on silent and put it away.

Communication Policy

- > Please contact me via email. I appreciate when students address emails to me with “Dear Dr. Kaell” (or “Dear Prof. Kaell”) and use full sentences.
- > I will do my best to respond within 24 hours, however if you send your email after 5pm or on weekends I may not be able to respond until the next day.
- > I cannot respond to substantive questions about essays or other written work over email. For those kinds of questions, please email me or the TA to make an appointment. Please state the reason for your appointment in the email so I can estimate the amount of time we’ll need.
- > You may email the TA for an appointment at any time
- > We will also hold Zoom discussion sessions, which are mandatory, as are your small group discussions.
- > Please raise general questions about class materials during discussion sessions or on Moodle. You can also email me questions about the material in advance of our discussion sections.

Course Materials

Emails & MyCourses – *Please MAKE SURE your email is correct on mycourses and you are active and checking the site.*

Coursepack – I will post all required primary and secondary source documents on MyCourses.

The Bible - Although not a required text, it’s always a good idea to get a Bible if you’re taking a class on Christianity. Choose one that did not belong to Gideon. I’d recommend the NRSV or any newer translation.

Background Reading

None of these books is required. However, if you don’t know anything about U.S. history of Christianity, some good texts include:

Amanda Porterfield, *The Protestant Experience in America*

Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada.*

Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*

Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart, eds. *New Directions in American Religious History*

David Hackett, ed. *Lived Religion and American Culture*

Territorial acknowledgement

The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which McGill University stands. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other people. It's crucial that we keep this in mind, in general, and certainly in a course about a religion that was introduced to the Americas by settlers.

Schedule

Due to the pandemic, we will do things differently than usual. We'll all have to be patient, and I'll try to make things as seamless as possible. You should check Moodle regularly and I will remind you what's ahead each week. Here's how we'll proceed:

1. Everyone will attend a Zoom introduction on September 2 (12:05-13:25). Please listen to Videos 1 and 2 beforehand and peruse the syllabus. This meeting will give me a chance to introduce myself and answer questions about the syllabus (Video 1) or the substantive lecture (Video 2). Following Sept 2, we will move into our 'normal' proceedings which are:
2. I will post a series of short lectures every Wednesday afternoon, totalling about 1 hour for each week. You must listen to the lectures before Wednesday of the next week. *We will not meet on Mondays.*
3. On Wednesday (12:25-13:25), we will have a 1 hour discussion session. These are mandatory and to be treated like a 'regular' class. During the discussions we will focus on (a) questions about the video lectures and (b) discussing the assigned texts. You must have completely your weekly readings by Wednesday.
4. Each student will be assigned to a team of 6 peers. Your team will meet on Zoom every week for 1 hour to discuss the lecture, readings, and posted discussion questions (see below). Please choose a time that works for everyone and stick to it. This should be *before* our discussion on Wednesday. These meetings will help prepare you to contribute on Wednesdays, and form the basis of the Team Assessments (10%), Team Teaching Assignment (20%), and Peer Review.

America: Found and Built

2 Sept Introduction

Video 1 & 2

9 Sept Empire, Conquest and Conflict

Video 3 & 4

READINGS

Erik Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 100-116 (until p132 if you are interested).

Puritans: A Settler Experiment for God

14 / 16 Sept Wonder and Judgment

Video 5

READINGS

- Puritan Relations
- The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson (1637)

21 / 23 Sept New Generations, Captivity, and Providence

Video 6

READINGS

- Increase Mather, Pray for the Rising Generation (1678)
- A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682)
http://mith.umd.edu/eada/html/display.php?docs=rowlandson_narrative.xml

Benevolent Empire and a New World Order

28 / 30 Sept Establishment Under Fire: Revolution

Video 7

READINGS

- James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance; Lyman Beecher, Excerpts from Autobiography (1961).

5 / 7 Oct Districts Burning Over: Revival

Video 8 & Video 9

READINGS

- Charles Grandison Finney, What a Revival Is (1834)
- Charles Wesley, Ye Ransomed Sinner, Hear (1742, hymn).
- Image: “A Methodist Camp Meeting” (please look at it carefully and mark down 10 things that arrest your attention).

12 / 14 Oct Apocalypticism & Restorationism

Video 10

READINGS

- Joseph Smith, The Articles of Faith (1842), and Revelation (1835)
- Image: Adventist End Times; **Peruse the Book of Revelation*

Proposal – Due Oct 14

Building ‘Moral’ Space: At Home, in the Nation, and the World

19 Oct: Women at Home and in the World

Video 11

READINGS

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, “In Which It Appears that a Senator is But a Man,” in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) pp 403-421.
- Sojourner Truth, Ain’t I a Woman? (1851)
<https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/167sojourner.html>

- If you are interested: *The Life and Experience of Jarena Lee, a colored lady: giving an account of the call to preach the gospel* (1839)
- In class: Mary Chestnut, *A Diary From Dixie* (1860s) pp. 142-143.

21 Oct: Nativism, Anti-Catholicism and Public Schools

Video 12

READINGS

- Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* (McDannell, 2001)
- Image: Thomas Nast, Anti-Catholicism

Team Teaching Assignments (x2) – 21 October

Peer assessment 1

26 Oct: Christian Slavery & Colonization Debates

Video 13 & 14

READINGS

- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987), pp 86-89
- Richard Allen, Letter in Walker's Appeal

28 Oct: The Slavery Debate

Video 14

READINGS

- Richard Furman, Exposition of the Views of the Baptists (1833)
- Recommended: David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens* (1829)

2 / 4 Nov: Manifest Destiny: Mission to the City, the West and the World

Video 15 & 16

READINGS

- Josiah Strong, excerpt *Our Country* (1886)
- Rudyard Kipling, *The White Men's Burden* poem (1899)

Midterm. 4 November.

Postwar Cultures/Countercultures

9 / 11 Nov: Debating Darwin

Video 17

READINGS

- J.J. Reeve, Excerpts from *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915)
- Harry Emerson Fosdick, Shall the Fundamentalists Win? (1922)
- Recommended: W.J. Bryan, "The Menace of Darwinism," Preface, 1-13.
<http://www.archive.org/details/menaceofdarwinis00brya>

16 / 18 Nov Outsiders, Utopians, Suburbanites

Video 18 & 19 & 20

READINGS

- Skim: Ralph Waldo Trine, excerpt *In Tune with the Infinite* (1897)
- Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) pp xiii-14, 32-7
- Will Herberg, excerpt *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955)

23 Nov The Vatican II Revolution

Video 21

READINGS

- Senator John F. Kennedy to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association (1960)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBNIS8Zg1WA&feature=related>
- William Madges and Michael Daley, *Vatican II: Forty Personal Stories* (2003), excerpts.

25 Nov Rights and Revivals Televised (Martin, Malcolm and Billy)

Video 22

READINGS

- MLK, Letter From Birmingham Jail
- Malcolm X, “God’s Judgment of White America”

“Culture War”: the 1970s on

30 Nov / 2 Dec: Christians on the Left and the Right

Video 23 & 24

READINGS

- Transcendental Meditation website, <http://www.tm.org/>
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching,” <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>
- Phyllis Schlafly, “The Differences Between Men and Women” (1977) & videos
- Ronald Reagan, Evil Empire Speech, www.youtube.com/watch?v=do0x-Egc6oA
- Recommended: Mary Daly, excerpt *Beyond God the Father* (1973)
Hal Lindsey, *Late, Great Planet Earth* (1970), pp. 1-2, 42-71

Last day to participate in peer review: 30 Nov

Peer Assessment 2 and Team Teaching Assignment x 2 (Dec 7)

Final Paper due Dec 15

Grading & Assignments

PARTICIPATION

1. Participation in Discussion Sections – 10%

Assessment throughout semester

We will have discussion sessions on Wednesday during our regular time slot. I have adjusted this grade so it is lower than normal, since I recognize that it's not always easy to show 'attentive' contribution and listening online. I will assess your performance based on (a) attendance and (b) attentiveness. That means that I'll be assessing how you discuss the readings. If you are shy and don't like to speak up, please type questions or comments in the Zoom feature. If a number of sessions go by and I haven't heard from you at all, I will send you an email to alert you so you have a chance to improve.

2. Participation in Team Meetings – 10%

Assessment on 21 Oct and 7 Dec (5% each)

Twice during the year (mid-term and end of term), your teammates will assess your contribution to the group by filling out a peer assessment form. You will be assigned the average of these assessments. If after the mid-term assessment, there seems to be a problem I will alert you so you have a chance to improve.

MIDTERM

Made available online on 4 Nov after class (1:30pm). You will have 3 hours to complete it at any point within 12 hours. The midterm is designed to take only 1.5 hours, but I have given you 3 hours to account for interruptions at home.

The midterm will consist of 8 long quotes drawn directly from the readings. For each one, you will identify the author/speaker (1 pt) and the period (1 pt). You will then write a short answer to clarify its context and main points (6 pts), based on lectures and reading discussions.

The midterm may cover any reading before Nov 4. You are welcome to use your notes and readings (using Google will not be helpful, since I am looking for evidence that you have understood what *we* said in lectures and discussion). You will have 12 hours to complete it from the time that it is posted online. DO NOT work on it together. That is considered cheating and will result in an automatic fail.

The midterm must be completed in 3 hours within 12 hours (1:30pm to 1:30am -- e.g. if you log on at 3:30pm you will have until 6:30pm to complete it). This system is designed to give you more flexibility.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Team Teaching Assignments - 5% x 4 = 20% (to be handed in twice)

First set due 21 October. Second set due 7 December.

The purpose of this assignment is, first, to put ask you to think like a teacher in order prompt group discussion. Second, it is meant to offer a chance for you to extend our readings/discussions by incorporating materials you find online, including those that may reflect your broader interests.

Every week, I will post reading questions for you to consider. These questions form the basis of your small team discussion sessions and this assignment. At the beginning of the semester, each team will assign ‘leaders’ for each meeting. Each team member must be assigned to 4 discussions sessions (so there may be more than one ‘leader’ per session). For the 4 weeks you are assigned to be leader, you will be in charge of leading the discussion of the assigned questions. You will also bring something you found online – a newspaper article, a map, an archival document, a film, an image, a blog post, etc. Items should be circulated a bit in advance so everyone can read or listen. If it is long— e.g. a movie or book—feel free to forward just an online summary, Amazon page, film trailer, etc. Since there will be more than one ‘leader’ each week, the leaders can divide up the discussion questions or readings so all are covered. *Even if you are working on the same document or question/theme, however, leaders should work individually.*

The purpose of the online item may be to:

- (a) Offer background about the historical people/place/event covered in the readings
- (b) incorporate a historical perspective/issue not covered in class
- (c) clarify how the theme/idea for that week retains relevance today

Leaders should not do a formal presentation where they talk at the group, but use the item and reading questions to spur discussion. How you do so is up to you. You may focus on comparing/contrasting the text to another one we have read; on how it connects to something you’ve seen on the news recently or to something you are reading in another class. One word of caution: make sure you *contextualize* the reading and the item you’ve chosen (e.g. think about *when, where, why, and by whom* they were created). Feel free to choose items from outside of North America, especially if you are familiar with that history/context, in order to offer a comparative angle.

For the assignment you will hand in: a 400-500 word outline (point form is fine) of your ‘teaching plan’ for the discussion. This should include specific references to the readings (including page numbers for any citations you brought up in discussion). It should also include any themes and questions that you posed to help spur discussion. Please include the online item (or a URL to that item) with a short explanation of why you chose it and how you integrated it into the discussion. **THE KEY TO GETTING FULL MARKS** is to make sure you focus on a specific *idea/theme/question from the lectures and readings*. Do not simply summarize the readings or the online item.

You will hand in two outlines at midterm and end of terms. That way you can get feedback on the first two before doing the last two. That means that each person in the group must be assigned to two discussions before XXX.

2. Independent Paper -- 40%

Proposal 5% due 14 October. Final Paper 35% due 15 December

Peer review (see below)

This is your chance to explore a topic of interest to you that bears some relation to the course. For your paper you must analyze ONE primary source. A primary source is a text that is NOT written by an academic. It could include a historical document, a novel, a newspaper article, a website, an image. Think of the kinds of primary sources we have

been reading and looking at in class. You may choose one or focus on a grouping of related sources (say, newspaper articles about a particular event).

You may not use a source we have discussed in class, but you may use one you used for your Team Teaching Assignment. You may cover a historical or contemporary topic. It does need to be related to North America (Canada or Mexico too!) but you can think broadly about transnational/global themes, if that interests you.

The assignment has three parts. The first two are designed to help you work through the ideas. The third part is the final paper itself.

PROPOSAL

About one page and in point form. I just want to make sure you're on the right track. You must answer the following:

- What is the primary source you will examine?
- What themes will you engage? (This can change but give me a sense of what interests you; **CONNECT these themes to what we've been discussing in this course or will be discussing in the weeks to come.
- What secondary sources have you identified? You must list 3. (see below)
- Optional: your proposed organizational structure

When choosing a primary source, ask yourself if there is a topic or person in the course about which you'd like to read more (e.g. Malcolm X) or a topic that interests you that we aren't covering (e.g. Chinese migrant labour or World War I). Once you have a topic in mind, there are a few ways to identify a good primary source. Try the following:

- Google!
- Academic journals (try search engines like ATLA, EBSCO or JSTOR – type in key words. A good journal to check out is Religion and American Culture. If there is a pertinent article, look at their footnotes. What primary sources are they using?)
- Textbooks on American history or American religion. Most textbooks list primary sources to read. Some are called “Documentary readers” and are made up of a series of primary sources.
- If you want an image, try Google images or art books and art gallery websites.
- Archives' websites (and archives.org) have accessible primary sources too.

PEER REVIEW

This is an opportunity to improve your paper. Giving feedback to someone else also helps build your skills as a writer by requiring you to think about how writing is constructed. There is no mark assigned to this part of the assignment, but I hope everyone in your team will participate. I will hand out assessment sheets beforehand, along with instructions.

Each team member who is participating will randomly select 2 other team members' papers to grade. In other words, each student should, ideally, have 2 others looking at their work (if one does not follow through, you will still have an assessment). Papers must be given to reviewers latest by 30 November. Reviewers must commit to

returning the assessment form within a week (this is a week no matter when the paper is given to you. If on 30 Nov, then you must return the assessment by 7 Dec latest).

PAPER

Your paper should be 2500 words. Over or under by 150 words is fine, but more than that may affect your grade.

To analyze the primary source, you will choose a particular theme or question. (e.g the role of music in African America churches). In order to situate your text and answer the question, you must refer to minimum THREE secondary sources (that is, written by academics about the topic/period/etc). One of your secondary sources can be from our syllabus. Two must be of your choosing.

In order to write a successful paper, please think about the following:

- Situate this text within a historical and cultural framework: what led to its creation? What impact did this text have? How does the author situate him or herself vis-à-vis the issues of the day?
- How does this text engage themes in our class?
- What does this text say about the theme/question YOU are posing? Is it indicative of a trend? Is it an outlier to a broader trend? Focus only on those parts of the primary source that help you prove the point you are trying to make in the paper.

*If you do not know how to access library resources (include online databases), please speak to one of the reference librarians. They hold regular hours to help students – it's their job to help you become a better researcher!

A Note on Format

Please read the following carefully and do not email about citation format. If something is not clear about formats, the answers are online.

All assignments should be written in 12 pt font, Times New Roman, double spaced, normal margins. Source citations can be in any format (in text, footnotes, or endnotes). You must include a List of Works Cited at the end.

I am not picky about citation format but you must keep it consistent. Some examples are below. In your list of works cited you must include AUTHOR, TITLE, PUBLISHER, DATE. The citations in text or in foot/endnotes must include the PAGE of the quote or idea you are citing. If this information is missing you may lose points.

Here's what a citation should look like:

In the text: (Author Last Name, date: page number). (Smith, 1998: 2). If you are referring to an idea (e.g. a central theme in the book) but not a precise page then it's (Smith, 1998).

In your List of Works:

Author, *Title*, Place of publication: Publisher, date. John Smith, *Women and Religion*, New York: Routledge, 1998.

For a chapter: John Smith, "Women and Religion," in ed. Ann Smith, *This is a Book* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 133-55.

If it is a website: Author (or organization), "Title of page/document," *Title of website*. Access date. URL.

John Smith, "Women and Religion," *United Church of Canada*, Accessed 12 Sept. 2012. www.fsdgdgdhdhdhgjj.com/fsdfgd/dff

**Note that you NEED to write the author, title, date of an online source. Do NOT just copy and paste the URL

A Note on Sources

A PRIMARY source is produced by believers, historical figures, etc. It is the material being analysed. A SECONDARY source is written by a scholar, giving context or analyzing a primary source.

The Bible is not a primary or secondary source for the purpose of our class. You can cite it, but it doesn't 'count'.

If you are not sure what all this means before you hand in your final paper proposal, google it or ask the reference desk librarians. The same thing if you do not know how to use online databases on Concordia's library website to access sources. Ask the librarians! They are happy to help.