RLG 5137

North American Religion

Section: U01

Hybrid/Certified

Spring Term 2027

Course Meeting Information

This is a Hybrid/Certified Course, with weekly on campus meetings

Fridays 12:30PM - 3:15PM

Charles E. Perry (PC) 438

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Religion is not going away! In fact, its role in American life is as significant as it has ever been. In this course we will explore religion in the United States of America from colonial times to the present. We'll see what has changed and what has remained basically the same. We will give attention to the rich diversity of religious expressions and religious communities and see how they have interacted with one another. We'll use a variety of tools, including theology, anthropology, phenomenology and sociology to understand and analyze the ways in which religion has functioned in American life. We'll give special attention to (1) religion and politics, (2) cosmology (world views), (3) community, and (4) religious practice. We'll learn how religion has shaped the wider culture of America and, in turn, been shaped by it.

RLG5137 is built on REL3120. This is a hybrid course, and the learning will take place in two components: (1) asynchronous learning activities, and (2) in-class interaction (lecture and discussion). The basic design of the course allows you to learn the historical facts on your own from the textbook, primary source documents, videos, and an illustrated outline of slides, leaving the in-class time for exploration of the deeper meaning and contemporary application of the material.

Your asynchronous work will insure that our class sessions are lively learning opportunities. To insure that you are armed with the basic facts, there will be an online quiz on each week's reading from the textbook. To further prepare you for the in-class session, and you will write a brief online post on a question that you are given (150-300 words), which you will use in the class discussion.

For one of the in-class sessions, you will give a 5-7 minute presentation

on an online religious service, based on detailed notes which you have prepared. Details for this assignment are in Canvas.

Graduate students will extend their exploration of each module with additional material around three themes:

1. **Historiography.** We will move beyond studying history to "doing" history. We will focus on the major debate or debates in each module and inquire about objectivity, causation, power dynamics and other contested issues.
2. **Artificial Intelligence.** We will explore the best uses and the limitations of AI in doing historiographical research. We'll see how far AI can take us in doing preliminary research.

1. **Story.** Beyond the facts about religion lies the human story. It is the story that makes religion come alive for us, and nothing performs this magic like good fiction. We will focus on one novel for each module that brings religion to life. We will ask how the story expands and differs from the perception left by the facts alone. Each student will read two of the novels carefully and will use summaries to prepare for discussions on the other novels.

Textbook and Course Materials

American Religious History

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Amanda Porterfield

Publisher: Wiley

Publication Date: 2002-02-26

Copyright Date: 2002

ISBN 10: 0-470-69281-2

ISBN 13: 9780631223214

Chapters/Pages: Entire book

Religion in American History

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Amanda Porterfield, John Corrigan

Publisher: Wiley Global Research (STMS)

Publication Date: 2010-04-10

Copyright Date: 2010

ISBN 10: 1-4051-6138-8

ISBN 13: 9781405161381

Chapters/Pages: Entire book

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

We will discuss the novels listed below. You will read two of them carefully and lead the discussion on them. You will learn about the others from online sources. You do not need to purchase any of them, unless you wish to do so. They are all readily available through libraries (including ebooks). You may want to have a physical copy of the two novels you are presenting when you are preparing for your presentations.

1. Puritanism – *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
2. Salem Witchcraft -- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
3. Native American Religion -- *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon

Silko

4. Religion and the Founding of the US -- *Rabble in Arms* by Kenneth Roberts
5. Edwards*: Spider in a Tree* by Susan Stinson
6. Catholicism in America -- *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather
7. Awakenings – *The Circuit Rider* by Edward Eggleston
8. Religion and Slavery – *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe
9. Judaism in America – *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok
10. Global Religions -- *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse
11. Religion and Politics -- *Advise and Consent* by Allen Drury
12. Theological Liberalism -- *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson
13. Conservative Evangelicalism -- *Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Analyze how religion, politics and the wider culture have interacted throughout American history, each influencing the others.
- Identify how the major religious expressions in the US have thought about God(s), the world and human beings, and how this has motivated their behavior.

- Imagine the life of the various religious communities that have lived in the territory of the USA.
- Appreciate the ways that people in the USA have practiced their religion, including rituals, customs and social interactions.
- Master skills necessary for living with religious diversity, including suspending judgment and responding sensitively.

Expectations of this Course

This is a hybrid course, meaning half of the coursework will be conducted in class, on campus, with the remaining half conducted out of class, including in this Canvas course. Expectations for performance in hybrid courses are the same as in a traditional course. Hybrid courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started page** located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is

compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;

- **interact online** with the instructor and peers;
- **review and follow the course calendar** and weekly outlines;
- **Attend class sessions** in person as scheduled;
- **log in** to the course 3 **times** per week;
- **respond to discussions** by the due date specified;
- **respond to emails** within 2 **days**;
- **submit assignments** by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- **log in** to the course 6 **times** per week;
- **respond to emails** within **24 hours**;
- **grade assignments** and/or provide feedback within 2 **days** of the assignment deadline.

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Preparation Posts

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Discussion and Preparatory Post Expectations

- Answer the question posed in the Discussion Preparation assignment in a way that will make a valuable contribution to a class discussion on this topic. You may actually read your post as part of the class discussion, but it is hoped that the in-class discussion will move beyond simply reading prepared posts as our ideas spur one another to deeper reflection.
- Posts must be made before the start of the class. They will remain available for viewing by the class until the final exam as a reminder of some of the points raised in discussion.
- For each discussion, the post will count as 50% of the grade and actual in-class discussion participation will count for 50%.Consult the Discussion Preparatory Post rubric for grading criteria and ratings.
- The weight of the 10 discussion assignments will be 35% of your course grade, so be sure and give proper attention to this aspect of the course.
- The next discussion preparation assignment will be available after each class. This means you will have only one week to complete the preparatory post, so that the material will be fresh in your mind for the discussion.
- Your grade for each discussion session will be calculated within two days of the discussion.

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet.

- Since you are responsible to master the basic facts (events, names, dates, etc.) during your non-class learning time, there will be a quiz for every chapter in the textbook.
- You may use the illustrated slide deck to help you master the material in the textbook.
- Each quiz is 10 questions and the time limit is 20 minutes.
- The 16 quizzes, taken together, will consist of 15% of your course grade.
- You will be able to see the results of your quiz and you can use the quiz for review for the midterm and final exams.
- Your quizzes will be graded automatically.

Online Religious Service Observation

- Each student will observe online the religion service of a religion with which they are unfamiliar.
- I have chosen to make this an online visit since there may be ethical problems with live attendance in a religious service

by someone who is not a sincere participant.

- Each student will present a report of their online visit based on detailed notes in one of our in-class sessions. We will create our schedule during the first week of class.
- Please consult the instructions for detailed note-taking and the grading rubric in the assignment description.

Historiography, AI and Story

- For each module you will use AI to prepare for a discussion on this question: "If I were a historian, what would I write next to contribute to the understanding of the history we have studied in this module." We'll see how far AI can take us in doing preliminary research.
- For each module, we will discuss one novel. We will ask how the story expands and differs from the perception left by the facts alone. Each student will read two of the novels carefully and will use summaries to prepare for discussions on the other novels.

Grading

Sample Tables

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Weight
Quizzes	16	10	10%
Discussion and Prep Post	10	10	20%
Online Service Observation	1	100	10%
Midterm Exam	1	150	20%
Final Exam	1	150	20%
Historiography and Story Discussion	13	100	20%
Total		**—**	**100%**

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
B-	80 to 82
C+	77 to 79
C	73 to 76
C-	70 to 72
D+	67 to 69
D	63 to 66
D-	60 to 62
F	0 to 59

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

Module 1 - Where We Are Now

In this module we'll get an overview of the religious situation in America to

Videos: Pew Survey, Christian Nationalism, James Talarico, American Pope, Zohran Mamdani

Historiography: Surveys of American religious history

Module 2 - Religion & Politics (1492-1692)

In this module we will begin our investigation of how religion and politics h

Readings: Textbook: Chapter One; Documents: John Winthrop

Videos: Dr. Foltz, Ronald Reagan

Quiz: Chapter 1

Discussion: Speech on the Arbella

Historiography, and Story: *The Scarlet Letter*

Module 3 - Cosmology (1492-1692)

In this module we will look at the clash of worldviews that characterized th

Readings: Textbook: Chapter 2; Documents: Hutchinson, Mather;

Video: Witch Hunt in Salem

Quiz: Chapter 2

Discussion: Witchcraft in Salem

Historiography, and Story: *The Crucible*

Module 4 - Community and Practice (1492-1692)

In this module we will focus on the cultural clash between European and Native American communities and religions and reflect on the implications for our present religio-cultural realities.

Reading: Textbook: Chapters 3 and 4; Documents: Williams

Videos: Clash in 1634, Black Robe, Native religions, Hassanamesit, Southwest Missions, Hopi

Quizzes: Chapters 3 and 4

Discussion: Native American and European Religion

Historiography, and Story: *Ceremony*

Module 5 - Religion and Politics (1692-1803)

Religion and politics are always intertwined in fascinating and consequential ways. In this module we will see what was unique about the interaction of religion and politics during the period of the founding of this nation.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 5; Documents: Jefferson, de Tocqueville

Video: Whitefield

Quiz: Chapter 5

Discussion: Religion and the Founding of the US

Historiography, and Story: *Rabble in Arms*

Module 6 - Cosmology (1692-1803)

In this module we will look at the diversity of world views held by Americans in the early modern period. An eminent visiting professor will lead us on a deep dive into the mind of one of its most important religious figures.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 6; Documents: Edwards

Videos: Liberalism, Jewish history

Quiz: Chapter 6

Discussion: Led by visiting professor

Historiography, and Story: *Spider in a Tree*

Module 7 - Community (1692-1803)

In this module we will look at the development of a diversity of religious communities and will discuss the issues surrounding Native American revival movements and the arrival of Catholic immigrants in a largely Protestant culture.

Reading: Textbook: Chapter 7; Documents: Handsome Lake

Videos: Catholics, Pre-1960s Catholicism

Quiz: Chapter 7

Historiography, and Story: *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Discussion: Catholicism (Ungraded)

Midterm Exam

Module 8 - Practice (1692-1803)

In this module we will survey the religious practices of the diverse religious communities and give special attention to one of the most important of American religious traditions: revivalist evangelical Protestantism.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 8; Documents: Finney

Videos: Awakenings, Black Church

Quiz: Chapter 8

Discussion: Awakenings

Historiography, and Story: *The Circuit Rider*

Module 9 - Religion and Politics (1803-1898)

In this module we will survey the many ways that religion and politics interacted in life of the American republic, and we will focus on one of the most troubled and troubling: religion and slavery.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 9, Document: Slavery and the Bible

Videos: Slavery, Free Blacks

Quiz: Chapter 9

Discussion: Slavery

Historiography, and Story: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Module 10 - Cosmology (1803-1898)

In this module we will look at the early clash between traditional religion and the acids of modernity. We will focus on the Jewish tradition as a model of continuity and change.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 10; Documents: Emerson, Wise, Pratt, Addams

Video: Jewish Life

Quiz: Chapter 10

Discussion: Judaism

Historiography, and Story: *The Chosen*

Module 11 - Community and Practice (1803-1898)

This module will survey the remarkable innovation and change in the communities and religious practices of this period of "American Empire" and will focus on the birth and the arrival of religions new to America.

Reading: Textbook, Chapters 11 and 12; Documents: Lee, Dickenson, Eddy

Video: Swami Vivekananda

Quizzes: Chapters 11 and 12

Discussion: New Religions

Historiography, and Story: *Siddhartha*

Module 12 - Religion and Politics (1898-Present)

This module will explore the diversity of political expression of religion in America. It will have special relevance to understanding the way that religion functions in America today.

Textbook: Chapter 13; Documents: King, Malcolm X, Murray, Reed

Videos: Taylor, Wagner

Quiz: Chapter 13

Discussion: Politics on the Right and Left

Historiography, and Story: *Advise and Consent*

Module 13 - Cosmology (1898-Present)

This module will explore deeply the clash of religious and secular world views that have defined the American spiritual scene, giving rise to both innovation and fundamentalist reaction. Hopefully, it will give us some solid tools for analyzing and participating in what can often become passionate debates.

Reading: Textbook, Chapter 14; Documents: James, Scofield, Machen, Black Elk, Ginsberg, Daly

Videos: Inherit the Wind (Trailer), Daly

Quiz: Chapter 14

Discussion: Theological Liberalism and Conservatism

Historiography, and Story: *Gilead*

Module 14 - Community and Practice (1898-Present)

This module will bring us up-to-date on the community life and practices in America amid the dizzying array of changes related to immigration, urbanization, suburbanization, commercialization, and globalization. We'll also discuss what we've learned about religion in today's America though our five-hundred-plus sweep of American religious history.

Reading: Textbook, Chapters 15 and 16; Documents: Day, Kaplan, Silko, Ruether, Frankiel, Epstein

Videos: Tribes with Catholicism, Jainism, Fajr

Quizzes: Chapters 15 and 16

Historiography, and Story: *Peace Like a River*

Module 15 - Review and Final Exam

Final Exam

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using the Canvas Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within 2 **days**.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies &

Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability,

marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.