

# Religion in America: Historical & Contemporary Perspectives

Edward R. Gray, Ph.D., instructor

REL 209

**MW, 4:15 – 5:30** (note time adjustment)

**103 WHITE HALL** (note change from course atlas)

Office hours by appointment, 404 727 2270 (Home: 404 815 7196)

## Teaching & Learning Goals:

Class members will demonstrate having acquired (1) a factual knowledge of historical events, trends, and themes in U.S. religious history; (2) competence in analyzing changes and continuities in the role of religion and religions in the U.S. from the perspectives of:

- popular culture
- state and politics
- institutionalization and organizational forms of religion and their relation to social structures and cultural forces
- pluralism and diversity of moral as well as religious beliefs and practices

Required Texts: (Referenced in the syllabus by author's last name.)

Butler, J. (1990). Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People

Corbett, J. M. (2000). Religion in America.

Harding, S. F. (2000). The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics.

Moore, R. L. (1994). Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture.

Tweed, T. A. (1997). The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912.

*(These are the only required texts; several recommended texts at the bookstore are misidentified as required.)*

In addition, there are several items on Euclid Electronic Reserve referenced as "READER" and, a course website, <http://courseinfo.wcw.emory.edu/courses/REL209/>

Please enroll *immediately* by following the simple instructions.

## Demonstration of Learning

Members of the class demonstrate their learning through both informal and formal assignments. The final course grade consists of three parts. Please choose your option by **January 31, 2001**.

**1. Active engagement** with assigned readings, occasional directed writing assignments (in and outside of class), classroom presentations and discussions, and panel discussions. (20%)

**2. Interpretative essay** on the role of religion in the U.S. (40%)

*Choose either 3 or 4*

**3. Research and Field trip, Savannah, GA.** (40%)

**4. Comprehensive examination** (40%)

## Evaluation of Learning

**Active Engagement.** You will formally demonstrate your active engagement several times through participating as a principal member of a panel discussion. Each week (usually on the second session of the week devoted to the topic, typically Wednesdays), a panel will discuss the assigned readings. The first

segment of the discussion will be among panelists. The second segment will invite broader participation. Panels are composed of three or four principals (scheduled in advance) and a moderator (assigned randomly on the day of class). Principals must post an outline of at least two readings on the course website by 8pm on the day before their panel (typically Tuesdays). Principals are encouraged to collaborate to plan their panel. Outline format for submission to the website:

- Summary of Thesis:
- Key theoretical/ideological presuppositions of the author
- Material facts used as evidence to support the thesis.
- Your questions or concerns raised by the reading. Specifically consider what would be evidence against the thesis offered. How does the thesis tie into principal course themes?

**Interpretative essay** on the role of religion in the U.S. over time. (40%). You will write an interpretive essay of 6-8 pages that demonstrates a factual knowledge of key historical events and trends in U.S. religious history and which analyzes changes and continuities in the role of religion and religions in the U.S. You will emphasize two of the following broad perspectives: popular culture; state and politics; institutionalization and organizational issues; or pluralism and diversity in your essay. You must attend to its development throughout the colonial, early national, ante-bellum, Victorian, and modern periods covered in the course. **ALL CLAIMS MUST BE SUPPORTED BY REFERENCE TO READINGS by the appropriate footnote (do not use end notes.)**

Essays consists of two parts. The first, due \*\*\*\* is a question. This question is what you answer in your final essay. Formulating a question should begin by choosing a topic of interest to you. Topics are broad areas (thematic, theoretical, or practical), e.g., religion in public schools, evangelism, physical culture and religion. Make sure the topic you choose allows you to fulfill requirements.

Next, begin to interrogate your favored topic. What makes you curious about it? What set of readings related to it was most striking? What about the topic do you want to think through? For example, if you are interested in the religious aspects of leisure and entertainment or the entertaining aspects of religion, you might begin to formulate a question like this, "What were the most important influences in the changing relationship between American religion and popular forms of entertainment?" Or, alternatively, you could explicitly frame your question by challenging or supporting an author's thesis, "If religion is a cultural commodity, as Moore argues, how were different organizational forms of religion attempts to translate religion into new cultural niches?"

- Demonstrate a factual and theoretical command of key historical events and trends in U.S. religious history related to your question.
- Analyze changes and continuities in the role of religion and religions in the U.S.
- Emphasize any two of the following broad perspectives: popular culture; state and politics; institutionalization and organizational; pluralism and diversity.
- Attend to the colonial, early national, ante-bellum, Victorian, and modern periods. Attending to all historical periods does not mean giving equal treatment to all of them. Some might be successfully treated by a single paragraph. However, the subject of your question cannot be limited to a recent phenomena.

Essays are interpretive exercises, not formal research papers. Your essay will be 6-8 pages. It will contain NO errors and have a citation for all claims made. Your learning will be evaluated on your

- Demonstration of command of the *key* fitting course materials. Your essay must be framed by an author's thesis; this will provide the theoretical framework for your essay.
- Grounding in a careful reading of all course text. Your essay must cite all pertinent course materials--including presentations; thus citations are required for all claims (and are excluded from the page limit)

- Logical organization and clarity. Essays should be well written, contain no errors, be well organized, and move from question, to discussion of evidence, to conclusion. (*Tip: The writing of this essay really begins with your second draft!*)

**Field trip to Savannah. (April 1-2, 2001).** Savannah, GA, 250 miles to the southeast, was the first city of the colony of Georgia and contains important historical sites. Students plan a group project around one of five areas of focus.

- Mainline Protestantism
- Black Protestantism
- Roman Catholic
- Jewish
- Other Non-Christian

The format of the project is open (it may include a web page, photo essay, research paper, portfolio.) but will include these elements:

- research, including primary and secondary sources, on your chosen Savannah religious segment
- preparation of a briefing paper before the trip. Includes highlights and chronology of important events related to your focus area or an in-depth exploration of a particular person, event, etc. (Show relation to at least one important course theme)
- arrangement of a site visit(s) during the field trip
- post field trip documentation and report on learning. Due two weeks after return.

**Comprehensive examination** at regularly scheduled examination date.

#### Course Preview

January 17

##### Introduction & Overview

*What is American about U.S. religious history? What is religious about American history?*

January 22, 24

##### U.S. Religious History: Themes

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 1, The European Religious Heritage; Moore, *Selling God*, Introduction

Corbett, Chapter 1; Tweed, Chapter 3, "Esoterics, Rationalists, and Romantics"

READER, from *Christianity*; from *Religion & Politics in America*; from *American Religions and Religion*

January 29, 31

U.S. Religious History II: Theory

Corbett, Chapter 2

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Conclusion: Lincoln and the almost chosen people

READER, from *Democracy in America*

February 5, 7

Colonial Heritage

*The religious idea of America*

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 2, The crisis of Christian practice in America & Chapter 3, Magic and occult

Corbett, Chapter 3, Consensus Protestants

READER, Religious Experience of Jonathan Edwards, Sinners in the hands of an angry God

February 12, 14

Church, state, and society

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 4, The renewal of Christian authority, Chapter 7, A revolutionary millennium? & Chapter 9, Christian power in the American republic, pp. 257-268.

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapter 3: *The end of religious establishment and the beginning of religious politics: the parallel rise of churches and political parties.*

READER, from *Documentary History of Religion in America: James Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance (1785)*; from Bellah, *Civil religion in America*, from *Philadelphia Negro*; from *Documentary History of Religion in America, Judaism: Education*; from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Roman Catholicism: Education*

February 19, 21

Popular Culture & Popular Religion

*The religious nature of culture*

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 6, The plural origins of American revivalism

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapter 2: *The spoken Word, stage performance, and the profits of religious spectacle*

READER, from *Documentary History of Religion in America: C.G. Finney, Revivalism*; from "Gospel Hour: Liminality..." *Amazing Grace & other hymns*

February 26, 28

Early Religious Pluralism

*The expanding marketplace of religious goods*

Corbett, Chapter 9 (pp. 212f)

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapter 5: The market for religious controversy; Chapter 6: Chautauqua and its protective canopy: religion, entertainment, and small-town protestants

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 5, Slavery and the African spiritual holocaust

READER, "From Middle Ground to Underground: Southeastern Indians and the Early Republic"; from "Birth of the Feminist Movement;" from "Power to heal in Haitian Vodou."

March 5, 7

Religious Pluralism in the Marketplace of Culture

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapter 4: *Americans learn to play and religion learns to let them*

Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Chapter 8, Toward the antebellum spiritual hothouse

Corbett, Chapter 7, Christianities that began in the U.S.

March 12-16 Spring break.

March 19, 21

Expanding Pluralism: Old World Religions in America

Corbett, Chapter 11: Hindus and Buddhists

Butler, Chapter 9, Christian power in the American republic, pp. 268f

Tweed, *American Encounter with Buddhism*, Chapter 1 and 2

READER: *Documentary History of Religion in America: Buddhism*; from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Organization*; from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Lesser's Missionary Journeys*; from *Documentary History of Religion in America: John England*

**March 26, 28**

**No class meeting this week**

April 2, 5

Religion, Work, and Media

Corbett, Chapter X, Catholics & Chapter XX, Jews

Tweed, Chapters 4 and 5

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapters 7: Selling religion in the workplace: wage earners and the pressures of marketed morality ; Chapter 8: Religious advertising and progressive protestant approaches to mass media

READER, from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Peace and Prosperity (Acres of Diamonds)*

April 9, 11

The Problem of Modernity

Corbett, Chapter 8, Alternative themes

Tweed, Chapter 6

Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (chapters to be announced)

READER, "Rise of Biblical Criticism" (Albert Schweitzer), from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Philosophy and Religion* (William James); from *Documentary History of Religion in America: the Scopes Trial*; "Social Gospel;" "What Fundamentalism stands for now."

April 16, 18

Adaptation & Change

Tweed, Postscript

Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, (chapters to be announced)

Moore, *Selling God*, Chapter 9: Recent market entries: contemporary evangelicals and purveyors of the new age

READER, "Old Fissure and New Fractures in American Religious Life"

April 23, 24

Change and restoration

Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*, (chapters to be announced)

READER, "Christians Struggle for Civil Rights" (ML King's, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*); from *Documentary History of Religion in America: Liberation/Alienation: Blacks*; "Beginnings of Women's

Liberation in Christianity;" Mary Daly, "The Women's Movement: An Exodus Community;" "Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching & the U.S. Economy"

April 30

Concluding Reflections

Corbett, Chapter 13, Religion as an individual and cultural problem

