RS 7: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN RELIGION

Professor Catherine L. Albanese     MWF, 11:00-11:50 am
Fall 2009                                                     Girvetz 1004

Course Description

This course is a survey of some of the many religions that flourish in the United States and of the people who live them. The course begins where the country began, with Native Americans. Then the course examines the religions of American Jews and Catholics and of white and black Protestants. It introduces new American religions like Mormonism and Christian Science as well as metaphysical faiths like Spiritualism and New Thought. It looks at the coming of different forms of Asian religions into the United States from the late nineteenth century on. It pays attention to present-day religion on both sides of the American spectrum—evangelicalism and the New Age as well as new spirituality. The course emphasizes how each religious path reflects contact with others. In the midst of the diversity, the course suggests that the different American religions have more in common than their followers sometimes think. It discusses how the shared experience of being American constitutes an "invisible" religion in which many, if not most, participate.

Required Texts

Catherine L. Albanese, America: Religions and Religion, 4th ed. (Wadsworth). Course Reader (Grafikart, 6550 Pardall Road, Isla Vista).

Required Exercises

1. **Section Participation** (15% of grade)

   Teaching Assistants for each section will determine particular requirements for section participation.

2. **Midterm Examination** (20% of grade)

   Midterm, on Friday, Oct. 30, will cover lectures, readings, and class discussion up to and including class on Oct. 28.

3. **Final Examination** (25% of grade)

   The final exam will cover lectures, readings, and class discussion from the second half of the course. The exam is scheduled for Friday, December 11th, from 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm.
4. **Paper (40% of grade)**

Research and write a paper on the religious history of one member of your family. The paper should be based on library research on the tradition or traditions in which the member of your family participated (participation may have been enthusiastic, indifferent, or hostile) as well as, if possible, oral history and interviews. Please write a unified and coherent paper in essay form and with endnotes that answers the following questions:

a) What are the main beliefs and practices that have been part of your family member’s history (a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, etc.)?

b) How do they reflect the general outlines of the history of a particular religious tradition in America?

c) Did these beliefs and practices change over the years, and if so in what ways?

d) If there are no changes, how do you explain that situation?

e) If there are changes, how do you explain them?

f) How does or does not the religious belief and behavior of your family member illustrate common themes in American religious history (see chapter 11 of your textbook)?

g) How is the change or lack of change related to your answer to the question above?

**Your paper will be graded on a 100-point scale as follows:**

1) answers questions a-b with clarity and historical depth (20 points);
2) answers questions c-d-e with specific attention to detail (20 points);
3) answers questions f-g with a comprehensive understanding of common themes in American religious history (20 points);
4) produces a study that is approximately 1,800 words (about 7-8--but not more than 10--pages), printed double-spaced, in 12-point font, with standard one-inch margins all around (10 points);
5) is appropriately documented with endnotes following a standard bibliographic format, to be discussed with you by your Teaching Assistant (15 points);
6) includes a bibliography of sources consulted, which contains at least four scholarly print items (meaning university press books, scholarly journal articles, and similar) and which is presented in a standard bibliographic format, to be discussed with you by your Teaching Assistant (15 points).

Please note that papers without any notes or bibliography at all are considered incomplete and will be very seriously downgraded, if still acceptable. Your paper must be submitted by Friday, December 4th, at class time. Late papers will be penalized and may not be accepted.

*N.B. If for any reason this research topic presents a problem for you, please consult your Teaching Assistant for an alternate assignment.*
Class Schedule

N.B. Please bring reading to be discussed to class.

Sept. 25 Orientation.
Sept. 28 What Counts as Religion—in the United States?
Reading: Text, 1-15.

I. MANYNESS: The Original Cast

Sept. 30 Native Americans
Reading: Text, 17-39; Reader #1 (Robert Allen Warrior).

Oct. 2 The Jews
Reading: Text, 40-58; Reader #2 (Michael Lotker).

Oct. 5 The Roman Catholics, I
Reading: Text, 59-67.

Oct. 7 The Roman Catholics, II
Reading: Text, 68-80; Reader #3 (Robert A. Orsi).

Oct. 9 The Protestants, I
Reading: Text, 81-98.

Oct. 12 The Protestants, II
Reading: Text, 98-115.

Oct. 14 The Protestants, III
Reading: Text, 115-33.

Oct. 16 The African Americans
Reading: Text, 134-52; Reader #4 (Albert J. Raboteau).

II. MANYNESS: Newcomers

Oct. 19 The Mormons
Reading: Text, 153-60; Reader #5 (Lucy Mack Smith).
Oct. 21  The Christian Scientists  
Reading: Text, 161-64; Reader #6 (Mary Baker Eddy).

Oct. 23  The Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses  
Reading: Text, 164-70; Reader #7 (Barbara G. Harrison).

Oct. 26  The Community Dwellers: Shakers  
Reading: Text, 170-73; #8 (Charles Nordhoff/Hervey Elkins; Edward Andrews).

Oct. 28  The Community Dwellers: Oneidans and Branch Davidians  
Reading: Text, 173-77; Reader #9 (Tirzah Miller).

Oct. 30  Midterm Examination

Nov. 2  Mystics, Metaphysicians, and Metaphysical Religion  
Reading: Text, 178-84; 192.

Nov. 4  The Spiritualists  
Reading: Text, 184-88; Reader #10 (Clara H. Whitmore).

Nov. 6  The Theosophists  
Reading: Text, 188-90; Reader #11 (Henry Steel Olcott)
Guest Lecturer: Albert Silva

Nov. 9  The New Thinkers  
Reading: Text, 190-97; Reader #12 (Elizabeth Towne).  
Guest Lecturer: Albert Silva

Nov. 11  Veterans’ Day Holiday

III. MANYNESS: Patterns of Expansion and Contraction

Nov. 13  The Eastern Orthodox  
Reading: Text, 199-206.

Nov. 16  The Muslims  
Reading: Text, 206-12; Reader #13 (Malcolm X).

Nov. 18  The Hindus  
Reading: Text, 212-18; Reader #14 (Paramahansa Yogananda).

Nov. 20  The Buddhists
Reading: Text, 218-26; Reader #15 (James William Coleman).

Nov. 23  The New Age and New Spirituality People
        Reading: Text, 227-39; Reader #16 (Shirley MacLaine).

Nov. 25  The Fundamentalists and Evangelicals
        Reading: Text, 239-53; Reader #17 (Charles Colson).

Nov. 27  Thanksgiving Holiday

IV.  ONENESS: The Culture of the Center

Nov. 30  Oneness and Public Protestantism
        Reading: Text, 255-65.

Dec.  2  Civil and Cultural Religion
        Reading: Text, 265-81.

Dec.  4  The Contact Situation
        Reading: Text, 282-99.
        COURSE PAPERS DUE.
        Course Evaluation.

Dec. 11  Final Examination, 12:00 noon-3:00 pm (Friday)

Selected General Bibliography

NB: The following books represent a short list of general surveys and reference volumes that may be useful for further introduction to topics and themes and for researching your paper.


*Other Information*

Students are to supply small-size Scantron sheets, no. 2 pencils, and blue books for midterm and final exams.
The instructor's office is 3001G Humanities and Social Sciences Building. Telephone is 893-3564. E-mail is albanese@religion.ucsb.edu. *N.B. Please do not send attachments. Embed all material in a regular email text file. No papers may be submitted by e-mail.* Office hours are Mondays and Fridays from 1:00 to 2:00 pm.
Students with disabilities who would like to discuss special academic accommodations should contact the instructor.
Plagiarism means presenting the words and ideas of others as one’s own in a written paper. It is a serious offense—a form of stealing—and it will not be tolerated. Evidence of plagiarism is easy to obtain with Internet search engines, and any evidence of plagiarism discovered will result in a written report to the Dean of Students’ office in accordance with university rules. A plagiarized paper will be inadmissible for fulfilling the writing requirement for the course and will result in a grade of F in the course. Also, any evidence of cheating during written exams will be handled stringently and will result in a written report to the Dean of Students’ office and an automatic F for the exam.