

HISTORY 4540, SUMMER 2017, Online Course
RELIGION AND AMERICAN CULTURE: 1945 - PRESENT

INSTRUCTORS:

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will explore some of the diverse currents of religion and American culture over the last half-century, approximately World War II to the present. Students will prepare a substantial research project of 10-15 pp. over the course of the semester and present the results of their work during the latter part of the semester in a formal oral presentation.

READING LIST (available at the UCCS bookstore)

1. David Howard Pitney, *Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History in Documents*. ISBN: 9780312395056
2. Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination*. ISBN: 9780226042800
3. Darren Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity*. ISBN: 9780199927975
4. Su'Ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*. ISBN: 9781479894505
5. J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*. ISBN: 9780062300546
6. Primary documents, films, and websites as noted on the syllabus

COURSE GRADING

Weekly Document Analyses and Reading Responses	350 (50 X 7)
These will be due Weeks 1-7; Week 8 will be your "makeup" week if necessary	
Primary Document Analyses	100 (50 X 2)
Midterm Paper (due no later than July 17)	250
Film Analysis (due no later than July 31)	50
Research Paper/Digital History Project/Oral History	250
Total	1000

Grading Scale:

940 - 1000 = A	900 - 940 = A-	870 - 900 = B+	830 - 870 = B
800 - 830 = B-	770 - 800 = C+	730 - 770 = C	700 - 730 = C-

All weekly reading responses/primary document analyses will be given out on Mondays, and will be due by noon the following Monday. The film analysis can be done any time during the semester prior to July 31; models of how to do film analyses will be given out. The first primary document analysis will be due by the end of Week 4 of the course; the second by the end of Week 7. Full instructions for the research paper/digital history project are given at the end of this syllabus.

This online course will require weekly work and demand your frequent attention, as it is a very intensive summer course. You will not be able to skip weeks and then "make up stuff" at the end; deadlines are firm. Your frequent participation in discussions is required, and grades are given according to that participation – this is the equivalent of class attendance and participation.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

WEEK ONE: June 12-19

Subject: The Cold War and American Religion After World War II

Watch: Introduction video to course, and introduction to Week One

1. Introduce yourselves on the blackboard site (10 extra credit points for everyone)
2. **Readings:**
 - a. “The Religious Response to the Atomic Bomb,”
<http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/uhic/ReferenceDetailsPage/DocumentToolsPortletWindow?displayGroupName=Reference&jsid=0226c56b37260abe7c03ecc74393a793&action=2&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CCX3468301673&u=midd46556&zid=827e5ee1d68dd50375768824875d48e5>
 - b. Grem, *The Blessings of Business*, chapters 1 and 2.
3. **Primary Sources:** Read the excerpt from Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, from weblink available on Blackboard.
4. **Videos:**
 - a. “God in America,” Part V, “The Soul of a Nation,”
<http://www.pbs.org/video/1610764018/>
 - b. **YouTube:** Billy Graham on the Communist Threat:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SpyppSVrmA>
 - c. **YouTube:** Listen to Allen Ginsberg read his poem “America” --
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Orar-V3y5Sk>. Read along with the poem here:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/49305>
5. **Assignment** (due for *everyone* by Monday, June 19th): Besides introducing yourself in the “introductions” link, prepare a response of about 750 words to the following, using the readings and videos for this week: “How did Americans religiously respond to the rise of nuclear weaponry and the threats posed by the Cold War.” Your response should have a *thesis statement* (i.e., an *argument*, not just a statement of information), and your short essay should support that argument with specifics. You must use citations – we’ll post a guide for citations for these reader response essays. You should use material from the Grem reading, from the videos, and from Niebuhr, showing a variety of responses.

WEEK TWO: June 19-26

Subject: American Religion and the Rise of Corporations

Watch: Video introducing the week and the issue of the relationship of religion and business.

1. **Reading:** Grem, *The Blessings of Business*, all.
2. **Primary Source Readings:**

- a. “What Dave Ramsey Gets Wrong About Poverty”:
<http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/11/30/what-dave-ramsey-gets-wrong-about-poverty/>
 - b. Kate Bowler, “Death, the Prosperity Gospel, and Me,” link available on Blackboard site for this week.
 - c. Burwell vs. Hobby Lobby, case summary here:
<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2013/13-354>
3. **Video:** R. G. LeTourneau, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg6dnHUQ85s>
 4. **Assignment:** In about 500 – 750 words (2-3 pages), agree or disagree with the following statement, *making reference to at least three examples from Grem’s book*, and one reference to the recent *Hobby Lobby* case or to the Dave Ramsey readings.

Agree with, disagree with, modify, or otherwise discuss the following statement: “Faith and entrepreneurial skill together have empowered American economic growth and prosperity from the 1930s to the present. In the contemporary world, as legal persons, corporations are entitled to First Amendment rights of religious freedom, and thus may legally discriminate against others for religious reasons.” Post your response on the discussions board, and then respond to *at least* two other students on the discussion board. 40 points for your response, 10 points for responding to another student. You may cite your sources with parenthetical references.

WEEK THREE: June 26 – July 3
Subject: Civil Religion in America

Watch Week Three Video discussing American civil religion

1. **Reading:** Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America”
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uccs.edu/stable/pdf/20028013.pdf>, article also posted to Blackboard
2. **Primary Source:** Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/147/147-h/147-h.htm>, PDF format also posted to Blackboard
3. **Video:** Short YouTube clip from Philip Gorski: “On the American Civil Religion”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAZp6_59DVg
4. **Assignment:**
Part 1: In a new thread on the Week Three Discussion Board and in your own words, describe what you think is “civil religion” in America now, and whether it still fits with Bellah’s classic definition or has changed. Do you think the United States fits Bellah’s “Civil Religion,” or does American civil identity align more with radical secularism? or religious nationalism? Is America any of these? Is America all of these? (40 points)

Part 2: Respond to *at least* two other students on the board. You may agree with, disagree with, or modify the other student’s comment, but in any case focus your intellectual response on *furthering* the class discussion. In other words, “I agree with student X” is not a sufficient response. (5 points per response, 10 points total)

WEEK FOUR: July 3 – July 10

Subject: Religion and the Civil Rights Movement

1. **Reading:** Pitney, *Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s*, all
2. **Primary Sources:**
 - a. Martin Luther King, “[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#),” click on the link on Blackboard and read there.
 - b. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “Statement of Purpose,” 1960, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/protest/text2/snccstatementofpurpose.pdf> (link available on blackboard)
3. **Videos:**
 - a. **YouTube:** Martin Luther King’s last speech, click on link in Blackboard.
 - b. **YouTube:** Debate between Malcolm X and James Farmer, click on link in Blackboard.
 - c. **Film:** *Eyes on the Prize*, Part 3, “Ain’t Scared of Your Jails.”
4. **Assignment: Part 1:** In a new thread on the Week Four Discussion Board, describe what you perceive to be the relationship of religion and the civil rights movement, and consider the following question: who had the more accurate analysis of race and religion in American history, Martin Luther King or Malcolm X? In your answer, make specific reference to *at least* three specific references from the Pitney source reader, one specific reference to *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, one specific reference to the debate between Malcolm X, and James Farmer, and one specific reference to one of the videos. (40 points)

Part 2: Respond to *at least* two other students on the board. You may agree with, disagree with, or modify the other student’s comment, but in any case focus your intellectual response on *furthering* the class discussion. In other words, “I agree with student X” is not a sufficient response. (5 points per response, 10 points total)

WEEK FIVE: July 10 – July 17

Subject: Religion and the “Problem” of the White Working Class

1. **Reading:**
 - a. Vance, *Hillbilly Elogy*, all
 - b. Robert Jones, “The End of White Christian America,” [URL here](#)
2. **Primary Source:** [something here](#)
3. **Film:** *The Apostle*, [URL here](#)
4. **Assignment:**

Midterm Paper due by the 5:00 p.m. on July 21, instructions and topic choices to be given out on Blackboard by early July.

WEEK SIX: July 17 – July 24
Subject: New Age, New Metaphysicals

Watch Week Six video discussing Romanticism, transcendentalism, and American metaphysical spirituality

1. **Reading:** Bender, *The New Metaphysicals*
2. **Primary Source:** Excerpt from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Nature," posted on Blackboard
3. **Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL9S0J8-4k> on Henry David Thoreau
4. **Assignment:**

Part 1: In a new thread on the Week Six Discussion Board, write two to three paragraphs connecting what you know about Romanticism and transcendentalism to Courtney Bender's study of metaphysical spirituality in Cambridge, Mass. How did writer-philosophers like Emerson and Thoreau lay the groundwork for the kind of spirituality Bender discusses in her book? What does this mean for American religious culture? (40 points)

Part 2: Respond to *at least* two other students on the board. You may agree with, disagree with, or modify the other student's comment, but in any case focus your intellectual response on *furthering* the class discussion. In other words, "I agree with student X" is not a sufficient response. (5 points per response, 10 points total)

WEEK SEVEN: July 24 – July 31
Subject: Islam in America

Watch Week Seven video discussing modern American Islam, race, and activism

1. **Readings:** Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*
2. **Primary Source:** Twitter feeds – @BlairImani, @overdramatique, @RajooWeyn, @TheReminders, or @TalibKweli
3. **Assignment:**

Part 1: Select one of the Twitter feeds listed above, or that of another (Twitter-active) Black Muslim activist, and read through a few days' worth of tweets. Think about how this Twitter user shapes their (online) identity around Islam, Blackness, and activism. Khabeer's three contentions in *Muslim Cool* are that 1) Blackness is central to the histories, entanglements, and experiences of U.S. Islam, 2) "Muslim cool" Blackness is a point of opposition to white supremacy and a significant way in which race is marshaled in the work of antiracism, and 3) Any "analysis of contemporary Blackness must contend both with the ways in which it is used to resist the logics of white supremacy and with its complicity in that supremacy." (page 5) In a new thread on the Week Seven Discussion Board, write two to three paragraphs considering how Khabeer's arguments relate to the Twitter feed you read. How do contemporary Black Muslim activists fit into Khabeer's three contentions? (40 points)

Part 2: Respond to *at least* one other student on the board. You may agree with, disagree with, or modify the other student's comment, but in any case focus your intellectual response on *furthering* the class discussion. In other words, "I agree with student X" is not a sufficient response. (10 points)

WEEK EIGHT: July 31 – August 4th

All yours Emilee. Leave them time to do a research paper of some kind. Find some kind of interesting contemporary theme for them to explore.

LIST OF FILMS TO WATCH

Sometime during the semester we will ask you to prepare one short film analysis – this will be due by no later than Monday, July 31. Below is a list of films from which to choose; some are very well known, some are more obscure, but all should be available. Early in the semester, we will post a more specific sheet of instructions for this.

<i>The Apostle</i>	<i>The Exorcist</i>	<i>Selma</i>	<i>Witness</i>
<i>Contact</i>	<i>Moonlight</i>	<i>The Big Lebowski</i>	<i>The Big Lebowski</i>
<i>The Mighty Macs</i>	<i>Let the Fire Burn</i>	<i>Field of Dreams</i>	<i>Doubt</i>
<i>Dogma</i>	<i>Taxi Driver</i>	<i>The Godfather</i>	<i>New York Doll</i>
<i>The Rapture</i>	<i>Safe</i>	<i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i>	<i>Malcolm X</i>
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Holy Ghost People</i>	<i>Devils Advocate</i>	<i>Smoke Signals</i>
<i>Quincenera</i>	<i>Oh God!</i>	<i>Heaven Can Wait</i>	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
<i>The Truman Show</i>	<i>Marjoe</i>	<i>Repo Man</i>	<i>The Edge of America</i>
<i>Yoga Inc.</i>	<i>Gentleman's Agreement</i>	<i>Goodbye Columbus</i>	<i>Beats of the Southern Wild</i>
<i>Eve's Bayou</i>	<i>Donnie Darko</i>	<i>Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus</i>	<i>The Master</i>
<i>The Matrix</i>	<i>Jesus Camp</i>	<i>The Book of Eli</i>	<i>Tongues Untied</i>
<i>Stop the Church</i>	<i>Agnes of God</i>	<i>Leap of Faith</i>	<i>Wise Blood</i>
<i>Tender Mercies</i>	<i>Elmer Gantry</i>	<i>Bless Me Ultima</i>	<i>Lilies of the Field</i>
<i>O Brother Where Art Thou</i>	<i>Fargo</i>	<i>Dr. Strangelove</i>	<i>Gentleman's Agreement</i>
<i>Dead Man Walking</i>	<i>Eyes on the Prize (entire 6-part documentary)</i>	<i>Rosemary's Baby</i>	<i>The Omen</i>
<i>On the Waterfront</i>	<i>Stigmata</i>	<i>The Best Years of Our Lives</i>	<i>God's Army</i>
<i>Miracles from Heaven</i>	<i>Synedoché</i>	Season 4 of <i>The Wire</i>	<i>Goodbye Columbus</i>

DOCUMENT ANALYSES

Each student will be expected to prepare two short (500 – 750) primary document analysis. The first should come from Weeks 1-4 in the course, any document(s) from those weeks. The second should come from Weeks 5-8 of the course, any document(s) from those weeks. You should determine the documents' authorship, background, contents, and impact. You should then *interpret* the meaning of the documents within the larger discussions we are having in this class. As necessary, you may research background information on the documents or its authors to help you interpret the documents for the class. Further information/instructions, and a grading rubric, will be posted on blackboard.

MIDTERM PAPER

The midterm paper will ask you to discuss a variety of course material in a more formal, structured way than the weekly discussion questions. You will be given a variety of topics to choose from, and these will be posted on Blackboard by the end of the first week of July. Rough drafts of your midterms are welcome. Midterm papers will be due no later than July 21.

RESEARCH PAPER/DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Each student will be expected to complete one research paper of about 10 - 12 pp. based predominantly on *primary* sources, on some selected topic of recent American religious history. Your paper should focus on and develop a thesis drawn from and supported by evidence. You may also, if you choose, present your work as a digital history project or as an analysis of an oral history that you conduct with someone; more instructions on that are below.

Research Papers

Topics should be selected in specific consultation with the professors; it's up to you to contact your professor and arrange a meeting, or consult over email. Dr. Harvey's (pharvey@uccs.edu, x4078) office hours are Tuesdays 2-4. Emilee's (eshindel@uccs.edu) office hours are Thursdays 9-12. You should select a topic that is as specific as possible, and one that is researchable – that is, a topic that has a body of primary sources available for you to consult. All papers should be fully referenced (with footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography of sources consulted) done in Chicago style of documentation. If you don't know what that is, consult the Writing Center handouts or get the book *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, available in the bookstore for the History 394 class (also easily available and very inexpensively online).

Digital History Project

Again, topics must be selected in consultation with professors, and must be approved by professors. A digital history project can be a website, blog, or other presentation of research in a digital format. Some students choose to create interactive maps; others create blogs (Wordpress and Blogger are good free platforms) to present their research; others create websites (again, Wordpress is a good option) to document oral histories and interviews that they conduct in the community. Your materials must still be cited appropriately and you will be expected to produce the same amount of research and material that you would find in a traditional research paper. Remember, your topic must be as specific as possible, it must be researchable, and it must be fully referenced. If you have questions about taking your project in this direction, please let us know.

Plagiarism

Warning: Plagiarism results in an automatic F for the course grade, regardless of any previous work you have done for this course. This includes the final paper. Review the "Honor Code" section in the Schedule of Courses. We will be examining papers closely for evidence of plagiarism, and will discuss the concept of plagiarism repeatedly in class. Repeat: Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the course. If you are on record as having plagiarized for another course previously, plagiarism in this course can and will result in your expulsion from the university.