

## **RS4405**

### **Religion in American History**

**1. Course number and title:** RS4405 Religion in American History

Prerequisites

Credits 3 hours

**2. Course Description:** This course rests on the premise that any attempt to understand American history that neglects the role of religion will yield an imperfect, even distorted, image. From the very beginnings of colonization in North America, people with religious convictions shaped the government, the laws, the social mores, and the cultural life of the nation. Although the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment represented a concession to the rampant religious and ethnic diversity of eighteenth-century America, its disestablishment provision has ensured a "free market" of religious expression and, absent government interference, a salubrious religious culture that persists into the twenty-first century.

**3. Course Goals:** Students will complete the course having acquired a broad understanding of and ability to trace the variety of religious experiences that comprise one of the most religious pluralistic countries in the world. By investigating the peculiar religious history of this immigrant nation, they will take away from the course a special appreciation for how religious fervor and toleration have affected U.S. culture and politics.

Specifically, they will consider the history and impact that Puritanism had in England and America. They will chart the course of the planting of early seeds of revival that led to the Great Awakening. They will be able to depict the influences of religion upon social reform, including feminism, civil rights, and urbanization, in the United States. They will examine the roles that Catholicism and Judaism have played in the development of religious toleration and plurality in a predominantly Protestant culture and evangelical subculture.

**4. Course Learning Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of the course subject matter by being able to:

1. Formulate how the pressures of time and conditions in the New World resulted in an ethic of industry and showing oneself approved within the community;
2. Describe how American Protestants cycle of reform, probity, and declension, became secularized into a social politic;
3. Identify the factors that resulted in religious education, fervor, individualism and social renewal becoming a fundamental part of this emergent nation's infrastructure,
4. Explain how these religious themes produced the political values of voluntarism, or individual rights, and the free market of religious beliefs and its counterpart toleration;
5. Analyze how 19th century political conditions influenced religious doctrine and responses of both Pre-millennialist "isolationism" and the Social Gospel Movement's social "engagement" and their endurance as two distinct strains of American "morality."
6. Track and explain how Catholic assimilation was a gradual process of becoming as "American" as the next (Protestant) person; and how that process produced "American" as distinct from other Catholics.
7. Describe how, as opposed to American Catholics and despite its long residence in the New World, Judaism's challenge is predominantly an internal question of whether and how to assimilate.

8. Account for the two essentially American Black political movements ( the Civil Rights and the Nation of Islam) that arose in part as reaction to and in part as a result of the American religious experience;
9. Compare and contrast the discriminatory practices against American Blacks and American Catholics and how each suffered in its own peculiar way from either being within the American Protestant community or outside of it;
10. Historically frame American evangelism and its two distinct but sometimes overlapping spin-offs protestant fundamentalism and the “religious right.”

#### **5. Course Concepts:**

1. Puritanism in Tudor and Stuart England; Coming to the New World; Puritan notions of salvation; the Godly Society; declension and heresy;
2. Context of the revival; revival at Northampton; George Whitefield, catalyst; religion, social, and political effects of the Great Awakening;
3. From Awakening to revolution; disestablishment of religion; three Voices; separation of Church and State;
4. The Second Great Awakening; constructing the Kingdom of God in America; the utopian impulse;
5. Colonial Women; women and "virtue"; the "feminization" of American religion; the protestant household;
6. Embattled orthodoxy; the challenge of immigration; re-thinking the millennium; the Social Gospel;
7. Immigrant church; survival in a protestant context; becoming American; Vatican II and beyond;
8. An ancient faith in the New World; the varieties of American Judaism; assimilation or particularity;
9. The "magnolia myth" and the elusive search for justice; religion and civil rights; Nation of Islam; and
10. Azusa Street Revival; The Fundamentals; the Scopes Trial and the making of the evangelical subculture; Billy Graham; the rise of the religious right.

#### **6. Required Texts:**

Balmer, Randall. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*. 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). ISBN: 0195131800.

Gaustad, Edwin S. *Church and State in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). ISBN: 019510792

Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989). ISBN: 0300050607

Marsh, Charles. *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). ISBN: 0691029407

Morgan, Edmund S. *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965). ISBN: 0801490413

Winston, Diane. *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). ISBN: 0674003969

#### **7. Recommended Reading: TBA**

#### **8. Additional Resources (see “Resources” in Izio)**