

Religion in America (Summer 2007, 01:050:300 H1)
Matthew Roth, Instructor
MTWTh 12:00-1:50 p.m. • Hardenbergh Hall, Room B1
<https://sakai.rutgers.edu>

Description

This course will examine the diversity of the American religious experience and the impact of American spiritual beliefs on politics, history and culture. While the first half of the course will give a loosely chronological approach to the development of American religion up to the twentieth century, the second half will explore a variety of themes, including the changing interpretations of the First Amendment, the roots of the New Age movement in Theosophy, the ongoing battle between Darwinism and Creationism, and the connections between religion and dieting (and self-help more generally). Interspersed will be case studies of specific religious groups: the Amish, the Mormons, Black Muslims and Sikhs. Readings will include historical and sociological articles, as well as three (short) books focused on personal narratives (*The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, *Holy the Firm* and *Strangers and Neighbors*). Two days will also be devoted to watching and discussing television shows (*Touched by an Angel* and *Joan of Arcadia*).

Requirements

Grades will be determined by two tests, one 5-7 page paper and class participation. Each exam (together 40% of the final grade) will consist of five IDs (out of seven) and one essay question. The paper (40% of final grade) will compare/contrast at least two of the three books assigned in the course, using as many other readings as are useful. Class participation (20% of final grade) will consist of discussion of each day's reading assignment and a brief oral presentation for one or more of the "community studies."

Readings

The nine articles are available on the Sakai web site at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>. To access: 1. On the upper right, log in using your Eden ID and password. 2. If you are on the class roster, you will automatically have a tab for the course (next to My Workspace). 3. If not, click on "Membership on your "Workspace" tab and scroll down to 01:050:300 H1 and click on "Join." 4. On the course tab, click on "Resources" to find the articles. 5. Click on "Syllabus" to see the syllabus, and so on.

The three books are available at NJ Books, 108 Somerset Street (near Easton), (732) 828-7401. The textbook counter is in the back.

Schedule

Week One

Monday, July 9 – Introduction

Tuesday, July 10 – Lecture: Native American Religion • Discussion: Article 1, Michael McNally, "Religion and Culture Change in Native North America" (14 pages).

Wednesday, July 11 – Lecture: Anglicans • Discussion: Article 2, Arthur Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parson" (15 pages).

Thursday, July 12 – Lecture: Puritans • Discussion: Community 1, The Amish

Week Two

Monday, July 16 – Lecture: African American Religion • Discussion: Book 1, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (80 pages).

Tuesday, July 17 – Lecture: The First Great Awakening • Discussion: Article 3, Ava Chamberlain, “Jonathan Edwards on the Relation between Hypocrisy and the Religious Life” (15 pages).

Wednesday, July 18 – Lecture: Revolution and the Second Great Awakening • Discussion: Article 4, Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Over-Soul” (10 pages).

Thursday, July 19 – Lecture: Reform, Abolition and the Civil War • Discussion: Community 2, The Mormons.

Week Three

Monday, July 23 – Lecture: American Christmas • Discussion: Book 2, Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (80 pages).

Tuesday, July 24 – Lecture: The Victorian Era • Discussion: Article 5, Leigh Eric Schmidt, “The Easter Parade” (16 pages).

Wednesday, July 25 – Lecture: Cities, Immigrants and the Social Gospel • Discussion: Review for Midterm.

Thursday, July 26 – **Midterm Exam.**

Week Four

Monday, July 30 – Lecture: Religious Freedom and the First Amendment • Discussion: Book 3, Maria Poggi Johnson, *Strangers and Neighbors* (166 pages).

Tuesday, July 31 – Lecture: Seeker Religion • Discussion: Article 6, William James, “The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness” (20 pages).

Wednesday, August 1 – Lecture: Creationism • Discussion: Article 7, Howard J. Van Till, “When Faith and Reason Cooperate” (15 pages).

Thursday, August 2 – Lecture: Peace and Social Justice • Discussion: Community 3, The Black Muslims.

Week Five

Monday, August 6 – Lecture: Dieting and Religion • Discussion: Article 8, Michelle Lelwica, “Losing Their Way to Salvation” (15 pages).

Tuesday, August 7 – Media Presentation and Discussion: *Touched By An Angel*.

Wednesday, August 8 – Media Presentation and Discussion: *Joan of Arcadia*.

Thursday, August 9 – **Paper Due**, Lecture: Pluralism, Discussion: Community 4, The Sikhs.

Week Six

Monday, July 23 – Lecture: Apocalypse • Discussion: Article 9, Amy Frykholm, “The Gender Dynamics of the *Left Behind* Series” (15 pages).

Tuesday, July 24 – Review for Final Exam.

Wednesday, July 25 – **Final Exam.**