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# RS307

## Religion in America

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Fall 2017  
Online

Instructor: Brian Clearwater  
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Office: Zoom Online  
Office Hours: [Tuesday 5-6 pm](#)

### Overview

Students will study the influence of diverse religious traditions on the formation of American society and the adaptations made by religions in the context of the United States. We will consider the role of race and religion in the founding of the American republic and how visual representations of Christ have shaped US political identity.

### Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will explain and reflect critically on the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in the historical development of religions in the United States from the founding period until the present.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts within which American religious institutions were created.
3. Students will be able to recognize the influence of religion on contemporary American political institutions and politics, culture and society.
4. Students will be able to describe the role of religion in the shaping of American concepts of race, gender, and national identity.
5. Students will use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of American religious expression orally and in essays.

### Required Books:

*The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America.* Edward Blum and Paul Harvey. UNC Press, 2012.

*One Nation, Under Gods: A New American History.* Peter Manseau. Back Bay Books, 2015

## Requirements

This is a writing intensive course. In addition to a Midterm and Final Term paper, you will complete regular exploratory writing assignments to deepen your thinking and engagement with the course material, and to develop your writing. You may accumulate this exploratory writing, and your discussion posts, into the body of your term paper.

For the Family Tree project, students will conduct interviews and research their family's experience of religion in the territory now known as the U.S., whether native or immigrant. 5 pages.

Canvas Discussion Boards: There are 40 students in this class. You will be split up into eight even peer groups to participate together online. You are responsible for reading the discussion posts of everyone in your peer group and responding each week according to the instructions.

There will be short content quizzes given online throughout the semester to insure you are comprehending the reading. Typically, they will be three to four questions with a ten minute time limit. Quizzes must be completed by end-of-day on Sunday of the week they are assigned.

## Evaluation

Family Tree Project	15%
Quizzes	10%
Discussions/Explorations	30%
Midterm Essay	20%
Term Paper	25%

## Grades:

Letter grades correspond to the points earned during the semester, based on the following scores:

94 or above = A	74-76 = C
90-93 = A-	70-73 = C-
87-89 = B+	67-69 = D+
84-86 = B	64-66 = D
80-83 = B-	60-63 = D-
77-79 = C+	59 or below = F

## Course Structure

All students registered for this course must have access to and utilize CSUN's **Canvas** system for online classes. Access is available by logging onto [canvas.csun.edu](https://canvas.csun.edu).

Students must have access to their my.csun.edu e-mail address, since all communications from the Instructor will be directed to your CSUN e-mail address.

Generally you will receive an email from me on Mondays with instructions for the week. Weekly assignments such as Discussion posts are due by end-of-day Sunday unless otherwise specified. Being an upper-division Humanities course, the reading and writing load for this course is heavy. You should plan to spend *at least* six hours per week on the assignments, recognizing that some times you will need to read the material more than once in order to digest it. Manage your time well.

## Respect for Diversity:

Respectful discussion and inquiry are at the heart of the academic enterprise. Meaningful and constructive dialogue requires mutual respect, willingness to listen, and tolerance for opposing points of view. Classroom and online discussions, like any academic discourse, should follow university norms of civility and effective communication. Debates should challenge ideas – not individuals who hold opposing views.

## Student Support Resources:

**Division of Student Affairs:** If you experience a family emergency or an overwhelming situation of any kind, the staff at Student Affairs is there to support and help you navigate accommodations you may need with your classes or the University. They are your advocates. You can contact find out more at <http://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/students>

**University Counseling Services** are available to students with medical and mental health concerns. Don't hesitate to make use of the support provided to you! <http://www.csun.edu/counseling>  
If you want to talk to a counselor, walk in to Bayramian 520 and ask. For urgent care assistance after hours, please call (818)677-2366, option 3 or visit the [urgent care](#) page for more information.

## Disability Services

Students with disabilities are welcome in this course! If you need any accommodation, please contact me to discuss ways you can succeed in this course. Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office can help you obtain documented accommodations through testing and other services. If

you are already registered with DRES, please share your accommodation letter with me soon so that we can facilitate your success in this course.

Any student who experiences physical or mental impairments should contact the DRES office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD) to learn about available services and support.. The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2054. More information is available at <https://www.csun.edu/dres>

### Plagiarism/Cheating

The CSUN Religious Studies Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, honesty, and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. **Anyone caught cheating or helping someone else cheat will receive an F on the assignment and will be subject to disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion.**

For more information of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 614-615 of the 2010-2012 CSUN catalog. **Remember, too, that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws.** Passing off this information as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

For research support, please contact Susanna Eng-Ziskin, the Subject librarian for the Religious Studies Department by phone at 818-677-4679 or by email at [susanna.eng@csun.edu](mailto:susanna.eng@csun.edu)

## Tentative Schedule and Readings:

Week	Date	Topic and Assignment
1	Aug 30	Russ McCutcheon, “What is the Academic Study of Religion?” Gary Laderman, “The Truth About Religion” Pew Research Center’s <a href="#">Report on America’s Changing Religious Landscape</a>
2	Sept 4	Labor Day Peter Manseau, <i>One Nation Under Gods</i> , p. 3-27
3	Sept 11	Blum & Harvey, <i>The Color of Christ</i> p. 1-24 Lee Irwin, “Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance”
4	Sept 18	Manseau, ch. 4-5 Blasphemy and the Salem Witch Trials Watch film: <i>God in America</i> , episode 1: “A New Adam”
5	Sept 25	Manseau, ch. 6-7 Watch film: <i>God in America</i> , episode 2: “A New Eden”
6	Oct 2	Blum & Harvey, ch. 3 Early Republic Manseau ch. 11 Muslim Slaves
7	Oct 9	Blum & Harvey, ch. 4 Manseau, ch. 13: A Tale of Two Prophets
8	Oct 16	Blum & Harvey, ch. 5 Al Raboteau, “African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel” Watch film: <i>God in America</i> , episode 3: “A Nation Reborn”
9	Oct 23	Blum & Harvey, ch. 6 White backlash Midterm Essay
10	Oct 30	Manseau, ch. 14-15 New Immigrants
11	Nov 6	Veteran’s Day Blum & Harvey, ch. 7
12	Nov 13	Blum & Harvey, ch. 8 Civil Rights
13	Nov 20	Thanksgiving Blum & Harvey, ch. 9
14	Nov 27	Manseau, ch. 17 Scientology, New Age
15	Dec 4	Edward Flores Orozco, <i>God’s Gangs</i> ch. 3-4
	Dec 11	Term Paper Due

## General Education Goal

Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

## General Education Student Learning Objectives, Arts and Humanities:

1. Students will explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures.
2. Students will analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Students will demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Students will be able to use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Students will learn to describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

### Writing Intensive (GE Designation WI)

Goal: Students will develop their abilities to express themselves and the knowledge they have obtained through practicing various forms of writing within different disciplinary contexts. Writing intensive courses will build upon the skills gained in the Analytical Reading and Expository Writing section of Basic Skills. In each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling a minimum of 2500 words.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;
2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;
3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;
4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;
5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;

6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate.