**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS: RST 307**

**RELIGION IN AMERICA**

**Spring 2016**

COURSE SECTION: Mon & Wed 11:00a-12:15p in SH 314

PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, Ph.D.

OFFICE/HOURS: Santa Susanna 418, x 6875, on MW 12:30-1:45 & F 9:00-10:45

FACULTY EMAIL: rrodman@csun.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will learn both about the history and incredible diversity of religious forms of expression in the U.S., but also will learn about the imbrication of religion with so-called secular forms of American life: gender, politics, economics, health, and society. This course fulfills both departmental and General Education student learning outcomes (GE S2; see SLOs, below). This course is a **GE Writing Intensive (WI)** course, and in each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling aminimum of 2500 words.

II. TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED MATERIALS

**Texts for Purchase**

* David Hackett, ed., *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*, 2nd ed (Routledge, 2003), ISBN: 978-0415942737. NOTE: Please get the correct edition; older editions will not have the same materials.
* In addition, I will be posting links to MANDATORY materials on our course Moodle page.

III. COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Familiarity with Moodle**: Because most of your writing will be submitted electronically, you must be capable in Moodle. If you have trouble or have never used Moodle before, you should access the information and instructions about Moodle on: <http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/>. If you need further assistance, be in touch with me.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation in the course are mandatory.

**Office/Hours:** Santa Susanna 418, x 6875, on MW 12:30-1:45 & F 9:00-10:45

**Written Work:** This is a writing-intensive class. You will generate at least 2500 words in written assignment over the course of the term. All assignments, whether forum postings or essays, must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but your writing must also serious reflection on the assigned reading. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the Writing Program at CSUN’s Learning Resource Center, Room 408, Bayramian Hall, 818-677-2033 or go to: <http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html>.

**Deadlines:** All papers/assignments must be turned in on Moodle on the date listed. Late work will be docked a full letter grade beginning immediately after the deadline. Failure to show up on the days of presentation will mean forfeiting your ability to present and all of the points that go with it.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course.Plagiarism is one form of cheating, but not the only one. Other examples include “borrowing” stealing, buying or otherwise procuring papers and exams, having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit, or “double-dipping,” in which you turn in substantially unchanged work from another class. The first instance of cheating will result no credit for the assignment; any subsequent violation will result in expulsion from the course and follow up with the Dean’s office.

**Special Accommodations**: If you have a documented learning disability and/or a physical disability and need special accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please make sure the instructor is informed. I will happily collaborate with you.

**Contact with the Professor:** My office hours are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to contact me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions!

IV: ASSESSMENT (POINT SYSTEM)

10 POINTS FOR ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Attendance is mandatory and I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, though I appreciate being informed about any absences. 0-1 absence = 10 points; 2-3 absences = 9 points; 4 absences – 8 points; 5 absences = 7 points; 6-7 absences = 6 points; 8 absences = 5 points; 9 or more absences = 4 points; 10 or more absences = 0 points. Partial points may be taken off for being late, leaving early, or using cell phones and etc. in class.

80 POINTS for ESSAYS

10 POINTS for SHOW AND TELL PRESENTATIONS (2 x 5 points)

**Total: 100**

**Letter Grade Allocation**

93-100 A

90-92 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

73-76 C

70-72 C-

60-69 D

NB: I DO NOT ROUND UP

V. SCHEDULE

*NB: All the readings will be provided as links on Moodle unless it is a reading from the Hackett volume. Needless to say, you should read it thoroughly and thoughtfully BEFORE you come to class. It will benefit you to print and bring the readings to class. Since you will be doing a lot of writing in class, being able to refer to the text is of utmost help and will mean less homework.*

**Module 1 Jan 25-Feb. 14 Defining Our Terms What is Religion – and how do we study it?**

READ:

* 10 Things Every College Student Should Know About Religion
* W.C. Smith, Introduction: The Meaning and End of Religion (pp. 7-18)
* Russ McCutcheon, What is the Academic Study of Religion
* Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience, Intro
* Mallory Nye, Religion, The Basics, Chap. 1 & Hackett, Introduction to 1st and 2nd eds.

DO: Essay #1 due before midnight on Feb. 12th

**Module 2 Feb. 15-28 What is America? Is there an American religion? Is there a common American**

**culture?**

READ:

* Feb. 15 Karina Martinez, “What Does American Actually Mean?”
* Feb. 17 NO CLASS ON FEB 17th; Diana Eck, “From Diversity to Pluralism” reading
* Feb. 22d “Old Fissures and New Fractures in American Religious Life,” in Hackett
* Feb. 24th “Is there A Common American Culture?” in Hackett

DO: Essay #2 due before midnight on Feb. 26th

**Module 3 Feb. 28-March 13th Is the US a Christian country? Was it founded as a Christian country?**

READ:

* Feb. 29, Kevin Kruse, “A Christian Nation? Since When? And Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim"
* March 2 “A World of Wonders,” in Hackett)
* March 7, ACLU “Your Right to Religious Freedom”
* March 9, Geoffrey Stone, “Kim Davis and the Freedom of Religion” and “Is Kim Davis Defending Religious Liberty?”

DO: Essay #3 due before midnight on March 11th

**Module 4 March 14-20th Spotlight on Spiritual But not Religious**

READ:

* March 14 Mark Oppenheimer, “Examining the Growth of Spiritual But not Religious”
* March 16 “Is It Better to Be Religious Than Spiritual?”

DO: Essay #4 due before midnight on March 18th

SPRING BREAK

March 21-27

**Module 5 March 28-April 10 Cultural Appropriation & Consumerism**

Read

* March 28th “Spirituality for Sale” in Hackett
* March 30th BYO example – show and tell
* April 4th “The Easter Parade,” in Hackett
* April 6th BYO example – show and tell

DO: Essay #5 before midnight on April 8

**Module #6 The Civil Rights Movement**

**April 11- 17**

READ:

* April 11th “Jim Crow, the KKK and Major Moments in the Civil Rights Movement”
* April 13th, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

DO: Essay #6 due before midnight on April 15th

**Module #7 April 18-May 8 California Dreaming**

* April 18th “Golden State of Grace”
* April 20th “Take it Outside,” and “Mapping a New Religion”
* April 25 & 27 *Finding God in the City of the Angels*
* May 2-4 BYO examples – show and tell

DO: Essay #7 due before midnight on May 6th

**Module #8 Dealer’s Choice**

**May 9-15th**

* Ripped from the Headlines – Readings TBA

DO: Essay #8 due before midnight on Friday May 13th

VI. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

**Religious Studies Departments SLOs**: Through active participation in this course, students are expected to accomplish the following:

• 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.

• Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts within which American religious institutions were created.

• Students will be able to recognize the influence of religion on contemporary American political institutions and politics, culture and society.

• Students will be able to describe the role of religion in the shaping of American concepts of race, gender, and national identity.

• Students will use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of American religious expression orally and in essays.

**General Education Arts & Humanities SLOs:** 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. 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;

• Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and

expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;

• Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a

demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;

• Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative

development within the arts and humanities;

• 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;

• Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work

was created or a tradition emerged.

**Writing Intensive:**

This course is a GE Writing Intensive course, and in each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling aminimum of 2500 words.

VII. CLASS CONTRACT

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| What I Expect From You | What You Can Expect From Me |
| You will treat everyone in class, including the professor, with respect and courtesy due all human beings. | I will treat you with the respect and courtesy due all human beings. |
| You will attend every class, give your full attention to the material, and conduct yourself in an appropriate manner. | I will attend every class, give my full attention to the material and conduct myself in an appropriate manner. |
| You will agree to do the work outlined in the syllabus on time. | I will return your work in a timely fashion. |
| You can ask for help. | I will assist you in any way I can, and make myself available to you via office hours. You can expect a response to email within 24 hours except in rare cases. |
| You will acknowledge that your perception of effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a distinguished grade. | I will not discriminate against you on the basis of your identity or your well-informed viewpoints. |
| You will prepare carefully for every class. | I will prepare carefully for every class. |
| You will not plagiarize, cheat, copy, or steal the work of others. | I will pursue the maximum punishment for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity. |
| You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought; you will accept the consequences – good and bad – of your actions. | I will keep careful records of your participation, performance, and progress. |