**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS: RST 307**

**Religion in America**

**Spring 2017**

**ONLINE**

PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, PhD

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OFFICE HOURS: I hold online office hours on Tuesdays 8-9pm; you are also invited to come to my in-person office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays in Santa Susanna 10:00am-11:00am

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will be introduced to the rich, textured and perhaps unexpected role of religion in America, as well as the influence of America on the power and limits of religious forms of expression.  Rather than approach the subject of religion in America historically, students will focus instead on particular cases that illuminate the complex intersections of religion in America, not only to explore the texture and complications of this intersection, but to critically inquire about what ideas those two terms (religion and America) convey. Special attention will be given to California as a laboratory for the study of religion in America (California as America only more so). This course fulfills both departmental and General Education student learning outcomes (GE S2; see SLOs, below) and is a GE Writing Intensive course, and in each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling aminimum of 2500 words.

II. REQUIRED MATERIALS:

All readings will be posted online. You are expected to read EVERYTHING that is assigned. Many of these are difficult and thick, so it is often helpful to print them out so that you can mark up the materials and jot notes in the margins. Take care with this! The key to success in this course is thoroughly reading materials that have been assigned.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ARTS AND HUMANITIES

***Student Learning Outcomes for Arts and Humanities and Religious Studies:*** 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:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. 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. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. 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. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.
7. 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.
8. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts within which American religious institutions were created.
9. Students will be able to recognize the influence of religion on contemporary American political institutions and politics, culture and society.
10. Students will be able to describe the role of religion in the shaping of American concepts of race, gender, and national identity.
11. Students will use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of American religious expression orally and in essays.

IV. COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Familiarity with Moodle**: Since this is a fully online class, you MUST regularly access the course on Moodle. This class will employ Moodle for all the readings, assignments, class updates, and communication. It is your responsibility to learn and use Moodle. For information and instructions about Moodle, go to: http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/

**Participation:** Even though this is an online class, your participation is a critical part of your success. You are expected to check in every week, to post to our discussion forums and fully engage in any other activities of the class. You are always welcome at office hours – virtual or actual

**Written Work:** You will be also doing a lot of writing. Some of the writing will be in discussion postings, but much of it will be in formal academic papers. All writing must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but also serious reflection on your topic. Your essays will be evaluated on the basis of:

1. **Conventions:** work is double-spaced, 1” margins, normal font. No title page, just put your name in the top right. Spelling and grammar are correct. Work is turned in on time. You NEVER USE FIRST PERSON (“I think…” or “In my opinion…” or “WE should…” These are formal academic essays you should avoid all colloquialisms. References are correctly rendered (use MLA), both in-text (use the author date system), followed by a works cited list that is rendered in correct bibliographic form.
2. **Substance:** The thesis (major point of the paper) is clear, and the paper remains focused on that thesis. The paper delves deeply into the substance of the topic, and supports the main point by providing well-chosen and well-placed paraphrases and quotes from the assigned readings. (Closely related to familiarity with the readings, #4, below).
3. **Organization:** work is well organized and transitions gracefully from one major point to the next. The major point (thesis) is clearly and directly stated in the introduction and again in the conclusion. The body of the essay is devoted to showing why you think as you do. The essays are thoughtfully organized which is apparent from the structure of the paper but also by transitions from one major point to the next, bookended by a clear introduction and conclusion.
4. **Facility with and clarity about the readings**: Each of the essays you write will be in response to a prompt question. You should refer concretely to at least two, but no more than three, of the readings to address the prompt. This, of course, requires clarity about the readings and the arguments the authors make.

There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the [University Writing Center in Oviatt Library](http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/learning-resource-center/university-writing-center-and-freshman-tutor-lab) on the 3rd Floor. Please utilize this resource to improve your writing, but if you have questions about what is expected, direct those questions to your instructor.

**Deadlines:** Because due dates are stated at the outset, and because you have flexibility about when you turn in your work, all papers/assignments must be turned in or posted on Moodle on the date listed. No late work will be accepted without consultation with and express permission of the instructor.

**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, or having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit. All instances of cheating will result in no credit for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.

**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 happily cooperate with [CSUN’s Disability Resources and Educational Services](http://www.csun.edu/dres) office.

**Contact with the Professor:** 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 especially urge you to contact me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions! Please contact me by email or during office hours with your questions, comments, or requests.

OUR 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 attendance, performance, and progress. |

V. ASSESSMENT (Point System)

* Discussion forum: (8 x 5) = 40 (Although there are ten discussion questions assigned, I drop the lowest two grades. This means that you have built-in wiggle-room and can miss a discussion forum or do poorly and it won’t affect your overall grade)
* Essays: (4 papers x 15) = 60
* TOTAL: 100 Points

**Grading: Plus-Minus System will be used**

**Letter Grade Allocation**

* 94-100 A
* 90-93.99 A-
* 87-89.99 B+
* 83-86.99 B
* 80-82.99 B-
* 77-79.99 C+
* 73-76.99 C
* 70-72 .99 C-
* 67-69.99 D+
* 60-66.99 D

VI. SCHEDULE

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| **Date** | **What to Read** | **Assignments** |
| Jan 23-29 | * Introduction to the course * Bio * Quiz | Introduction to the course; read and understand the syllabus -- take a short quiz; write a brief bio. |
| Jan 30-Feb. 5  Definitions and Terms  “Religion”  “America” | * Karina Martinez-Carter, “What does ‘American’ Mean? *The Atlantic,* June 19, 2013 * Martin Marty, *Religion and the Republic: The American Circumstance* (Boston: Beacon Press), 1-50 | Post to the discussion forum |
| Feb. 13-19  Corporate Christian America | * Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God?: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, Introduction and Chapter 4 (New York: Basic Books, 2015). | Post to the discussion forum |
| Feb. 20-26  The Black Church and Civil Rights: Religion as an Agent of Social and Political Change | * Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* * The Civil Rights Movement Major Moments * Marilyn Mellowes, “The Black Church” | Paper due before midnight on Feb 26 |
| Feb. 27-March 5  Alternatives to the Story of the Mayflower | * Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim” in *Retelling US Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 127-148. * Pope and the Pueblo Revolt * The Pueblos (God in America) | Post to the discussion forum |
| March 6-12  Religion and The First Amendment | * Rodman, *Ever the Twain Shall Meet*, selections * Should Religion Be Taught in Public Schools? readings | Post to the discussion forum |
| March 13-19  Natives and Cultural Appropriation | * Laura Donaldson, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans” * More than Headdresses (WBUR) * The Benefits of Cultural ‘Sharing’ Are Usually One-Sided * “But Why Can’t I Wear a Hipster Headdress?” | Paper due before midnight on March 19th |
| *March 20-26* | *SPRING BREAK – NO OFFICE HOURS, NO ASSIGNMENTS* | *Have a good time* |
| March 27-April 2  The Motto, the Pledge of Allegiance and the idea of Civil Religion | * Justin Latterell, “In God We Trust” * Rodman, “Civil Religion,” excerpts (7.1) * Jones, “The Man Who Wrote the Pledge of Allegiance” *The Smithsonian* | Post to the discussion forum |
| April 3-9  Sacred Places | * Jeffrey Meyer, *Myths in Stone: Religious Dimensions of Washington, DC* intro and chap. 3. * Jeremy R. Ricketts, “Land of (Re) Enchantment: Tourism and Sacred Space at Roswell and Chimayo, New Mexico” | Post to the discussion forum |
| April 10-16  Spiritual But Not Religious | * Pew Report * Emma Green, “American Religion: Complicated, Not Dead,” *The Atlantic*. * Molly Worthen, “One Nation Under God?” *New York Times*, December 22, 2012. | Post to the discussion forum |
| April 17-23  Contact & Change | * C. Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History,” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (University of California Press, 1997), 200-226. * Kimberly Sambol-Tosca, “Slavery and the Making of America,” (PBS) | Paper due before midnight on April 23 |
| April 24-30  Religions in California | * Articles from Boom! “Getting Religion” – “Golden State of Grace” and “Take it Outside” * CRCC | Post to the discussion forum |
| May 1-7  Sacred/Place in California | * [Mapping the New Landscape of Religion](https://boomcalifornia.com/2016/02/18/mapping-religion-los-feliz/) * [A Mountain of Many Legends](http://www.npr.org/2015/06/07/412098380/a-mountain-of-many-legends-draws-spiritual-seekers-from-around-the-globe) * [The Integratron](http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/02/a-time-machine-in-the-mojave-desert/385652/) * Bron Taylor, “Surfing into Spirituality and a New Aquatic Nature Religion, “*JAAR* | Post to the discussion forum |
| May 8-14 | Last week of class; work on paper #4 | Paper due before midnight May 14 |