

REL 3130-W061
Religion in America
Fall 2017
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Course Description:

This course explores religious traditions in North America, their relationship to politics, popular culture, media, and society.

Prerequisite: REL 2300. This course fulfills the Gordon Rule Requirement.

Fall 2017: This course focuses on Western religions in North America (as opposed to "Asian Religions in America," which are covered in a different course offered at UCF.) Among the central questions we will explore in this course are the meaning of "religion" and the meaning of "America" as they developed in specific circumstance – and in interaction with each other. We will read and discuss contemporary scholarly studies exploring key features of religion in America, the role of Protestant Christianity in the formation of American identity, and specific case studies of the American religious experience. Students will also read monographs that focus on Muslim American, Jewish American, and Catholic American religious identities and histories, as well as the popular culture icon Oprah explored through religious studies. Throughout, the course introduces students to specific histories, social aspects, cultural and political developments, and contemporary issues as they relate to particular religious groups in specific locations. Students will also gain familiarity with different disciplinary perspectives within the study of religion in North America.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with different approaches to the study of religion in America.
- Learn about foundational American myths and stories as they relate to "religion" and "America."
- Learn about foundational aspects of religion as it functions in North American society and culture.
- Learn and practice research methods in the study of religion.
- Become familiar and develop a critical understanding of specific traditions' histories and present circumstances within America (e.g. Muslim American history, Jewish American identity formation, Christian traditions as they develop differently within North America.)
- Become able to identify, and argue for the relative value of, different perspectives within religious studies as applied in the American context.

- Develop a critical understanding of the uniquely American cultural/historical/geographic/political circumstances in which American religious traditions and identities develop and function
- Analyze specific media and popular culture phenomena from within a religious studies approach.

Required Texts (in the order of modules covering them)

- Beal, Timothy. *Religion in America: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2008. (ISBN: 9780195321074)
- Curtis, Edward E. IV. *Muslims in America: A Short History*. Oxford. UP 2009. (ISBN: 9780195367560)
- Wenger, Beth S. *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage*. Princeton UP, 2010. (ISBN: 9780691156149)
- Orsi, Robert. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton UP, 2005. (ISBN: 9780691127767)
- Lofton, Katherine. *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. University of California Press, 2011. (ISBN: 9780520267527)

REQUIREMENTS:

In this web course, students will explore the material by reading five books, discussing the required texts, taking brief content quizzes, contributing to discussions and responding to other students’ and instructor comments and developing their own perspective on the characteristics and study of religion in North America. Students must also complete the introductory Module 0 and the final exam Module 6.

REQUIREMENTS AND POINTS TO BE EARNED (see here for the Final Grading Scale)				
Module 0 Introduction to the Course	Practice Quiz 10 points	Introductory Discussion Posting 10 Points	Responses to other students’ postings and/or to instructor prompts 20 Points	

Module 1 Religion in America Overview (Beal)	Quiz (on content of book) 10 Points	Original Discussion Postings 30 Points	At least two substantive responses 20 Points	
Module 2 Muslims in America (Curtis)	Quiz (on content of book) 10 Points	Original Discussion Postings 30 Points	At least two substantive responses 20 Points	
Module 3 The Creation of Jewish America Heritage (Wenger)	Quiz (on content of book) 10 Points	Original Discussion Postings 20 Points	At least two substantive responses 20 Points	Midterm 70 Points
Module 4 Between Heaven and Earth (Orsi)	Quiz (on content of book) 10 Points	Original Discussion Postings 30 Points	At least three substantive responses 30 Points	
Module 5 Oprah – The Gospel of an Icon (Lofton)	Quiz (on content of book) 10 Points	Original Discussion Postings 30 Points	At least two substantive responses 20 Points	
Module 6: Conclusions and Final Exam.		Final Discussion Posting 10 Points		Final Exam 80 Points
				Total: 500 Points

IMPORTANT NOTES (THE FINE PRINT)

MAKE-UP WORK / EXTRA CREDIT

As a rule, no make-up assignments or extra credit will be given. Discussions, Assignments, and Quizzes will not reopen after they have closed. Plan to do the necessary work to succeed on your assignments by the deadline clearly stated.

PLAGIARISM, CHEATING, AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. Also, any sources consulted for your writing must be properly documented. "Rewriting," in which a student consults a source, changes a few words, and presents the ideas as his/her own, is plagiarism. All of the following activities constitute plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not
- Note: it is even possible to plagiarize yourself if you turn in work that you have written previously, or that you are using for another class, as if it is original for this class. If you want to use work for more than one class, you should *always* discuss this with both professors before you submit the work.

The standard punishment for plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment is an "F" for the assignment or even for the entire course. Plagiarism and cheating subjects a student to referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further disciplinary action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>). I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, do not cheat by giving answers to others or by taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so do not expect me to change your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

TURNITIN.COM

The instructor may ask you to submit your written assignments to turnitin.com.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

The University Writing Center (UWC) offers writing support to UCF students from first-year to graduate in every discipline. Trained peer consultants provide help at every stage of the writing process, including understanding assignments, researching, drafting, revising, incorporating sources, and learning to proofread and edit. The UWC's purpose is not merely to fix papers or to make better writers, but to teach writers

strategies to navigate complex situations for writing, both in and outside the University. Consultations are available for individuals and small groups. To make the best use of the UWC, visit far enough before your due date to allow yourself time to revise after your consultation, browse the writing resources on our website, and arrange a regular weekly appointment if you'd like long-term help. You may schedule a 45-minute appointment by phone or by using the scheduler on our website; walk-in consultations are also available. This service is free, so you should take advantage of it. 407-823-2197 <http://uwc.cah.ucf.edu/>

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

☰ ▶ Module 0 - Introductions

☰ ▶ Module 1: Religion in America Overview (Beal)

☰ ▶ Module 2: Muslims in America (Curtis)

☰ ▶ Module 3: The Creation of Jewish American Heritage (Wenger)

☰ ▶ Midterm

☰ ▶ Module 4: Between Heaven and Earth (Orsi)

☰ ▶ Module 5: Oprah- The Gospel of an Icon (Lofton)

☰ ▶ Module 6: Conclusions and Final Examination