

THOUGHT AND PRACTICE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN RELIGIONS

American Studies 5202
Fall Semester 2002
3:35-6:05 p.m. Tuesdays

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Office hours: 11:15-12:15, 1:30-3:00 Tuesdays

Course requirements:

Read all reading assignments, attend all class sessions, and participate in seminar discussions of the books and research topics

Assume seminar leadership on at least one book and its topic, orally presenting the book's content and possibly providing visual, artistic, and historical information around it, both presenting information and leading discussion

Do library and field-learning research on two unrelated religious faith communities currently practicing in Minneapolis and St. Paul, (such as Buddhists, Hindus, Baptists, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Lutherans, Catholics), one in which you have previous association or affiliation, one new to you

Assume seminar leadership on research reporting on each of your religious group subjects

Optional seminar leadership: organize the class to go on an outside-of-class field learning session to a religious building or service of worship, an art exhibition in a local museum, a theater production, or a public lecture pertaining to your research topic religious group(s)

Attend outside-of-class field learning session organized by a fellow student or the professor

Write four (4) small research reports (8-10 pages, typewritten, double-spaced) on these two religious groups, thinking of the papers as "works in progress"

Write a final 20-page research paper, ideally based on one or both of the religious groups studied all semester, or some focus within one of them, drawn from the small reports and "finished" or elaborated as the final project

Required books:

Diana L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*

Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religion and Religions* (selected chapters)

Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*

Cornel West, *Race Matters*

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *The Religious Imagination of American Women*

Drude Krog Janson (Orm Overland, ed.), *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*

Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ, *Weaving the Vision: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*
(selected chapters)

Thomas Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills: the World Before and After Jesus*

L. DeAne Lagerquist, *The Lutherans*

Optional books:

Richard Hughes Seager, *Buddhism in America*

Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Orthodox Church*

Diana L. Eck, *New Religious America : How A Christian Country Has Become The Worlds Most Religiously Diverse Nation*

Schedule:

First and second weeks, Sept. 3 and 10--Orientation Contemporary American Religions and Spiritualities

Read Diana Eck, *Encountering God*

Decide on religious group research topics

Third week, Sept. 17--What is "American"? "Religion"? "Spirituality"?

Read assigned selections from Albanese, *America: Religion and Religions*

Fourth week, Sept. 24--American Judaism

Read Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*

***First small research report due

Fifth week, Oct. 1--Black Christianity and other African-American Religious Communities

Read West, *Race Matters*

Selected readings from Albanese

Sixth week, Oct. 8--Native American Religions

Read Silko, *Ceremony*

Selected readings from Albanese

***Second small research report due

Next three weeks--American Women's Spirituality and Religiousness

Seventh week, Oct. 15--Read Bednarowski, *The Religious Imagination of American Women*

Eighth week, Oct. 22--Read Janson, *A Saloonkeeper's Daughter*

Ninth week, Oct. 29--Read selections from Plaskow and Christ, eds., *Weaving the Vision*

***Third small research paper due

Two weeks--American Christianity

Tenth week, Nov. 5--Read Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*
Selected readings from Albanese

Eleventh week, Nov. 12--Read Lagerquist, *The Lutherans*
Optional reading (perhaps re: research)--FitzGerald, *The Orthodox Church*

Next three weeks--Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions originating in Asia--
readings optional and related to student research projects

Twelfth week, Nov. 19--optional reading Seager, *Buddhism in America*
Selected readings from Albanese
***Fourth small research report due

Thirteenth week, Nov. 26--optional reading Eck, *New Religious America*

Fourteenth week, Dec. 3

Fifteenth week, Dec. 10 student oral presentations on final research paper projects

*****Final paper due in class last day, NO EXCUSES, NO LATE PAPERS