

## AMERICAN RELIGION, 20TH CENTURY

Religious Studies 27  
Spring 2000  
MWF 9:40-10:40 am.

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Office Hrs.: Tu, Th 3:30 -5:00 and by appointment

### Course Description and Goals

The American religious landscape has always been one of great diversity, not only diversity among native born Americans, but also diversity created through immigration. In the twentieth century, two distinct periods of immigration marked significant transformation in the pluralistic character of religious life in America. The first of these periods was during the early 20th-century, when growing numbers of Jewish and Catholic immigrants significantly challenged a Protestant hegemony that itself was undergoing a profound transformation. The second period we live in now, as immigrants from the Middle East and Asia come to America.

This course will examine the situations, ramifications, and consequences of religious pluralism in the U.S. We will first examine the concept of Protestant hegemony and the challenges that Protestantism faced due to growing Modernism. We will then examine that modern context through discussion of immigrants' religious experiences.

This class will also participate in the [Pluralism Project](#), an on-going initiative headed by Dr. Diana Eck of Harvard University to document the many new religious congregations throughout the U.S. We will be gathering data on the Twin Cities area to be included in the Project's website and to be issued in bound form.

### Required Texts

Cahan, Abraham. *The Rise of David Levinsky*. New York: Penguin, 1993 [1917].  
Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, ed. *The Muslims of America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.  
Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Signet Classic, 1967 [1927].  
Marsden, George M. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.  
Orsi, Robert. *The Madonna of 115th Street*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985.  
Tweed, Thomas A., and Stephen Prothero, eds. *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

### Recommended Texts

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, and Jane Idleman Smith, eds. *Muslim Communities in North America*. Albany: State University of New York, 1994.  
Williams, Peter W. *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1990.

### Requirements

15% Short paper (5-pages) on what was and is at stake in the modernism debate. — Comparative analysis of a pre-1930 "text" and post-1970 "text." E.g. Elmer Gantry and "The Apostle"

15% Short paper on a (the) religious tradition with which you are most familiar. The paper should ask/answer the questions: who are the \_\_\_ and what issues are of concern to them currently?

15% Short paper on similarities and differences in Jewish and Catholic situations and responses to modernism.

[15%] [Short paper on the role of immigrant religions in America today].

15% Participation in Pluralism Project data gathering and website/book writing.

25% Religious Group Analysis. Each student will become an expert on a 20th century American religious group, writing a 10- page analysis of the that group, and representing the group's views at the "Congress of American Religions" to be held at the end of the term. If possible, students should obtain first-hand knowledge of their group through observation. A brief description of the group and a list of three relevant sources is due March 31. A list of the three social or political issues about which the group is most concerned is due April 7. The ten-page paper analyzing the group's stand on one particular issue, and placing their position within the group's history, is due in class on May 1. [Students may submit an optional draft of the paper by April 21.]

### **Rules and Regulations:**

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day. Students must complete all five assignments and the three parts of the researched analysis paper, as well as participate in the Congress of American Religions to receive a final grade in the course. Attendance is expected. Three absences will severely affect your participation grade. Papers are due at the times listed or at the beginning of class if not otherwise specified. Papers will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade (a + or - equivalent) for each day late. Students will be held to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism or cheating in any fashion will result in an automatic F for the course.

### **Tentative Calendar**

- W 2/2 Course introduction
- F 2/4 Modernism vs. Orthodoxy in the early 20th century.  
Read: Marsden, chpts 1-2
- M 2/7 Evolution and the Scopes trial.  
Read: Marsden, chpts 5-6
- W 2/9 Evangelicals through the century.  
Read: Marsden, chpts 3-4
- F 2/11 Library session. Meet in the computer classroom on the second floor of the Dewitt-Wallace library.  
Website assignment
- M 2/14 Perspectives on evangelicals and fundamentalists.

- Read: Elmer Gantry  
Bring to class: website ranking
- W 2/16 Elmer Gantry  
Evening screening of The Apostle (required)
- F 2/18 Comparing Elmer Gantry and The Apostle
- M 2/21 Paper Due — Pre-post Evangelicals.  
Jewish Immigration to the U.S.  
Read: The Rise of David Levinsky (Cahan).
- Tu 2/2 Evening screening of Hester Street (required)  
2 Read: The Rise of David Levinsky
- W 2/23 Challenges facing immigrants in Hester Street and Levinsky  
Read: Levinsky through pp. 216 (Book VIII)
- F 2/25 Read: Levinsky, Book IX
- M 2/28 Read: finish Levinsky
- W 3/1 Continue/conclude discussion of issues facing Jewish immigrants
- F 3/3 Paper Due — Familiar Religious Group  
Open discussion on familiar religious groups.
- M 3/6 Catholic immigrants  
Read: Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street, Introduction-106
- TBA Speaker: James T. Fisher
- W 3/8 Read: Orsi, 107-162
- F 3/10 Read: Orsi, 162-end
- M 3/13 Comparison of immigrant experiences.
- W 3/15 Conclusions: Protestant, Catholic, Jew
- F 3/17 Paper Due - Jewish/Catholic comparison (Paper due in Old Main 106 by 12:00 noon)  
No class
- Spring Break
- M 3/27 Pluralism Project  
Read: Diana Eck, "The Mosque Next Door: Neighboring Faiths" (on reserve) and  
"Religion and the Global Moment" (on reserve)
- W 3/29 Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains in America  
Read: appropriate sections of the [On Common Ground CD-ROM](#)
- F 3/31 Read: Tweed, chpts 5, 6, 7  
Due: The religious group you will focus your socio-religious analysis on
- M 4/3 Read: Tweed, chpts 9 and 16
- W 4/5 Read: Tweed, chpts 17 and 20
- F 4/7 Read: Tweed, chpt 19  
Due: List of three issues your group is involved in — with brief descriptions of  
their positions
- M 4/10 Muslims in America  
Read: Haddad, Part I (essays 1 and 2)
- W 4/12 Read: Haddad, Part II
- F 4/14 Read: Haddad, Part III
- M 4/17 Read: Haddad, Part IV
- W 4/19 Pluralism meetings
- F 4/21 Pluralism meetings

Due: Optional Draft of Socio-political paper  
M 4/24 Pluralism meetings  
W 4/26 Pluralism meetings  
F 4/28 Contemporary immigrant Issues  
Paper Due: Role of immigrant religious in U.S.  
M 5/1 Congress of American Religions — attendance required  
Due: Socio-political paper  
W 5/3 Congress of American Religions — attendance required  
F 5/5 Congress of American Religions — attendance required  
M 5/8 Course conclusion