

CATALOG INFORMATION

Dept and Nbr: HUMAN 10.4    Title: RELIGION IN AMERICA  
Full Title: Religion in America  
Last Reviewed: 3/10/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00

Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable  
Grading: Grade or P/NP  
Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP  
Also Listed As:  
Formerly:

**Catalog Description:**  
This course will look at the interaction between diverse ethnic and racial groups in the shaping of American religious discourse and institutions and the encounter between secular and religious forces by surveying the many multi-cultural personalities, ideas and movements of the past 400 years.

**Prerequisites/Corequisites:**

**Recommended Preparation:**  
Engl 1A.

**Limits on Enrollment:**

**Schedule of Classes Information:**  
Description: This course will look at the interaction between diverse ethnic and racial groups in the shaping of American religious discourse and institutions and the encounter between secular and religious forces by surveying the many multi-cultural personalities, ideas and movements of the past 400 years. (Grade or P/NP)  
Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended: Engl 1A.

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit: CSU;UC.

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

## **ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:**

<b>AS Degree:</b>	<b>Area</b>			<b>Effective:</b>	<b>Inactive:</b>
	E	Humanities		Fall 1996	
	G	American Cultures/Ethnic Studies			
<b>CSU GE:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>			<b>Effective:</b>	<b>Inactive:</b>
	C2	Humanities		Fall 1997	
<b>IGETC:</b>	<b>Transfer Area</b>			<b>Effective:</b>	<b>Inactive:</b>
	3B	Humanities		Fall 1997	
<b>CSU Transfer:</b>	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1996	Inactive:	
<b>UC Transfer:</b>	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1996	Inactive:	

**CID:**

**Certificate/Major Applicable:**

Not Certificate/Major Applicable

## **COURSE CONTENT**

### **Outcomes and Objectives:**

The student will be able to:

1. Describe and analyze the spectrum of American religious culture in its historic development.
2. Examine and evaluate the diverse racial and ethnic roots of religious expression in America.
3. Track and analyze the impact of colonization on both the European and the indigenous peoples and their religious expressions.
4. Describe and distinguish the impact of the institution of slavery on both the Europeans and Africans in America and on their religious expressions and political and cultural development.
5. Describe and appraise the impact of Industrialization and Immigration in non-Anglo Europeans and their religious expressions.
6. Distinguish and compare the leading and often contentious intellectual and scientific claims behind emerging spiritual expression.
7. Explain and appraise the interaction between religious communities and secular political culture in America.
8. Identify and evaluate the major personalities and events which shaped American religious discourse.
9. Examine and appraise the effect of religious enthusiasm in the shaping of such American political discourse and institutions as

- Abortion, Suffrage, Prohibition, Civil Rights, etc.
10. Describe and analyze the inherent tensions which give shape to American religious discourse such as the Separation between Church and State; Moral/religious values and personal liberty; Tradition and Modernity; Personal Salvation and social activism, etc.
  11. Distinguish and describe the diversity of religious expression in America, probing the variety and rivalry of religious denominations and the restless debates within denominations which led to schism and proliferation in American culture.
  12. Compare and contrast the effect of such religious movements as evangelical revival and millennialism on religious expression in diverse ethnic and racial communities.
  13. Discern and evaluate the emergence of new religions and new religious expression in American society.
  14. Describe and assess recurring liberal and conservative themes in American religious discourse.

### **Topics and Scope:**

This course will seek 1) to identify and assess the impact of Colonization on both the European and the indigenous peoples and their religious expressions; i.e., Native Americans, Hawaiians; Puritans in New England, Spanish in the South and Southwest; 2) to describe and analyze the impact of the institution of slavery on both Europeans and Africans in America and how it shaped their religious expressions, cultural and political development; And 3) investigate and evaluate the impact of Industrialization and Immigration on non-Anglo Europeans and their religious expressions. This will include demonstrations of interaction between varied ethnic and linguistic groups who colonized and immigrated to America; showing the struggles within and between such groups as well as with other non-Europeans, demonstrating the influence of national identities and religion for each ethnic group and their common struggle with assimilation and American identity and with all the issues of modernity.

The secondary and background theme of this course will be the charting and study of the development of religion within the cultural and political life of America in its historic setting. Attention will be given to the dialogic interaction between diverse communities of traditional religious belief and modernity in all its guises. Thus the course will investigate how all religions, traditional and new, embraced, rejected, denied or absorbed all the developments and challenges of modernity; notably the Enlightenment, science, global exploration and colonial expansion, the development of capitalism, the American Revolution, secularism, industrialization and urbanization. The course will trace the national commitment to religious freedom and personal liberty, and will trace debates concerning issues of separation of church and state as they evolved in litigations before the U. S. Supreme Court as well as in the culture as a whole.

We will also survey the spontaneous growth and development of peculiarly American religions and religious expressions within the political environment of a secular state, with no established church. This

will allow for the exploration of the perennial and spasmodic popularity of evangelicalism and millennialism as aspects of the national character even as it crosses racial and cultural boundaries.

Texts and Course Structure Introduction:

- 1) The general outline of the course will follow the development of various ethnic groups within historical settings and interactions, but will also include a general introduction of shifting cosmic paradigms:
  - a) The Ptolemaic, geocentric universe of the European Christian Middle Ages and Dante's cosmos.
  - b) The Copernican revolution and the Enlightenment: Galileo, Newton and the birth of modern science.
  - c) The convergence of the Protestant Reformation and the values of the Enlightenment with the secular needs of the rising capitalist state to foster the ideas of religious liberty.

Ethnic and Historical Survey: The primary text for the course will present a short history of religion in America as it was manifest in the following communities:

- 2) Indian Religion: A survey of Native American cosmology, religion and polity before, during and after the European conquest.
- 3) White Protestantism: A survey of consensus and conflict within the communities of European Christian Protestants, showing how rivalries within their diverse episcopal, congregational and Puritan communities shaped the religious and political discourse of the emerging nation.
- 4) Black Religion: A survey of how the African slave populations took on the mantle of Protestant (and later) evangelical Christianity and transformed them into a unique American religious expression. An investigation into the issue of race and slavery in the shaping of religion and politics in America, especially as it affected the Protestant establishment.
- 5) Catholicism: A survey of the Roman Catholic experience in the United States from its colonial beginnings under the French and the Spanish to its later incarnation in the poor and peasant immigrations from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Germany of the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 6) Judaism: A summary of the flight of European Jews to the New World starting with the days of the Spanish Inquisition through the German migrations of the 19th century and the later East European migrations; and a survey of the variety of Jewish experience and religious expressions in the American transition, also considering issues such as anti-Semitism, debates over the rise of Zionism, the Holocaust, assimilation and renewal.
- 7) New American Religions: A second text for the course will allow for closer study of the peculiar aspects of "American Religion," exploring the elements of individualism, community, enthusiasm, evangelicalism, spiritualism and millenarianism and the rise of peculiarly American religions such as the Mormons, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witness and the African American religion.

The two texts will be enhanced by a syllabus reader which will present an anthology of original writings and speeches by the men and women who helped shape the American discourse on religion. This will include the secular and political leaders of the Enlightenment, most notably Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, as well as pieces by Cotton Mather, Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, Jonathan Edwards, Julia Ward Howe, Frederick Douglass, Mary Baker Eddy, Chief Red Jacket, Dwight

L. Moody, Isaac Mayer Wise, Reinhold Niebuhr, Abraham Joshua Heschel, William Cardinal O'Connell, Malcom X and Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. There will similarly be a catalogue of available videos and films on relevant personalities and issues in American religious discourse. The course will also allow for the periodic focus on one or more religious communities such as the Baptists, the Mormons, the Afro-American church, the Jews; or the influence of American religion on Native American, Hawaiian and Asian communities.

### Assignment:

Assignments for this course include the following:

1. Regular reading assignments from course text and the syllabus reader.
2. No less than four written papers each exploring a particular ethnicity, personality, movement and/or issue in American religious discourse against its historical and cultural background. Responses will come from one or more of the following sources:
  - \*the course text
  - \*speeches or writings in the syllabus reader
  - \*appropriate films, videos and theater
  - \*interviews and field trips (to churches, revivals, exhibits, etc.)
3. A six to ten page term paper researching in depth any one personality, movement and/or issue in American religious discourse.
4. A short answer mid term and final examination.

### Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

**Writing:** Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Essay exams, Term papers

Writing  
60 - 75%

**Problem Solving:** Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

None

Problem solving  
0 - 0%

**Skill Demonstrations:** All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

Class performances

Skill Demonstrations  
5 - 10%

**Exams:** All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Multiple choice, True/false, Matching items, Completion

Exams  
15 - 20%

**Other:** Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

INTERVIEW, MUSEUM, OR FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Other Category  
5 - 15%

**Representative Textbooks and Materials:**

Lester B. Scherer, A SHORT HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA,  
1980, Advocate Publishing Group.

Harold Bloom, THE AMERICAN RELIGION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE  
POST-CHRISTIAN NATION, 1992, Simon Schuster.

Syllabus Reader