

Pam



Chaminade University

OF HONOLULU

RE 380 Home Page

Special Topic: American Religions

Spring Accelerated Term 1998

April 6 – June 15

Jane Tam, jtam@chaminade.edu, 735-4826

[Syllabus](#)

[Go to Discussion Board](#)

[Student E-Mail Addresses](#)

[Reflection Papers](#)

[Term Paper](#)

Students: You are responsible for reading and understanding this entire web site!

Copyright © 1997, Jane Tam

This page was last modified on 04/01/98

Syllabus

Overview

This class is intended to introduce you to the diverse American religious landscape, as represented by three distinct types of American religions: indigenous religions, "world religions" practiced in America, and made-in-America religions. We will sample religious traditions from each of these categories, but will not attempt an exhaustive survey. The class is organized thematically rather than historically, and is intended to give you a taste of the vast and fascinating subject of American religions rather than a comprehensive historical overview. In addition, given the constraints of time, we will not be able to cover some of the thematic areas which may be of particular interest to you--religion and politics, women in American religions, new religious movements, and so forth--but, hopefully, the course will give you the direction to pursue your own interests within the field.

Textbooks

All of the required and recommended textbooks listed below are available at the Chaminade bookstore. Contact the bookstore at 735-4798 for more information. Some of the books were late in arriving, but are now all available. If you are not on Oahu you may arrange to have the bookstore ship the books to you, or, if you prefer, you may purchase them through an online bookseller.

You may have been told to wait until after the orientation to purchase textbooks for this class. This applies only to the recommended books; please purchase the required books as soon as possible.

Required books:

- *One Nation Under God*, by Kosmin and Lachman (Crown Trade Paperbacks)
- *The Blessing Way*, by Tony Hillerman (Harper Mass Market Paperbacks)
- *Religion and American Culture*, edited by David G. Hackett (Routledge)

Additional photocopied articles will also be required, and will be provided to you at no charge at the orientation meeting on Saturday, April 11. If you are unable to attend the orientation, get in touch with me as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements to obtain the reader.

Recommended books available for purchase in the Chaminade bookstore include:

- *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement*, Martha F. Lee (Syracuse University Press)
- *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints*, Arrington & Bitton (University of Illinois Press)
- *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, Randall Balmer (Oxford)
- *The Search for Meaning: Americans Talk About What They Believe and Why*, Phillip Berman (Ballantine Books)

With the exception of *The Search for Meaning*, the recommended books will be used for your term papers (see below), so you will probably want to wait until you have chosen a topic before purchasing one of

these books. However, they are all quite good and relevant to the course, so if you are so inclined, feel free to buy them all! *The Search for Meaning* available to you in the bookstore as a supplement to our work in the class if you so choose. It provides fascinating, first-person accounts of the range of American beliefs.

Expectations

Syllabus. It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of this syllabus in its entirety, including all attached pages. If you are unclear about any aspect of the syllabus, contact me at jtam@chaminade.edu as soon as possible.

Deadlines. Keep in mind that this is an upper-division, online class, being taught during an accelerated session. It requires the self-discipline and motivation to do an extensive amount of reading, writing, and critical reflection, without constant prompting from me.

No make-ups are allowed or late papers accepted, except under extraordinary *documented* circumstances, such as military duty or a serious illness. If you have a verifiable excuse, it is your responsibility to inform me and to arrange to make up any missed work.

Internet Proficiency. All students are expected to be proficient in Internet technology, i.e., getting online, sending and receiving e-mail, using the Chaminade discussion board, and web navigation. You are responsible for keeping me apprised of your current e-mail address at all times. If your address changes, please let me know immediately. If at all possible, please keep the same e-mail address throughout the course.

Regular Participation. Plan on checking your e-mail and the discussion board several times a week, if not daily, for information related to the course. Also, check the home page and syllabus regularly for any updates or new postings.

Course Requirements

1. Discussion forums. Regular participation in online discussion forums is required. I am more interested in the quality than quantity of your discussion, but, again, you are expected to participate regularly. These forums are designed to stimulate thought and provoke reflection among class members. Feel free to share your opinions, but remember that personal opinion must be backed up by factual information and critical reflection. Any technical questions regarding the discussion board should be addressed to Kerry Kakazu at kkakazu@chaminade.edu (735-4819). [Go to discussion board.](#) (10% of grade)

2. Reflection papers. Three reflection papers (2 to 4 pages each) will be assigned during the course of the term, in which you will be asked to critically reflect on the work we have been doing in class. Critical reflection includes both comprehension and evaluation of the reading material and class discussions. One of the three reflection papers will involve a field research project. [Click here for more information about the reflection papers.](#) (15% each).

3. Term paper. You will be required to write a 7 to 10 page (including bibliography) term paper selected from one of the topics listed below. One of the recommended texts listed above, depending upon the topic you select, will serve as the basic research resource for your term paper. [Click here for more information about the term paper.](#) (30% of grade).

4. Final. The final exam will be held on Saturday, June 13th between 12:00 - 5:00 p.m. on the Chaminade

main campus. You may also arrange to take a proctored exam at another site of your choosing, but all exams must be completed by June 13th. Please contact the Evening Program's office at 735-4755 to arrange to take a proctored exam if necessary. **No make-up exams will be given.** (15% of grade).

Grading Criteria

Grades will be determined as set forth in the Chaminade University General Catalog, as follows:

- A Outstanding scholarship and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative
- B Superior work done in a consistent and intellectual manner
- C Average grade indicating a competent grasp of the subject matter
- D Inferior work of the lowest passing grade; is not satisfactory for fulfillment of prerequisite coursework
- F Failure to grasp even the minimum subject matter; no credit given

Incompletes will not be given except in extraordinary circumstances and in no event unless the majority of the work in the class has been completed.

This class is not an easy "A. I take seriously the difference between outstanding and competent work. Your grade will reflect the time, effort and thought you put into the class.

Schedule of Assignments

Please read the below schedule carefully and in its entirety. You may find that you want or need to work ahead to meet the deadlines, which are not subject to extension. For example, although it is the last assignment due, I strongly recommend that you start working on your term paper as early in the semester as possible to avoid any last minute problems. Likewise, although the orientation will not be held until April 11, I suggest that you begin the required reading as soon as possible.

APRIL 11-APRIL 24

Part 1: Historical Overview and the Contemporary Scene

Readings:

1. *One Nation Under God*, Chapters 1 and 2, "Introduction," "Religion in American Culture: A

Historical Overview", pp. 1-48

2. *One Nation Under God*, Chapter 3, "Geography is Destiny", pp. 49-113
3. "Frontiers of Encounter," by Diana Eck, in *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 495-513

Writing assignment: Reflection paper #1 due April 25

APRIL 25-MAY 8

Part 2: Indigenous Religions: North American Indian Traditions

Readings:

1. *The Blessing Way*, by Tony Hillerman (read first!)
2. "The Indians of the American Imagination," from *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, by Vine Deloria, Jr. (photocopy)

Writing assignment: Reflection paper #2 due May 8

MAY 9-MAY 29

Part 3: World Religions in America

Readings:

1. *One Nation Under God*, Chapter 4, "From the Ethnic Factor to the New Age," pp. 114-156
2. "Seeking Jewish Spiritual Roots in Miami and Los Angeles," by Deborah Dash Moore, in *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 383-406
3. "The Easter Parade," by Leigh Eric Schmidt, in *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 246-269
4. "Robert Aitken," from *Zen in America*, by Helen Tworckov, pp. 25-62 (photocopy)
5. Religion in the News, from the Harvard Pluralism Project, including media coverage of Buddhism, Jainism and Islam in America (recommended reading)
6. Hare Krishna Field Research Project, by Melissa Melendez (recommended reading)

Field research: Visit the place of worship of a religious tradition other than your own in order to identify differences in classical practice and practice in America. Read the reflection paper assignment carefully for more information about the field research. Additional resources on world religions practiced in America can be found in this [virtual library of religion](#).

Writing assignment: Reflection paper #3 due May 29

MAY 30-JUNE 5

Part 4: Made-in-America Religious Movements

Readings:

1. "The Genesis of Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition," by Jan Shipps, from *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 166-184; and
2. "Searching for Eden with a Satellite Dish: Primitivism, Pragmatism and the Pentecostal Culture," by Grant Wacker, from *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 436-458
3. "Martin and Malcolm: Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History," by James H. Cone, from *Religion and American Culture*, pp. 407-421