REL 6126: RELIGION IN THE AMERICAS
THURSDAY, 6-8 PERIODS
CBD 234
FALL 2012

Instructor: Dr. Manuel A. Vásquez
Office: Anderson 107B  Tel. 352-273-2945  E-mail: manuelv@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays Noon- 2PM and Wednesday 11:30AM – 1:30PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Does it make sense to adopt a (inter)continental approach to the interplay among religion, culture, and society? What do we gain and what do we lose by taking this approach?

In this course, we evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a hemispheric approach to the study of religion vis-à-vis traditional perspectives that focus on the nation and stress radical differences between the U.S. and the rest of the continent. We aim to bring into conversation themes, methodologies, concepts, and key historical actors and dynamics in North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Topics include the tension between methodological nationalism and transnationalism, comparative colonialisms, indigenous and diasporic religions, immigration, globalization, cultural and religious hybridity, encounter and ethno-generation, and the construction, reproduction, and crossing of frontiers and borderlands. We also assess two prominent paradigms in the continental study of religion: the popular/lived religion approach and rational choice/religious market theories.

OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce a hemispheric lens in the study of religion, placing the Americas within larger transnational and global processes.

2. To compare and contrast salient themes and methodologies in the study of religion in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

3. To prepare doctoral students in the “Religion in Americas” track for one of their core qualifying exams.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Four Short Response Papers (5-6 pp). These response papers will address key issues and methodological and theoretical questions raised in each section of the course. The objective of these papers is to encourage students synthesize the readings and class discussions and articulate their own informed and analytically nuanced positions. The papers are due on the Monday following the end of the specific sections to which they respond. There will be five opportunities to submit response papers, out of which students will chose four. The papers constitute 60 % of the final grade (15% each).

2. A Mock Qualifying Exam given on site during exam week. Following the standard procedure for qualifying exams, students will be given a couple of synthetic questions seeking to gage their overall knowledge of the field of religion in the Americas. Students will have approximately the same amount to time allotted for the real exams. This exam will be 20% of your grade. Students
not enrolled in the religion in the Americas track and not wishing to take this exam, can instead write a long research paper (15 to 20 pages) on a topic related to the course with the instructor’s approval.

3. A Critical Summary of an Additional Book (4-5 pp). At the beginning of the semester students will chose an additional book to review from the list of readings for the “Religion in the Americas” qualifying exam. They will be expected to present a 4-5 page summary of the author’s main arguments, theoretical assumptions, and methodology, as well as the evidence provided in support his/her conclusions. Students will also offer an overall evaluation of the work, drawing from class discussions, lectures, and other class readings. The aim here is to place the reviewed work in the context of the larger field of the study of religion in the Americas. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade.

4. Attendance and Active Participation. Given that this course is a small advanced seminar, attendance is mandatory. Absences will be allowed only under very special circumstances, such as a medical emergency. In that case, students must bring a doctor’s note. As part of the participation grade, students are to e-mail the instructor and peers one or two short queries connected with the readings assigned for Thursday by the preceding Wednesday at 5PM. These queries will count as participation. Students are expected to read all the assigned material and to participate actively in class discussion. Attendance and participation represent 10% of your final grade.

RULES

1. Plagiarism or cheating: Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a zero tolerance policy. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course. In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm for more information on UF policies.

2. Incompletes are strongly discouraged and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom. Please turn phones and pagers off during class.

4. Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.
REQUIRED READINGS

Books:


Articles and Book Chapters:

They are available on line either through the databases at Smathers Library or through Sakia (those marked with *).

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. Theoretical Interventions

Week 1 (08/23): Methodological Nationalism and Exceptionalism

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TURNER/home.html

Week 2 (08/30): The Nation-State and the Denial of Coevalness: The Challenge of Transnationalism and Internationalism


**Week 3 (09/06): Beyond the Nation?**


**II. Intertwined Colonialisms**

**Week 4 (09/13): The British and the Spanish Empires**

-- Cañizares Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*. Read All.

***Reflection Paper for Sections I and II Due on Monday 09/17 at 4 PM***

**III. Encounters with Indigenous Cultures and Civilizations**

**Week 5 (09/20): Can the Subaltern Speak?**


-- Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), Prologue and Chapter 1. (*)

**Week 6 (09/27): Comparative Post-Colonialisms?**


4

Invited Speaker: Prof. Robin Wright, Religion Dept.

*** Reflection Paper for Section III Due on Monday 10/01 at 4 PM ***

IV. The Black Atlantic: Diaspora, Identity, and Religion

Week 7 (10/04): Race and Transatlantic African-American Christianity

-- Sensbach, Rebecca's Revival. Read all.
-- Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness. Preface and Chapter 1. (*)

Week 8 (10/11): Transatlantic African-based Religions and Beyond

-- Johnson, Diaspora Conversions. Read all

V. Transnationalism and Religion

Week 9 (10/18): Transnational Religious Networks and Fields across the Americas

-- Peña, Performing Piety, read all

*** Reflection Paper for Sections IV and V Due on Monday 10/22 at 4 PM ***
VI. The Borderlands: Hybridity and/or the Nation-State Strikes Back?

Week 10 (10/25): Genealogies of Border Culture

-- Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007). Chapters 1 and 2. (*)


-- Chesnut, Devoted to Death, read all
-- Luis León, La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands (Berkeley, University of California Press 2004), Chapters 3 & 6. (*)

Week 12 (11/08): The “Other” Border

-- Phyllis D. Airhart, “‘As Canadian as Possible under the Circumstances:’ Reflections on the Study of Protestantism in North America.” New Directions in American Religious History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 116-137. (*)

*** Reflection Paper for Section VI Due on Monday 11/12 at 4 PM ***

VII. Methodological Interphases: How Can We Study Religion Hemispherically?


Week 14 (11/22): Thanksgiving. Classes cancelled

Week 15 (11/29): Religious Markets and Rational Choice


*** Reflection Paper for Section VII Due on Monday 12/05 at 4 PM ***

*** Final Exam, Monday, December 10th, Time TBA ***