

Cults and New Religious Movements-Spring 2017

REL 3076

Matherly 009 Tuesday 7 & Thursday 7-8

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Office Hours: 9:30 am-12:30 pm Thursday and by appointment

Course Description

Cults and New Religious Movements is intended to help students develop a nuanced understanding of how minority religious groups are classified, discussed, studied, and portrayed inside and outside of the academy. In this course we will explore theoretical and methodological approaches to studying NRMs using case studies addressing a variety of religious traditions that have emerged in the past 200 years. While this class primarily has an Americas focus, students are encouraged to think about the global implications of religious belief and practice, especially in the digital age. We will explore a variety of questions including: What is the academic study of religion and what are New Religious Movements? Why do some people join New Religious Movements and why do others oppose them? Where do issues like gender, race, and media fit into the discussion of NRMs?

Objectives

Students will:

- Become familiar with the terms used by scholars, believers, critics, and the media to discuss groups referred to as New Religious Movements
- Gain an understanding of the histories and beliefs of key NRMs in the Americas from the mid 19th century to the present.
- Engage in online discussion with their peers to experience group learning outside of the classroom.
- Leave the course with knowledge of how to utilize databases, journals, and scholarly works to develop their own independent research.

Course Requirements

Reading Reflection and Participation (25% of Final Grade)

Students are required to sign up for a Twitter account that they will use to post reading responses, discussion questions, and interact with their classmates outside of the classroom. You may use an existing account or create one specifically for this course, and the account can be made public or private. However, students are required to supply the instructor with their handle by the second week of class, and add all their classmates by the beginning of the third week (using twitter lists to manage followers is encouraged). Students are required to post at least 5 relevant tweets a week, but can engage more if desired. It is also suggested that students follow relevant religious studies accounts or the accounts of NRMs they are interested in. All posts should be tagged with #NRM3076.

Mid-term and Final Exams (10% of Final Grade-Each)

The mid-term and final exams will be a take-home essay format. Students will be asked to answer two questions (3-4 pages each in length) in a detailed fashion. Students must cite sources and provide salient examples using the assigned readings, videos, and course lectures. The essays must be typed using 1-inch margins and should be in 12pt Times New Roman font. The questions will be handed out well before the due date so that students have ample time to prepare for and complete the exams. Therefore, the exams are expected to be well written, contain few grammatical or punctuation mistakes, and demonstrate a high level of critical thinking and analytical skill.

Research Project (45% of Final Grade-All Components)

Each student will be expected to complete a research paper (8-10 pages in length) that covers a particular New Religious Movement or group opposed to New Religious Movements. Students will be expected to provide a brief history of their group, and also analyze the manner in which members, scholars, and the media discuss the group or organization. While students may choose to cover a group discussed in class, outside research using relevant scholarly research and primary source documents is required. Students should make a decision concerning the focus of their paper by the end of the third week of the course. This selection must be communicated in writing to the instructor for feedback and approval. The project will be broken up into sections and will be due at various points throughout the semester. A handout with more specific information regarding the various mini-assignments will be made available as we get closer the project due dates.

Attendance (10% of Final Grade)

Attendance and participation are critical to your success in this class. You are allowed two unexcused absences. However, in the instance of documented illness, family emergency, university function, or religious holiday additional absences will be excused. Students are responsible for notifying the instructor of the date and reason these absences occur. Additional information about excusable absences can be found here: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog1011/policies/regulationattendance.html>. As upper division students in a specialized course I assume that you WANT to be enrolled in this course. If for any reason chronic absences become an issue, the student will need discuss their situation with me. Grade adjustments for this sort of behavior will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Breakdown of Assignments

Reading Reflection 25%

Mid-term Exam 10%

Final Exam 10%

Research Proposal 5%

Annotated Bibliography 5%

Historical Paper (3-4pages) 10%

Analytical Paper (3-4pages) 10%

Final Research Paper (8-10pages) 15%

Participation and Attendance 10%

Grading Scale

Student's final grade will be assigned based on their performance and will reflect the following scale:

A	95–100	C+	77-79
A-	90-94	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	E	0-59

Required Texts

Urban, Hugh B. -*New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements*

Chesnut, R. Andrew-*Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte the Skeleton Saint*

McCutcheon, Russell-“What is the Academic Study of Religion?” from the University of Alabama Website

Miner, Horace- “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” from *American Anthropologist* 1956, Volume 58, Issue 3.

*Chryssides, George D. and Benjamin E. Zeller eds- Chapters from *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements* eds. George D. Chryssides and Benjamin E. Zeller

*Landing, James E.- “Cyrus Reed Teed and the Koreshan Unity” from *America's Communal Utopias*

*Cowan, Douglas E. and David G. Bromley-“Transcendental Meditation: Questions of Science and Therapy” from *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Brief History*

*Lewis, James R.- “Satanic Ritual Abuse” from *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements Volume II* eds. James R. Lewis and Inga B. Tollefsen

*Chidester, David- “The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock and Roll” from *Religion and American Culture: A Reader* ed. David Hackett

Readings marked with (*) are available through canvas or online.

Reading

Students are expected to do all of the reading for this class. There are no exceptions. Success on exams and group discussions depends on the student’s close reading of the material. The professor reserves the right to administer pop-quizzes if class discussion becomes stagnant and/or if it becomes clear that the readings are being neglected. If possible, please read the assignments in the order they are listed on the syllabus.

Class Discussion

In addition to discussing readings and relevant news articles using the class Twitter hashtag, students will be expected to engage their classmates in detailed discussions about the readings for that day in the classroom. We will, as best as we can, conduct the class in a seminar format. Some classes may require lectures, but group, student-led discussion will be the desired goal. Students are expected to be respectful of one another's opinions, and personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to uphold the academic honor code of the University of Florida. Any student found in violation of this code will be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible. Students should take care in correctly citing all sources consulted during research. More information about the honor code can be found here: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scer/honorcode.php>

Students with Disabilities

Students in need of special accommodations must register with the UF Student Disability Resource Center and provide the instructor with documentation to ensure that the student has adequate opportunity to reach their full potential. More information on disability accommodation at the University of Florida can be found at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/current.php>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Part I: Introduction and Theoretical Considerations

- Week 1-Intro
 - Thursday (1/5)
 - McCutcheon-“What is the Academic Study of Religion?”
 - Miner- “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”
- Week 2-What do we mean by cults and NRMs?
 - Tuesday (1/10)
 - Urban Chapter 1 and Appendix on Theory
 - Thursday (1/12)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 2
- Week 3-Anti-Cult Organizations
 - Tuesday (1/17)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 12 and 17
 - Thursday (1/19)
 - Film: Deprogrammed (2015)
 - **Last day to choose a Research Topic**
- Week 4-Media and Religion
 - Tuesday (1/24)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 9
 - Urban Chapter 11
 - Thursday (1/26)
 - Library Research Day

Part II: Charismatic Authority

- Week 5-Mormons
 - Tuesday (1/31)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 6 and 13
 - Thursday (2/2)
 - Urban Chapter 3
 - **Research Proposal Due**
- Week 6-Koreshan Unity
 - Tuesday (2/7)
 - *James E. Landing- “Cyrus Reed Teed and the Koreshan Unity”
 - Thursday (2/9)
 - Film: Holy Hell (2016) and/or Kumare (2011)
 - **Annotated Bibliography due**

Part III: Women-Led Groups

- Week 7: Spiritualism
 - Tuesday (2/14)
 - Urban Chapter 4
 - Thursday (2/16)
 - *Chapter from *Cassadaga: The South’s Oldest Spiritualist Community*
TBD
- Week 8: Neo-Paganism
 - Tuesday (2/21)
 - Urban Chapter 8
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 4
 - *Religious Studies Project Podcast-A Critical Introduction to the History, Beliefs, and Practices of Wiccans- October 17, 2016
<http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/a-critical-introduction-to-the-history-beliefs-and-practices-of-wiccans/>
 - Thursday (2/23)
 - **Historical paper due**

Part IV: Globalization and NRMS

- Week 9: Transcendental Meditation and Hare Krishna
 - Tuesday (2/28)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapters 24 and 31
 - Urban Chapter 10
 - *Cowan, Douglas E. and David G. Bromley-“Transcendental Meditation: Questions of Science and Therapy”
 - Thursday (3/2)
 - **Midterm due**
- Week 10
 - **No Class-Spring Break**
- Week 11: Nation of Islam and Rastafarianism
 - Tuesday (3/14)
 - Urban Chapter 5
 - Thursday (3/16)

- Urban Chapter 6
- Week 12: Santa Muerte
 - Tuesday (3/21)
 - Chesnut Intro-Chapter 4
 - Thursday (3/23)
 - Chesnut Chapter 5-Conclusion

Part V: NRMs Millenarianism/Violence

- Week 13: Branch Davidians and Jonestown
 - Tuesday (3/28)
 - Urban Chapters 12 and 13
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapters 15 and 16
 - Thursday (3/30)
 - Optional Reading *Barkun, Michael *Religion and the Racist Right* Preface and Chapter 4
 - **Analytical Paper Due**

Part VI: UFOs and NRMs

- Week 14: Raelans and Heaven's Gate
 - Tuesday (4/4)
 - *Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 20
 - *Religious Studies Project Podcast-UFOs, Conspiracy Theories...and Religion?-May 9, 2016
<http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/ufos-conspiracy-theories-and-religion/>
 - Urban Chapter 14
 - Thursday (4/6)
 - *Ashley Fineburg "The Online Legacy of a Suicide Cult and the Webmasters Who Stayed Behind"
<http://gizmodo.com/the-online-legacy-of-a-suicide-cult-and-the-webmasters-1617403237>

Part VII: Satanic Panic, Political NRMs, and the Internet

- Week 15: Satanism
 - Tuesday (4/11)
 - Urban Chapter 9
 - *Lewis-"Satanic Ritual Abuse"
 - Thursday (4/13)
- Week 16: Pastafarianism
 - Tuesday (4/18)
 - *Chidester "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock and Roll"
 - Chryssides and Zeller Chapter 26
 - *Kathy Gilsinan "Big In Europe: The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster" <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/11/big-in-europe/501131/>

- Thursday (4/20)
 - **No class: Reading Day**
 - **Final Take Home Exam Due**

****Final Projects Due by Noon on Monday April 24th.**

PLEASE NOTE: the schedule of classes and assignments is subject to amendment at any point during the semester. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of any changes that are made and adjust accordingly. Should changes be made they will be announced in class and be promptly posted on the Canvas website.