



REL 6387: RELIGIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

Spring 2015

Tuesdays 2nd-3rd periods, Thursdays 3rd period

Anderson 101

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:45-1:30 and Thursdays 12:40-1:30 and by appointment

Description and Objectives

Latin American religions are diverse and complex, vastly different from the stereotyped image of a “Catholic continent.” No single course could cover the entire range of religious experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, but this class will introduce graduate students to some of the more significant and interesting varieties of religious life in Latin America, with particular attention to contemporary religious diversity and change. In the process, students will be exposed to and encouraged to evaluate a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion, past and present, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

One major theoretical and methodological issue will be the comparative study of religious ideas and practices. How, for example, can we evaluate the ethical dimensions of institutions such as human sacrifice in pre-colonial Mesoamerica from our contemporary Western position? How can we understand the syncretic processes and results of colonial religion in the face of the

power dynamics associated with the conquest? And how might we sift among the ideological, religious, and intellectual frameworks seeking to explain current religious diversity and change?

Another central theme will be the relations between religion and social change, including the role(s) of religion in encouraging, directing, and/or suppressing efforts to alter political structures; the relations between individual transformation and wider social change; and the ways that different social groups draw on the same religious symbols and rituals toward varying social and political ends.

A final concern, to be addressed throughout the semester, will be the adequacy of various theoretical and methodological approaches to religious life in Latin America. We will discuss varying ethnographic models and also examine problems related to the scarcity and ambiguity of many historical sources. Tied to this will be discussions about primary sources, including fiction, visual art, oral histories, and church documents, and also about researchers' relationships to their subjects and materials.

Goals

The course's first main goal will be to familiarize students with important historical developments and contemporary expressions of religion in Latin America. The second principal objective will be to begin training students to think critically about the use of particular theoretical and methodological models in the study of religion and society.

The course will also help prepare Ph.D. students for the Religion Department qualifying exam in Religions of Latin America, although additional readings will be required for that exam.

Policies, rules, expectations, and resources

1. *Attendance and reading:* I expect you to attend all meetings of the class, barring extraordinary circumstances, and to come prepared to discuss the reading at each and every class meeting.
2. *Handing in Assignments:* Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.
3. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may receive an extension on an assignment only in extraordinary circumstances *and* with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.
4. *Completion of All Assignments:* You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing for any assignment or requirement.

5. *Common Courtesy:* Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer or other device, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Repeat violations of these rules will result in dismissal from the class.

6. *Honor Code:* On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities:* Students requesting classroom accommodation 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.

8. *Counseling Resources* available on campus for students:
- a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575
 - b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
 - c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
 - d. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601

9. *Software Use:* All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Requirements

1. Complete all readings and be ready to discuss them on the day for which they are assigned. Attendance is mandatory. Participation will be 10% of final grade.

2. Take-home essay exam due on Wednesday, 2/11 by 4:00 pm in my mailbox. 25% of final grade.
3. Review essay due Monday, April 6 by 4:00 pm in my mailbox; 30% of final grade.
4. Final Exam. 35% of final grade. Date TBA according to university exam schedule.

Course Readings

Note: All books are on reserve at Library West. Required books will be available for 24 hr.-overnight use. Recommended books will be available for 24 hr. use. Several books are also available as e-books, as noted below.

Required Books

1. Kay Almere Read, *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Indiana, 1998; ISBN 0253334004). E-book available through UF library.
2. Irene Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World* (Duke, 2004; ISBN 0822334178).
3. Todd Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality: Brazil's Contestado Rebellion, 1912-1916* (Duke, 1991; ISBN 0822311674)
4. Paul C. Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and God: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomble* (Oxford, 2002; ISBN 0195188225)
5. Kristin Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life* (Columbia, 2005; ISBN 0231136897)
6. Daniel H. Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton, 1992; ISBN 0691024596)
7. David Smilde, *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism* (California, 2007; ISBN 0520249437).
8. Leah Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon: Religion, Migration, and the Mexican Dream* (NYU, 2013; ISBN 1479839787).

Recommended background reading

1. A. Peterson and M. Vasquez, *Latin American Religion: Histories and Documents in Context* (New York University Press, 2008; ISBN 081476732X)

2. John Lynch, *New Worlds: A Religious History of Latin America* (Yale University Press, 2012; ISBN 030016680X).

Schedule

Tues 1/6	Introduction to the class
Th 1/8	Read, <i>Time and Sacrifice</i> , Ch. 1-2
Tues 1/13	Read, <i>Time and Sacrifice</i> , Ch. 3-5
Th 1/15	Read, <i>Time and Sacrifice</i> , Ch. 6-7
Tues 1/20	View film “The Mission”
Th 1/22	Silverblatt, <i>Modern Inquisitions</i> , Ch. 1-3
Tu 1/27	Silverblatt, <i>Modern Inquisitions</i> , Ch. 4-6
Th 1/29	Silverblatt, <i>Modern Inquisitions</i> , Ch. 7-8 and Afterword
Tu 2/3	Diacon, <i>Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality</i> , Ch. 1-3
Th 2/5	Diacon, <i>Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality</i> , Ch. 4-5
Tu 2/10	Diacon, <i>Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality</i> , 6-7
Wed. 2/11	* Take home exam due on Wednesday, 2/11 by 4:00 pm in my mailbox *
Th 2/12	Johnson, <i>Secrets, Gossip, and God</i> , Introduction and Ch. 1-2
Tu 2/17	Johnson, <i>Secrets, Gossip, and God</i> , Ch. 3-5
Th 2/19	Johnson, <i>Secrets, Gossip, and God</i> , Ch. 6-7 and conclusion
Tu 2/24	Norget, <i>Days of Death</i> , Introduction and Ch. 1-3
Th 2/26	Norget, <i>Days of Death</i> , Ch. 4-6

* SPRING BREAK *

Tu 3/10 Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*, Introduction and Ch. 1-2

Th 3/12 Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 3/17 Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*, Ch. 5-6

Th 3/19 Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*, Ch. 7-8

Tu 3/24 Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*, Ch. 9-10

Th 3/26 Smilde, *Reason to Believe*, Ch. 1-2

Tu 3/31 Smilde, *Reason to Believe*, Ch. 3-4

Th. 4/2 Smilde, *Reason to Believe*, Ch. 5-6

Wed. 4/3 Smilde, *Reason to Believe*, Ch. 7-8 and Epilogue

Mon. 4/6 Review Essay due by 4:00 pm in my mailbox

Tu 4/7 Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon*, Introduction and Ch. 1-2

Th. 4/9 Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 4/14 Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon*, Ch. 5-6

Th. 4/16 Sarat, *Fire in the Canyon*, Ch. 7-8

Tu 4/21 Exam preview

Final exam: TBA