

**Fall 2014**

**RELIGION IN AMERICAS**

**RLG 6126 03AB**

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**Wright, Robin**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The basic objective of the course is to provide a long-range historical and global overview of the encounters and changes amongst the religions of the Americas. To what extent can we speak of a common past and present among the religions of the Americas ? How has scholarship created various rifts between the studies of North and Latin American religions; Highland and Lowland Native South American religions; Latin American and Brazilian religions; and others ? And how can these rifts be overcome and a truly hemispheric perspective be developed for the study of Religions of the Americas ?

In this course, we will consider five broad thematic areas: 1. Theoretical and Methodological Questions on a Hemispheric Approach; 2. Pre-Colonial and Colonial Indigenous Religious Traditions and Cultures; 3. African Religious Traditions and Diaspora Religions in the colonial "Atlantic World"; 4. Christianities in the Americas; 5. New Religious Movements. Among the principal factors we shall consider as formative of Religions in the Americas are: Indigeneity, Post-Colonial Displacements, Mestizaje, and "Borderland" Religions, Globalization, Transnationalization, and Diaspora Religions.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This is primarily a reading course. It is unique in that both the instructor and the graduate student participants will be reading and seeking to understand portions of this material. Therefore, we look upon this course as a kind of collective venture into new terrain in which all are expected to participate together, and each can provide a special area of expertise which will help us answer some of the questions posed above.

The course bibliography is based on the Religion and the Americas Area Reading list plus a significant amount of modification in the sections that have to do with indigenous religious traditions, new religious movements, and Asian-American religions. In a spirit of serious adventure, we will read and discuss our way through the semester with each of us bearing some leadership load. Thus, the course requirements consist of participation in seminars, presentations of summaries of the readings, discussion and debate about ideas raised in the readings, as well as book reports and short reflection papers. The central guiding

question of the course: what is entailed by “a hemispheric view” on the Religions of the Americas ?

**There are five basic requirements:**

1. Read and come to the seminar prepared to discuss the material for that week (absences will not be tolerated unless justified with a documented excuse);
2. Each week a student will be responsible for summarizing the issues contained in the week’s readings, which will serve as a starting-point for our discussions.
3. Seven times in the course of the semester, each student will be required to submit a one-page synthesis of the required readings for that day;
4. Two book reports, 3-5 pages in length, double-spaced.
5. Seven (7) reflection papers/essays, due at the end of each unit, 3-5 pp. apiece, reflecting on the key questions and issues raised in the bibliography for that unit.

**GRADING:**

- active participation in weekly discussions: 10 points
- weekly summaries: 10 points
- 8 one-page syntheses of readings: 10 points
- 2 book reports: 10 points
- 6 reflection papers/essays: 60 points

Total: 100 points

**BOOKS TO PURCHASE:**

**Required or recommended texts:**

**Text No. 1** Title: RELIGION IN THE ANDES Author: SABINE  
MACCORMACK

ISBN: Publisher: PRINCETON Copyright: PRINCETON  
Cover: paperback book Edition: 1991 This text is required

**Text No. 2** Title: RELIGIONS OF MESOAMERICA Author: DAVID  
CARRASCO

ISBN: Publisher: WAVELAND Copyright: WAVELAND  
Cover: paperback book Edition: 2014 This text is required

Text No. 3 Title: BLACK ATLANTIC RELIGION Author: J. LORAND  
MATTORY

ISBN: Publisher: PRINCETON Copyright: PRINCETON  
Cover: paperback book Edition: 2005 This text is required

**Text No. 4** Title: OUR LADY OF THE EXILE Author: THOMAS TWEED

ISBN: Publisher: OXFORD U PRESS Copyright: OXFORD  
 Cover: paperback book Edition: 1997 This text is required

**Text No. 5** Title: BEYOND PRIMITIVISM Author: JACOB OLUPONA  
 ISBN: Publisher: ROUTLEDGE Copyright: ROUTLEDGE  
 Cover: paperback book Edition: 2004 This text is recommended

**Text No. 6** Title: SEARCHING FOR AFRICA IN BRAZIL: POWER AND  
 TRADITION IN CANDOMBLE Author: STEFANIA CAPONE  
 ISBN: Publisher: DUKE Copyright: DUKE  
 Cover: paperback book Edition: 2010 This text is recommended

**Comments or Notes for Students and Vendors:** Reprints and papers will complement the books; they will be Xeroxed and sent via pdf email to your addresses well before the assigned date of discussion.

### Topic Areas and Reading Calendar:

- I. Introduction to Theoretical and Methodological Approaches: Readings:  
 (1) Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1956. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press [This book is available as an e-book on Google]; (2) John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation*, Duke, 1999; (3) Readings from Part 1, Olupona, *Beyond Primitivism*, "Introduction", Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4;
- II. Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (pre-colonial, colonial, and the Indigeneity Movements of the present): Readings: (1) Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*. Princeton, 1991. (2) David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 2010. (3) Wright, RM (ms), "Indigenous Religious Beliefs and Practices in the Americas: Towards a Hemispheric Perspective";
- III. African Diaspora and the Genesis of Afro-American Traditions: Readings: (1) Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn Updated and Expanded Edition (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)* University of California Press; With a New Foreword by Claudine Michel edition (April 5, 2011); (2) S. Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil*, Duke University, 2010; (3) Luis Nicolau Parés & Roger Sansi, *Sorcery in the Black Atlantic*, Chicago, 2011.
- IV. Christianities in the Americas: Readings: (1) J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "The Post-Colonization of the (Latin) American Expansion: A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism', 'Post-Colonialism', and 'Mestizaje'. In: *After Colonialism: Imagined Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, G. Prakash, ed.

Princeton, 2005; **(2)** Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*. Oxford, 1997; (3) Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1993 *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (4) Readings from Vasquez & Peterson (eds), *Latin American Religions*. NYU, 2008; (5) Readings from Vilaça & Wright, *Native Christians*, 2009.

V. Asian-American Religious Traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism & Islam):  
**Readings: TBD**

Gomez, Michael A. 2005. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VI. Judaism in the Americas: **Readings: TBD**

VII. New Religious Movements in the Americas: **Readings:** (1) Partridge, Christopher, ed. *Encyclopedia of New Religions*, 2005, Lion (selections); (2) Taylor, Bron, ed. *Avatar and Nature Spirituality*, 2013, Wilfred Laurier University Press (selections); (3) Taylor, B., ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2005, Metanexus (selections).

### Calendar of Assignments:

Week 1 (08/26-28): Introduction to Theoretical and Methodological Approaches. Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1956. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press [This book is available as an e-book on Google];

Week 2 (09/02-04): Introduction to Theoretical and Methodological Approaches. John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation*, Duke, 1999;

Week 3 (09/09-11): Introduction to Theoretical and Methodological Approaches: Olupona, *Beyond Primitivism*, Part 1, "Introduction", Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4;

Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (pre-colonial, colonial, and the Indigeneity Movements of the present). Wright, RM (ms), "Indigenous Religious Beliefs and Practices in the Americas: Towards a Hemispheric Perspective";

Week 4 (09/16-18): Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (pre-colonial, colonial, and the Indigeneity Movements of the present). Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*. Princeton, 1991.

Week 5 (09/23-25): Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (pre-colonial, colonial, and the Indigeneity Movements of the present). David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Waveland Press, 2014.

Week 6 (09/30-10/02): African Diaspora and the Genesis of Afro-American Traditions. Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn Updated and Expanded Edition (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)* University of California Press; With a New Foreword by Claudine Michel edition (April 5, 2011)

Week 7 (10/07-09): African Diaspora and the Genesis of Afro-American Traditions. Luis Nicolau Parés & Roger Sansi, *Sorcery in the Black Atlantic*, Chicago, 2011.

Week 8 (10/14-16): African Diaspora and the Genesis of Afro-American Traditions. S. Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil*, Duke University, 2010;

Christianities in the Americas (Protestantism & Catholicism) Vasquez & Peterson (eds), *Latin American Religions*. NYU, 2008 (selections); Vilaça & Wright, *Native Christians*, 2009 (selections).

J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "The Post-Colonization of the (Latin) American Expansion: A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism', 'Post-Colonialism', and 'Mestizaje'". In: *After Colonialism: Imagined Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, G. Prakash, ed. Princeton, 2005;

Week 9 (10/21-23): Christianities in the Americas (Diaspora Religions) Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*. Oxford, 1997;

Week 10 (10/28-30): Christianities in the Americas (Catholicism in Northeast Brazil) Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1993 *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 11 (11/04-06): Judaism in the Americas. TBD

Week 12 (11/13): Asian-American Religious Traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism & Islam). TBD

Week 13 (11/18-20): Asian-American Religious Traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism & Islam). TBD

Gomez, Michael A. 2005. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 14 (11/25): New Religious Movements in the Americas(1) Partridge, Christopher, ed. *Encyclopedia of New Religions*, 2005, Lion (selections); (2) Taylor, Bron, ed. *Avatar and Nature Spirituality*, 2013, Wilfred Laurier University Press (selections);

Week 15 (12/02-04): New Religious Movements in the Americas (3) Taylor, B., ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2005, Metanexus (selections).

Week 16 (12/09): Final Class – Towards A Hemispheric Perspective on Religions of the Americas