

## **Course Syllabus**

### **RELIGION IN THE AMERICAS RLG 6126**

**INSTRUCTOR:  
Robin M. Wright  
Anderson 107C  
392-1625**

**(office hours: by apptmt.)**

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This graduate-level course offers a long-range, historical, and hemispheric overview of the encounters and exchanges among the religions and spiritual traditions of the Americas. Course readings and discussions focus on six broad thematic areas: 1. Theoretical and Methodological Questions in a Hemispheric Approach to the study of Religions in the Americas; 2. Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas; 3. Colonial Encounters Part I: Christianity and Indigenous Religious Traditions; 4. Colonial Encounters Part II: African Religious Traditions and Diaspora; 5. Borderland Religions and Post-Colonial Encounters; 6. Globalization, Transnationalism, and Migration.

This is primarily a reading and discussion course. The course bibliography is derived from the Graduate Program's "Religions in the Americas" Area Reading list. We will read and discuss our way through the semester with each of us bearing some of the 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 reviews and one longer paper (20-25 pp.).

This is a proseminar. It is intended to immerse graduate students in the literature. Students will read and critically assess major books, articles and methods current in the field. Students will not do primary research, however. In the seminars, students will be expected to clearly report on the readings and directly respond to the ideas of fellow students.

We look upon this course as a kind of collective venture into the 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 by the thematic areas discussed in the

course. Some of the central guiding questions are: what is entailed by “a hemispheric view” on the Religions of the Americas and how is such a view distinct from prior perspectives? What theories, concepts, methodologies, and resources are available for constructing and developing a truly hemispheric perspective? How does each Module in this course contribute to the construction of a hemispheric approach, taking into account the unique dynamics produced by the encounters among the diverse religions?

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

There are five major requirements:

- 1) Each week a core of common readings will form the basis of our discussions. Your careful reading and reflection upon these weekly readings is essential to the success of this course. The required books are listed in the syllabus; some are available at the University Bookstore and all can be purchased via the internet (many are Kindle e-books). Most of the articles will be available online or through course reserve in the UF library.
- 2) Three times during the semester each student will be responsible for summarizing the methodological and theoretical issues contained in the week's common readings (three presentations will be required of each student). This summary will offer a starting point for our discussions.
- 3) Six times in the course of the semester each student will be required to submit by class time a one-page synthesis of the required readings for that day.
- 4) Two book reviews will be required of each student. These reviews will consist of three to five pages, double-spaced. Students are also expected to provide expertise in the discussion of the week's topics based on their reading.
- 5) Each student will also prepare an essay on one of the topics discussed in the field. The essay should be twenty to twenty-five pages in length. The subject may be based on one of the oral reports or book reports, and it should fully cover the topic. First drafts of this essay will be distributed to class members and discussed in class.

## **GRADING:**

Essay (20-25 pp.) 26%  
Oral Report (3) 30%  
Book Reviews (2) 14%

One Page Papers (6) 30%

## **TOPICS AND READINGS:**

### **Schedule of Seminars:**

#### **I. Orientation (week 1)**

Introductions

Review of syllabus

Course mechanics

#### **II. Overviews (weeks 2-3)**

Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe. 2003. *The Americas: A Hemispheric History*. New York: Modern Library. [Kindle; & on Reserve]

Elliot, J.H. 2007. *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* [available online, Kindle, & on Reserve]

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "International at the Creation. Early Modern American History" Chapter 4 in: Bender, Thomas, ed. 2002. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press; [book available online, pdf in Modules]

Rogers, Daniel. 1998. "Exceptionalism." In *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, edited by Anthony Molho and Gordon Wood. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [pdf in Modules]

#### **Recommended:**

Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1956. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [Kindle; & on Reserve]

#### **III. Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (weeks 4-5)**

Pauketat, Tim. 2009. *Cahokia. Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*. NY: Penguin. [available as Kindle]

Carrasco, David. 2014. *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Waveland Press [available as Kindle ebook; & on Reserve at Smathers]

*The Popol Vuh*, Dennis Tedlock (ed.), (pdf in Modules section);

*The Huarochiri Manuscript. A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion*. Translation from the Quechua by Frank Salomon and George Urioste,

University of Texas Press, 1991; [available as Kindle; & on Reserve][Read the Introductory essay by Frank Salomon up to the section "Previous editions ..."]

Zuidema, Tom. 2002. "Inca Religion: Its Foundations in the Central Andean Context", Ch. 8, in: L. Sullivan (ed.) *Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America*, N.Y.: Continuum, pp. 236-46 (pdf in Modules).

Kopenawa, Davi & Bruce Albert, 2013. *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Harvard (available as Kindle; pdf selections in Modules section).

Richter, Daniel K. 2003. *Facing East from Indian Country*. Cambridge: Harvard University [available online through Smathers; read selected chapters]

### **III. Colonial Encounters I: Christianity and Native Religions (weeks 6-7)**

Greer, Allan. 2005. *Mohawk Saint. Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [available at Library West, and as Kindle e-book]

Rachel Wheeler, "Hendrick Aupaumut Christian Mahican Prophet", in: Joel Martin and Mark B. Nicholas, *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2010 [pdf chapter in Modules]

Barr, Juliana. 2004. "A Diplomacy of Gender: Rituals of First Contact in the "Land of the Tejas," *William and Mary Quarterly* LXI:3 [pdf in Modules tab]

Austin, Alfredo Lopez, "Guidelines for the Study of Mesoamerican religious traditions", in J. Olupona (ed.), *Beyond Primitivism*, pp. 118-127; [pdf in Modules tab]

Scheper-Hughes, Jennifer. 2021. *The church of the dead: the epidemic of 1576 and the birth of Christianity in the Americas*. NY: NYU Press.

Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru*. Princeton, 1991. [available online at Smathers]

Sullivan, Lawrence E., "The World and Its End: Cosmologies and Eschatologies of South American Indians" in Sullivan, L.E., 2002. *Native Religions and Cultures of Central and South America*. Continuum, pp. 179-99.[pdf in Modules tab]

#### **Recommended:**

Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short account of the Destruction of the Indies* (available as audible and ebook, in Smathers, numerous copies of Las Casas' Report), 1992 [read selections]

Miguel León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, expanded and updated edition, pp. xxv-xlvi, 1-126 [Kindle; & on Reserve]

Richard White, 2011[1991]. "Chapter 2. The Middle Ground" in *The middle ground Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650–1815*. Cambridge: CUP. [pdf in Modules tab]

#### **IV. Colonial Encounters II: The African Diaspora (weeks 8-9)**

Sensbach, Jon F. 2005. *Rebecca's Revival: Making Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press[Kindle; & on Reserve] ;

Mattory, Lorand. 2005. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press;

Gomez, Michael A. 2005. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge: CUP.[Kindle; & on Reserve]

Fernandez Olmos, Margarite and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. 2011. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: an introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*. NY: NYU Press.

Sweet, James H. 2003. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.[Kindle; & on Reserve]

#### **Recommended:**

Horne, *The Deepest South*. Introduction and Chapter 1

#### **V. Borderlands and Post-Colonial Encounters (weeks 10-12)**

Brooks, James. 2002. *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.[Kindle; & on Reserve]

Hendrickson, Brett. 2017. *The Healing Power of the Santuario de Chimayo. America's Miraculous Church*. New York: New York University Press.[Kindle; & on Reserve]

Leon, Luis. 2004. *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Las Fronteras/Borderlands: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

Saldivar, Jose David. 1997. *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Garcia Canclini, 1995. "Hybrid Cultures, Oblique Powers," in *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 206-63. [pdf in Modules] Read also: Foreword to Garcia Canclini, by R. Rosaldo. [docx in Modules]

## **VI. Globalization, Migration, and Transnationalism (weeks 12 - 14)**

Appadurai, Arjun 1990. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Public Culture* 2/2: 1-24. [docx in Modules tab]

Tweed, Thomas. 1997. *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford. [Kindle; & on Reserve]

Casanova, José. 2001. "Religion, the new millennium, and globalization." *Sociology of Religion* 62/4: 415-441. [pdf in Modules tab]

McAlister, Elizabeth. 2002. *Rara: Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [available online, Kindle, & on Reserve]

Levitt, Peggy, 2004. "Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life." *Sociology of Religion* 65/1: 1-18.[pdf in Modules tab]

Khan, Aisha. 2004. *Callaloo Nation. Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity among South Asians in Trinidad*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [available online, Kindle; & on Reserve]

Napolitano, Valentina. 2016. *Migrant Hearts and the Atlantic Return: Transnationalism and the Roman Catholic Church*. Fordham University Press. [available online at Smathers]

## **VII. Papers Workshop (Final Week)**

Discussion of Drafts of Final Papers