



**RLG 6387: RELIGIONS IN LATIN AMERICA**  
Spring 2017

Instructor: Anna Peterson

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

**Description and Objectives**

This class will introduce graduate students to the varieties of religious life in Latin America, from pre-colonial indigenous experiences through to the contemporary period, across different traditions and regions. 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 politics,

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.
2. Presentation to the class on a selected topic; date TBD. 20% of final grade.

2. Take-home essay exam due Sunday, 2/21. 25% of final grade.
3. Review essay due Sunday, 4/4. 25% of final grade.
4. Final Exam. 30% of final grade. Date TBA according to university exam schedule.

## **Course Readings**

### Required Books

1. David Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Beacon, 2000).
2. Todd Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality: Brazil's Contestado Rebellion, 1912-1916* (Duke, 1991)
3. Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala* (Texas, 2002).
5. Joseph Murphy, *Santeria: African Spirits in America* (Beacon, 1993)

### Grad student only books:

1. Kay Read, *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Indiana, 1998)
2. Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Bodies of Christ* (Duke, 1999)
3. David Smilde, *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism* (California, 2006)
4. Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou* (Duke, 2019).

Other readings will be posted on Canvas.

## **Schedule**

### Module One: Introduction to the Class

Tues 1/12      Introduction to the class

Th 1/14          Michel Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History

of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race.” *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (Dec. 2013), 1345-1375

Module Two: Precolonial Religion and Politics

Tues 1/19 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Introduction and Ch. 1

Th 1/21 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 2-3

Tues 1/26 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 4-5

Th 1/28 Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, Ch. 6-8

Grad students add: Kay Read, *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Indiana, 1998)

Module Three: Religion and Politics in the Colonial Period

Tu 2/2 Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*, Ch. 1

Th 2/4 Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*, Ch. 2-3

Tu 2/9 Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*, Ch. 4

Th 2/11 Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*, Ch. 5-6

Tu 2/16 Burns, “Gender and the Politics of Mestizaje: The Convent of Santa Clara in Cuzco, Peru.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), 5-44

Th 2/18 Silverblatt, “New Christians and New World Fears in Seventeenth-Century Peru.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, No. 3 (Jul., 2000), 524-546

Grad students add: Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Bodies of Christ* (Duke, 1999)

Take home essay due Sunday, Feb. 21, by midnight

Module Four: Millenarianism

Tu 2/23 Patricia Pessar, “Three Moments in Brazilian Millenarianism: The Interrelationship between Politics and Religion.” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 28, No. 1 (Summer, 1991), 95-116

Th 2/25 Robert Levine, “Canudos in the National Context.” *The Americas* 48, No.

2 (Oct., 1991), 207-222

Tu 3/2 Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality*, Ch. 1

Th 3-4 Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality*, Ch. 2-4

Tu 3/9 Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality*, Ch. 5-6

Th 3/11 Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality*, Ch. 7

No additional grad student readings this module

Module Five: Catholics, Pentecostals, and Politics

Tu 3/16 Mary Roldán, “Acción Cultural Popular, Responsible Procreation, and the  
Roots of Social Activism in Rural Colombia.” *Latin American Research  
Review* 49 (2014), 27-44

Th 3/18 Leila Celis and Victoria Furio, “The Legacy of Liberation Theology in  
Colombia: The Defense of Life and Territory.” *Latin American Perspectives*  
43, No. 3 (May 2016), 69-84

Tu 3/23 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 1-2

Th 3/25 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 3/30 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 5-6

Th. 4/1 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 7-8

Grad students add: David Smilde, *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American  
Evangelicalism* (California, 2006)

Review Essay due Sunday, 4/4, by midnight

Module Six: Ethnicity, Race, and Gender

Tu 4/6 Murphy, *Santería: African Spirits in America*, Part 1

Th. 4/8 Murphy, *Santería: African Spirits in America*, Part 2

Tu 4/13 Murphy, *Santería: African Spirits in America*, Part 3

Th. 4/15      Jalane Schmidt, “The Antidote to Wall Street? Cultural and Economic Mobilizations of Afro-Cuban Religions.” *Latin American Perspectives* 43, No. 3 (May 2016), 163-185

Tu 4/20      Ruth Chojnacki, “Religion, Autonomy, and the Priority of Place in Mexico's Maya Highlands.” *Latin American Perspectives* 43, No. 3 (May 2016), 31-50

Grad students add: Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou* (Duke, 2019).

Final Exam: TBD (based on UF official final exam schedule)