

Spring 2010

Course Syllabus

CH 6302

Religion in America

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WELCOME to **CH 6302, Religion in America.**

We will be studying the story of religion in the America from its origins to the twenty first century. It is hoped, prayed, and anticipated that the student will develop life long habits of learning as a result of this history course. Each student is invited to discover or perhaps gain a greater understanding of their personal faith and its origins.

Academic Objectives

- The student will learn the major people, key events, and the significant trends in interpretation of American religious history.
- The student will become familiar with the major movements of Christianity— Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism as well as the Stone-Campbell theological tradition.
- The student will become familiar with the databases, reference works, and bibliographical tools used in the study of American religion.

Formative Objectives

- To fall in love more deeply with God’s word—both the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ himself, and the written words of Scripture.
- To develop an even greater appreciation for the church as it expresses itself in history and in the present world.

Textbook Information

Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale University Press, 1989).

George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1991).

Steve Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (Random House, 2008).

Peter Williams, *America’s Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-first Century* Third Edition (University of Illinois 2008).

Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty-and Thirty Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Evaluation and Grading Policies

Grading Percentages		Grading Scale	
Participation	10%	93-100	A
Founding Faith Project	15%	90-92	A-
Three Book Reviews	30%	87-89	B+
Three Identification Lists	15%	83-86	B
Two Exams	30%	80-82	B-
		77-79	C+

Participation. We will meet on January 13-16, February 26-27, March 26-27, and April 23-24. Students are committed to eight (8) hours of class involvement at each session-- Friday 4:00-8:00 pm and Saturday 8:00-12:00 pm. Consistent attendance is expected. Taking your own notes and actively participating in class discussion will help you internalize the material. Inconsistent attendance will result in a failing grade in this course.

In addition to attendance, the participation grade will be evaluated based on the contribution that each student makes to the overall learning environment throughout the course.

Readings. There are five texts that we will use in this course. Williams' book is the primary text for this course, and lecture outlines will roughly follow its layout. To prepare for most lectures, students will need to complete the reading before attending class.

Submitting Work. For all assignments, use 12 point Times Roman font and standard one-inch margins. All papers should be double-spaced.

Waldman Group Project. Each student will be placed in a group and asked to collaborate with others. The project is divided into two sections: In the first section, type a paper of approximately five pages indicating your religious heritage.

- How has your life been shaped by sacred things, people, or events?
- Do you consider your parents to be religious or spiritual people? Why or Why not?
- Have you experienced conversion or an "awakening" to God's presence?
- If you are a person of prayer, what kinds of things do you find yourself praying about?
- How much do you know about the history of religion (or Christianity) in America?
- Where did learn what you know so far?
- If you could learn more about one facet of religion in America, what would that be and why is it important to you?

As your instructor, I will plan to share some of my own autobiography with you at our first session, and I will encourage you as students to share from your autobiographies as well.

The second section of this paper will call for you to meet with other students to write a five page combined review of Steven Waldman's *Founding Faith* (2008). The first two pages of the combined review should summarize the outline of Waldman's argument. Then as a group discuss and write about the following questions.

- How do you understand the relationship between church and state as established by the Founding Fathers? Illustrate the range of opinions that they held.
- How did their personal experiences shape their convictions?
- Which sections of this book surprised you the most?
- Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?

Also part of the grade of this project will be an assessment done by your fellow group members. This assignment is due on Friday February 26th.

Hatch, Marsden, and Wuthnow Reviews. For each book, students will prepare a six (6) page review. In each essay, the student should use 3 pages to summarize the general content, outline, and purpose of the book.

Then, in the second half of the essay, students should offer a three (3) page personal reaction to the book. What are the strengths of the book? What do you think of the author's perspective? Why or Why Not? What do you think would have made the book stronger? Each student should compare their own religious convictions with those represented within the book as well as the authors.

Identification. Students will provide short answer definitions to key persons, organizations, and events from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. All answers will be given in complete sentences.

Exams. There will be two exams that will cover class notes and readings. The format is short answer and essays. Students should be able to summarize the basic facts discussed in the lectures and be able to articulate concrete examples from the readings. Students should allot three hours to take the Mid Term exam, and it is to be completed without consulting notes or the readings. This exam will be handed out at the end of class on Friday, February 27 and is due on Friday, March 26. The final exam will be taken in class on Saturday, April 24.

Meals and Breaks. Please plan to bring food to class because we will eat together as part of our class sessions.

Lecture Topics and Assignments

<p>January 13-14</p>	<p>An Introduction to Church History Interpreting Religion in America Oral Traditions, The Mediterranean Matrix, and The Reformation Era</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Read Williams <i>America's Religions</i>, 1-104</p>
<p>January 15-16</p>	<p>Early America: Europeans, Colonials, and Traditional Peoples Before the Revolution</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Read Williams <i>America's Religions</i>, 105-175</p>
<p>February 26-27</p>	<p>Religious Community Formation in the New Republic</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Identification Due Read Williams <i>America's Religions</i>, 177-242 Waldman Group Project Due Hatch Book Review Due Take Home Exam One Assigned</p>
<p>March 26-27</p>	<p>The End of the Frontier and the Rise of the City</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Read Williams <i>America's Religions</i>, 243-342 Nineteenth Century I & II Identification Due Marsden Book Review Due Take Home Exam Due</p>
<p>April 23-24</p>	<p>The Twentieth Century and Beyond: Further Encounters with Modernity and Pluralism</p> <p><u>Assignments:</u> Read Williams <i>America's Religions</i>, 343-529 Twentieth Century Identification Due Wuthnow Book Reviews Due Final Exam (in class on Saturday April 24)</p>