

**RLST 2500: RELIGIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
**University of Colorado**  
**Spring 2017**  
**Lectures MW 11-11:50 in HUM 250 and weekly recitations**

**PROF. DEBORAH WHITEHEAD**

**Office:** HUMN 274, Box in HUMN 240

**Office Hours:** Mondays 12-2 and by appointment

**Office Phone:** 303-492-7649

**Email:** [deborah.whitehead@colorado.edu](mailto:deborah.whitehead@colorado.edu)

**Teaching Assistant, Office Hours/Locations, and Email:**

Cameron Rowlett, [Cameron.rowlett@colorado.edu](mailto:Cameron.rowlett@colorado.edu), Tuesdays 12-2pm, HUM 216

**Recitations:**

2500-011     Wed 1-1:50 p.m.     MCOL E186

2500-014     Wed 3-3:50 p.m.     HLMS 263

Email is always the best way to contact your professor and TA. We will respond to emails within 24 hours as a general rule; response times may be longer on weekends and university holidays.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will introduce students to the historical and contemporary study of religions in the United States. It will not seek to give either a comprehensive historical account of the development of *all* American religions, nor a survey of *all* religious institutions, movements, and traditions that have made up the vast and diverse U.S. religious landscape. Rather, the course approaches the topic of religions in the U.S. through a framework of religious literacy and the investigation of primary source texts, which, set in context, will give us snapshots of religion as lived, practiced, and experienced by Americans of all backgrounds during the past 400 years. Along the way we will encounter many of the key religious traditions, movements, and figures that have shaped American religious belief and practice. In addition the course will consider such questions as: What major cultural forces shape and have shaped religions in America? How have Americans of different faiths and nationalities encountered, interacted, argued, clashed, and cooperated with one another? Have they seen America as a promised land or place of refuge—or as a place of conflict and suffering? What are some ways that religious Americans think about faith, spirituality, religious diversity and church and state? Ultimately, how does the academic study of religion shed light on what it means to be an “*American*” or a religious American?

This course is designed on the proposition that learning takes place in many forms and that the critical exchange of ideas is a fundamental principle of a humanities education. While you will be expected to learn, and be tested on your knowledge of, facts and information about the history of

religions in the U.S., you will also engage the material conceptually and experientially through your site visits and class discussions.

## OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to the academic study of religion.
- Gain *religious literacy*: defined by Stephen Prothero as “the ability to participate in our ongoing conversation about the private and public powers of religion.”
- Explore U.S. religious history and how it has shaped the past and present.
- Think carefully about religion in American public life and popular culture.
- Learn to read and analyze primary texts.
- Develop discipline-specific critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.

## BOOKS FOR PURCHASE (at CU Bookstore)

### Required:

R. Marie Griffith, ed., *American Religions: A Documentary History* (Oxford, 2007)

### Recommended (for purchase on your own):

Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today* (rev. ed., HarperSanFrancisco, 2002)

\*Other readings will be available on D2L or posted on the course blog, as noted on the syllabus or announced.

\*The reading load for this course is approximately 25-50 pages per week. Your success in the course ultimately depends on your ability to keep up with the readings.

\*This course will incorporate films and other multimedia resources in lecture. Students are responsible for this material as well.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1) Recitation Attendance and Participation (10%)

This portion of your grade is based on the quality of your engagement with and participation in weekly recitations.

*Participation presupposes attendance.* Students are expected to read the assigned texts in a timely fashion, attend lecture and recitation regularly, and participate in an informed and thoughtful manner in discussions. Lectures will be designed to fill in background information, give context and structure to the assigned readings, and identify issues for further discussion. We will aim for a mixture of lecture and discussion in our lecture meetings; recitations will be devoted to discussion. This means that students should come to recitation each week prepared to participate actively in discussions of the week’s readings; thus, **you are expected to complete the week’s readings *prior to* recitation and to bring your readings to recitation in order to refer to them during our discussions.** Participation will be monitored regularly at recitations, and your grade will be based on its *quality*. Because the purpose of recitation is to collectively discuss the assigned readings in more depth than the large lecture format allows, you are expected in recitation meetings to not simply show up, but

rather to contribute actively and in a way that demonstrates thoughtful and informed engagement with the readings and ideas discussed. Close reading and preparation, *including bringing your readings to class*, active engagement and participation in recitations, and the quality of same, will constitute this portion of your final grade. Please note that it is not possible to make up missed recitations, nor are you permitted to attend alternate recitations other than the one you are assigned. As part of your participation grade, you may have in-class reading quizzes, short writing assignments, or small group activities to complete during recitations. *These in-class assignments will **not** be accepted if you arrive late or do not attend a recitation.*

I understand that some students are hesitant about speaking up in class, while for others, it comes easily. If you are generally shy about speaking in class, aim for at least one thoughtful comment or question each class period. If you feel very comfortable contributing, be sure to allow space for others to speak as well.

Here is the rubric we will use to assess your participation grade:

A level	Attends class regularly and always brings readings to class; frequently contributes to discussion in an informed and thoughtful manner; written & oral contributions show evidence of depth, originality, and of <i>having already</i> reflected on material prior to class	Only in very exceptional cases will a student earn an A+ for participation.
B level	Attends class regularly and brings readings to class most of the time; regularly contributes to discussion; shows a beginning to intermediate level of engagement with and reflection on material	
C level	More than 4 recitation absences; brings readings to class only some of the time; occasionally or rarely contributes to discussion; low level of engagement with and reflection on material	
D level or below	Poor attendance; never brings readings to class; never contributes; is consistently disengaged, distracting or disruptive	Grades in this category indicate serious problems with the course and warrant a conference with the TA or professor

## 2) Weekly Blog Assignments (15%)

Regular weekly assignments will be given throughout the course to help you identify key points in the assigned readings, prepare for recitation discussions, and deepen your understanding of the material. These weekly assignments will be blog-based, short, low-stakes assignments including web-based mini-research projects and comments on blog posts, and together they will constitute 15% of your final grade. One assignment will be given each week in the course, beginning with the second week of the semester, for a total of 14 weekly assignments, each due on Wednesdays by 11 a.m., prior to lecture. You are asked to complete 12 of the 14, meaning that you can miss 2 with no penalty to your grade. *It is not possible to make up missed weekly assignments or to submit them late. No extra or substitute credit will be given for completing more than the required 12. No exceptions to these rules. Choose your two "skip" weeks carefully.*

## 3) Site visit papers (35%; 15% first paper, 20% second)

You will research a local religious group, visit one of their meetings or services, and write a 4-6 page paper about it, using texts from the course to analyze your experience. Two such papers are required during the semester, based on research on and visits to two different services representing two different religious traditions. I will distribute prompts and grade rubrics for these papers during the semester. I will also organize several opportunities for group site visits during the semester. Papers must be submitted *in class* the day the paper is due; no papers will be accepted via email. Late papers will be penalized 1 grade level (e.g. A to A-) per day. See also the plagiarism policy.

## 4) Exams (40%; 15% midterm and 25% final)

There will be a **midterm exam**, worth **15%** of the overall grade, and a **final exam**, worth **25%**. I will hand out study guides in advance of each exam. Exams will consist of identifications, short answers and essays. The midterm will be given on **Wednesday, March 8** and the final will be given on **Sunday, May 7, from 7:30-10pm**. See policy on exams below.

## 5) Course Website = Desire 2 Learn

This course uses **Desire 2 Learn** (D2L) for online access to course documents and the gradebook as well as for posting additional readings not found in our course textbook. If you experience any difficulties with on or off campus access to D2L, please call 303-735-HELP (5-HELP from on campus). Be sure to check our D2L site and your CU email account regularly, as this is the method we will use to send emails and announcements to you relating to the course.

## 6) Course Blog = <http://rlst2500.wordpress.com> (restricted access)

This course will also have its own blog, password-protected for students in this course only. If you experience any problems with access, your TA and professor are happy to help. The blog will be used for submitting weekly assignments, discussions, suggestions for outside readings, resource lists, and links to U.S. religion in the news and popular culture. You are responsible for checking the blog regularly, and for posting as directed.

## EVALUATION

Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

Participation	10%
Weekly Assignments	15%
Site visit papers	35% (15% and 20%)
Midterm	15%
<u>Final</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total	=100%

This course will track grades using the D2L Gradebook. As a general rule, you can expect to have papers and exams graded and returned, and grades posted, within 2 weeks; within 1 week for weekly assignments. Attendance record and the quality of course preparation and participation will factor in deciding borderline grades. Your professor and TA are able and willing to help if you are struggling in the course. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to seek help.

Standard Grades		Grade Scale
A	Superior/Excellent	94-100
A-		90-93
B+		88-89
B	Good/Better than Average	83-87
B-		80-82
C+		78-79
C	Competent/Average	73-77
C-		70-72
D+		68-69
D		63-67
D-	Minimum Passing	60-62
F		0-59

## COURSE POLICIES

**Policy on Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance and participation means attendance of and participation in a *whole* class, from beginning to end. At the end of the semester, you will be given an overall participation grade based on the above rubric.

It is not necessary for you to contact me or your TA each time you miss a class, and we ask that you don't, unless you are having serious issues. Please do contact me if your absence from class falls into one of the following categories: medical emergency (with documentation from a doctor), university-sponsored commitments (with documentation), or family emergencies (with documentation). If you have an ongoing medical or personal condition that prevents you from attending class regularly, please make an appointment to speak with me about it. Please make sure you understand this policy and contact me early in the semester if you have any questions. Students, not the professor or TA, are responsible for material missed when absent and are encouraged to contact a classmate to secure this information.

**Policy on Late Assignments and Submitting Assignments:** All weekly assignments must be posted on the course blog in order to receive credit. Site visit papers must be submitted *in class on the day and at the time they are due* or late penalties will be assessed, amounting to loss of one grade level

(e.g., A to A-) per day. Papers must be submitted as hard copies unless otherwise directed. **No papers or assignments will be accepted via email.**

**Policy on Exams:** There will be **no makeups** given for exams *except in the case of a documented medical emergency*, or, for the final exam, proof of 3 exams on the same day. I follow the university's policy for final exams which is as follows:

If you have three or more final exams scheduled on the same day, you are entitled to arrange an alternative exam time for the last exam or exams scheduled on that day. To qualify for rescheduling final exam times, you must provide evidence that you have three or more exams on the same day, and arrangements must be made with your instructor **no later than the end of the tenth week of the semester (Friday, March 24, 2017).**

Barring these two exceptions, there will be no exceptions and no makeups given for the midterm and final exam, for any reason. Make your travel plans accordingly.

**Classroom Etiquette:** The study of religion is an academic discipline located in the humanities. Discussion of religious topics relates to the deeply held beliefs and values of people who lived centuries ago – and often, equally powerfully, to the beliefs and values of people today. In an academic setting we want to *understand* what others think; we want to *communicate* what we think; and we want to *clarify* our own thinking based on a give and take of ideas. It is unlikely that we will all agree with one another all the time – and that disagreement will often be an important part of how and what we learn. Whenever you speak in the classroom, then, I ask you to remember this: *In this setting, respect for the ideas of others is a must; agreement with others is not.*

Respect for other students in the class includes not only respectful discussion, but also maintaining respect for the classroom environment. I am asking each of you to minimize class disruptions by coming to class on time; attending to personal needs before or after class; and turning off your phones and all other electronic devices (including laptops, see below) while in class and putting them away. Furthermore, leaving and returning to class while the session is in progress interrupts the learning experience of all students. If you know that you will have to arrive late or leave class early on a particular day, please speak with me in advance and make arrangements to minimize the disruption, such as sitting near an exit. If you are unable to arrive on time or stay for the full duration of the class on a regular basis, you should not take this class (please speak to me about exceptions relating to permanent or temporary disability). Repeated classroom disruptions will negatively impact your final course grade.

**Policy on laptops in the classroom:** Studies have shown that non-class-related computer use negatively impacts a student's performance in a course, while also distracting students around you. Since this is a large class, **I am adopting a no-electronic devices policy in the lecture classroom.** You may use your electronic devices to access readings during designated discussion periods. If you have a disability or other compelling reason for an exception to this rule, please come to see me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss it.

### Campus-wide policies observed in this course:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries guidelines](#) under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details. In this class, arrangements will be made for absences due to religious observance. Students should notify me in writing **at least two weeks in advance** of the conflict to request special accommodation.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the [policies on classroom behavior](#) and [the student code](#).

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU-Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible of violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>. With regard to the policy on academic integrity, please note the following:

I support the CU Honor Code and expect that you pledge work that you submit for this class. All written work in this course *must* be original to you. Copying another student's work on an exam, paper, or weekly assignment; bringing unauthorized notes into an exam; using all or part of a paper written by another person; using ideas from a published source, including web sources, without documenting the source or using the exact words from the source without putting them in quotation marks and documenting their source are all examples of plagiarism.

**It is YOUR responsibility to know, understand, and honor the definition of plagiarism and academic misconduct. Any and all acts of plagiarism will result in severe penalties, up to and including an F in the course. If you have questions about these policies, please feel free to consult with me.**

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus. You will be notified of any changes to course policies, reading schedules, etc., by email and/or announcement in class and on the course website.

## **SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE OF READINGS AND SESSIONS**

### **Key to course reading abbreviations:**

AR = Griffith, *American Religions*

D2L = pdf on D2L course website under Content tab by week

Blog = access through course blog (see instructions for access handout)

### **Recitations will meet each Wednesday afternoon during the semester**

WEEK 1: Jan 17 — Introduction to the course and to the academic study of religion; the concept of “religious literacy”

- (Handout) Prothero, “A Nation of Religious Illiterates”
- Religious literacy quizzes

WEEK 2: Jan 23-25 America’s religious landscape; ; getting to know the local and national religious landscapes; approaches to religious diversity

*Readings (all on D2L):*

- Familiarize yourself with the Pew Religious Landscape Survey: access at <http://religions.pewforum.org>



- “Americans Not Losing But Changing Their Religion”
- Lecture Handout (also on D2L), “World of Religion”
- Deloria, “Polarized Tribes”
- Eck, “A New Religious America” (D2L)

### WEEK 3: Jan 30-Feb 1 Contact and Exchange; Native American Religious Traditions

#### *Readings:*

- The Bull *Sublimis Deus* (AR 2-3)
- Williams, “Varieties of Native American Religious Life” (D2L)
- Ronda, “Indians’ Views of Christian Missionaries” (D2L)
- Additional readings on Standing Rock tba

### WEEK 4: Feb 6-8 The Puritans; the Salem Witch Trials

#### *Readings:*

- Bradford, “Of Plymouth Plantation” (AR 3-10)
- Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (AR 16-19)
- Bradstreet, “Poems” (AR 23-27)
- Mather, “Wonders of the Invisible World” (AR 80-90)
- “Mary Dyer” (D2L)

### WEEK 5: Feb 13-15 Early American Religious Diversity; Models of Religion and the State in the American Colonies

#### *Readings:*

- “Jews and Catholics in Early America” (D2L)
- “Maryland’s Act of Religious Toleration” (D2L)
- Williams, “Letter...on Limits of Religious Liberty” (AR 75-76)
- Penn, “Letter to the Indians” and “Persuasive to Moderation” (AR 73-75, 76-80)

### WEEK 6: Feb 20-22 The Great Awakening; religion and the early republic

#### **FIRST SITE VISIT PAPERS DUE, Mon Feb 20, IN LECTURE**

#### *Readings:*

- Edwards, “Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival” (AR 92-102)
- Chauncy, “Seasonable Thoughts” (AR 102-09)
- Wheatley, “Poems” (AR 121-27)
- Franklin, “Religious Views” (D2L)
- Jefferson, “Religious Freedom” (AR 150-52)
- Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance” (AR 152-56)
- The *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution* of the United States (links on blog)

### WEEK 7: Feb 27-Mar 1 African American Religious Traditions; the Civil War

#### *Readings:*

- “African Background of New World Religions” (D2L)
- NPR, “Ancient African Religion Finds Roots in America” (blog)

- Raboteau, "The Slaves' Own Religion" (D2L)
- Douglass, "Life of an American Slave" (AR 213-220)
- Armstrong, "The Christian Doctrine of Slavery" (AR 239-44)
- Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address (D2L)

WEEK 8: Mar 6-8 The Second Great Awakening and New Religious Movements

**\*MIDTERM EXAM: WEDNESDAY, Mar 8 (Hum 250, 11-11:50am)**

*Readings:*

- Marini, "How the Revolution Stimulated New Religious Movements" (D2L)
- Finney, "Memoirs" (AR 189-196)
- Lee, "From the Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee" (AR 197-213)

WEEK 9: Mar 13-15 19<sup>th</sup> Century New Religious Movements con't; Metaphysical Religion

*Readings:*

- Emerson, "HDS Address" (AR 172-183)
- Smith, "Articles of Faith" and "Revelation" (AR 164-172)
- Wight, "Shaker Leader Mother Ann Lee" (D2L)
- Lecture Handout, Spiritualist Principles
- Eddy, "Reality of Suffering, Sin, and Death" (D2L)
- Williams, "Health, Wealth, and Metaphysics" (D2L)

WEEK 10: Mar 20-22 Catholicism and Judaism in the U.S.; the Concept of Assimilation and the "Melting Pot"

- Strong, "Our Country" (AR 365-82)
- Seton, "Letters" (AR 183-89)
- "Russian Jewish Immigrant's Traditional Faith" (D2L)
- "Immigrant Rabbi" (D2L)
- *The Pittsburgh Platform* (AR 321-23)
- Mary Antin, "The Promised Land" (AR 352-65)
- Herberg, "Religion and Assimilation" (AR 517-533)
- Black Elk, "Black Elk Speaks" (AR 341-352) and Deloria, "Intro to Black Elk" (D2L)
- "The Myth of the Melting Pot" (blog)

WEEK 11: Mar 27-29: NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK

WEEK 12: Apr 3-5 Introduction to Hinduism in the U.S.

*Readings:*

- Swami Vivekananda, "Hinduism as a Religion" and "Farewell" (AR 402-411)
- Kurien, "Hindus' Adjustments to American Life" (D2L)
- "In Texas, Young Hindus Want to Americanize Ancient Faith" (blog)
- Miller, "We Are All Hindus Now," *Newsweek* (D2L)

WEEK 13: Apr 10-12 Introduction to Buddhism in the U.S.

*Readings:*

- Kerouac, “Dharma Bums” (AR 486-492)
- Goldstein and Kornfield, “Seeking the Heart of Wisdom” (AR 571-584)
- “Buddhism in America: What Is the Future?,” *Huffington Post* (blog)

WEEK 14: Apr 17-19 Introduction to Islam in the U.S.

*Readings:*

- Voll, “Muslim Adaptation in America” (D2L)
- “Muslim in America” series, *Denver Post* (blog)
- “Boulder County Muslims Find Elbow Room in Former Baptist Church,” *Daily Camera* (blog)
- Asma Hasan, “American Muslim Women: Between Two Worlds” (blog)
- “Latino Family Reflects on Conversion to Islam,” KPBS San Diego (blog)

WEEK 15: Apr 24-26 20<sup>th</sup> Century Religion and Social Change

**SECOND SITE VISIT PAPERS DUE, Monday Apr 24, IN LECTURE**

*Readings:*

- King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (AR 502-14)
- Malcolm X, “Letters from Abroad” (AR 514-17)
- Judah, “Why Hippies Join the Hare Krishnas” (D2L)
- Church of Scientology entry, University of Virginia Religious Movements Archive (blog)
- Mellon, “Rise and Fall of the New Age Movement” (D2L)

WEEK 16: May 1-3 Today’s “Spiritual Marketplace”; Forms of Organized Atheism and “No Religion”; Concluding Reflections

*Readings:*

- Fisher, “The Rise of the Nones” (blog)
- “Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths” (blog)
- “Putting Faith in a New Name: Many Churches Rebranding Themselves,” *Washington Post* (blog)
- Clark, “From Angels to Aliens” (D2L)

**FINAL EXAM: SUNDAY, MAY 7, 7:30-10:00 P.M., HUMN 250**