History 299: Modern American Religion

Prof. Justin Poche  
Office: 390 O’Kane hall  
X3448  
jpoche@holycross.edu

Office Hours:  
MW 10-11 am  
TF 2-3 pm

Description:
This course examines the role of religious belief and practice in American society from the Gilded Age and Progressive Era of the late 1800s to the present. It combines a lecture/discussion format with a community based learning (CBL) component through which you will explore themes raised in class in the context of work within a faith-based non-profit organization. As a course in modern American history we will examine communities’ struggles with the “ultimate questions” raised in everyday life. Students will critically engage texts ranging from sermons, memoirs, and secondary analyses to music, film, art, and literature as we examine the social, economic, political, and cultural currents that have affected religious belief in America. Topics include: The Civil War as a moral crisis; the impact of railroads, industry, mass communications on religious belief; Christian struggles with modern scientific and psychological theories; the “theology” of American blues, soul, and folk music; the emergence of therapeutic religion, from Christian Science in the Gilded Age and the “peace of mind” movements of the 1950s to the rise of Zen Buddhism in popular culture and Scientology; the religious roots of social justice struggles from the progressive era through the Civil Rights and anti-war movements; the deconstruction of denominational boundaries; and debates over America’s sacred destiny in the world, from imperialist crusades of the 1890s to the War on Terror.

As a CBL course students will be placed in one of a number of organizations that focus on social ministry and reform. Through short journal and presentation assignments students will examine the theological framework of these organizations and their implementation in day-to-day practice. They will also evaluate their own experience within the context of a larger history of faith-based reform and political development in the twentieth century.

Course Goals:
- Understand how religious institutions and theologies (both formal and informal) have interacted and developed throughout American history in relation to larger social, political, and economic transformations.
- Appreciate and examine the complexity of religious belief and practice as a crucial window into the history of “everyday life” in America, including the construction of gender and racial identities that variously inhibit and empower individuals and communities.
- Learn the historians’ craft by working with a range of primary and secondary sources to develop important research questions and insights into the events, ideas, and social forces that shaped the lives of men and women.
- Understand and examine the theological and socio-political roots of faith-based social reform movements, applying these to practical experience of social justice and charity work in local organizations.
- Refine oral and written communication skills to engage the professional, social, and political world beyond the classroom.

**Readings for Purchase:**


**Assignments and Assessments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings quizzes/responses (Moodle)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 research essays (5-6 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Critical Event” paper and presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Take Home Exam</td>
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<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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**Journal Assignments:**
Through the course of the semester you will be posting journal assignments on Moodle that reflect upon your community service experience in relation to the themes that arise throughout the course. More details will follow.

**Quizzes/Responses:**
Throughout the semester there will be about 5-6 responses or online quizzes to assess your grasp of the material. You should be able to complete them relatively quickly. They will consist of some multiple choice and brief subjective responses to questions. They may ask you to compare key themes of the readings from the previous and the next class, particularly the primary sources. When announced you must complete them before the next class session.

**Papers:**
In addition to journal assignments you will write two short research essays based on primary and secondary source evidence available in class. Prompts for these essays will follow in a separate handout.

**"Critical Event" Paper:**
This assignment and presentation enables you to connect in-class learning with reflection upon your experience with faith-based organizations in Worcester. It provides you with the opportunity to evaluate
your placement and construct a short narrative/analysis of a critical moment in your service. This event may have reshaped your perception of community life and development or reinforced some major themes or concerns taken from class. In some ways the paper/presentation should be patterned off of the “This I Believe” series frequently aired on NPR.

**When submitting papers:**
- Include a title page with your name and an original title on it
- All papers must be typed and double spaced with 1-inch margins around the entire paper.
- Have a 12-point Times New Roman Font or equivalent (for instance, this is Calibri typeface – 11 point; **Nothing like this...**)  
- All pages must be numbered
- Cite all sources using footnotes and use proper citations with Chicago Manual of Style (more details will be provided)
- Papers must be submitted by 5 pm on the due date

**Papers should be submitted on Moodle or via email in a PDF FORMAT** (pdf ensures consistency in formatting and grading feedback. If you are having trouble converting papers please see me or consult another computer geek).

**Late Papers Policy:** Late papers will be accepted only for reasons of serious illness or excused absences. Absences are excused for family crises or for sanctioned college events.

- Unless excused, late assignments will be penalized one grade increment for every day past due.
- Any assignment more than one week late will automatically receive a failing grade.
- In order to receive a passing grade, you must complete ALL assignments.

**Peer Review:** Academic writing is a collaborative process. In this course you will have the opportunity to not only receive feedback from fellow students on your essay assignments but also offer your own critique of another’s work in a friendly and collegial atmosphere. We will set aside certain days to review drafts of the essay assignments for peer review. You will submit a draft of your paper to your partner according to the dates on the assignment. Your partner will offer commentary on the draft using the guidelines provided in class. I will provide more information on this assignment as it approaches. I am also available to discuss outlines, drafts, and graded work with you in person. Do not hesitate to come see me. You may also consult the College’s writing services.

**"Jesus Saves. So Should You." Retaining Coursework and Copies of Assignments:** Students should keep all graded assignments until the final grade is calculated. In addition, students are expected to retain a copy of their papers until their graded papers have been returned. Be sure to back up your work on your P-Drive or alternative drive.

**Academic Honesty:** A Student found to have cheated on an examination or plagiarized on a paper will fail the assignment. No exceptions. See the History Department’s definition of plagiarism.

**Statement on Academic Honesty**
The History Department calls your attention to the section of the College Catalog describing the College's policy on Academic Honesty. All students should carefully read this portion of the College Catalog, particularly the section dealing with plagiarism and the reference to further discussion in the Little Brown Handbook and the Harbrace College Handbook. As an aid to your understanding and as a matter of Departmental policy, the History department is supplying you with the following additional statement. Your professor may wish to incorporate a further statement.

Adherence to ethical standards is an important part of education and is the highest responsibility of student and teacher alike. There is nothing more valuable than one's personal integrity. There are few things more painful in life than the loss of this integrity, be it through a deliberate act or through careless inattention to ethics. Most students have no intention of cheating. That is why it is all the more important that students be fully aware of the ethical standards that govern the world of ideas. The basic rule to keep in mind is that words and ideas are intellectual property, to which property rights apply. As the Harbrace College Handbook suggests, plagiarism is literary theft. At one extreme is the gross offense of trying to pass off as one's own the exact words of another, at the other extreme is "borrowing" a fine phrase to dress one's own writing. Passing off the ideas or the words of someone else as one's own is a form of lying or stealing. One must be as scrupulous and careful not to shoplift ideas as one would be about not shoplifting physical property.

Plagiarism is more broadly defined than some students realize:

1. Turning in a paper written in whole or in part by anyone else is a form of plagiarism.
2. Paraphrasing means putting something in your own words. Making minor changes, such as reversing the order of clauses or changing one or two words, does not constitute putting something into your own words. Thus:
3. Using another author's wording or something very close to his or her wording without putting the passage in quotation marks IS A FORM OF PLAGIARISM, EVEN IF YOU GIVE A REFERENCE NOTE. "Your reader has a right to assume that words not enclosed in quotation marks are indeed your words" (G. Heberle, Ethics and Reference Notes, Rochester, 1989).
4. In particular, plagiarism includes stitching together a paper by "borrowing" unattributed phrases and sentences from various sources. Every "borrowing," regardless of length, must be in quotation marks, and every quotation must be properly credited through a reference note. Mere rearrangement of phrases into a new pattern does not confer originality.
5. An author's idea, discovery of fact, or original interpretation of fact is as much the author's property as are the author's exact words. Restatement by means of paraphrase does not remove the necessity of giving credit to the original source. Thus:
6. Failing to cite sources constitutes plagiarism. This stricture applies both to quotations and to paraphrases.

If in doubt, consult your instructor before you turn in your paper!

The purpose of this statement is not to question anyone's honesty, but to spare everyone the pain and embarrassment that can result from carelessness or thoughtlessness. Once one is "caught with the goods," it is often very difficult to prove whether the act was intentional or not. Moreover, ignorant misuse of sources does not exonerate a student from a charge of plagiarism, for ignorance cannot be an acceptable excuse for wrongdoing. The best way to protect one's reputation is to be scrupulously aware of the rules of proper attribution in the first place.
Contacting the Instructor and Site Visits:
Beyond my regular office hours I am available to you for any help as the course progresses. However, I will usually only respond to emails during regular business hours (8 am – 6 pm). Any emergencies should be handled during this period.

I will also be accompanying you to service sites on occasion. If you have a particular day in mind, please let me know. I am excited to be participating in these organizations with you.

Course Schedule:
Please note, with the exception of paper deadlines, the reading schedule is subject to change as the course progresses. Please consult Moodle. I will announce any changes in class.

Week 1

Wednesday, August 28th --
  Introduction to Course
  Visit from CBI Office
  Begin reading Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude

Week 2

Monday, September 2nd – 19th Century American Religion and the Civil War as Spiritual Crisis
  - Orsi, Introduction

Wednesday, September 4th – Redemption
  - Orsi, Chapter 1

Week 3

Monday, September 9th - “Among these Dark Satanic Mills”: Industrialism and Urbanization
  - Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Celestial Railroad”
  - Josiah Strong, “The Challenge of the City” (1895)
  - Orsi, Chapter 2

Wednesday, September 11th – Redeeming the City
  - Frederick St George de Lautour Booth Tucker, The Social Relief Work of the Salvation Army in the United States (League for Social Service, 1900).
- Alice Toomy, “There Is a Public Sphere for Catholic Women,” *Catholic World* 57 (August 1893): 674–76.

**Week 4**

**Monday, September 16th – Private Charity and Social Reform**
- From Russell Conwell, “Acres of Diamonds” (1900)
- “The Y” Movement” (1951)

**Wednesday, September 18th – The Social Gospel**
- Richard T. Ely, selections from *Social Aspects of Christianity* (1899)
- Orsi, Chapter 3

**Week 5**

**Monday, September 23rd – Mission and Empire**
- Orsi, Chapter 4

**Wednesday, September 25th – The End of “Christian America”**
- Dwight L. Moody, selections (1900)
- Lyman Abbott and N.D. Hills on German kultur (1918)
- H.E. Fosdick (1917) On the morality of war.

*Peer review of essay #1*

**Week 6**

**Monday, September 30th – Religious Reactions of the 1920s**
- Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925) (selections)

**Wednesday, October 2nd – Holiness and Pentecostalism**
- Orsi, Chapter 7
Week 7

Monday, October 7th – Preaching the Blues in the Depression Era
- Blum/Harvey, Intro and Chapter 5

Wednesday, October 9th – Neo-Orthodoxy and Prophecy
- Paul Tillich (1951).
- Blum/Harvey, Chapter 6

First Essay Due Friday, October 11th

Week 8

Monday, October 21st – The Apocalyptic Imagination in the Atomic Age

Wednesday, October 23rd – “Protestant, Catholic, Jew” – Religion and Social Conformity at Mid-Century
- Will Herberg, selection from Protestant, Catholic, Jew
- Blum/Harvey, Chapter 7

Week 9

Monday, October 28th – “Pray Your Weight Away”: Therapeutic Religion and Middle Class Culture at Mid-Century
- Norman Vincent Peale, selections from The Power of Positive Thinking (1951)
- Blum/Harvey, Chapter 8

Wednesday, October 30th – Prophetic Religion and the Civil Rights Movement
- Blum/Harvey, Chapter 9
Week 10

Monday, November 4th – Prophetic Religion and the Civil Rights Movement II
   - Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct" (1968)

Wednesday, November 6th – Alienation and the Ideal Self
   - Timothy Leary, "The Buddha as Dropout" (1968).
   - Thich Nhat Hanh, "The Miracle of Mindfulness" (1975)
   - Moreton, Prologue-Chapter 2

Week 11

Monday, November 11th –
   - Moreton, Chapters 5-6

   Peer review of essay #2

Wednesday, November 13th –
   - Moreton, Chapters 7-8

Week 12

Monday, November 18th – The Right and the Righteous: Evangelicalism and the Rise of American Conservatism
   - Moreton, Chapters 9-10

Wednesday, November 20th –
   - Moreton, Chapters 11-12

Film: Virgin Tales (if available)

Essay 2 Due, Friday, November 22nd

Week 13

No Class – I will be attending the American Academy of Religion Conference (AAR)

Read:
- Moreton, Chapter 13

View: God Fights Back

**Week 14**

“Critical Event” Presentations

**Take Home Final Due, Friday, December 13th**