

## **LINCOLN, RELIGION and THE CIVIL WAR**

REL 300.1/ Spring 2016

Bowne Hall, Room 125/ Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

Gustav Niebuhr

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Religion (Arts & Sciences)

Offices: Newhouse II, Room 481A  
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**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (in Newhouse) and by appointment.

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**Course Description:** Although the life of Abraham Lincoln and the national transformation of the Civil War are accorded the historical respect they deserve, both the man and his era tend to be treated from political, military and economic points of view. However, the period that coincides with Lincoln's lifetime was distinguished by enormous religious change and upheaval, one in which ideas and organizations emerged that continue to influence our nation's character. This course is designed to study the impact of religion as a source of societal change that strongly affected those who experienced the war, including Lincoln himself. As president, he will always be considered a singular figure as to his decisions during our greatest crisis. He also was a man who thought deeply, often in anguish, about the relationship of God and a nation whose destruction so often seemed imminent.

**Outcomes:** You will come to know the first several decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as among the most creative religious periods in America. You will understand Lincoln in a new light and become familiar with significant people of his time, black and white, male and female, inspired minds and influential voices.

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### **Reading and writing assignments:**

- One required text: Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, The Religious History of America (Harper SanFrancisco). First 10 chapters.
- Articles, book chapters and essays will be placed on Blackboard.

- **Written assignments:** Six times during the semester, I will ask you to write a reflection paper of 500 or more words, responding to questions about material we are studying. You will be responsible for five papers: you may either do five out of the six **or** you may do all six and I will toss out the lowest grade among them.

Papers must be double-spaced. Instructions will be distributed beforehand. Turn papers in at the Religion Department, Hall of Languages, 501; a box will be provided on the counter. We will discuss your findings in class.

**Tests:** There will be **two short quizzes**, focusing on the lectures and readings. There will also be a **mid-term** and a **final test**. The dates are listed below.

**Grading:** The five reflection papers will each be worth 10 percent of your grade, or 50 percent collectively. The quizzes will be worth five percent each, or 10 percent total. The mid-term will be worth 15 percent; the final (on Friday, May 6) will be worth 25 percent.

**Attendance:** Coming to class is expected of you. Students who miss two or more classes tend to do poorly on written exercises, quizzes and exams.

**Deadlines:** All assignments must be turned in by their deadline; papers turned in at any time thereafter will likely be marked down.

**Disability-Related Accommodations:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to me and review those accommodations with me. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, [Office of Disability Services](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/) <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

**Academic Integrity:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. All work that you turn in for this course must be yours alone (except in cases of collaborative assignments specified by the instructor). *Students who violate SU academic standards on an exam or assignment will receive an F for that work. Students have a right to appeal.* For more information, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarizing or fabricating material in an assignment will result *at the least* in an F in the assignment. Talk to me if you have questions about attributing information.

**Religious Observances:** Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes if they will be observing religious holiday(s). Information, with the means to notify me, is on your MySlice page; go to the Enrollment section under Student Services.

**Title IX** prohibits harassment or discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. Privileged and confidential advocacy and support services are available for students at Syracuse. If you or someone you know have been affected by sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, intimate partner or dating violence, or discrimination based on sex in a university program or activity, resources are available, including the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team at 315-443-4715, 200 Walnut Place. <https://www.syr.edu/currentstudents/files/SRVsticker.pdf>

The team offers 24/7 privileged and confidential crisis counseling, referrals, advocacy, safety planning, and ongoing assistance for students addressing sexual misconduct and relationship violence. The services provided include: advocacy, safety planning, emotional and psychological support, trauma-informed counseling, facilitating medical evaluation and evidence collection, and reviewing legal and procedural information regarding reporting options. This team works with others on campus to address academic, working transportation and housing needs and in obtaining no-contact orders. [http://counselingcenter.syr.edu/SexualAssaultRelationshipViolence/sexual\\_assault.html](http://counselingcenter.syr.edu/SexualAssaultRelationshipViolence/sexual_assault.html) Reports, questions can go to Title IX Coordinator at 443-0211, 005 Steele Hall, or [TitleIX@syr.edu](mailto:TitleIX@syr.edu). [http://studentconduct.syr.edu/documents/title\\_ix\\_resource\\_guide.pdf](http://studentconduct.syr.edu/documents/title_ix_resource_guide.pdf)

**About your instructor:** Professor Niebuhr has taught at SU for 12 years. Prior to that, he worked for two decades as a reporter covering religion in the United States for daily newspapers, most recently, *The New York Times*. He also worked for *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In 2001-03, he was a visiting fellow and scholar in residence at the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University.

Based in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, he holds a joint appointment with the College of Arts & Sciences, where he is director of the Religion and Society Program and director of the Carnegie Program in Religion and Media. He is the author of two books, *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America* (Viking Press, 2008) and *Lincoln's Bishop: A President, a Priest and the Fate of 300 Dakota Sioux Warriors* (HarperOne, 2014).

**Basic rules of classroom civility:** Turn off cell phones and laptops; do not text during class; arrive on time and do not leave during the class. (If you have a medical situation, please discuss it with me in advance.)

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The schedule below is subject to change.

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*“The past is never dead; it’s not even past.”*  
—William Faulkner, Nobel laureate in literature, 1949.

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First week: 1/19 and 1/21.

Introduction: “A new birth of freedom.”

1. Some background to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.;
2. Denmark Vesey: the rise of new institutions;
3. Abraham Lincoln’s language.

***Read:*** *Selections, speech on Washington Mall; Report on the Vesey trial, 1822.*

***Also:*** Gaustad and Schmidt, begin reading first five chapters. Gustav Niebuhr, Lincoln’s Bishop, chapter 3.

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Second Week: 1/26 and 1/28

“God’s almost-chosen people”

1. John Winthrop’s vision;
2. George Washington’s counsel;
3. The Lincoln family amidst religious pluralism.

***Read:*** *Sermon aboard the Arbella; sections, Charles Woodmason’s diary; Rodney Stark on religion in Revolutionary America; Lincoln’s 1861 speech to New Jersey state senate;*

**Assignment:** Your first reflection paper due: 2/1.

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Third week: 2/2 and 2/4

“I do not think I could... support a man for office, whom I knew to be an open enemy of, and scoffer at, religion.”

1. Thomas Jefferson’s expectation;
2. The (limited) rise of religious rationalism;

3. Plain-spoken Christianity explodes on the Kentucky frontier.

**Read:** Description of the Cane Ridge revival; Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s conversion; Lincoln’s “open letter” of 1846.

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Fourth week: 2/9 and 2/11

“Accounts of outrages committed by mobs form the every-day news of the times.”

1. Charles G. Finney refuses slaveholders;
2. Rioters murder the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy;
3. Evangelicals and society’s reform;
4. Joseph Smith Jr. prophet;
5. Tocqueville encounters the memory of Ann Lee.

**Read:** Finney’s conversion experience; random violence in rural culture; Lincoln’s speech at the Young Men’s Lyceum.

**Also:** Gaustad and Schmidt: chapters 6-7.

**Assignment:** Your second reflection paper due 2/12.

[Lincoln’s birthday, 2/12.]

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**First Quiz:** multiple choice and short answer on 2/18.

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Fifth week: 2/16 only.

“... there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another.”

1. Fox sisters contact the dead.
2. The Mexican War;
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau;
4. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law; Rescue in Syracuse.

**Read:** Mexican War background; “Civil Disobedience;” the “Jerry Rescue;” Lincoln’s speech in Peoria, Ill.

**Note:** Come to class February 18 for quiz only. Otherwise, make time to see the Jerry Rescue monument, and catch up on assigned reading.

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Sixth week: 2/23 and 2/25

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe;
2. Lincoln as a debater;
3. John Brown, armed prophet;
4. Emily Dickinson and Herman Melville.

**Read:** Account of John Brown's raid and trial; sections, Frederick Douglass's autobiography; Lincoln's Cooper Union speech, 1860.

**Also:** Gaustad and Schmidt: chapters 8-9.

**Assignment:** Your third reflection paper will be due 2/29.

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Seventh week: 3/1 and 3/3

"... I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, in the pleasure of Almighty God, die by."

1. Religious disunion;
2. Slaveholders' theology;
3. God in the North.

**Read:** Selected sermons; Accounts of the election of 1860; Lincoln travels to Washington.

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Eighth week: 3/8

"The mystic chords of memory..."

1. Lincoln and the Bible.

**Read:** First Inaugural Address.

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**Midterm Test 3/10**

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[SPRING BREAK: March 14-18]

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Ninth week: 3/22 and 3/24

“And the war came.”

1. Sullivan Ballou;
2. Christianity in the military camps;
3. Religion in the South.

**Read:** Sullivan Ballou’s letter to his wife; accounts of the war’s first year.

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Tenth week: 3/29 and 3/31

“God wills this contest...”

1. Mass death;
2. “Meditation on the Divine Will;”
3. God’s signal to Lincoln;
4. Emancipation.

**Read:** “Meditation...;” accounts of Antietam; the Emancipation Proclamation.

Eleventh week: 4/5 and 4/7

“...we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain..”

1. Black chaplains;
2. Gettysburg;
3. Lincoln’s “Address.”

**Read:** “The Gettysburg Address;” Garry Wills’ prologue.

**Assignment:** Your fourth essay will be due 4/8.

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Twelfth week: 4/12 and 4/14

“There is more involved in this contest than is realized by everyone.”

1. 1864;
2. Re-election.

**Read:** Accounts of war's final year and religious response.

**Assignment:** Your fifth essay will be due 4/18.

**Second Quiz:** multiple choice and short answer, 4/14.

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Thirteenth week: 4/19 and 4/21.

“Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding...”

1. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.

**Assignment:** Your sixth essay due 4/25.

**Read:** The “Address.”

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Fourteenth week: 4/26 and 4/28

“Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other.”

1. Second Inaugural, continued.
2. Rev. Henry Ward Beecher in Charleston, S.C.

**Read:** TBA

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May

Fifteenth week:

5/3: Preparation for **Final: Friday, May 6, 8 a.m., in classroom.**