

**RELIGION AND THE CONQUEST OF AMERICA, Spring 2009**

NAT 347 (39877)/REL 347 (39679)

WF 8:00-10:20;

215 Hall of Languages

Blackboard: (<http://blackboard.syr.edu/>)

Professor Philip P. Arnold

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Office hours: W 9:30 – 10:30 AM, and by appointment

The religious dimensions of American colonialism will be assessed by examining the cultural contact between European and Native American groups and their distinctive views of land in Central and North America. First we will forge an interpretation of religion that can encompass both Native and European understandings of how human beings meaningfully occupy land. There are dramatic differences in how this is understood in each cultural context, which is characterized as locative (for Native Americans) and utopian (for Europeans and European Americans). Rather than a denominational history of the spread of Christianity, we will seek a more inclusive way of understanding of religion within the phenomenon of colonialism. To help us we will read a Native American Theologian, a linguist, a popular historian, a historian of religions, and an ethnohistorian. By the end we should have a critical and complex picture of colonial America and how that history effects us today.

Even though we enjoy the “freedom of religion” in the United States we define “religion” in such a way as to exclude other dimensions of religious life. The case of exclusion of Native Traditions is particularly traumatic in the American experience. By the end of this class you should be able to understand aspects of religion that are not usually considered religion by individual citizens. You will be able to address deep and important questions regarding fundamental aspects of the American identity such as; does real estate constitute a viable religious worldview? Or how does phenomenon of conquest of the American continent in the past impinge on my religious understandings of the world today?

**Required Texts:**

William Cronon, Changes in the Land

Vine Deloria, Jr., God is Red: A Native View of Religion

Charles H. Long, Significations

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Tastes of Paradise

Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America

Handouts

**Goals:**

In accordance with the Department of Religion this class has four major goals that shape its teaching and its expectations of what students expect to gain from this course:

1. to think both critically and imaginatively about the nature of religion as a basic response to and expression of the human condition in America;
2. to recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities inherent in undertaking a coherent, disciplined study of religion; and to become aware of the diversity of perspectives within that study;
3. to come to a distinct yet corrigible conception of "religion," and to be able to recognize its appearance not only within the historical institutions of diverse religious traditions, but also in other social/cultural forms;
4. to develop an understanding of key instances in the diversity of human religious history, phenomena, and experience; and to achieve a fluency in interpreting and describing them.

**Statement Regarding 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 the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. 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, see <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

**Academic Integrity Statement**

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 instructor and 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. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
<u>January</u>		
14	Introductions	
16	History of Religions	Blackboard
19	<b>Discussion topic paper#1—What is American religion?</b>	
21	Category problems	Long: Introduction
23	Primitive and Civilized	Long: Chapter 6
26	<b>Discussion topic paper #2</b>	
28	Colonialism	Long: Chapter 7
31	Religion in time and place	Deloria, Jr.: Chapter 4
<u>February</u>		
2	<b>Discussion topic paper #3</b>	
4	Creation	Deloria, Jr.: Chapter 5
6	Natural and hybrid people	Deloria, Jr.: Chapter 9
9	<b>Discussion topic paper #4</b>	
11	Christianity today	Deloria, Jr.: Chapter 13
13	Sacred lands	Deloria, Jr.: Chapter 16
16	<b>Discussion topic paper #5</b>	
18	Discovery	Todorov: pages 1-33
20	Signs	Todorov: pages 34-62
23	<b>Discussion topic paper #6</b>	
25	Conquest	Todorov: pages 63-97
27	Cortez	Todorov: pages 98-124

March**2 Discussion topic paper #7**

4 Love Todorov: pages 125-167

6 Knowledge Todorov: pages 168-201

**12&14—Spring Break—no classes****16 Discussion topic paper #8**

18 Salt and pepper Schivelbusch: Chapter 1

20 Coffee and Protestantism Schivelbusch: Chapter 2

**23 Discussion topic paper #9**

25 Chocolate Schivelbusch: Chapter 3

27 Tobacco Schivelbusch: Chapter 4

**31 Discussion topic paper #10**April

1 Industry and drinking Schivelbusch: Chapter 5

3 Ritual places Schivelbusch: Chapter 6 & 7

**6 Discussion topic paper #11**

8 Drugs Schivelbusch: Chapter 8

**10—Good Friday—no classes****13 Discussion topic paper #12**

15 Transcendentalism and colonization Cronon: Chapters 1 & 2

17 Binding the landscape Cronon: Chapters 3 & 4

**21—Mayfest—extra credit opportunity**

22 Commodifying the world Cronon: Chapters 5 & 6

**FINAL EXAMINATION-TBA****Grading**

Final grades will be based on discussion topic papers, a final exam, and attendance and class participation.

Discussion Topic papers: Each week you are responsible for writing a short paper on the assigned topic and readings. The paper is to be 300 to 500 words (1 or 2 pages, double spaced) and posted on the class Blackboard site (<http://blackboard.syr.edu/>). The papers are required to be posted on Blackboard on each Monday before the Wednesday class in which they are to be discussed (see the class schedule). You will receive up to 4 points each week for your paper depending on its quality. You will also be asked to respond to at least 2 other papers of your peers each week for which you will receive 2 points. You will have until the Monday *after* the due date for the paper to make your responses. You can get up to 6 points each week and there are a total of 12 papers for a possible total of 72 points.

- 1) **Clarity.** The viewpoints you present in your writing must be clearly conceived and well argued. Your writing style should be straight-forward, easy to read and should be clearly related to the issues you wish to address. Topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph are helpful in establishing the issue and argument for the reader at the outset. (40%)
- 2) **Engagement with the material.** Entries are to be related to the reading material. They are *not reviews* of what has been stated in the book but are your *critical analysis* of the reading. Avoid direct quotes. Instead seriously take-up what you consider to be the 'key' issues for the study of religion in the reading. An analysis of the issues discussed in the course become clearer the closer your writing is to the texts used in class. (40%)
- 3) **Creativity.** The 'work' of Religious Studies, and perhaps the Humanities in general, is essentially creative. Interpretation of religious phenomena requires that you come to some meaningful relationship with your object of study. This is one of the defining characteristics of creativity. You have a unique and important contribution to make to our collective understandings. There are no predetermined experts in the area of interpretation, only well refined and well argued positions. Your interpretations will be dealt with as importantly as you regard them yourself. (20%)

Final exam: The final is worth 18 points and will be composed of short identification questions and essays. This exams will be designed to reflect material discussed in both lectures and reading--so it is to your advantage to familiarize yourself with *all* the class material. The final exam will require you to do a substantial amount of writing in class. Particularly helpful in preparing for this exams will be diagramming your answers to the short identifications and essay questions. A study guide will be distributed the last week of class to help you prepare for the

final. The same criteria as that used to grade your papers will be used when grading your papers and exam.

Attendance and class participation: Attendance is mandatory for this class. No role will be taken however. Lectures and reading will be intimately related but quite different. It is therefore in your own best interest to do the reading and attend class as both will reflect on your performance on discussion topic papers, the midterm, and final. You will be given regular opportunities to participate in class either by asking questions, making comments, and interacting with other students in discussion.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Discussion Topic papers	72 points
Final exam	18 points
Attendance and class participation	10 points

Final grades will be assessed in the following way:

A	91-100 points
A-	88-90 points
B+	84-87 points
B	81-83 points
B-	78-80 points
C+	74-77 points
C	71-73 points
C-	68-70 points
D+	64-67 points
D	61-63 points
D-	58-60 points
F	57 points and below