

James Bennett
Spring 2009

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OH: W 10:30-11:30am, Th. 2:30-3:30pm, and by appt.

RSOC 111
INVENTING RELIGION IN AMERICA

MWF 11:45-12:50, Sobrato 19

Course Description

Why has the United States been such a religiously innovative society?

This course explores the spiritual creativity that stands at the center of the American experience. The totality of that creativity is far too extensive to cover in a single quarter. Therefore, we will examine a representative cross section of traditions. Groups covered include Mormons, Adventists, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Nation of Islam, Scientology, and the Branch Davidians in Waco. Among the questions of the course will be what characteristics facilitated such religious diversity and whether these were unique to the American experience. As a result, the course will focus on the historical contexts that gave rise to each tradition and affected its growth and expansion, as well as to each group's particular beliefs and practices. We will also explore unifying themes that link clusters of movements, including democratization, millennialism, gender, race, and the effort to integrate religion and science. Pervading our explorations will be attention to interpretive issues that create challenges for scholarly investigations of marginal religious groups, as well as considerations of the social tensions that new religious movements both create and respond to.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- explain the origins, context and basic beliefs of several major new religious movements in the United States
- account for the proliferation of religious movements native to the United States
- identify and critically evaluate sources of information concerning new religious movements
- apply theoretical frameworks to understand both individual movements and their relationship to the larger American religious landscape
- engage in clear, concise and analytically sharp reading, writing, and speaking

Books (available at the University Bookstore)

Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals*

Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher, *Why Waco?*

Additional Readings. Much of the reading for the course will come from articles and primary source material posted on the ANGEL course management system. Students must sign-up for this course (RSOC 111) on ANGEL in order to access the material. ANGEL is accessible from the SCU main web page, in the drop-down menu in the bottom left corner. If you do not have an ANGEL account you will need to create one. Once into your ANGEL account, from "My Page"; click on "find a course" under the "Courses" banner. Search for this course. Once you have located the course, click on it to enroll. You will need the password "cults" in order to enroll. Once enrolled, you will be able to access all readings not in the books available for

purchase. The readings will appear in the "lessons" folder. ANGEL will also be critical for receiving updated communications about readings, course meetings and assignments.

Third Level Religious Studies Course

As the third course in the Religious Studies sequence, the underlying emphasis of this course is an engagement with and opened-ended discussion of critical issues in religion. Focusing on new religions in the U.S. will provide an avenue to engage such issues. Consequently, the emphasis will be on questions more than answers. Students will be expected to bring together the intellectual tools they have developed in both their core and disciplinary studies in order to make critical, well-reasoned, insightful and nuanced assessments that reflect a variety of perspectives and thereby enhance our understanding of the society and nation in which we live. In order to receive credit for this course as a 3rd level religious studies course, students must have completed their first and second religions courses and have completed at least 88 units.

Course Requirements

Intellectual Engagement. Your presence and participation is essential to your success in this course, and to the success of the course as a whole. Discussion of assigned texts forms a core aspect of this third-level religious studies course. As a result, the intellectual engagement grade extends beyond mere attendance to emphasize engagement with course materials. Attendance is only a necessary pre-condition for this engagement, not a measure of it. Intellectual engagement will be measured by the extent to which you come to class prepared and are willing and able to discuss the assigned readings. For each class meeting, you should be prepared with questions, comments and observations about the assigned readings and discussion topics. Students who miss more than two classes will lose one grade point (in the Intellectual Engagement grade) for each absence

Writing. Written assignments will consist of two short essays, a media/cult analysis, and a profile of a religious movement or theme in new religious movements. For grading standards on written assignments, see "Rubric for grading Religious Studies Essays," posted on the ANGEL course website.

Essays (750-1000 words). Essay topics will be distributed in class. Essays should be well-written, with a clear, focused thesis statement, supporting evidence and critical analysis, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, and include citations when appropriate (see note on academic integrity below).

Media/Cult Analysis (3-4 pages). A brief analysis of either the way a particular movement has been depicted in the media or the way that the word "cult" has been used to describe religious movements.

Profile of a Religious Movement or Theme (7-8 pages). Whether choosing to profile a new religious movement or a theme in the study of new religious movement, this paper must engage movements not studied in class.

A preliminary (one page) description of your topic and a list of sources is due May 8.

Late Paper Policy: Papers will be penalized one grade point (e.g. B to B-) for each day they are late.

Grading:

Participation	15%
Essay #1	20%
Essay #2	20%
Media/Cult Analysis	15%
Profile/Theme Paper	30%

The Santa Clara University *Undergraduate Bulletin*, identifies the standards for grades as follows: A (excellent), B (good), C (adequate), D (barely passing), F (not passing).

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and ask questions of one another. However, all written work must be your own and clearly distinguishable from the work of others. When you present others' work as your own, or fail to cite the contributions of others to your own work, you have engaged in plagiarism. It matters not whether the work is from a fellow student, the world-wide web, or a traditional printed source. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the instructor. Santa Clara University and the Religious Studies department take seriously the commitment to academic integrity. Any violations, including plagiarism or cheating, may result in an "F" and referral to the Office of Student Leadership, as described in the *Community Handbook*.

Course Schedule

(Tentative: schedule and readings subject to change)

PRELIMINARY MATTERS: CATEGORIES, CONCEPTS, AND TERMS

March 30 Course Introduction and Overview

**** Enroll in RSOC 111 on ANGEL**

April 1 **** Definitions: BEFORE completing any of the readings, write your own definition of the words Cult, Sect, Church and Religion**

Robert Ellwood, "The Several Meanings of Cult;" Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements"

April 3 Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models"

MORMONISM

April 6 Nathan O. Hatch, "The Crisis of Authority in Popular Culture;" Gordon Wood, "Evangelical American and Early Mormonism"

- April 8 Conkin, *American Originals*, 162-85
- April 10 NO CLASS (Good Friday)
- April 13 Conkin, *American Originals*, 185-216; Book of Mormon (excerpts)
- April 15 Conkin, *American Originals*, 216-225

UTOPIAN AND COMMUNAL IMPULSES: GENDER IN THE 19TH CENTURY US

- April 17 Suzanne Thurman, "Shaker Women;" "Shakers: Primary Source Documents"
- April 20 Louis Kern, "Ideology and Reality;" "Oneida Community"
- April 22 Louis Kern, "Blest Family"
**** Essay #1 due**
- April 24 NO CLASS: Inauguration of President Engh

MILLENNIALISM, PART 1

- April 27 Millerites
 Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 110-124; "Millerites"
 Video: "Midnight Cry!"
- May 29 Seventh-Day Adventists
 Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 124-45
- May 1 Jehovah's Witnesses
 Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 145-59; James Penton, "Major Doctrines"

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

- May 4 Spiritualism
 Video: "Telegrams from the Dead"
- May 6 Christian Science
 Conkin, *American Originals*, 226-69; Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (excerpts)
- May 8 Robert Peel, *Spiritual Healing in a Scientific Age* (excerpts)
- May 11 Scientology
 "Scientology;" *Dianetics* (excerpts); www.scientology.org
**** Profile/theme topic due at beginning of class**

RELIGION AND RACE

- May 13 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 1-7
- May 15 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 8-13

May 18 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 14-19

PENTECOSTALISM

May 20 Conkin, *American Originals*, 276-314

May 22 Readings TBA
**** Essay #2 due**

May 25 NO CLASS: Memorial Day

MILLENNIALISM, PART 2

May 27 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 1-2

May 29 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 3-6
In-class Video: "The Rules of Engagement"
**** Media/Cult Analysis due**

June 1 Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 7-8

RELIGION IN THE NEW AGE

June 3 New Age Religions
J. Gordon Melton, "Whither the New Age?"

June 5 The future of new religious movements
Rodney Stark, "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model"
**** Movement/Theme Profile due**