



RSOC 136 Religion in Latin America
Religious Studies, Santa Clara University
Fall Quarter 2008
MW 3:30 – 5:15, Kenna Hall 104

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Religion in Latin America (44185)

This course develops intellectual tools to explore with depth and clarity the recent religious pluralism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Further, it offers us a place to consider the role that faith and belief play in people's lives and culture. The course situates and examines distinct historical, socio-cultural contexts, political and economic processes in which various religious expressions have emerged. Understanding religion as generative, we will examine the foundations, theological themes, and processes of pre-Hispanic indigenous practices, Spanish colonial Catholicism, liberation theology, the recent growth of Protestantism with a focus on Pentecostalism, the contemporary praxis of Catholicism, the public emergence of native spiritualities, and diasporan religions of the Caribbean and Brazil.

Course offers critical analysis to ways various religious traditions construct knowledge and power, that is, inform/transform communities and identities. The course will critically appraise of the meaning of conversion: "What is conversion? Who converts and under what circumstances? How does conversion impact beliefs and actions? How are the political, economic and social effects of conversion multiple, complex and even counterintuitive?"

Course Requirements

Attendance, university level discourse, critical reflection, and designated in-class facilitating of course materials are required in this course. Preparation of required reading/participation in class sessions is essential and required. Student teams will facilitate selected classes (*). There will be a quiz each week of the first five weeks of class, and then intermittently. Three unexcused absences during the semester will result in the drop of one letter grade. Three tardy classes equal one absence.

Class preparation is a critical part of any course. Each student should prepare notes addressing: 1) major issues raised in the assignments; 2) questions for discussion, and 3) personal reaction to the reading.

Quizzes/short written assignments: There will be three quizzes/short essays to chart understanding of readings, class discussions and lecture materials. (10 pts each for total of 30 pts.)

Presentation by small groups on specific topics.

Starting the third week, each student, either individually or in a small group will be responsible for making a 20-minute in class, multi-media presentation on a specific aspect of Religion in Latin America. Topics and guidelines provided Week One Day two. (20 pts).

Critical Engagement Project: Students will choose participation in one liturgy or service sponsored by a local Latino religious group, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Catholic in the Great Bay Area, or one popular culture event, i.e. Day of the Dead in Oakland or San Francisco, "La Virgen del Tepeyac: The Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe" Sunday, December 7th at Mission Church. Guidelines provided Week One, Day Two. (10 pts).

Final Exam: A comprehensive and integrated essay. (25%)

Incompletes, Plagiarism and Cheating. Late papers, make-up exams, or incompletes are not acceptable except under unusual circumstances and with prior permission. Please speak with me in anticipation of a problem. In accordance with the Student Handbook, plagiarism and cheating of any kind are a serious breach of morality and can lead to expulsion.

Requirements for the student's final earned grade:

Attendance and active participation in all sessions	15 pts.
Three essays/short answer quizzes on readings & lecture materials.10% each.	30 pts.
Group presentation	20 pts.
Critical Engagement Project	10 pts
Final	25 pts

Required Texts

Gonzalez, Ondina and Justo L. Gonzalez. 2008. *Christianity in Latin America*. Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.

Molesky-Poz,Jean. 2006. *Contemporary Maya Spirituality: The Ancient Ways are Not Lost*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Steigenga, Timothy and Edward L. Cleary. 2007. *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

E-Res: pluralism

Week One
9/22

Introductions. Inventory of student knowledge.
Tracing experiences of conversion.

Encounters and Colonial Projects

9/24 **Who were the original Inhabitants of the land?**
Gonzalez. "Foundations," 12-39

Week Two
9/29

The Long Tyrannical Shadow: Inscription into a Spanish World
Slavery, tribute systems, *encomienda*, *congregaciones*, *cofraidas*

Pedro de Alvarado: Account by Pedro de Alvarado to Hernando Cortes. E-Res
De Las Casas. Selection from Devastation of the Indies. E-Res

10/1 **Are They Not also Men?**

Efforts at conversion:
Gonzalez. "The Arrival of Christianity," 40-63.

Week Three
10/6

How did the colonial projects of the 16th and 17th centuries shape faith expressions?
Gonzalez, "The Shaping of the Faith," 64-103.

10/8

How did Protestant Immigration and Liberalism Impact Latin America?
Gonzalez, "An Expanding Protestant Presence," 206-239.

Quiz.

Liberation Theology

Week Four
10/13

What were the contexts for Theology and Liberation?
Gonzalez. "Catholicism after Vatican II," 240-289.

10/15

What is liberation Theology, and what does it do?
Chopp: "Latin American Liberation Theology," *The Praxis of Suffering*, 7-27. E-Res.
Optional: Guitierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology,"
from *Liberation Theology*, 19-

Approaches to Conversion, Implications of Conversion

Week Five
10/20

Evangelical and Pentecostal Growth: What propels the recent growth of Pentecostalism, Charismatic Christianity and African diasporan groups?

Conversion. Goore. "Conversion Careers in Latin America," 51-69.
Conversion. Chesnut, "Specialized Spirits, 72-90.

10/22

Tongues of Fire: Neo- Pentecostalism
What are its geo-political context, its appeal, its implications?

Conversion, Wightman, "Healing the Nation," 239-253.
Conversion. Garrard-Burnett. "Stop Suffering?" 218-233.

Week Six
10/27

Religions of the Diaspora: Afro-Brazilian Religions
Conversion. Carozzi. "Conversion to Afro-Brazilian Religions in Buenos Aires,"
133-150.
Conversion. Birman. "Conversion from Afro-Brazilian Religions to Neo-Pentecostalism:
Opening New Horizons of the Possible," 115-133.

Quiz

10/29

No class.

Week Seven
11/3

What are Maya meanings of conversion?
Kovic. "Indigenous Conversion to Catholicism," 199-215.
Conversion. Steigenga. "The Politics of Pentecostalized Religion, 256-276.

The Public Emergence and Florescence of Maya Spirituality

- 11/5** **What is the context for the public emergence of Maya Spirituality?**
Molesky-Poz, 57-62; Portal, xi-xviii; Chapter 1, 11-33.
See Study Guidelines for *Contempoary Maya Spirituality*, on E-RES.
- Week Eight
- 11/10** **What is Maya Cosmovision and Spirituality?**
Chapter 2, 34-54.
- 11/12** **What is the life and work of the *Ajq'ijab'*: Maya Calendar keepers?**
Molesky-Poz, Chapter 3, 62-89
- Quiz
- Week Nine
- 11/17** **How do traditionalists understand Sacred Geography: The Earth, Sacred Sites, and Quatrefoil Mapping?**
- Molesky-Poz, Chapter 4, 93-126
- Outside event due.
- 11/19** **The Maya Calendar: Will the World End in 2012?**
Sacred Time: The *Chol Q'ij*, The heart of the wisdom of the Maya
Molesky-Poz, Chapter 5, 127-153.
- Week Ten**
- 12/1** **Why Popular Religions?**
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Peterson: The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest of Liberation? E-Res
- Critical Engagement Project due, unless you are attending "La Virgin"
- 12/3** **How do we assess and understand popular religions, religious pluralisms and the processes of conversions?**