

James Bennett  
Spring 2015

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OH: Tu 10:15-11:30 a.m. W 10:30-11:45 a.m., or by appt.

RSOC 111  
**INVENTING RELIGION IN AMERICA**

T, TH 8:30 a.m.-10:10 a.m., Kenna Hall 214

***Course Description***

This course explores the spiritual creativity that stands at the center of the American religious experience. The totality of this 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, the People's Temple (Jonestown) and the Branch Davidians in Waco. The course will focus on the historical contexts that gave rise to each tradition and affected its growth and expansion. We will also explore unifying themes, 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, the social tensions that new religious movements both create and respond to, and the complex, controversial, and even contradictory ways that Americans have understood, defined, and treated such groups.

***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
- critically evaluate the use of the word “cult” to describe religious groups
- 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

***Core Curriculum: Religion, Theology and Culture 3***

The study of Religion, Theology and Culture forms an important component of a Santa Clara education. This course fulfills the requirement for the third course in Religion, Theology, and Culture (RTC 3). **In order to earn RTC 3 credit students must have completed both RTC 1 and RTC 2 courses, and have earned at least 88 units (transfer students excepted).** RTC 3 is part of the Explorations dimension of the Core Curriculum. It builds upon the first two RTC courses, applying insights from the study of religion to difficult, open-ended questions of vital interest to contemporary societies. As an RTC 3 course, this class will enable students to:

1. identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions
2. evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society

In the context of RSOC 111, we will develop these skills by exploring the role of “marginal” religions and the ways they are depicted and treated in American society.

### ***American Studies Pathway***

This course is associated with the American Studies Pathway: You can find information about Pathways on the Core Curriculum website <http://scu.edu/core> including specific Pathways, all courses associated with them, and the Reflection Essay prompt and rubric used to evaluate the final essay you will submit. <http://www.scu.edu/provost/ugst/core/pathways/resources/>

SAVE YOUR WORK FROM THIS CLASS. If you declare an American Studies Pathway, you may use a representative piece of work from this course as one of the Pathway materials you will upload via eCampus during your junior or senior year. Therefore, we recommend that you keep electronic copies of your work using Dropbox or Google Docs, in addition to saving copies on your own computer or flash drives. This may ensure you will have a range of choices for retrieving your saved files when you analyze and assemble your Pathway materials in preparation to write the Pathway reflection essay.

***Books*** (available at the University Bookstore and on reserve at Orradre)

Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals*

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

James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher, *Why Waco?*

*Additional Readings:* Readings not included in the above texts will be posted on Camino.

### ***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 have the assigned reading with you to refer to, be prepared with questions, comments and observations about the assigned readings and discussion topics, as well as having completed any additional assigned tasks for that day's class.

*Writing.* Written assignments will consist of one short essay, several Reflect and Respond papers, and a final research paper.

*Essay* (4 pages). Essay topics will be posted on Camino. 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).

*Reflect and Respond Papers* (2-3 pages unless otherwise noted). Throughout the quarter (approximately once a week), there will be Reflect and Respond papers, in which you will reflect upon a question or topic. Like all work for submission, these responses should be typed (doubled-spaced) and written with clear, concise prose. Based on the trajectory of our discussions and/or changes in the pace we move through the materials, the dates and/or frequency of Reflect and Respond papers may change from the schedule below. Any

changes will be announced in class and on Camino. Reflect and Respond papers may not be turned in late, as their purpose is to focus discussion for the particular day they are due.

*Final Research Paper* (10-12 pages). Students will write a research paper examining a religious movement or a theme in new religious movements. The topic must be different than those covered in class readings. The sources used for research must include at least four traditional scholarly resources (books, journal articles) that are not a part of the course readings. Students should start planning research topics from the beginning of the quarter in order to meet deadlines for progress on the research paper. Students will submit preliminary materials related to the research paper throughout the quarter, including a topic and an annotated bibliography.

***Late Paper Policy:***

There will be a minimum one point deduction for each day late (*late Reflect and Respond papers will not receive any credit*).

***Grading:***

Intellectual Engagement	10
Reflect and Respond Papers	30 (3 points each)
Essay	20
Annotated Bibliography	10
Research Paper	30

Final grades will be based upon the following scale: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (below 60). Final grades are not negotiable and cannot be changed, except in the case of clerical error.

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).

***Attendance***

Students who miss two or more classes will lose at least one point off the total grade for each absence.

***Disability Accommodation Policy***

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must be registered with Disabilities Resources, located in Benson, room 216. In order to register, please go on-line to [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities). You will need to register and provide professional documentation of a disability prior to receiving academic accommodations. It is best to read "Required Documentation" on the website before starting the registration process in order to determine what is needed. You may contact Disabilities Resources at [408-554-4109](tel:408-554-4109) if you have questions.

***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 Life.

### Course Schedule

Tentative: schedule and readings subject to change  
Additional information and instructions on Camino

### PRELIMINARY MATTERS: CATEGORIES, CONCEPTS, AND TERMS

March 31 Course Introduction and Overview

April 2 Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, “Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements”; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, “Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models”  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper: BEFORE completing any of the readings, write your own definition of the words Cult, Sect, Church and Religion**

### MORMONISM

April 7 Nathan O. Hatch, “The Crisis of Authority in Popular Culture”; Gordon Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism”  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

April 9 Conkin, *American Originals*, 162-216; Book of Mormon (excerpts)

April 14 Conkin, *American Originals*, 216-225; lds.org  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

### UTOPIAN AND COMMUNAL IMPULSES: GENDER IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY US

April 16 Suzanne Thurman, “Shaker Women”; “Shakers: Primary Source Documents”

April 21 Louis Kern, “Ideology and Reality”; “Oneida Community”  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

### MILLENNIALISM, PART 1

April 23 Millerites and Seventh Day Adventists  
Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 110-145; “Millerites”; Adventist.org  
Film (in class): “Midnight Cry!”  
**\*\* Essay due**

April 28 Jehovah’s Witnesses  
Paul Conkin, *American Originals*, 145-59; James Penton, “Major Doctrines”; jw.org

### RELIGION AND SCIENCE

April 30 Christian Science  
Conkin, *American Originals*, 226-69; Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the*

*Scriptures* (excerpts); Robert Peel, *Spiritual Healing in a Scientific Age* (excerpts); “Ian Lundman Case”; Stephen Carter, “The Power of Prayer Denied”; christianscience.com  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

May 5      Spiritualism  
Video: “Telegrams from the Dead”  
**\*\* Profile/theme topic due at beginning of class**

## **RELIGION AND RACE**

May 7      *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 1-4

May 12     *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 5-11  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

May 14     *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chp 12-19; noi.org  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

## **RELIGIOUS CREATIVITY IN CALIFORNIA: PEOPLE'S TEMPLE, SCIENTOLOGY AND BEYOND**

May 19     Scientology: *Dianetics* (excerpts); [www.scientology.org](http://www.scientology.org); Janet Reitman, "Inside Scientology"; Hugh Urban, “Fair Game: Secrecy, Security and the Church of Scientology in Cold War America.”  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

May 21     The People's Temple: Catherine Wessinger, "1978-Jonestown"; David Chidester, “Rituals of Exclusion and the Jonestown Dead”  
**\*\* Annotated Bibliography due**

## **MILLENNIALISM, PART 2**

May 26     Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 1-3

May 28     Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 4-6  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

June 2      Tabor & Gallagher, *Why Waco?* chp 7-8

## **THE FUTURE OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

June 4      Rodney Stark, “Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model”; J. Gordon Melton, “Perspective: New New Religions”  
**\*\* Reflect and Respond Paper**

June 11 @noon:  
**\*\* FINAL PAPER DUE IN PROFESSOR BENNETT’S BOX IN KENNA 323**