

## **WR 153, Multi-Religious America, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Fall Semester 2007**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Examines the social, civic, and theological implications of America's "lively experiment" with religious diversity, paying special attention to developments since the 1960s, including immigration trends and new religious movements.

America has always been a religiously diverse land, even prior to the founding of the United States. American history features a number of recurrent themes or issues surrounding religious diversity, including accommodation, anti-clericalism and anti-institutionalism, assimilation, competition, conflict and contention, cooperation and harmony, debate, dialogue, dissent, domination, eclecticism, establishmentarianism and disestablishmentarianism, exceptionalism, exclusion, fragmentation, individualism, innovation, inquisitiveness, liberty (free expression), multiculturalism, national unity in diversity, negotiation of mutual rights and responsibilities, non-conformism, pluralism, protest, renewal and revival, schism, sectarianism, separatism, spiritual seeking, syncretism, tension, tolerance, utopianism, and voluntarism. This course will trace variations on such themes and issues throughout American religious history.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Identify and analyze recurrent themes and issues surrounding religious diversity throughout American history.
2. Research one primarily post-1960 religious group or movement as a case study in American religious diversity.
3. Develop one's own perspective on the social, civic, and theological implications of American religious history in preparation for faithful participation in inter-religious interaction and informed leadership among fellow Christians and in the larger society.
4. Enhance the scholarly enterprise of the Consortium seminaries.

### **REQUIRED READINGS:**

Edwin S. Gaustad and E. E. Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*, rev. ed. (New York:

HarperCollins, 2002). [MTSO/TLS BR515.G3, PCJ 209.73.G274re, available for purchase at MTSO Cokesbury Bookstore]

Other readings listed on Assignment Schedule, plus possible additions.

#### RESOURCES FOR RESEARCHING AMERICAN RELIGIOUS GROUPS:

##### General:

Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005). [MTSO/TLS Reference BL31.E46 2005, PCJ Reference 203.E42e 2005]

Gary Laderman and Luis Leon, eds., *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003).

Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements* (New York: Scribner, 1988). [MTSO/TLS Reference BL2525.E53, PCJ Reference 291.0973 L766e]

Melton, J. Gordon, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Gale, any edition). [MTSO Reference BL2530.U6 M443, PCJ Reference 200.973 M528e, TLS Reference BL2530.U6 M45]

Edward L. Queen II, Stephen R. Prothero, and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., eds., *Encyclopedia of American Religious History* (New York: Facts on File, any edition). [MTSO/TLS Reference BL2525.Q44]

Religious Movements Homepage Project,  
<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu>.

Wade Clark Roof, ed., *Contemporary American Religion* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000). [MTSO/TLS Reference 2525.C65, Reference PCJ 209.73 R776c]

Stephen J. Stein, *Alternative American Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). [TLS BL2525.S73]

##### Case Studies:

Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000). [MTSO/TLS BL2525.R4616]

Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002). [MTSO/TLS BL2525.E35]

Fred Kniss and Paul D. Numrich, *Sacred Assemblies and Civic Engagement: How Religion Matters for America's Newest Immigrants* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007). [on order at Consortium libraries]

Gurinder Singh Mann, Paul David Numrich, and Raymond B. Williams, *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). [TLS BL2525.M356]

Paul David Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravada Buddhist Temples* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996). [MTSO/TLS BQ734.N86]

Stephen Prothero, ed., *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, eds., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). [MTSO BL632.5.U5.G37]

## ASSIGNMENTS

Gaustad and Schmidt, Preface, Chapter 1

Gaustad and Schmidt, Chapters 2, 3

Gaustad and Schmidt, Chapters 4, 5, 6

Gaustad and Schmidt, Chapters 7, 8, 9

Gaustad and Schmidt, Chapters 10, 11, 13 (note: skip Chapter 12)

Gaustad and Schmidt, Chapters 14, 16, 17, 18 (note: skip Chapter 15)

Paul D. Numrich, "Fundamentalisms and American Pluralism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42,1 (Winter 2007): 9-14 [handout]

Timothy Miller, "Religious Movements in the United States: An Informal Introduction," <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/essays/miller2003.htm>

Courtney Bender and Jennifer Snow, "From Alleged Buddhists to Unreasonable Hindus: First Amendment Jurisprudence after 1965," in *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*, ed. Stephen Prothero (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 181-208

Raymond Brady Williams, "Asian Indian and Pakistani Religions in the United States," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 392-407

Paul D. Numrich, "A Hindu Temple Comes to Town" and "More Hindus and Others Come to Town," *The Church Next Door: Local Christians Face America's New Religious Diversity* [linked at [www.tcgcoho.org](http://www.tcgcoho.org)]

Paul David Numrich, "American Lessons about Religious and Racial Liberties, with Special Reference to Asian-American Buddhists," in *Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies: Challenges and Prospects for Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States in the New Millennium*, ed. K. S. Nathan ((Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Association for American Studies, 2007), 91-106

"Brief Amicus Curiae of Buddhist Temples, Centers and Organizations..."

Ihsan Bagby, "Isolate, Insulate, Assimilate: Attitudes of Mosque Leaders toward America," in *A Nation of Religions*, 23-42

Constance W. Elsberg, "Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization (3HO)," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), vol. 6, 3877-3880 [MTSO/TLS BL31.E46 2005, PCJ 203.E42e 2005]

R. Stephen Warner, "The De-Europeanization of American Christianity," in *A Nation of Religions*, 233-255

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Chapter 8

Paul D. Numrich, "Living among People of Other Faiths: Two Types of Inter-Religious Cooperation to Create a Better Neighborhood, Town, Nation, and World"

The use of the term "livlie experiment" in reference to American religious liberty derives from the Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, granted by King Charles II, July 15, 1663.

The Constitution mentions religion explicitly in two places: 1) "... no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States" (Art. 6, Cl. 3); and 2) "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." (1st Amendment).

"The past is never dead. It's not even past." (William Faulkner, quoted in Gaustad and Schmidt)