

**WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE**  
**LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION**  
**GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

PHI Course Prefix	215 Course Number	Religion in America Course Title	3 – 0 (Lec-Lab)	3 Semester Hours
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Surveys the contribution of religion to American culture, including the differences between rural and urban society, the development of religious freedom and the rise of a "secular religion." Examines the emergence of new forms of belief and practice and the variety of religious issues confronting American society today. IAI H5 905

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction to the Study of Religion
- II. History of Religion in America
  - A. Native American Religions
  - B. Roman Catholic Missionaries
  - C. Protestant Foundation
  - D. West African Religions & Slavery
- III. Contemporary Mainline Religions
  - A. Protestantism
  - B. Catholicism
  - C. Judaism
  - D. Humanism & Unitarian Universalists
- IV. Other Contemporary Christian Groups
  - A. Indigenous American Christianities (Latter Day Saints, Christian Scientists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses)
  - B. The Christian Right & Left
  - C. Eastern Orthodox Christianity
  - D. Contemporary Native American Faiths
  - E. Contemporary African American Religion
- V. Muslim & Eastern Groups
  - A. Islam
  - B. Hinduism
  - C. Buddhism
- VI. Contemporary Popular Movements
  - A. Cults & counter-cults
  - B. The New Age
  - C. Kabbalah
  - D. 12 Step Programs
  - E. Feminist Spiritualities
  - F. Nature Religions
- VII. Some other possible topics for consideration in class or in term papers are the following:
  - The role of revivalism in American Christianity, First and Second Great Awakenings
  - Christian Reform Movements (Abolitionists, Prohibitionists, YMCA, YWCA etc.)
  - Religion and Politics
  - Rise of Evangelism (i.e. Dwight L. Moody, RA Torrey, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, etc.)
  - Gospel music
  - Development of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Humanistic Judaism
  - Liberals vs. Fundamentalists' theological controversies in the early 20th century ( i.e. change with Princeton and other "church universities," Scopes' Trial)
  - The effect of the Second Vatican Council on American Catholicism

- The effect of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 on Asian immigrants (i.e. the rise of Indian and Middle Eastern religious groups)
- The effect of the Chicago's World Parliament of Religions in 1893
- Megachurch phenomenon (i.e. Willow Creek Community Church)
- Rise [and fall] of Televangelism (Jimmy Swaggart, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Pat Robertson)
- The political impact on policy and presidential elections of late 20th and early 21st century evangelicals and fundamentalists (James Dobson "Focus on the Family," James D. Kennedy, "Coral Ridge Ministries" etc).
- American religious architecture (from country churches, to the Washington Cathedral, to the Greater Hindu Temple in Lemont IL. etc)

### METHODS OF PRESENTATION

1. Lecture
2. Discussion
3. Small group work
4. Student presentations
5. Student debates slides, movies
6. Visiting speakers

### STUDENT OUTCOMES: (*The student should . . .*)

#### Attitudes

1. demonstrate respect for differing views and traditions.
2. value cultural pluralism.
3. appreciate the power & influence of religion in America today.

#### Skills

1. read, write and speak critically and effectively about religious traditions & themes in America.
2. work maturely with diverse and conflicting religious views.
3. develop a critical and appreciative awareness of religious ideas and practices.
4. engage in first hand experiential investigations of living manifestations of these religions such as worship services or mediation sessions.

#### Knowledge/Content

1. define religion and religious experience.
2. discuss with understanding the history of religion in America.
3. identify mainline religions in the US.
4. explore several of the following: contemporary Christian groups, other African American spiritualities, Muslim and Eastern Religions.
5. analyze competing definitions of the term "cult" and how the term applies to contemporary popular movements.
6. explain in detail at least one contemporary popular movement.
7. discuss with understanding the impact of religion on American life today.
8. Write at least fifteen pages of approximately 300 words each of college level writing in the process of demonstrating the accomplishment of the other outcomes.

### SOME METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. Quizzes, exams (may be oral)
2. Written reading responses.
3. Debates
4. Homework.
5. Class activities.
6. Participation.
7. Field research projects.
8. Position papers.
9. Term papers.

SOME TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Corrigan & Hudson, *Religion in America*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, Prentice Hall, 2010.

Hackett, ed., *Religion and American Culture*, Routledge, 2003.

Mathisen, *Critical Issues in American Religious History: A Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Baylor University Press, 2006.

Eck, *New Religious America: How A Christian Country Has Become The Worlds Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, HarperOne, 2002.

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