

HIS 13 – Introduction to American Religious Culture

Instructor: Taylor Kirsch	Class Days & Times: MW 1:00pm-4:30pm
Office Hours: By Appointment	Classroom: Physical Sciences 140
Email: tkirsch@ucsc.edu	Class Dates: 6/25-7/25

I. Course Description

This course is an introduction to religious culture/s of the United States. To begin to understand this topic, we must reach back in time before this land *was* the United States, and across the globe to distant lands in which many American religions have strong roots. With some necessary intellectual time travel interwoven, our course is chronologically organized, beginning with the deep past of Indigenous American religions, and following the religious development of North America through the colonial era, early nationhood, and the tumultuous nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the present. This course emphasizes the incredible diversity and religious pluralism that characterizes the United States, and traces this aspect of our history alongside an unfolding dominant religious culture.

Students should expect to follow these themes throughout the course:

- Church and State
- Religion in the Social, Political and Material Lives of Americans
- The Role of Religion in Activism and Identity Formation
- Changing Gender Roles and Ideologies in American Religions
- Women's Roles, Restrictions and Opportunities in American Religious Culture
- Race and Ethnicity in American Religions
- Religious Syncretism
- Religious Freedom

II. Course Outcomes

HIS 13 is a skills based course as well as a content based course. Class time and assignments are designed with the aim of facilitating increased understanding of U.S religious culture, as well as honing critical thinking and analytical skills. By the end of HIS 13, students will be able to:

- 1) Use a rhetorical framework to critically analyze and assess primary and secondary texts from a variety of contexts, and clearly explain findings
- 2) Find connections between religion, and other aspects of U.S history such as politics, social movements, life trajectories, etc.
- 3) Trace the progression of religious movements across time and space within, and in connection with the U.S
- 4) Develop increased understanding not only of “what happened” in the past, but how “history” is created, and the many ways this informs our understanding of past and present issues

III. Class Technology & Online Communication: Canvas, Google Drive, UCSC Email)

- This course relies on Canvas, your UCSC email, and Google Drive for class communication, turning in assignments, notifications about adjustments to the course schedule, in-class work, and group collaboration. Canvas automatically links to your UCSC email – be sure to check this email address at least once a day to make sure you do not miss important updates, and please use this address to communicate with your instructor and classmates.
- We do a lot of work in class that requires access to a computer – **If you do not have access to a laptop that you can bring to every class for in-class activities and formal in-class writing, please see me ASAP** so we can work out an alternative.
- If you want to get in touch, **please email me directly** at tkirsch@ucsc.edu. (The Canvas messaging system can be glitchy.)

IV. Readings and Required Texts

- This class fulfills the Textual Analysis GE, and the success of each class depends largely on everyone coming to class prepared to discuss and work with the reading assigned for that day. **Please ensure that you complete all assigned readings due each day before class starts.** Work done in class based on readings is an important part of your overall grade.
- “Readings” will be posted on Canvas, under “Files.” There is a folder for each day’s readings, which will often be written text, but can also take the form of video, audio, and other formats. If you have difficulty accessing any of this material for any reason, please see me ASAP so we can ensure your full participation in the course.
- You are not required to purchase any books for this class 😊

V. Assignments and Grading Breakdown

- 25% Analytical Paper: Due on Canvas Saturday, July 14th before midnight
- 30% Formal in-class writing assignments, quizzes, and homework (Lowest score dropped)
- 20% Participation in classroom discussions and activities
- 25% Cumulative Final Exam

VI. Grade and Attendance Policy

- Attendance: HIS 13 is a fast paced course. Material covered and work completed in the classroom is crucial to your overall grade and learning outcomes. Therefore, **missing more than two days of class puts you in danger of failing.** If an emergency happens that prevents you from attending class, please be in touch with me as soon as possible.
- To pass HIS 13, you must earn a passing grade or better in every category of assessment (See above, “Assignments and Grading Breakdown”.) This means earning a passing grade on the “Analytical Paper” and “Cumulative final exam” and a collective passing grade in “Participation” and “Formal in class writing assignments, quizzes, and homework”

VII. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of someone else as your own without proper acknowledgment of the source. This is a serious academic offense with very real consequences that can include failing a course, and penalties from the university administration.

The following are all examples of plagiarism:

- Buying or using a paper written by someone else.
- Cutting and pasting passages from the internet, a book, or an article and inserting them into your paper without citing them. Warning! It is easy to search and find passages that have been copied from the internet.
- Using the words or ideas of another person without citing them.
- Paraphrasing a person's words without citing them.

If you have any questions about this, please see me. More information is also available at:

<http://library.ucsc.edu/help/research/what-is-plagiarism>

VIII. Disability Accommodations & Full Participation

I want to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities to fully participate in this course. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, (or at any time, really) I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089) or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

IX. Class Schedule

Week 1

Day 1

Monday, June 25

- Introduction to the class, textual analysis, and rhetorical frameworks
- Introduction to American religious roots: World religions that took root in North America, and were the foundations for outgrowths of distinctly “American” religions

Readings Due:

- No readings on day 1

Day 2

Wednesday, June 27

- Early Native American religions and immigrant religions: Christianities of European colonists (including Catholicism, the Society of Friends, and Protestantism), early American Judaism, African religions in America, and religious syncretism

Readings Due

- See “Day 2, June 27 Readings” folder on Canvas

Week 2

Day 3

Monday, July 2

- Origins of Evangelicalism, African American Christianity, and the role of religion in early United States nation building

Readings Due

- See “Day 3, July 2 Readings” folder on Canvas

Day 4

Wednesday, July 4

***No Class – Campus closed for 4th of July Holiday**

Week 3

Day 5

Monday, July 9

- Utopianism, 19th century reform movements, and the Darwin bombshell

Readings Due:

- See “Day 5, July 9 Readings” folder on Canvas

Day 6

Wednesday, July 11

- Manifest Destiny, missionaries, and Indigenous religions amidst United States imperialism

Readings Due:

- See “Day 6, July 11 Readings” folder on Canvas

Week 4

Day 7

Monday, July 16

- Immigrant religions in the 19th & 20th century: The first major waves of Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism
- American religion and global upheaval: America religious culture during the great depression, war, and nuclear threat

Readings Due:

- See “Day 7, July 16 Readings” folder on Canvas

Day 8

Wednesday, July 18

- Historically motivated religious movements: Wicca, Hasidism, Nation of Islam, American Interpretations of Asian Spiritualities, the Native American Church, and Christian Fundamentalism.

Readings Due:

- See “Day 8, July 18 Readings” folder on Canvas

Week 5

Day 9

Monday, July 23

- 20th century reform and activism: American religion in the Civil Rights Movement, women’s rights, LGBTQ activism, The American Indian Movement, the Christian Right, anti-War and anti-imperialism movements

Readings Due:

- See “Day 9, July 23 Readings” folder on Canvas

Day 10

Wednesday, July 25

- American religious culture today – tracing our roots
- Final exam

Readings Due:

- See “Day 10, July 25 Readings” folder on Canvas