

Religious Institutions in America

(SOCI 154)

University of California, San Diego; Spring 2026

Location: MOS #0204

Tuesdays 5:00 – 7:50 pm

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Office Location: Social Sciences Building (SSB) – Room #465

Office Hours: By appointment; either in-person (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:00 pm) or via Zoom.

Course Description:

This course is an introductory overview of the American religious experience. We will begin our inquiry with the arrival of the first pilgrims on the eastern shores of what is Massachusetts today on November 11, 1620, and follow the trajectory of the development of various religions and religious institutions here since that time. The course will examine a number of religious themes and movements and look at their effects on American politics and culture during certain key historical junctures such as during Colonial America, the American Revolution, the Civil War, at the turn of the 20th century, during the two World Wars, and in the latter part of the 20th & the first two decades of the 21st- Centuries. We will carry this out in a chronological order divided in three periods: 1) Colonial America (1500-1800), 2) the 19th Century, and 3) the 20th and 21st Century United States.

The course will also explore the ways in which these religious, cultural, and social forces have served to affect and shape one another in each one of these three periods, under very different socioeconomic and political conditions. We will primarily be looking at Christian traditions and denominations but other religious traditions (such as Unitarianism, Deism, Judaism, Islam, etc.) will also appear from time to time. Major recurring themes include religion and politics, race and religion, immigration, nativism, wartime religion, pluralism, and Christian Nationalism.

Course Format:

The structure of the course will consist of weekly reading assignments that you are expected to keep up with; some lecturing by me on the readings and related topics; your questions, concerns, and comments to encourage class discussions, and regularly some audio/visual material related to the topic of the week.

Although this course will be held in-person for the most part, a few of the sessions will take place remotely via Zoom. Those sessions will be intermittent and announced after Week 3.

Course Requirements:

Required Books:

The following two books will serve as the main study sources for this course, and you are required to purchase a copy of your own:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life; A Short Story*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011 (ISBN-13: 978-0199832699)
- Butler, Anthea, *White Evangelical Racism; The Politics of Morality in America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021 (ISBN-13: 978-1469661179)

The next two books will expose you to more in-depth accounts of each subject/period we focus on. I will provide you with a pdf version of these two books.

- LaCorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History* (translated by George Holoch) New York, Columbia University Press, 2011 (ISBN-9780231151016)
- Moseley, James G., *A Cultural History of Religion in America*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981 (ISBN-031322479X)

Other than these four books, there will occasionally be additional readings (newspaper or magazine articles, and short book chapters) and posted on Canvas at least one week ahead of the session when the readings are due.

Weekly Memos: Starting with the readings for Week 2 and ending with Week 10 (except for Week 6) you are required to turn in a 3-page (double-spaced) summary of some aspects of what we had covered the previous week (i.e. on Week 2) including the reading assignments, videos we watched, and the major topics we discussed in class.

Each weekly memo is due 48 hours after the end of the corresponding class and should be emailed to me. If you miss this deadline, you may still submit your memo within another 48 hours, but you will receive only 50% of the credit for it. The purpose of these assignments is to help you review what had just been covered in the readings and class discussions, to reflect on the contents, and to show me that you are indeed keeping up with those weekly reading assignments. The memos will comprise 20% of your overall grade for the course.

Please make sure to include your **NAME, COURSE #, DATE, and "MEMO for WEEK__"**.

Mid-Term Exam: There will be one mid-term exam, scheduled to be held during the second half of our Week 6 (May 05) class. It will involve a combination of short answers and paragraph-long essays related to the assigned readings and the other material covered in the preceding sessions. The exam will be closed book.

Final Paper: There will be a 6-to-8-page final paper (double spaces, 12 font) due at the end of the quarter on a topic related to the material we will have covered in class. You will decide what to research and write about. This will be an opportunity to learn more comprehensively and delve more deeply into a subject that you would have found interesting among the topics covered and discussed in this course.

Your paper will be evaluated on the clarity of your writing, as well as on the clarity and the soundness of your argument.

A short synopsis of what you intend to write about, and how you plan to go about doing it, should be emailed to me by May 21.

Your Final Paper will be due no later than June 02 by midnight (again, to be emailed to me.)

How to Succeed in This Course

In order to gain from and succeed in this course, the bulk of the responsibility rests on you. I play the role of the facilitator, but your part is primary and without fulfilling that you cannot expect to gain fully from this course. You would need to keep up with the weekly reading assignments, pay close attention to the video documentaries we will be watching and discussing during our sessions, and complete and turn-in your weekly memos on time. Do your best to ask questions and make informed comments. Use the opportunity to excel this quality in yourself.

Do all this properly and attentively and you should be getting the most out of this course.

If you are concerned about any issues related to this course, I encourage you to discuss it with me - either during class, or individually.

Grading:

The following distribution is a close approximation. I will not be using an exact mathematical formula. The final grade will be at the discretion of the instructor taking into consideration your entire performance in this course.

Your Attendance at Each Session.....	15%
Your Participation in Class Discussions.....	5%
Weekly Memos.....	20%
Mid-Term	30%
Final Paper	30%

The following grading criteria will be then be used to arrive at a letter grade for you:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
97-100	A+
94-96	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
59 and below	F

Academic Integrity

It should go without saying that all written work must represent your own original work. All other intellectual content must be cited using a professionally recognized citation style of your choice (e.g., MLA or Chicago). Do not give in to temptation: plagiarism will not be tolerated; it will also be counterproductive to you in the long run. Not limited to “copying” and “pasting” sources from one document into your own, it is also considered plagiarism in cases of un-cited paraphrases from online, unpublished, or published writings of any kind (blogs, articles, Wikipedia, other student papers, etc.).

Course Schedule:

Week 1 – March 31___ **Introduction to the Course and to One Another**

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

“American Heretics” (1 hour 26 min -Only watch the first half.) A look at the cross section of faith, politics, and cultural issues in modern America:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_3UO8Wiqik&t=4185s

Week 2 – April 07___ **Religion in England’s First Colonies in America: The Case of the First Pilgrims**

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp.xi – 71 ; 446-453 (Chronology)
- Lacorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History*; pp. ix - 39
- Moseley, James G., *A Cultural History of Religion in America*; pp. xiii – 26

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

“The Mayflower: The Puritan Voyage Of The Pilgrim Fathers | Journey Into The Unknown” (51 min.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp9wdqwZE3w>

The Quakers: A Brief History (18 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI_iE9Je4TI

Were Quakers Puritan? (7 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ok9b-IYjoI8>

How Did Quakers Come to America? (5 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05EvjtZLQQc>

Video to watch prior to class session:

“The Mission” (Directed by Ronald Jofe, 1986) available free on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxzOliKBzuM>

Additional recommended video: “The Pilgrims” (The full documentary in three parts produced by PBS) (3:41:00) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOr3Q06BhD0>

Week 3 – April 14 ___ Religious Diversity in the Settlements, and the Growth of Immigrant Communities

Readings:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp. 72 - 152
- Moseley, James G., *A Cultural History of Religion in America*; pp. 29 – 66

Review and Learn: A Map of the 13 Early American Colonies:

https://www.ducksters.com/history/colonial_america/thirteen_colonies.php

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

- Bill Moyers Eassay: Freedom of and from Religion (6 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbmRjupmH60&t=50s>
- An Evening with Bill Moyers - Martin E. Marty Lecture on Religion in American Life (55 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8XgxhPQdTU>

Week 4 – April 21 ___ Nineteenth Century America: Religion in the Wake of the American Revolution

Readings:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp. 155 – 231; 453-459 (Chronology)
- Lacorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History*; pp. 40 – 80

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

The “Native American Problem” (12 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if-BOZgWZPE>

Indigenous Reflections on Christianity (14 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoxNyNWFvZw>

How Slaves Became Christians (12 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG9MebuJMEs>

A History of Slavery in America (Full Documentary) (28 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJN6N-O9p-s>

America's History of Slavery Began Long Before Jamestown (8:23 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziQoVPtd5zM>

How Lynching Still Effects American Politics (6 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYYDgYWc3IE&t=174s>

On Black Voter Suppression (8 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-O25ykB2Z4&t=122s>

Week 5 – Feb. 05 ___ Religion and the American Civil War & Post-Civil War Era

Readings:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp. 232 – 261, and pp. 262 - 307
- Lacorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History*; pp. 81 - 103

Videos to Watch in Class:

The American Civil War Explained (1861-1865) (12 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6N2P5yM0oU>

Fredrick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln (10 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOhgrTo257M>

Four Causes of the Civil War (11:00 min.): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rC7c3a-WO_g&t=68s

Religion in the Civil War (4:30 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLOe22xjN6s>

The Impact of Religion during the Civil War (6:40 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbm8esUopvU>

The Biblical Roots of American Racism (11:00 min.): <https://truerichesradio.com/biblical-roots-of-american-racism/>

Heather Cox Richardson: How the South Won the Civil War (50 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oxOYaoBdY>

Week 6– May 05 ___ **Mid-Term Exam**

Week 7 – May 12 _____ Readings to be assigned.

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

On the Scopes' Trial, 1925 (43 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdD9vi4koUw&t=1614s>

Week 8 – May 19 ___ **Religion Revival in the 20th Century America**

Readings:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp. 311 – 381
- Lacorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History*; pp. 104 – 121

Videos to Watch in Class:

On Christian Fundamentalism (25 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRi1mOQEXQw>

America in the Gilded Age (34 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z66lixOelfc>

What Is Dispensationalism? (5 min): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhl_vMtn8E

On the Difference between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology (3 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h71FzzLKf0>

On Malcolm X (15 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaVIucxNeTY>

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech (7 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP4iY1TtS3s>

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Final Speech (the last 2 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmkwI5ItCFk>

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X Compared (10 min)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_lO8lN1Yg

The Assassination of Martin Luther King (2min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thLubKoxp3o>

Who Killed Malcolm X? (6 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcZ2pN7WJFo>

Suggested videos related to this week to watch on your own for discussion in the following week:

Pentecostalism (33 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzT3pRu2FkY>

PBS Frontline: American Insurrection 2022 (1:24 min)

<https://www.pbssoal.org/shows/frontline/episodes/american-insurrection>

Week 9 – May 26___ **Religion, Race, and Politics in the 20th Century America**

Readings:

- Butler, Jon, et al., *Religion in American Life*; pp. 382 – 445; 459-467 (Chronology)
- Lacorne, Denis. *Religion in America; A Political History*; pp. 122 - 139
- Book Review: On the Historical Roots of an Antisemitic Myth (Reviews by Sara Lipton; _ September 23, 2021: The New York Review of Books) – to be posted on Canvas

Videos to Watch in Class:

“American Heretics” (1 hour 26 min – Watch the second half.) A look at the cross section of faith, politics, and cultural issues in modern America:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_3UO8Wiqik&t=4185s

Evangelical Christians in the U.S. (42 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S33bTCrv-vE>

Billy Graham; A Life Remembered (28 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwJ-sT9OwA0>

The Story of How Billy Graham Ministry Began (4:30 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kd9XZ2kU34>

The Man Who Mobilized the Evangelical Votes: Paul Weyrich (10 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcC53j32BW4>

Trump and the Evangelicals (4 min): <https://nyti.ms/3NUIj3x>

Sacralization in Politics: Trump is Likened to Jesus (11 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExSLraRn0H8>

How a Bible Prophecy Determines the US Foreign Policy Today (8 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmWL0I3oytw>

Christian Evangelicals’ Connection to Israel (10 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo77sTGpngQ>

Suggested videos related to this week to watch on your own:

PBS Documentary on Billy Graham (1:52:00):

<https://www.pbsocial.org/shows/american-experience/episodes/billy-graham>

May 28: Due Date to Submit Your Final Paper Topic

Week 10 – June 02___ **Race, Religion, Identity, and Politics in Our Century**

Readings:

- Butler, Anthea, *White Evangelical Racism (The entire book)*
- Article: “Nixon’s Southern Strategy” (May 17, 1970; The New York Times) – Posted on Canvas

Videos to watch and discuss in the class:

- The “Lost Cause”; How Southern Socialites Rewrote Civil War History (7:00 min.):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOkFXPbllpU>
- On the Confederacy, and Its Monuments (22 min.):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5b_-TZwQ0I
- Why Did Trump Supporters Wave the Confederate Flag on January 6? (3:15 min.):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXdtggH9KIU>
- White Evangelical Racism: Interview with Anthea Butler (11:00 min):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMZpsrYGLeA>
- An (Un)Civil War: The Evangelical Divide (27 min.):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnsrTr0XwEg>
- The Weaponization of American Christianity, with Anthea Butler (47 min.):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6royw1DCaUg>
- Inside America’s Christian Zionist movement and its support for Israel (9 min):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FjI7d2TBrA>

Week 11 Final Week; Final Paper Due: June 09 (by 11:59 pm)