

## **HIS 523: Revival, Reform & War: Religion in America from the Revolution to the Civil War**

Spring 2015

Instructor: Christopher Graham

Classroom: MHRA 1206

T, Th: 3:30-4:45

Office: MHRA, Room 2110

Office Hours: T, Th: 11am-12, 2pm-3, and by appointment

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Course description:

*Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention... In America, the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom were intimately united. Religion in America takes no direct part in the government, but nevertheless, it must be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country—Alexis de Tocqueville, 1838.*

In this course, students will explore the rapidly evolving religious environment of the early republic that so fascinated the Frenchman Tocqueville. His observations contain paradoxes that this class will strive to understand and explain. Americans became religious, but the government was not. Americans celebrated religious freedom, but used their faith to keep people in bondage. In this class, we will engage historiography and analyze primary documents to ask if America was founded as a Christian nation; to explore the reasons why evangelicalism spread so rapidly after the Revolution on both the frontier and in urban centers; to ponder why American faith could be simultaneously liberating and oppressive; to understand how Americans used their faith to reform national sins; and to examine abolitionist and proslavery theologies that undergirded the sectional crisis on the eve of the Civil War. In the process, you learn how religion—particular evangelical Christianity—has become central to the American national character.

Reading (the following books are required):

John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011)

Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)

Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006)

Other reading will be available as e-reserves or .pdfs on Canvas.

Optional:

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015)

### Learning Goals

1. Students will understand and explain how Americans from diverse backgrounds acted to shape their own faiths and the religious outlook of the nation between the Revolution and the Civil War.
2. Students will discover, analyze, and interpret primary sources and engage with the current historiography of American religion, resulting in the development of original arguments in the form of class discussion and proposal for a research project.

### ASSESSMENT

**PARTICIPATION:** This is a discussion-based class and I will not be lecturing. Our success, and your participation grade, will depend on your active engagement in discussions. You will need to have read and/or completed all assignments and prepared not only to discuss them, but to ask questions about things that are unclear or spark your curiosity, listen respectfully to your peers, articulate ways of understanding and talking about religion in American history, and synthesize interpretations from across the readings and assignments. If you read, talk, and generally engage, you will do well. If you show evidence that you have not read, and do not speak in class, you will not do well. **(40 percent)**

**RESEARCH PROPOSALS:** You will create a proposal for a major research paper that will include a historiographical review and précis of primary sources. This project will help familiarize you with the fundamentals of historical research, including the shaping of a research question, identification of useable and appropriate primary sources, location of your place in a historical argument, navigation of digital, library, and other bibliographic resources, and good writing and presentation. You will be required to submit drafts and different parts of this proposal and make regular reports to the class on your progress. Details to follow. **(30 percent)**

**REFLECTIONS:** You will submit five reflections based on each unit of this class. Your reflections will be an engagement of the monograph at the center of each unit, informed by the additional reading materials and classroom discussions. They are not book reports, but critical engagement with the monograph in which you make

an evidence-based argument about the monograph's thesis. These will be well-written and properly cited. **(30 percent)**

**SCHEDULE**  
**(Subject to change)**

**UNIT 1: WAS AMERICAN FOUNDED AS A CHRISTIAN NATION?**

**WEEK 1**

**January 13:** Introduction to class and syllabus review

**January 15:** Overview of religion in America

Fea, *Was American Founded?* Preface, Introduction, Part I

**WEEK 2**

**January 20:** Colonial background

Marilyn Westekamp, "Religion," in Daniel Vickers, ed., *A Companion to Colonial America*. (e-reserves)

Thomas S. Kidd, "Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature*. 169-186. (e-reserves)

[George Whitefield](#), Wikipedia

Fea, *Was American Founded?* Chapter 5

**January 22:** The Revolution

Fea, *Was American Founded?* Chapter 6

Documents, "Religion and Revolution" from Gaustad & Noll, 200-228. (Files)

### **WEEK 3**

#### **January 27**

Fea, *Was American Founded?* Chapter 11-15

#### **January 29**

Fea, *Was American Founded?* Chapter 7-10, Conclusion

*Reflection due*

## **UNIT 2: AMERICAN GETS THE SPIRIT**

### **WEEK 4**

#### **February 3**

Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt*, Introduction (e-reserves)

Mark A. Noll, Review of *Conceived in Doubt*, *American Historical Review* (2013) 118: 845-846 (EBSCO)

Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Chapters 1-4

#### **February 5**

Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, Chapters 5-8

*Research question due*

### **WEEK 5**

#### **February 10**

Roy Rogers, "[After Democratization](#)," JuntoBlog

#### **February 12**

Documents on American revivalism. (Files)

(Paine, "The Age of Reason")

Stone, "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery"

Alexander Campbell, "Christian System"

Bower, "Baptist Conversion"

Gilruth, "Methodist Circuit"  
Susanna Anthony of Newport.  
Peter Cartwright (Allitt, p. 130-133))

**WEEK 6**

**February 17**

Work day

**February 19: NO CLASS**

*Reflection due*

**UNIT 3: WAS THE BENEVOLENT EMPIRE BENEVOLENT?**

**WEEK 7**

**February 24**

Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, Chapters 5 & 8 (Files)

**February 26**

Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, Chapter 12 (Files)

**WEEK 8**

**March 3**

Documents on the Benevolent Empire (Noll & Gaustad, 304-327) (Files)  
Phillip Schaff & Tocqueville (Allitt), Lyman Beecher on Dueling, ABS, ASSU,  
ATS, Livermore, Finney, New Lebanon (Files)

**March 5**

Grant Wacker, "Sojourners at Home." (e-reserves)

**WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 10**

**March 17**

Documents (Noll & Gaustad, 328-351) (Files)

*Historiographical review due*

**March 19**

Work day

*Reflection due*

**UNIT 4: FREEDOM AND BONDAGE**

**WEEK 11**

**March 24**

Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, Introduction, Chapters 1-3

**March 26**

Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, Chapters 4-6, Epilogue

**WEEK 12**

**March 31**

Beth B. Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy," (Files)

Charles Irons, review of *Ministers and Masters*, [H-Net](#)

**April 2**

Albert J. Raboteau, "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism," and Vincent Harding, "Religion and Resistance Among Antebellum Slaves, 1800-1860" (e-reserves)

*Primary source analysis due*

## **Week 13**

### **April 7**

Frederick A. Bode, "The Formation of Evangelical Communities in Middle Georgia: Twiggs County, 1820-1861," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), pp. 711-748. (J-Stor)

### **April 9**

Documents on southern religions (Files)  
Thornwell and Stringfellow, Lilly, Meeting minutes (documents from Allitt, already scanned.)

*Reflection due*

## **UNIT 5: BROKEN CHURCHES**

## **WEEK 14**

### **April 14**

Sean Scott, "Religion," from *A Companion to the U.S. Civil War*. (.pdf available through the e-book in library catalog.)

### **April 16**

Documents on broken churches (Files)

## **WEEK 15**

### **April 21**

Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Chapters 1-5

### **April 23**

Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Chapters 6-8

*Revised research proposal due*

**WEEK 16**

**April 28**

Work day

*Reflection due*



## RESEARCH PROPOSALS

You will create a proposal for a research project that will include the following elements:

[DUE: February 5] *Create a research question:* Write a short description of a research topic, then construct a research question derived from that topic and explain how it satisfies our criteria for good research questions.

This will include a title, a brief description in about 3-4 well-written sentences that explains the general scope of the proposed research, and a penetrating research question. Explain how your research question satisfies the criteria for a good research question, including:

- What does it seek to explain?
- Is it specific?
- Is it feasible with regard to availability of primary source?
- Is it original?
- Is it penetrating?

This is a draft but you will make an effort at good writing and correct formatting. *Your research question will change as you delve more deeply into the historiography and primary sources.*

[DUE: March 17] *Historiographical review:* Create a bibliography with a historiographical review. You will consider *at least* two monographs and two scholarly articles that bear on your research proposal. Your review will address:

- What is the historiographical placement of the texts?
- What are the authors's specific claims?
- How does the author support those claims?
- How will your work fit into the historiographical discussion?

[DUE: April 2] *Primary source analysis:* Create a primary source bibliography with a discussion of the primary sources you will employ. You must consider

- Scope of the sources.
- Location of the sources.
- Analysis of the sources (author, points of view, etc.)
- Justification for use of the sources
- How the content will inform your inquiry.
- How this review shapes your original research question.

[DUE: April 23] *Revised research proposal*: This will be a revision of your original research question that will incorporate your historiographical discussion and primary source material into a larger narrative that includes, ultimately, a hypothesis.

## **PARTICIPATION RUBRIC**

A: regularly active and constructive in classroom discussion

B: occasionally active in classroom discussion

C: rarely active in classroom discussions

D: does not participate in classroom discussion

## **REFLECTION RUBRIC**

A: critically engages monograph with appropriate evidence; well written and formatted.

B: adequately engages monograph; use of limited evidence; less attention to good writing and formatting.

C: merely summarizes monograph; does not use evidence; little attention to good writing and formatting.

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

\_\_\_\_\_/5 points, research question

\_\_\_\_\_/5 points, historiographical review

\_\_\_\_\_/5 points, primary source analysis

\_\_\_\_\_/10 points, final proposal

\_\_\_\_\_/25 points

A: 21-25 points

B: 16-20 points

C: 10-15 points

D: <10 points