

**Religious Outsiders and the American State**

Dr. Shari Rabin

This course explores the relationship between select outsider religions – Native Americans, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, and Buddhists – and the American state from the beginnings of the nation until the present day. In a country that is premised on the separation of church and state but that also includes diverse religious communities, the place of religion in public life and of the government’s role in regulating and defining religion have long been contested. What do church-state relations look like if we focus on groups outside of the Protestant mainstream? What are the scope and limits of “religious freedom”? In this course, students explore these questions in relationship to immigration, education, national security, first amendment jurisprudence, and more.

Originally taught at a mid-size public institution, this upper level seminar course was adapted for a selective liberal arts college, which involved adding more reading material and writing assignments. The course offers students an introduction to an exciting field of inquiry in religious studies that has immediate contemporary relevance. The major goals of the class are for students to be able to: 1) read governmental and legal documents as primary sources, 2) understand how precarious and limited ‘religious freedom’ has been in the United States, and 3) situate contemporary religion-state battles in historical context. The assignments are designed in service of these three goals and build upon one another. While there are many communities that might be included in such a class, included those whose identity as “religious” is fundamentally contested – for instance, voodoo or Scientology – I ultimately decided to prioritize a deeper engagement with select communities that

demonstrate a range of understandings of “religion” and relationships to processes of racialization.

**Required Text:**

Sylvester Johnson and Steven Weitzman, *The FBI and Religion: Faith and National Security Before and After 9/11*

**Assignments:**

**Participation (20%):**

You will be excused for up to **FOUR (4)** absences during the semester. If you miss more than four classes, you should not expect to pass this course. This class is a seminar, which means that you must come to class prepared and actively join in discussions and activities with good faith and generosity.

**Analysis Paper (15%):**

In three to five pages, you will analyze Donald Trump’s “Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” (January 27, 2017). This paper should offer a close reading of the text and contextualize it in relationship to at least one primary or secondary source we have discussed in class. Due Week 6

**Synthesis Paper (20%):**

Read one of the following chapters from *The FBI and Religion* and write four to six pages describing what it tells us about the relationship between religious outsiders and the American state. In the process, you should summarize your chapter’s argument and connect it to one other assigned course reading (20%). Due Week 10

- Regin Schmidt, Catholic Church, 108-120
- Sarah Imhoff, Jews, 121-133
- Karl Evanzz, Nation of Islam, 148-167
- Matthew Bowman, Mormonism, 191-202
- Junaida Rana, Kashmiri Americans, 256-268

**Final Assignment:**

-Find a reliable news article identifying an issue of public policy related to one outsider religious group and one area of public policy. Submit a two-page proposal 1) describing the issue and 2) summarizing one course reading that it relates to. **(10%)**. Due Week 11

Groups: Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Native Americans, Buddhists, or another group approved by me.

Areas: Immigration, Education, National Security, Healthcare, Military, Prison, Free Exercise, Establishment, or another issue approved by me.

-Give a brief in-class summary of your issue and its history during Week 14 (5%).

-Write 8-10 pages analyzing the issue in historical context, using course readings and other relevant research. **(30%)**

<b>PART I – Orientations</b>	
Week 1 – Introduction	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“State,” <i>Keywords for American Cultural Studies</i>, <a href="https://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/state/">https://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/state/</a></li> <li>•The First Amendment (1789)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Winnifred Sullivan, “Introduction,” <i>The Impossibility of Religious Freedom</i>, 1-13</li> <li>•Religious Freedom Restoration Act (1993)</li> </ul>
Week 2 – Religious Insiders and Outsiders	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Sehat, “Introduction: The Myth of American Religious Freedom,” <i>The Myth of American Religious Freedom</i>, 1-10, 31-50.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R. Lawrence Moore, “Postscript,” <i>Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans</i>, 201-210</li> <li>•Pew Research Center Studies</li> <li>•FBI Hate Crime Statistics</li> </ul>
<b>PART II – Identifying Religion</b>	
Week 3 – Land and Mobility	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Jennifer Graber, “1803-1837,” <i>The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West</i>, 21-46.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Shari Rabin, “Wandering Sons of Israel: Europe, America, and the Politics of Jewish Mobility,” <i>Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America</i>, 21-43.</li> <li>•Chinese Exclusion Act (1881)</li> </ul>
Week 4 – Immigration and the Military	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libby Garland, “Not-quite-closed Gates: Jewish Alien Smuggling in the Post-Quota Years,” <i>American Jewish History</i> (September 2008), 197-224.</li> <li>•Congressional Committee on Immigration Report (1920)</li> <li>• Lyndon B. Johnson speech on the Immigration Act (1965)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ronit Stahl, “Dog Tags: Religious Toleration and the Politics of American Military Identification,” in <i>The Lively Experiment</i>, 209-221</li> </ul>

Week 5 – Identifying Race and/or Religion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Judith Weisenfeld, “Introduction,” and Images, <i>New-World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration</i>, 1-22</li> <li>•“A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census,” <i>Pew Research Center</i>, January 26, 2010</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Annalise E. Glauz-Todrank, “Judging and Protecting Jewish Identity in Shaare Tefila Congregation v. Cobb,” in <i>Who is a Jew?</i>, 43-60.</li> <li>•United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923)</li> </ul>
<b>PART III – Defining/Defending America</b>	
Week 6 – Elected Office	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morton Bordon, “There is No God but Liberty, No Gospel but the Constitution,” <i>Turks, Jews, and Infidels</i>, 23-52.</li> <li>•Benjamin Park, “The Mormon National Convention, 1844,” <i>The Junto</i>, August 17, 2016</li> </ul> <p>➔ Analysis Paper Due</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finbarr Curtis, “The Fundamental Faith of Every True American: Al Smith and Loyalty,” <i>The Production of Religious Freedom</i>, 87-112.</li> <li>•John F. Kennedy’s Speech on Religion (1960)</li> </ul>
Week 7 – Education	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tracy Fessenden, “From Disestablishment to ‘Consensus’: The Nineteenth Century Bible Wars and the Limits of Dissent,” <i>Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature</i>, 60-83.</li> <li>•“Instruction of the Propaganda Fide Concerning Catholic Children in American Public Schools” (1875)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jennifer Graber, “1893-1903,” <i>The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West</i>, 175-200</li> </ul>

	➔ In-Class Documentary, <i>Unspoken: America's Native American Boarding Schools</i>
Week 8 – National Security	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Johnson and Weitzman, “Introduction,” in <i>The FBI and Religion</i>, 1-16.</li> <li>• Kathryn Gin Lum and Lerone A. Martin, “American Religion and the Rise of Internal Security: A Prologue,” <i>The FBI and Religion</i>, 17-32.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sylvester Johnson, “The FBI and the Moorish Science Temple of America, 1926-1960,” in <i>The FBI and Religion</i>, 55-66</li> <li>• Moorish Science Temple FBI Files</li> </ul>
Week 9 – Defining “Threats”	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan Williams, “America: A Nation of Religious Freedom?,” <i>American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War</i>, 15-28.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Barkun, “The FBI and American Muslims after September 11,” in <i>The FBI and Religion</i>, 244-255</li> <li>• “Muslim NYPD Chaplain on Faith, Fear, and Getting Stopped by Airport Security,” <i>Fresh Air</i>, January 18, 2017</li> </ul>
<b>PART IV – Contesting Religious Freedom</b>	
Week 10 – Mormons and Native Americans	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Barringer Gordon, “The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America,” <i>Journal of Supreme Court History</i> (2003), 14-29.</li> </ul> <p>➔ Synthesis Paper Due</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tisa Wenger, “Indian Dances and the Politics of Religious Freedom, 1870-1930,” <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> (2011), 850-78.</li> </ul>
Week 11 – Jews	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tisa Wenger, “Making American Whiteness: Jewish Identity and the Tri-Faith Movement,” <i>Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal</i>, 143-187</li> <li>• Jonathan Sarna and David Dalin, “Old</li> </ul>

	<p>Principles and New Rights: The Free Exercise Debate,” <i>Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience</i>, 271-281</p> <p>➔ News Article Selection Due</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarna and Dalin, “Old Principles and New Rights: The Free Exercise Debate,” <i>Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience</i>, 281-300</li> <li>• Oral Argument, Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet (1993), <a href="https://www.oyez.org/cases/1993/93-517">https://www.oyez.org/cases/1993/93-517</a></li> </ul>
Week 12 – Muslims	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral Argument, Holt v. Hobbs (2014), <i>Oyez.org</i></li> <li>• “The Latest: Alabama executes inmate who wanted imam present,” <i>Associated Press</i>, February 7, 2019</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaac Weiner, “Calling Muslims – and Christian – to Pray,” <i>Religion Out Loud</i>, 158-194</li> </ul>
Week 13 – Conclusions	
	➔ Student Presentations
	➔ Conclusions