

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS (WESTERN)
Religious Studies 585, University of Kansas
Fall, 2001 7:00-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays 108 Smith Hall
Tim Miller, instructor

The religious minority groups--including those sometimes called sects or cults--have been an important part of the American religious experience for centuries. This semester we will examine some of these movements that stem from or are closely related to the mainstream American traditions, Christianity and Judaism. We will examine groups active today as well as some from earlier times, attempting to understand their teachings and practices as well as their relationship to the larger culture.

The movements we will study in this course have been arranged into somewhat arbitrary groupings. These groupings, listed below, will constitute the organizational framework of the course. The order of topics on this list may vary from the order in which we will actually study the movements in class; the schedule may be altered to take advantage of guest speakers and other special resources.

Class requirements: Regular attendance, completion of one major paper (due October 30, 2001), and completion of an in-class final examination on Tuesday, December 18, 2001, at 7:00 p.m. Details are provided in the supplementary packet of materials in the library.

The textbooks:

T. Miller, ed., *America's Alternative Religions* (abbreviated AAR)

William Kephart (with William Zellner in later editions), *Extraordinary Groups*, various editions (library reserve; not all articles appear in all editions)

Additional readings from the packet on reserve in the Religious Studies library (below called "packet")

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Introduction to the course and some definitions
Reading assignment: AAR, Introduction
2. The Anabaptists: the Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites
Reading assignment: AAR, chapter 1; Kephart, chapters on the Old Order Amish and the Hutterites (library reserve)
3. The Pietists: Brethren, Harmonists, the Amana Society
Reading assignment: Packet, articles by Arndt and Andelson
4. Fundamentalists and the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, including snake handlers
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 2 and 13; packet, articles by Williams and Waldvogel, La Barre, Falwell, and Melton (Independent Fundamentalist Family)
5. Varieties of Perfectionism: the Shakers and the Oneida Community
Reading assignment: Kephart, chapters on the Shakers and the Oneida Community (library reserve)

6. Other communal separatists: the Doukhobors, the Children of God, the Peoples Temple
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 12 and 30; packet, article by Tarasoff
7. The Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and related groups
Reading assignment: AAR, chapter 4; Kephart, chapter on Mormons
8. The end of the world and extraordinary history: Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Worldwide Church of God
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 3, 11, and 15; Kephart, chapter on Jehovah's Witnesses
9. Dissenting Catholics and Eastern Orthodox: Traditionalists, Old Catholics, radicals, and others, plus the Holy Order of MANS
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 9 and 14; packet, articles by Day and O'Connor
10. Liberal dissenters: Unitarians, Quakers, Ethical Culture
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 6 and 8; packet, article by Emerson
11. Healing, metaphysical, and New Thought groups: Christian Science, Unity, New Thought, and Swedenborgianism
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 5, 7, and 32; packet, article by Fillmore
12. Jewish movements: Hasidism and others
Reading assignment: AAR, chapters 10 and 26; Kephart, chapter on the Hasidim; packet, article by Goering and Goering
13. Skepticism: the atheists and agnostics
Reading assignment: packet, two articles by Kurtz
14. The people: who are the members of new religions, and why do they join? Who are the leaders, and what are they up to?
Reading assignment: AAR, pp. 6-7; packet, article by Melton (Life in a New Religion)
15. The anti-cult movement: deprogrammers and other opponents of new religions; religious liberty vs. the brainwashing hypothesis
Reading assignment: AAR, chapter 43
16. Concluding reflections

NOTE WELL! Additional materials, including specific class requirements and required readings beyond those in contained in the textbooks, are on reserve in the Smith Hall library. You are required to obtain those materials; they are hereby incorporated into this syllabus.

CLASS MATERIALS
Religious Studies 585
New Religious Movements (Western)
Fall, 2001

1. Class requirements and instructor information
2. Ecumenical suggestions and infallible decrees
3. Grading policies and standards
4. Abbreviations and symbols used in marking papers
5. Project instructions and requirements

CLASS REQUIREMENTS
Religious Studies 585

1. Regular class attendance and thorough and timely reading of assigned materials are essential. Attendance is required; details of the attendance policy are spelled out below under "Ecumenical Suggestions and Infallible Decrees."
2. Each student will be required to study in depth one religious movement or a topic related to one or more movements and to compose a written report of that study--a substantial term paper. This requirement will be discussed in class early in the semester; there will be several ways of pursuing it, such as reading extensively in the scriptures or other documents of a particular group, visiting several services and/or meetings of a particular group, or closely observing the spiritual exercises of a group. Topics will be assigned early in the semester.
3. Each student will be required to take an in-class final examination as scheduled by the University.

Your instructor: Tim Miller, Professor of Religious Studies

Office: 11 Smith Hall

Hours: 1:30-3:00 MWF, 6:30-7:00 Tuesdays, and by appointment. I will usually also be available after class. Office hours are sometimes preempted by campus duties, especially by faculty meetings on certain Monday afternoons.

"I have drawn the ESSENCE and the SUBSTANCE of the Kingdom from their fondest imaginations and I have brought them through the process of Tangibilization and Materialization. I have TANGIBILATED and MATERIALIZED the ESSENCE and the SUBSTANCE of your fondest imagination of heaven as imagined by the most conscientious and sincere religions."

--Father Divine

ECUMENICAL SUGGESTIONS AND INFALLIBLE DECREES:

The basic rules, and some advice for doing well in class

To begin with, I will presume that you have read this and every document and handout pertaining to the class. Ignorance of the rules is no excuse!

Attendance is required, and you must be in class for the whole class period to be counted present. There will be no excused absences for any reason except once for mandatory religious observances. Each absence in excess of one will result in a lowering of your grade by 5% of the possible points in the course. Also, certain announcements and modifications to previously distributed documents may be made orally in class (e.g., deadlines may be changed, or new readings assigned); you are fully responsible for having all classroom information whether you attend or not.

Order in the classroom: The majority of students in the class want to learn from it, and in past semesters many have told me that they resent inattentive behavior on the part of others. Talking or whispering, reading, writing notes to the person next to you, coming in late or leaving early, and other such things distract me and make it difficult for others to hear or learn. Please don't make me be a disciplinarian. Behavior which I find distracting to the point that I call one or more individuals down for it will be counted as an absence (see attendance policy, above). Repeated disrespectful and/or disruptive behavior is deemed Academic Misconduct in university regulations and could lead to your disenrollment.

Deadlines: Class assignments must be turned in by the announced deadlines; exceptions will be made only under compelling circumstances. In no case will materials be accepted after the last day of classes. Students submitting assignments after that date will be graded incomplete and their work will be evaluated after the end of the semester. Students whose work must be resubmitted because of their failure to follow instructions will normally be graded incomplete; their work will be evaluated later. Your instructor also reserves the right to grade such nonconforming submissions "F." Materials submitted or resubmitted late are subject to receiving lower grades--usually a penalty of one letter grade.

Self-expression: This is a university course. I assume that you have a good working command of English and will expect you to demonstrate that in your written work. No one whose writing is not clear and whose grammar and spelling are not solid can expect to get a grade as high as "C."

Help! Believe it or not, the first job of faculty members is to help students. Please feel free to contact me in person or by telephone at my office; you can find me there most afternoons. Please do NOT, however, call me at home. I try to return all telephone calls made during my office hours.

GRADING POLICY

Point totals will be assigned to the project and the examination. Students earning 90% or more of all possible points will be graded A; 80%, B; 70%, C; 60%, D. It is my goal to assign grades which, over several semesters, approximate the university average for undergraduate courses, which is in the vicinity of 2.4 to 2.5 on a scale in which 4.0 = A; grades tend to be somewhat higher in junior-senior-level classes than in freshman-sophomore classes.

Approximately 60% of the grade will be based on the final examination; 40% will be based on the project.

Due to university regulations with which I disagree but which I am nevertheless bound to observe, grades cannot conveniently be posted at the end of the semester. Leave a postcard at the time of the final examination if you're in a hurry to know your grade. Grades will not be disclosed by telephone or in person.

The secret formula for getting a good grade in this class: Attend every session and pay attention. Read and digest all assigned readings. If you don't understand something, ask. Assimilate all the content of the course. Do a thoughtful term project. If you haven't done all of these things, please don't complain about your grade.

FAIR WARNING: Plagiarism or other academic misconduct at any time during the term means failure in the course. Plagiarism includes directly quoting a written or oral source in a paper without attribution, or submitting a digest or lightly revised version of another's work as one's own. Other academic misconduct includes falsification of sources in a paper, cheating on an examination, participating in any way in falsification of attendance records, or other such things. All work turned in must be strictly your own, save for limited direct quotations in a term paper, which quotations must be indicated and clearly and fully credited. The KU pamphlet, "Academic integrity at the University of Kansas," available through the Office of Student Affairs, is hereby incorporated into this class syllabus.

TERM PAPERS AND ESSAY EXAMINATIONS: STANDARDS FOR SUBJECTIVE GRADING

A. The grade of A is reserved for work of distinction, for work which does much more than simply meet the basic requirements of the assignment. There are many ways to achieve distinction. Among them are creative use and integration of a strong body of source material; unusually clear and forceful writing; superior thoroughness in coverage of the topic; especially thorough research; and creative, thoughtful approaches to the topic.

B. The grade of B goes to work which meets the requirements in good, competent fashion but without unusual distinction. A B term paper reflects good research and clear analysis; it is clearly written and grammatically and technically correct; it conforms to class instructions regarding format, documentation, and the like for the assignment. A B examination shows good basic knowledge of both reading assignments and classroom material without major errors.

C. The grade of C is assigned to work which has considerable merit but which also contains significant shortcomings. Among the problems which can produce a grade of C are noteworthy errors of fact or interpretation; failure to follow specific instructions for the assignment carefully; unclear or grammatically unsound writing; failure to demonstrate use of a good range of sources; failure to exhibit substantial depth or breadth of knowledge of the material involved; production of a polemic, a piece of advocacy or a testimony of faith instead of objective, scholarly analysis; and other such things.

D. The grade of D is reserved for papers with serious and multiple errors. The errors are of the sort described just above, but more serious in nature and/or number than would be the case in C work. Papers written so unclearly that the reader has trouble following the argument of the writer are often graded D.

F. The grade of F is assigned only when the errors are so substantial as to invalidate the assignment. When the writer fails utterly to address the topic at hand, or shows very substantial ignorance of it, or fails to write readily comprehensible English, an F is the appropriate grade.

There are, obviously, judgment calls to be made in the gray areas between these categories. One overall governing principle is that grades in my courses are relative, or curved. In a typical semester, perhaps 20% of written assignments would receive the grade of A, 30% B, 40% C, 5% D, and 5% F. Overall course grading usually follows a similar pattern. Generally, if your grade is not as high as you would prefer, you are not competing successfully with certain other students.

THE TERM PROJECT

Our classroom work and readings are intended to cover a wide range of American religious movements. In the pursuit of learning in depth as well as breadth, each student will be required to study in depth one movement or one topic pertaining to the course.

The investigation can take any one of several forms. It can consist of a single intensive personal exposure (an all-day retreat, for example); a series of shorter exposures (attendance at several worship services and other meetings); reading extensively in the scriptures and other documents of a specific group; or some other comparable in-depth study. If possible, ten to fifteen hours of actual contact with the group and people in it should be involved; that contact should be supplemented with appropriate reading.

After the contact and reading have been completed, each student will be required to report on the project. In most cases that will consist of a written paper which should include a detailed account of the study itself (a diary, perhaps, of the experience, when personal contact is made) as well as a critical analysis of the experience and group as a whole. If your report is in diary form, you should record when, where, and on what occasions you visited meetings of the group or spoke with members. Report your observations factually; then provide some interpretation of them. What did you learn from the project? Did the group conform to your preconceptions about it? Were there inconsistencies in what you saw? What other evaluative and interpretive remarks can you offer?

Although your report may be based primarily on personal observations, it is good to ground your impressions in standard material. If the textbooks for the class cover your group, read the relevant passages before beginning the project. If not, get similar reliable background elsewhere (ask if you need help on that). You should read the general and theoretical chapters in the textbooks before writing the report, trying to make sense of what you have seen in light of standard interpretations and theories concerning new religious movements.

In every case you must make your sources of information clear. When you are using diary form, make it clear in your text where your information came from. If it came from your personal observation, note its time and place. If it came from an interview, name the person interviewed and date the contact. If information came from a written source, provide a standard footnote. Consult a style manual if you are not sure about proper footnote form.

Remember that propaganda is rife in the world of new religions. Works published by religious groups and by their enemies are often biased and can contain erroneous "facts." Part of your task is to slice through propaganda to actual facts.

I encourage you to speak with me about the project if you have questions. I hope that this project will provide each student with an awareness of the teachings and practices of a single group in much greater depth than can be achieved simply through the reading of textbooks.

Projects will be assigned to students individually through personal consultation.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE TERM PROJECT

The goal of the term project assignment is threefold. In this assignment the student will be expected to learn to do an original investigation using library research, interviews, survey research, and/or personal observations. The student will be expected to write (or present in other acceptable fashion) a presentation of his or her findings. Finally, the student will be expected to learn to present research findings in good form, using appropriate tools of documentation (such as footnotes).

1. Definitions: a term paper is an exposition of research, written in essay form and in your own words. "Research" means consulting several sources; research materials can include books, articles, interviews, and personal observations.
2. This assignment calls for a short but solid paper, one approximately 2000 words in length. Pack as much factual material as possible into the paper. Vague ramblings are not very useful in advancing one's argument.
3. Stick to your assigned topic. If you have trouble finding material on it, see your instructor; do not change your topic unilaterally. Papers not on your assigned topic will not be accepted.
4. Style and clarity of presentation are important. Good papers are carefully written and use correct English; they are easy for the reader to follow. Use proper form, following standard style manuals.
5. Give credit where credit is due. Footnote sources completely, using standard form. Notes may be placed at the bottom of each page or at the end of the paper. All sources, written and oral, must be credited. Include a separate bibliography at the end of the paper. Papers lacking adequate documentation will be graded "F." All direct quotations must be cited; so must all substantial pieces of information not directly quoted but gleaned from an identifiable source. It is essential that the reader of the paper know the source of each significant datum. For samples of proper footnote form, see below. For further information see any standard style book.
6. Proofread your paper carefully. Errors of fact, spelling, typing, or grammar detract significantly from a paper's impact, and will therefore have an adverse effect on your grade.
7. Collegiate term papers should always be typewritten, double-spaced. Use a good printer. Just to be safe, keep a rough draft or disk copy until the end of the semester.
8. Be sure to observe the due date listed in the course syllabus. Late papers will receive lowered grades if they are accepted at all.
9. If you have trouble finding enough material on your topic, ask for help *before* the due date so that your topic can be changed or research help can be provided.
10. How many sources do you need to consult and cite? Several. The thoroughness you display in covering your topic will have an important impact on your grade.

Examples of proper footnote form:

1. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 128-29.
2. Karl J.R. Arndt, "The Harmonists and the Mormons," *American German Review* 10 (June, 1944): 6.
3. Interview with Father Patrick O'Malley, Church of the Awakening, Joplin, Missouri, July 19, 2001.

An abbreviated guide to religious terminology and usage

A.D. "Anno Domini," i.e., "In the year of the Lord." The word "Domini" makes a theological claim (that Jesus is Lord); a more neutral and generally accepted usage is C.E., "Common Era."

Altar. A raised platform or table for religious sacrifices or other ceremonial use. Note correct spelling (*not alter*).

B.C. "Before Christ." The word "Christ" (=Messiah) makes a theological claim (that Jesus was the Messiah); a more neutral and generally accepted usage is B.C.E., "Before the Common Era."

Bible. Literally "book"; principal book of sacred writings for Christians and Jews. Always capitalized, but not underlined or italicized although a book title. Similarly names of individual books within the Bible are not underlined or italicized. The adjectival form is "biblical"; capitalization is optional.

Canon. Literally "rule" or "list." (1) Law of the Catholic Church. (2) The list of the saints. (3) An official in the Roman Catholic or Episcopal church. (4) A part of the Catholic Mass. Note correct spelling (*not cannon*).

Clergy, clergyman, clergywomen. Ordained religious professional(s). Originally a Christian usage, now used in other religions as well. "Clergy" is a collective noun and often used with a plural verb.

Minister. Literally "servant"; noun commonly used to denote member of the clergy in Protestantism.

Pastor. Literally "shepherd"; used to describe a Catholic priest or Protestant minister who oversees a parish.

Priest. Member of the clergy authorized to perform the sacraments; term widely used in liturgical churches and in some nonchristian religions.

Rabbi. Literally "master"; authoritative teacher in Judaism.

Evangelical. (1) Conservative Protestant. (2) Having to do with the Gospel. (3) Certain Lutherans.

Evangelism, evangelistic. In Christianity, work aimed at making converts; literally, preaching the gospel.

Prophet. Inspired person who speaks for God. Note spelling (*not profit*).

Prophecy (noun). A pronouncement made by a prophet.

Prophecy (verb). To give a prophecy.

Reverend. Adjective describing a member of the clergy. NOT a title. Correct usage is exactly the same as the correct use of the term "honorable" to address or describe a judge. On first reference, write "the Reverend Barbara Harris," "the Rev. Barbara Harris," or "the Rev. Ms. Harris," not "Rev. Harris" or "the Rev. Harris." On second reference the "Rev." should be omitted: "Harris" or "Dr./Ms./Miss/Mrs. Harris," as appropriate.

Spiritualism, spirituality. These once interchangeable terms now have distinct meanings. Spirituality has to do with a person's spiritual quest or outlook. Spiritualism is a religion whose best-known distinction is a belief that the living can communicate with the dead.

A common type of error in usage not specific to religious studies:

Latin- and Greek-derived singular and plural forms are often used incorrectly. In Latin the endings -us and -um are usually singular; -i and -ae are usually plural; and -a can be either (singular for a feminine noun, plural for a neuter noun). In Greek the ending -on is usually singular, and -a is often plural. As is otherwise the case in English, the verb “is” should be used with a singular noun, and “are” with a plural noun. Herewith a few words in their correct singular and plural forms (singular first):

alumna, alumnae (female)

alumnus, alumni (male)

auditorium, auditoria

candelabrum, candelabra

criterion, criteria

datum, data

forum, fora

graffito, graffiti (in this case the language is Italian)

medium, media

phenomenon, phenomena

SOURCES OF THE READINGS

Karl J. R. Arndt, "George Rapp's Harmony Society," *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 57-87.

Jonathan G. Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies," *America's Communal Utopias*, 181-203.

Weston La Barre, *They Shall Take Up Serpents: Psychology of the Southern Snake-Handling Cult* (New York: Schocken, 1962), 3-50.

Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981), 186-223.

J. Gordon Melton, "Independent Fundamentalist Family," *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Gale Research, fifth edition, 1996), 105-109.

Koozma J. Tarasoff, *A Pictorial History of the Doukhobors* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1969), 13-36.

Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1963), 3-59.

Edward D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1971), 111-139.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "An Address, Delivered before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, Sunday Evening, July 15, 1838." (This printing from Mark van Doren, ed., *The Portable Emerson* [New York: Viking, 1946], 47-68.)

Charles Fillmore, *Christian Healing* (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1909), 40-49.

Violet and Orlando J. Goering, "The Agricultural Communes of the *Am Olam*," *Communal Societies* 4 (1984), 74-86.

Paul Kurtz, *In Defense of Secular Humanism* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1983), 39-47, 265-273.

J. Gordon Melton, "Life in a New Religion," *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America* (New York: Garland, second edition, 1992), 15-22.