

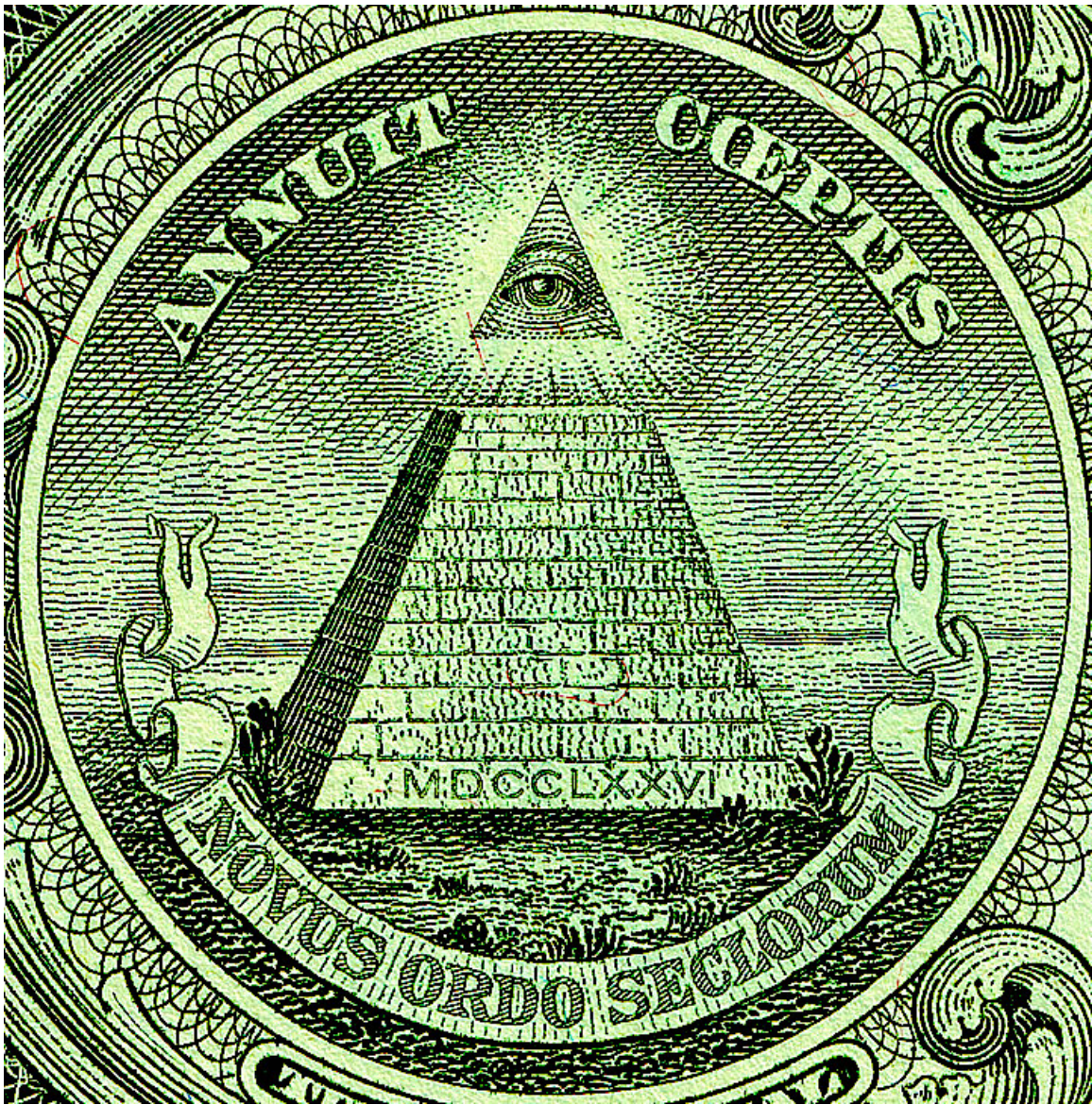
Religion in America:

One Nation, Under God(s)?

PHR-410 / Spring 2018

Phillips Academy

Mr. Prescott



Instructor: Mr. Prescott
Location: Chapel 015
Email: kprescott@andover.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In contemporary American public life, religion is everywhere, and the United States is considered one of the most religious countries in the world. This course will examine the role of religion in American history and politics, from colonial times to the present day. Questions to be addressed include: Is America a Christian country? What role did religion play in the founding of America? Did the founding documents seek to create a separation of church and state? How were religious arguments used to justify or challenge slavery? What are the causes of the rise of fundamentalism in the 20th century? What, looking forward, is America's religious identity in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic society?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATION, AND POLICIES

I. Required Text(s):

1. Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2009).
2. Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).
3. Additional texts will be made available in class and posted on Canvas

II. Evaluation

i. Class Discussion (30%) – Much of this class will proceed as a seminar, which means careful reading of assigned work, regular attendance, and participation in class discussion are all essential in order to succeed in the course. A separate handout/rubric will be provided regarding expectations for classroom participation/discussion.

ii. Reading Quizzes/In-Class Writing Prompts (10%) – Short reading quizzes and writing prompts will be given in-class throughout the term. These are not meant to be comprehensive, but rather help students establish a foundation for larger writing assignments.

iii. Essays/Projects (60%) – Two different analytical/argumentative essays (appx. 3-5 pages in length) will be assigned at the conclusion of the first two units, while the course itself will culminate in a curatorial project, where students will be asked to design a mini-exhibition on a theme of their choosing. More specific information about the nature of these assignments will be provided closer to their corresponding due dates.

- a. **Unit 1 Essay (15%)** – Due on Tuesday, April 17
- b. **Unit 2 Essay (20%)** – Due on Tuesday, May 15
- c. **Curatorial Project (25%)** – Due on Wednesday, May 30

III. Extensions – Generally speaking, I do not grant extensions. In addition to allocating class time for papers, prompts are also handed out at least one week in advance of the due date, so the expectation is that students will plan ahead and manage their time appropriately. The only exception to this policy is when a student has three or more **major** assignments due on the same day, in which case students are expected to follow the protocols outlined on p. 51 of the Blue Book under “Workload & Assignments” (which includes 24-hours advance notice).

IV. Late Work Policy – All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Any work handed in after this point will be counted as late. Please note that problems with technology are **not** an excuse for lateness. Anticipate that the printer will break, that files will be lost, or that your computer will die! **Any work handed in after the due date will receive a grade no higher than a 3+.**

V. Rewrite Policy – Students may rewrite any essay in the course (except for the final), though note that revisions must be substantial; it is not sufficient simply to plug in the instructor’s feedback. To that end, I strongly encourage students to meet with me if they are electing to complete a revision. The grade for the rewrite will be averaged with the first grade to determine the final grade for the assignment. All rewrites are due one week after the initial essay is returned. Please note that I do not accept rewrites for unauthorized late essays.

VI. Absences - As noted above under Classroom Preparation/Participation, regular attendance is essential if one is to succeed in this course! However, I realize that this course is not your only commitment this term, just as I realize that circumstances inevitably arise that are outside of your control. First and foremost, I ask that you communicate with me (the earlier the better). Please note that students are responsible for all announcements or changes made in class. Regarding **Personal Time**, I ask that students follow the procedures outlined on pp. 54-55 of the Blue Book. Finally, in the event that an assignment is due on the day a student is sick (with an excused absence from the Health Center), said assignment will be due at the beginning of the next class meeting.

VI. E-mail – I will respond to all e-mail within 24 hours. However, please note that any e-mail sent after 7:00 PM will not receive a response until the following morning, so please plan ahead!

VIII. Religious Observances – Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that fall during the term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with participation in the course, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

IX. Disabilities – Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities who may require disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to see me as soon as possible to discuss your particular needs. All discussions will remain confidential, though I may consult Student Health Services to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

X. Technology – Although we live in an increasingly digitized world, please note that I do not allow the use of computers/tablet/phones during class unless otherwise specified.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Unit 1: Religion and the Founding of the United States

WEEK 1 – THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

TUESDAY, MARCH 20 – INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW

- No assigned readings

THURSDAY, MARCH 22 – THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

- Read: Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, "Religious Polarization and Pluralism in America," in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), pp. 1-32.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23 – NO CLASS

WEEK 2 – THE AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION

TUESDAY, MARCH 27 – MYTHS AND AMERICAN ORIGINS

- Read: Bruce Lincoln, "Mythic Narrative and Cultural Diversity in American Society," in *Myth and Method*, eds. Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 163-176.

THURSDAY, MARCH 29 – THE AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION

- Read: Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 117.3 (1988): 97-118.

FRIDAY, MARCH 30 – THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

- Read: Sargent Bush, Jr., "America's Origin Myth: Remembering Plymouth Rock," *American Literary History* 12.4 (2000): 745-756.

WEEK 3 – THE MYTH OF AMERICAN ORIGINS

TUESDAY, APRIL 3 – NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE COLONIES

- Read: Steven Waldman, "Christian America," in *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 2008), 3-17.

THURSDAY, APRIL 5 – THOMAS JEFFERSON AND ENLIGHTENMENT RATIONALISM

- Read: The Declaration of Independence
- Read: TBD

FRIDAY, APRIL 6 – THE DEIFICATION OF WASHINGTON

- Read: Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 2008), selections.

WEEK 4: CASE STUDY – THE U.S. CAPITOL ROTUNDA

TUESDAY, APRIL 10 – DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND MANIFEST DESTINY

- Read: TBD

THURSDAY, APRIL 12 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

FRIDAY, APRIL 13 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

WEEK 5: A NEW ORIGIN MYTH

TUESDAY, APRIL 17 – THE MYTH OF AMERICA’S FOUNDING

- Due: Essay #1

THURSDAY, APRIL 19 – RELEASE TIME (MR. PRESCOTT AT EIGHT SCHOOLS CONFERENCE)

FRIDAY, APRIL 20 – NON-SIBI DAY (NO CLASS)

Unit 2: Religious Intolerance in America

WEEK 6: “DIRT” AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

TUESDAY, APRIL 24 – RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND SECULAR DEFILEMENT

- Read: Mary Douglas, “Secular Defilement,” in *Purity and Danger* (New York: Routledge, 1966), 36-50.

THURSDAY, APRIL 26 – RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

- Read: Eboo Patel, “Introduction,” in *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), xi-xxix.

FRIDAY, APRIL 27 – FRIDAY FREE (NO CLASS)

WEEK 7: RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN AMERICA

TUESDAY, MAY 1 – ISLAMAPHOBIA AND CORDOBA HOUSE

- Read: Eboo Patel, “Ground Zero,” in *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), 3-22.

THURSDAY MAY 3 – THE CATHOLIC MENACE

- Read: Eboo Patel, “The Muslim Menace,” in *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), 23-40.

FRIDAY, MAY 4 – THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

- Read: Eboo Patel, “The Evangelical Shift,” in *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012), 41-64.

WEEK 8: RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND AMERICAN POLITICS

TUESDAY, MAY 8 – NO CLASS

THURSDAY, MAY 10 – RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND INAUGURATION SPEECHES

- Read: Donald J. Trump, “First Inaugural Address,” January 20, 2017
- Read: Barack H. Obama, “First Inaugural Address,” January 20, 2009
- Read: John F. Kennedy, “First Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1961
- Read: Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1865

FRIDAY, MAY 11 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

Unit 3: Final Projects

WEEK 9: THE CURATORIAL CHALLENGE OF RELIGION AND AMERICA

TUESDAY, MAY 15 – INTRODUCTION TO FINAL PROJECTS

- Due: Essay #2

THURSDAY, MAY 17 – BRAINSTORM WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

FRIDAY, MAY 18 – BRAINSTORM WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

WEEK 10: FINAL PROJECT RESEARCH

TUESDAY, MAY 22 – RESEARCH WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

THURSDAY, MAY 24 – RESEARCH WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

FRIDAY, MAY 25 – RESEARCH WORKSHOP

- No assigned readings

WEEK 11: FINALS PERIOD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30 – FINAL PRESENTATIONS

- Due: Final Project

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bellah, Robert. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 117.3 (1988): 97-118.

Bush, Sargent, Jr. "America's Origin Myth: Remembering Plymouth Rock." *American Literary History* 12.4 (2000): 745-756.

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