

**American Society and Religion**  
**Wednesday 10:45 – 12:15**

**Andrée Lafontaine** ([alafo@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp](mailto:alafo@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp))

Office: L322

Office hour (no appointment necessary): Monday 16:30 – 18:00

Course webpage:

<http://www.andreelafontaine.com/american-society-and-religion>

Founded on the principle of religious freedom, the United States is at once the most religiously diverse country *and* the most religiously fervent of industrial democracies. Faced with this claim, one may wonder: “How has the American religious landscape evolved over time?”, “How have immigration and evolving trends in politics, science, the economy and gender relations affected the growing diversity of religion?”, “How have different and sometimes incompatible religions interacted?” This class will aim to answer these questions by presenting a broad view of the United States’ rich religious landscape.

Adopting a historical and sociological approach, our aim is not to “assess” religions, but rather to understand the enmeshment of religions with the social and political life in the American context. First, we will look at the different religions that have played a significant role in the historical development of the United States. Then, we will take a closer look at the role of religion in the shaping of contemporary American society and politics. Finally, we will discuss how religion inflects public life and politics in important contemporary debates such as gay marriage and abortion.

*Keep in mind that most of us come to class with various religious experiences, both negative and positive, and that some hold strong religious beliefs. It is important to remain open-minded and respectful.*

**Evaluations:**

1. Attendance and class participation: 10%
2. Mid-term (group work): 30%
3. Class presentation: 20%
4. Final paper (group work): 40%

Teamwork is central to this class, and your evaluation will reflect your level of involvement within your group. You will select a major research topic on which you will work, as a group, for the duration of the semester. This topic will be the subject of your mid-term, class presentation, and final paper.

1. **Attendance** to all classes is mandatory. In order to participate fully, you will have to do the required readings before class.

2. The **mid-term** is meant to help you prepare the final paper. You will identify a subject, research question and hypothesis. You will also determine your final paper's outline, define key concepts, and build a tentative annotated bibliography. This is a group assignment. You are free to divide up the labor however you see fit. A portion of your grade will be attributed by your peers based on your level of participation and contribution.
3. Along with the members of your group, you will do an in-class **presentation** (10-15 minutes, plus 10 minutes for Q&A) to present your research subject to your colleagues. Each member of the group is expected to contribute to both preparation and delivery. Presentations will take place during the four last weeks of class.
4. Your **final assignment** is a research paper (8-12 pages). You will carry out the research proposed in your mid-term. This paper builds on your mid-term and class presentation: You are expected to take into account comments made in the marking of your mid-term and during class discussion following your presentation, and to fix any problems highlighted in your mid-term and presentation.

Guidelines and marking grid for each assignment will be distributed in class.

### Readings:

- 📖 Jon Butler, Grant Wacker and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Available at the University bookstore.

## CALENDAR

### SECTION 1: Historical Landscape

**April 6**

#### Week 1: Introduction

The American religious landscape in numbers.

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 1: Worlds Old and New, 1-20.
- 🌐 Molly Worthen. "One Nation Under God?" *The New York Times* December 22, 2012. Available online.
- 🌐 "America's Changing Religious Landscape". Pew Research Center.  
<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

Optional:

- 🎧 *American Visions: The Promised Land* (Episode 2). Available online with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9teEmtNdtjg>

**April 13**

#### Week 2: Religious Freedom

- 📖 David Sehat. "Introduction", *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011, 1-10.

Optional:

- 📖 Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan. "Backgrounds and Beginnings". *Religion in America*. Pearson Education Press, 1998. 11-37.

## April 20

### Week 3: American Indians and Spirituality

This week's reading focuses on the colonial settler's religious activity. It will provide critical background information to this week's lecture, which will focus on native American spirituality.

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 2: "Religions and Missions in New Spain and New France", 21-46.

Optional:

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, excerpt from Chapter 12: "Sojourners at Home", 212-218.
- 📖 Peter H. Wood. "The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790". In *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Eds. Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov and M. Thomas Hatley). Lincoln, 1989, 35-103.
- 📖 James H. Merrell. *The Indian's New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal*. Chapel Hill, 1989.
- 📖 Gregory E. Dowd. *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*. Baltimore, 1992.
- 📖 Joel W. Martin. *Sacred Revolt: Muskogees' Struggle for a New World*. Boston, 1991.

## April 27

### Week 4: Puritanism

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 3: "Religion in England's First Colonies", 47-70.

Optional:

- 📖 Perry Miller. "Chapter 1". *Errand Into the Wilderness*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1952.
- 📖 Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt. Chapter 3 "Puritan New England". *The Religious History of America*. San Francisco: Harper, 2004. 49-73.
- 📖 David D. Hall. *World of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. New York, 1989.
- 📖 Sacvan Bercovitch. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. Yale UP, 1975.
- 🎧 *The Scarlet Letter* (Roland Joffé, 1995, 135 min).

## May 11

### Week 5: Immigrants and Religion—Catholics and Jews

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, excerpt from Chapter 12: "Sojourners at Home", 219-223.
- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 14: "Fashioners of Immigrant Faith", 246-260.

Optional:

- 📖 Jay P. Dolan. *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865*. Baltimore, 1975.
- 📖 Robert A. Orsi. *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*. New Haven, 1985.
- 📖 Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt. Chapter 10 "Immigration and Diversity". *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*. San Francisco: Harper, 2004. 209-230.

## May 18

### Week 6: The Great Awakening and the Protestant Landscape

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*. Chapter 9: "Awakeners of the Heart", pp. 171-183.

Optional:

- 📖 Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt. Chapter 5: "From Maryland Catholics to Georgia Evangelicals". *The Religious History of America*. San Francisco: Harper, 2004. 95-118.
- 📖 Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan. Chapter 4: "The Great Awakening". *Religion in America*. Pearson Education Press, 1998. 11-37.

## May 25

### Week 7: Utopian Communities and New Religious Movements

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapters 10 and 11: "Reformers and Visionaries" and "Restorers of Ancient Ways". 185-210.

Optional:

## SECTION 2: Religion and Politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

## June 1

### Week 8: Progressivism and Temperance Movement

#### Mid-Term Due in Class Today

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 19: "The Age of Militancy". 323-339.
- 📖 Garry Wills. "Introduction", *Under God: Religion and American Politics*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990, 15-26.

Optional:

- 📖 Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, Chapter 11 "Cities and Social Gospels". *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story*. San Francisco, Harper, 2004. 231-254.

## June 8

### Week 9: Fundamentalisms

- 📖 Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (Eds). "The Rise of American Fundamentalism". *Religion in American History: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997, 314-331.

## June 15

### Week 10: The 1970s and 1980s—The Religious Right

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 23: “Preachers, Politicians, and Prodigals”, 395-408.
- 🎧 *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple* (Stanley Nelson, 2006, excerpts)

**June 22**

**Week 11: New Age Religions and Millenials**

- 📖 *Religion in American Life*, Chapter 24: “Religion for the New Millenium”, 409-426.

**June 29**

**Week 12: Religion and Public Policy**

**Class presentations**

- 🎧 *Jesus Camp* (Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, 2006, excerpts)

**July 6**

**Week 13: *E Pluribus Unum***

**Class presentations**

- 📖 Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (Eds.) *Religion in American History: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997. 468-485.

**July 13**

**Week 14: Postmodernism and Religious Diversity**

**Class presentations**

- 📖 David Chidester. “The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock ‘n’ Roll: Theoretical Models for the Study of Religion in American Popular Culture”. In David G. Hackett (Ed), *Religion and American Culture: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 467-480.
- 🎧 *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief* (Alex Gibney, 2015, 120 min)

Optional:

- 📖 Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, Chapter 18 “Politics and Pluralism”. *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story*. San Francisco, Harper, 2004. 398-427.

**July 20**

**Week 15: Class presentations**

- 🎧 *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief* (Alex Gibney, 2015, 120 min)