

Violence in American Religious History

RS 280

OCNL 239

Wednesdays 7:00—9:50 PM

Instructor:

Sarah Pike

Trinity 231

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Office hours: **Wed. and Thurs. 12-2** and by appointment

• Course Description •

This seminar will explore the relationship between religion and violence in American cultural history. Course topics will include captivity narratives and the encounter between Europeans and American Indians, martyrdom, the slave experience, anti-lynching campaigns, religious rhetoric and war, the nativist movement's violence against Irish immigrants, conflicts between new religious movements ("cults") and other Americans, violence in Mormon history, memorialization, media and politics around 9/11 and the Iraq war.

• Course Texts •

James Tabor and Eugene Gallager, *Why Waco?*

Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, *Indian Captivity Narratives*

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of a Slave*

Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*

RS 280 course packet at Mr. Copy next week, readings for 2nd week on electronic reserve.

• Course Requirements and Grading •

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:

This class will be taught as a seminar, so your participation and attendance are essential. You should read assignments carefully and come to each class with written comments and questions about the readings. Absences will only be excused in the case of medical or other emergencies (20%).

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Every week you will turn in a two-page response to the readings or take a short quiz on the readings at the beginning of class, as noted in the syllabus. Your responses should be typed double-spaced and should not exceed two pages. This should not be a summary, rather you should react to the readings by developing one or two ideas. What issue(s) does the reading raise for you? Do you agree or disagree with the author's perspective? Why or why not? Your response should focus on one or two central issues, but you should try to make specific references to the texts and incorporate brief quotes into your response (20%).

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

One or two students will facilitate class discussion each week. You will start the class off by introducing what you see as the significant issues for the week. You must also bring in information on the topic of the week to supplement assigned readings. This supplementary information could consist of your comments on an article or book about the topic, a guest speaker, a video, or a survey of World Wide Web sites about your topic. You will also be responsible for getting the discussion going with provocative questions about the readings. Feel free to bring in audio-visual aids and customize your class session in any way you like (20%).

RESEARCH PAPER:

Each student will pursue a research topic throughout the course, resulting in a 12-15 page paper. You must use at least **four books or articles including at least one primary source**, at least **one type of "field work,"** if appropriate to your topic, such as a visit to a church or temple, a telephone interview, participation in an event, etc. and at least **one electronic source**

--Two page description of your topic with bibliography of primary and secondary sources. For ethnographic research projects your primary sources can be individuals, groups or communities. Due on **February 18**

--Annotated bibliography due **March 31** (5%)

--First draft of research paper due in class on **April 21**. Drafts will be exchanged with another member of the seminar and you will read and write up comments and suggestions on each other's papers which you will also share with me. Comments will be due on **May 5** (5%).

--20 minute class presentation on your topic to be scheduled during the semester at an appropriate time or in the last few weeks (10%)

--Final paper due on **May 21** (20%).

Some recommended topics: Wounded Knee and other Indian massacres; Spanish missions and forced conversion in California and the Southwest; colonial witch persecutions; slave revolts in the South; the Ku Klux Klan; post 1960s Christian white supremacists; anti-Asian violence in California; persecution of Shakers; the churches and the Civil War; religious rhetoric and the World Wars; religiously based non-violent protest movements; conscientious objectors; religion and family violence; contemporary Christian support of corporal punishment; religiously motivated anti-gay violence; religiously motivated anti-abortion violence; memorials as a response to violence (Columbine, Oklahoma City, Vietnam, World Trade Center); the Jonestown mass suicide; domestic "terrorism" such as radical animal rights or environmental groups; the Gulf War as a holy war; and anti-Muslim violence and rhetoric.

Course Calendar

Topics, Readings and Films

January 28, Introduction to the course and discussion of terms

February 4, Colonial conquest and Manifest Destiny

Readings: Zinn, "Columbus, the Indians and Human Progress," Mary Rowlandson's narrative

In-class quiz

FILM: "The Mission"

February 11, Indian wars and captivity narratives

Readings: Mary Jemison's narrative and one other of your choice.

Response paper due

February 18, Domestic violence in colonial times

Readings: selection from Ann Taves, "Religion and Domestic Violence in early New England"

In-class quiz

PAPER TOPIC DUE

February 25, Freedom and servitude in the 18th century

Readings: Douglass, Chaps. TBA, excerpt from Toni Morrison, *Beloved*,

Response paper due

FILM: "Beloved"

March 3, Slavery and the Civil War

Readings: Douglass, Chaps. TBA, Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

Response paper due

March 10, Racial violence, lynching and the anti-lynching movement during Reconstruction

Readings: Excerpt from Harris, "Exorcising Blackness" and Dray, "At the Hands of Persons Unknown"

FILM: "Eyes on the Prize"

In-class quiz

March 17, Protestant nativism in the East and anti-Asian violence in the West

Readings: excerpt from Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures*, Tang, "My Noose"

Response paper due

FILM: "Gangs of New York"

SPRING BREAK

March 31, Survivalism, Christian Identity and white supremacy

Readings: Krakauer, Prologue-Chapter 5, excerpt from Barkun,
Religion and the Racist Right

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

FILM: "American History X"

April 7, Persecution of 19th century sectarian movements

Readings: Krakauer, Chaps. 6-17

In-class quiz

April 14, Violent Faith

Readings: Finish Krakauer

Response paper due

April 21, Violence and new religious movements from the 1970s on

Readings: Tabor and Gallagher, Chaps. 1-5

ROUGH DRAFT DUE

FILM: "Waco: The Rules of Engagement"

April 28, Waco and Jonestown

Readings: finish *Why Waco?*

Response paper due

May 5, American memorializing

Readings: Excerpt from Zoba, *Day of Reckoning*

In-class quiz

COMMENTS DUE ON COLLEAGUE'S PAPER

May 12, 9-11 and the War in Iraq

FINAL PAPER DUE by midnight May 21

Students with certified disabilities: please notify me of any special needs within the first two weeks of the semester. I will make every effort possible to facilitate your success in this course.

• Other Information •

--Lateness: In fairness to all, I will penalize late papers 1/3 letter grade per business day.

--It is recommended that students make and keep a copy of all assignments and papers submitted to the instructor.

--If there is evidence that you have been involved in any form of academic dishonesty, you will receive an "F" grade for the course and a report will be provided to Student Judicial Affairs for further action.

