

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE USA

RELST 120

Instructor: Prof. S Brent Rodríguez Plate

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Office hours: 11.00-11.50am MW, or by appt. Room 108 Benedict Hall

FYC Mentor: Shannon Boley sboley@hamilton.edu

Course Overview:

Religious diversity has been noted in big cities like New York and Los Angeles. But smaller cities like Utica have also diversified, seeing unprecedented population shifts in recent years. This course will take advantage of our proximity to Utica, and explore the mosques, temples, synagogues, and churches that exist there today, as well as explore some of the autobiographies of Americans who have matured in their faith through contact with others.

Course Materials:

Students will need to purchase the following books, available in the bookstore:

- Diana Eck, *Encountering God*
- Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith*
- Martin Luther King, Jr., *Autobiography of MLK*
- Timothy K Beal, *Religion in America*
- Other required readings at Blackboard (BB)

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

Presence: (25% of the final grade) This grade includes attendance and participation, but entails a more general sense of bringing both body and mind to the classroom for discussions. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. The course relies on informed comments by students on a regular basis. This grade includes attendance, plus, you will be graded on your ability to analyze and synthesize readings; on the frequency, relevance and insights of your comments; and on your ability to present your ideas coherently to the class. Presence grades will be calculated from: 1) my own notes from class sessions, in which I note who was significantly involved in discussion, 2) your own self-assessment of your contributions to class discussion.

Weekly writings: Two Questions, One Comment (2Q-1C): (20%)

On every Monday, students will bring in two questions about the assigned readings/viewings for the coming day/week. These will be printed out, and will serve as discussion starters for Monday and Wednesday's classes. Then, every Friday, students are to bring one solid paragraph of ~150 words, printed out, that is a response to one key point that was brought up in the discussions for the week. As we move into the semester, you will work on these in tandem with other students.

Religious Site Visits: (30%)

There will be five (possibly more) religious site visits arranged through the semester. You are required to attend **three** of them, and write up a 700-800 word paper on each (due one week after the visit). Transportation will be provided. Options will include a Sabbath service at a Reform Jewish synagogue, a Jummah prayer service at a Bosnian Mosque, a Lenten service at a Catholic church, a service at a Mormon church, a service at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple, and/or a Sunday service at an African-American church. One of these will be rewritten and due by end of the semester.

10 hours volunteer work: (10%)

You will have the choice to join Project SHINE, or work with either Hope House or Midtown Utica Community Center. More in class.

Final Presentations: (15%)

More information on these in class. In brief, they will be 10min oral presentations that discuss your experiences working in Utica this term.

Finally: You are expected to treat this classroom as if you were on an airline flight: All electronic devices must be turned off and safely stowed for the duration of our flights. Cell phones will not be tolerated, and laptops are not allowed. A ringing phone or text messaging during class will result in that student being marked absent for the day.

Statement on Disabilities

Prof Plate will work with any students with disabilities as need be. Students should contact Prof Plate **in the first two weeks of class** to discuss any specific needs, and should have already spoken with Dean Harrison (aharriso@hamilton.edu) about this.

Course Schedule

(All events subject to change)

21 Jan	Introductions
23 Jan	Introducing "Religion" Reading: "Ten Things Every College Student Should Know about Religion" Online.
	E Pluribus Unum
26 Jan	Read: Timothy Beal, <i>Religion in America</i> ; D. Eck on pluralism (2Q due)
28 Jan	Timothy Beal, <i>Religion in America</i> ; D. Eck on pluralism
30 Jan	Timothy Beal, <i>Religion in America</i> ; D. Eck on pluralism (1C due)
31 Jan	First volunteer Saturday-Midtown
	Growing up Plural
2 Feb	Read: <i>Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>
4 Feb	<i>Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>
6 Feb	<i>Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>
9 Feb	Imam Sabur Abdul-Salaam visit. Read section from his book. 2Q for this week regarding his book; you can ask him your questions. Evening Screening: <i>Malcolm X</i> , 7-10pm Benedict 105 (if you can't make this, you need to watch on your own by Wednesday)
11 Feb	Discuss Spike Lee's <i>Malcolm X</i>
13 Feb	<i>Malcolm X</i> (1C for week on the film)
16 Feb	Richard Newton visit, Discussing <i>Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> (2Q will be on Malcolm; prepared for Newton's visit) REQUIRED: Afternoon Lecture: "The African American Bible," 4pm KJ 102
18 Feb	1C due: on Newton's visit, lecture, + follow up on Malcolm X
20 Feb	No class
21 Feb	Second volunteer Saturday-Midtown

23 Feb	Read: Eboo Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i>	
25 Feb	Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i>	
27 Feb	Patel, <i>Acts of Faith</i>	
2 Mar	Read: Diana Eck, <i>Encountering God</i>	
4 Mar	Diana Eck, <i>Encountering God</i>	
6 Mar	Diana Eck, <i>Encountering God</i>	
9 Mar	Individual meetings with students-no regular class	
11 Mar	Individual meetings with students-no regular class	
13 Mar	No Class	
16-27 Mar	Spring Break	
30 Mar	TBA: We will vote on class content for the final four weeks	
1 Apr	<p>Possible topics for final weeks: Latter-day Saints in upstate NY Oneida Indian life (visit to Shako:wi) Gerrit Smith and Underground Railroad Russian Orthodox Monastery Communal Societies-Oneida Community Mansion Artistic approaches to religious life</p>	
3 Apr		
6 Apr		
8 Apr		
10 Apr		
13 Apr		
15 Apr		
17 Apr		No Class
20 Apr		TBA
22 Apr		TBA
24 Apr	TBA	
27 Apr	TBA	
29 Apr	TBA	
1 May	TBA	
4 May	Final Presentations	
6 May	Final Presentations	
8 May	Final Presentations	
11 May	Revised papers due	

