

MODERN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

RELS-277-01

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 3: 00 pm
Spring Semester 2005

Department of Religious Studies, College of the Holy Cross.

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DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the phenomenon of modern religious movements within the United States. The movements we will consider in this course are popularly known as “cults,” and the one of the course’s most important objectives will be to examine critically the term “cult,” and other categories such as “brainwashing.” The course will range broadly, from a consideration of contemporary movements such as Scientology, the Branch Davidians, and UFO Cults to other groups that have experienced longer histories such as the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) and the Watchtower (Jehovah’s Witnesses). The course will also consider religious movements in modern Catholicism. Any consideration of modern religious movements is inevitably highly charged. Many of the works we will read have very strong ideological agenda and the fundamental purpose of the course will be to provide the analytic tools to consider not only modern religious movements themselves but also the discourse surrounding them. The reading load for this course is substantial.

GOALS: This course has five overall objectives:

- 1) To introduce students to modern religious movements in the United States.
- 2) To discuss and examine critically the term “cult.”
- 3) To examine the role of charismatic leadership in the development of religious movements.
- 4) To discuss and examine critically the concept of “brainwashing.”
- 5) To examine the relationship between new religious movements and issues of religious liberty in contemporary America.

Format: Lecture and Discussion.

Evaluation: There are five (6) graded exercises: Four essays of 5-7 pages, a midterm examination; and a final. All graded exercises are weighted equally. A written self-evaluation is included as part of the final paper assignment.

Grading: All assignments will be given a letter grade. When your final grade is calculated, the individual letter grades you have received will be converted into a GPA figure: 4.3 (A+); 4.0 (A); 3.7 (A-); 3.3 (B+); 3.0 (B); 2.7 (B-); 2.3 (C+); 2.0 (C); 1.7 (C-); 1.3 (D +); 1 (D); 0 (F). Numerical examination grades will have these equivalents: 98-above (A+); 93-97 (A); 90-92 (A-); 88-89 (B+); 83-87 (B); 80-82 (B-); 78-79 (C+); 73-77 (C); 70-72 (C-); 69-68 (D+); 63-67 (D); 0-62 (F). Please note that you must reach the full level of a grade to earn it. Thus a 3.25 is still a “B” even though it is closer to a B+.

Class Participation: Class participation will contribute positively to your final grade. Please note that it will be difficult to achieve a flat “A” without class participation. For purposes of evaluating class participation, there are the following categories:

Consistent and substantive: Consistently intelligent contributions to class discussions over the course of the semester will automatically raise your final grade one-half letter regardless of how close your average is to a higher grade (i.e. From a 3.0 to a 3.3)

Inconsistent and substantive: Perceptive contributions to class discussions, limited to a particular section of the course or made sporadically throughout the semester, will raise your grade if you are at least half-way to a higher grade (i.e. if your final average is 3.15, which is a B, your grade will be raised to 3.3, a B+--a final average of 3.10 would not merit a raised grade given this level of class participation)

Consistent: Consistent participation in class discussion, whether in the form of questions or comments, will raise your final grade if you are within one-tenth of a point of a higher grade (i.e. if your final average is 3.2, which is ordinarily a "B" would become a 3.3, a "B+").

Inconsistent and No participation: No extra consideration will be given—your final average is your final grade.

Paper Format: All papers must be typed or written on a computer and submitted on plain white paper in a font no smaller than 10 point and no larger than 12 point. Each paper must have a centered title with the student's name and class on the lines below. Thus:

APOCALYPSE WHEN? PROPHECY AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Jane Doe
Class of 2006

Papers must be submitted as an email attachment in a word processing program that can be read by Microsoft Word. **All papers will be archived to deter collusion.**

Class Policies: Students are required to complete the assigned readings before the class period in which they are discussed. Attendance is also required and I will have a sign in sheet available before each class. Students are allowed three unexcused absences per semester—an unexcused absence is any absence that is not excused by a written statement from the appropriate Class Dean. **Unexcused absences beyond the limit will adversely affect your final grade by one-half letter grade (i.e. from a B to a B-).** Since the syllabus is subject to modification and change, students are also responsible for these changes even if they were not able to attend the class in which the changes were announced. Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day.

Intellectual Honesty: I advise all students to be aware of the College's policies pertaining to intellectual honesty. All students will be required to testify to the integrity of their work in a written statement. In order to complete the assignments for this class, students will not need to consult any other source beyond the required texts. If a student does rely upon an outside source for an assignment, he or she should simply cite that work in a parenthetical note (see "Citation Rules" below). **Not citing an outside source that you draw upon will constitute a violation of The College's Academic Honesty Policy. I reserve the right to submit all papers to an online source that will check for plagiarism.** Work that violates the College's Academic Honesty Policy will receive the grade of F (0). The student will also then be subject to administrative sanctions ranging from academic probation to expulsion.

To be sure to avoid the possibility of collusion, I would strongly advise all students not to share written work before it is handed in. If you do talk to your fellow students about a particular assignment, be sure to give appropriate acknowledgment to your peers in the final

drafts of your written assignments if their help has been particularly useful to you in your writing. Please follow instructions in "Citation Rules" below. If such acknowledgements are not made, it could constitute a case of intellectual dishonesty. **Students are absolutely forbidden from sharing a graded paper with a student who has yet to complete the assignment (i.e. with a student who has an extension). Students who violate this standard will be charged with collusion.**

Citation Rules:

- 1) For interpretative points that come directly from one of the course textbooks, a parenthetical citation such as (Tabor, 42) will be acceptable. You do not need to cite "facts" such as when Joseph Smith was born.
- 2) For interpretative points that are not your own and instead come from a lecture, a parenthetical citation such as (Schmalz 10/12/03) will be acceptable. Again you do not need to cite "facts."
- 3) For interpretative points that are not your own and instead come from another student, a parenthetical citation such as (Jane Doe 10/12/03) will be acceptable.
- 4) For all internet sources you must use footnotes and, in the footnote, include the entire address and the date accessed. **You are strongly discouraged from using internet sources.**
- 5) For all other print sources (such as books or journal articles), you must use footnotes that include the author's full name, article or book title, journal title if applicable, publisher, date and page number. **You are strongly discouraged from using other print sources not identified in the syllabus.**

Examples:

Book: Darius Cooper, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25.

Article: Mathew N. Schmalz, "Images of the Body in the Life and Death of a North Indian Catholic Catechist," *History of Religions* 39 (November): 177.

ERes: Documents for the course will be available on ERes accessed through the library's homepage. **The course password is "watchtower."** Document names are included in the relevant section of the syllabus.

Extensions: All students are given the opportunity take advantage of a single extension of forty-eight hours (48) for any paper (this does not include the midterm, final exam or final paper). **You must however e-mail or call me before the paper is due** in order to receive the extension (you do not need to provide reasons for the extension). This extension covers everything from personal emergencies to computer failure. No other extension will be granted without the explicit written permission of the appropriate class Dean.

E-Mail: Class announcements, outlines and assignments will usually be distributed by electronic mail. Please be sure to check your e-mail regularly.

TEXTS FOR PURCHASE:

Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*.
David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*.
Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*.
John Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*.
Massimo Introvigne, *The Unification Church*.
Gordon Melton, *The Children of God*.
Gordon Melton, *The Church of Scientology*.
James Tabor, *Why Waco?*

AVAILABLE ON ERES:

(Listed in Chronological Order)

Willa Appel, *Cults in America* (selections);
James Beckford, "Beyond the Pale: Cults, Culture and Conflict;"
Max Weber, "The Legitimation of Charismatic Authority;" "The Prophet."
Operation Clambake, "What is Scientology?"; "Who is Xenu?"; "The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power."
Winston Davis, "Heaven's Gate: A Study of Religious Obedience;"
Bryan Sentes, "Presumed Immanent: The Raelians, UFO Religions and the Post-Modern Condition."
James T. Richardson and Brock Kilbourne, "Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique"
Barbara Hardgrove, "Social Sciences and the Consequences of the Brainwashing Controversy"
The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life (selections)
Sun Young Myung, "The Formula for God's Providence;" "America in God's Providence;" "The Three Stages of Judgement"
"The Moonies: Who They Are and How they Work"
David Taylor, "Thought Reform and the Unification Church."
Moses David, *The Mo Letters* (selections)
Miriam Williams, *Heaven's Harlots* (selections)
Ruth Gordon, *Children of Darkness* (selections)
The Book of Nephi (selections)
Doctrine and Covenants (selections)

PLAN OF THE COURSE

I. THE IDEA OF A CULT

WEEK 1: PRELIMINARIES

January 19: *Introduction to the Course.*

January 21: *People's Temple*

Reading: Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 1-78.

WEEK 2: THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE AND CULT DISCOURSE

January 24: *Space and Time*

Reading: Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 79-128.

January 26: *Snow Day.*

January 28: *White Night*

Reading: Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide*, 129-171.

WEEK 3: THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

January 31: *Cult Discourse*

READINGS: (On ERES "Beckford," "Appel," "Appel2," "Atwood.") Beckford, "Beyond the Pale: Cults, Culture and Conflict;" Appel, *Cults in America* (selections); Atwood, "Christianity as a Cult Movement."

February 2: *No Class.*

Optional Film: *Waco: Rules of Engagement*, Smith 426, 9 pm-11 pm.

February 4: *The History of the Branch Davidians*

READING: Tabor, *Why Waco?*, 1-79.

WEEK 4: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND WACO

February 7: *David Koresh*

READING: Tabor, *Why Waco?*, 80-145.

February 9: *Armageddon in Waco*

READING: Tabor, *Why Waco?*, 146-186.'

February 11: *18Charisma, Conversion and Prophecy*

READING: (On ERES "Weber") Max Weber, "Charismatic Authority;" "The Prophet

II. SCIENTOLOGY AND UFO CULTS

WEEK 5: SCIENTOLOGY AND UFO CULTS

February 14: *L. Ron Hubbard's Science of the Mind*
IN CLASS VIDEO: *How to Use Dianetics*.

February 16: *Scientology*
READING: N. Melton, *Scientology*.

February 18: *Scientology as Cult*
READINGS: Melton, *Scientology* (concluded); (On ERES "Clambake") Operation Clambake, "What is Scientology?"; "Who is Xenu?"; "The Secrets of Scientology;" "The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power."

WEEK 6: BRAINWASHING

February 21: *Heaven's Gate*
READINGS: (On ERES: "Davis")
Winston Davis, "Heaven's Gate: A Study of Religious Obedience;"
First Paper Due Via Email at 10 pm

February 23: *Brainwashing*
Readings: (On ERES: "Brainwashing") James T. Richardson and Brock Kilbourne, "Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique;" Barbara Hardgrove, "Social Sciences and the Consequences of the Brainwashing Controversy;"

II. NEW CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS

WEEK 6: THE WATCHTOWER

February 25: *Introducing the Watchtower*
IN CLASS VIDEO: *Jehovah's Witnesses: The Organization Behind the Name*.

WEEK 7: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

February 28: **Examination**

March 2: *Watchtower Doctrine*
READING: (On ERES: Jehovah) selections from *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*.

March 4: *Get Out From Among Them*
READING: : (On ERES: Jehovah_2; Jehovah_3) selections from *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life* and *Your Youth: Getting the Best Out of It*.

WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK

March 8: No Class.

March 10: No Class.

March 12: No Class.

WEEK 9: PROPHECY AND TONGUES

March 14: *Prophecy*

READING: (On ERES: “Botting,” “Schmalz”) Selections from Botting and Botting, *The Orwellian World of Jehovah’s Witnesses*; Schmalz, “When Festinger Fails.”

March 16: *No Class*

March 18: *Serpents and Strychnine*

Reading: Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*

WEEK 10: FROM SERPENT HANDLERS TO MOONIES

March 21: *Power Over Them Snakes*

Reading: Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain*

March 2: **Second Paper Due Via Email By 10 pm**

March 23: *The Unification Church*

Reading: Massimo Introvigne, *The Unification Church*.

March 25: *No Class*

WEEK 11: FROM MOON TO MOSES

March 28: *No Class*

March 30 *Sun Myung Moon*

READING: Massimo Introvigne, *The Unification Church* (concluded); (On ERES “Moon”): Sun Young Myung, “The Formula for God’s Providence,” “America in God’s Providence,” “The Three Stages of Judgment,” “The Moonies: Who They Are and How they Work.” (On ERES “Moonies”) David Taylor, “Thought Reform and the Unification Church.”

April 1: *Moses David and the Children of God*

READING: Melton, *The Children of God*.

WEEK 12: THE CHILDREN OF GOD

April 3: *Flirty-Fishing*

READING: Melton, *The Children of God* (concluded); (On ERES: “Mo”) selections from *The Mo Letters*.

April 7: *Reflections on the Family*

READING:) (On ERES “Harlot”) a selection from Miriam Williams, *Heaven’s Harlots*; (On ERES “Darkness”) a selection from Ruth Gordon, *Children of Darkness*.

April 9: *Classifying “Cults”*

READING: (On ERES: “Wilson”) B. R. Wilson, “A Typology of Sects.”

III. MORMONISM

WEEK 13: THE MORMON PROPHET

April 12: *Joseph Smith*

Reading: Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 9-78.

April 14: *The Book of Mormon*

READING: Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 79-142; (On ERES "Nephi") selections from *the Book of Nephi*.

April 16: *Restoration and Gathering*

READING: Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 79-142; selections from *Doctrines and Covenants*.

Third Paper Due Via Email By 10 pm

WEEK 14: THE MORMON WORLDVIEW

April 19: *Mormon Doctrine*

READING: (On ERES "O'Dea") Selections from O'Dea, *The Mormons*.

April 21: *Mormon Values*

READING: (On ERES: Davies_1) Selections from Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*.

April 23: *Mormon Ritual*

READING: (On ERES: Davies_2) Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*.

WEEK 15: MORMON FUNDAMENTALISM

April 26: *Mormon Fundamentalism*

Reading: Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, 1-114

April 28: *The One Mighty and Strong*

READING: Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, 115-208

April 30: *Mormonism and Cult Discourse*

READING: Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, 209-339.

WEEK 16: CONCLUSION

May 3: **In Class Final**

May 11: Final Paper Due