

**HIS 561:  
American Religious History  
Spring 2008**

**CID: 3964**

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**Course Objectives:**

**Students will be introduced to the history and historiographical sources of the major religious traditions that are present in North America.**

**Students will learn how to locate and analyze pertinent primary source materials in the history of American religion.**

**Students will develop critical thinking skills by learning how to review and critique secondary works on the history of American religion.**

**Getting Started -- First Steps for this Class:**

1. Sign up for an SHSU email account since it is essential for you to have this to use the databases at [SHSU's Newton Gresham Library](#). These will allow you to read articles online, some of which I may require for the class, but many of which will be useful to you in developing bibliographies for future study. I suggest you peruse the library's [Databases and Index's](#) page. In particular, I recommend the databases [JSTOR](#) (thousands of online articles, book reviews, etc. from leading academic journals) and [America: History and Life](#) (great research tool for articles, books, book reviews, etc. that will help you learn more about traditional American history) for this course. In this class, you also will be using the Charles Evans and the Shaw and Shoemaker Early American Imprints Series. Essentially, these digital libraries include copies of all publications in North American before 1820. To [activate your computer account, click here](#) and follow the instructions (your pin is your birth day, month and year

with no spaces or slashes, i.e. if you were born on January 1, 1970 it would be 010170). As long as you are registered for this class, you can acquire this account. Then, when you try to enter these databases available to you as a member of the SHSU community, you just type in your user name and password and you're in.

2. I realize that you have outside commitments, other classes, work, family, etc., but in order to successfully complete this course you will have to assign a high priority to it. This course meets on a fairly flexible schedule that is broken into four units of approximately one month each, but it is also intensive, challenging and demanding and thus requires you to exert a considerable degree of self-discipline and self-motivation. The pay-off for this hard work, I hope, comes in a rewarding learning experience that should spark new interests in various aspects of history.

## Required Readings:

These books should be available in most university and public libraries. If you wish to purchase the books, you should be able to find paperback copies of them online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Barnesandnoble.com](http://Barnesandnoble.com), or in used bookstores that you can search at sites such as [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) and [bibliofind.com](http://bibliofind.com). Used paperback copies often can be purchased online for under \$10. Remember when ordering used books that you may want to find a copy that is "fine" or better, which is usually quite easy to do, available at a reasonable price, and nicer than a moldy, highlighted, or otherwise flawed text. I have placed links on the texts below that will allow you to click on the title and order directly from amazon.com's new or used selections, but, again, you're welcome to purchase these through whatever means are most convenient for you.

### **Common Readings**

#### **Secondary Texts:**

Marcus Borg, *Jesus (HarperOne, 2006)* or Marcus Borg and N. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions (HarperOne, 2007)*

Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity*

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America*

Edwin S. Gaustad, *Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land: A History of Church and State in America*

Edmond Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*

Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*

Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*

#### **Primary Source Texts:**

Selections from the New Testament

Selections from non-canonical Christian writings (see website addresses below)

Selections from Charles Evans and Shaw and Shoemaker series of Early American Imprints

Optional: Diane Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual (if you make frequent writing mistakes, I may refer you to this short and useful writing primer)

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## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### **Class Participation:**

Students are expected to complete all assignments for each unit on time and submit these via Blackboard's Discussion Board to the entire class. Since some students may have difficulty opening attachments, cut and paste your lessons into the menu box in Discussion Board. I strongly encourage each of you to discuss the readings and each other's comments via group postings in the Discussion Board because this work is an important part of the course..

### **Unit Assignments:**

**Answer the Part A (secondary source analysis) and Part B (primary source analysis) sections for each unit.**

### **WHEN YOU TURN IN YOUR ASSIGNMENTS, FOLLOW THESE BASIC RULES:**

**1. The subject of your thread within the Discussion Board should clearly state your name, the class you are in (i.e., History 561), and the Unit number of the assignment.**

**Example Subject Line: Terry Bilhartz, HIS 561, Unit 1**

**2. Only post the answers for a unit when you have COMPLETELY finished ALL of the questions for that unit.\*\*DO NOT SEND PARTIAL ANSWERS**

**3. Be sure to include your full name at the BEGINNING of each of your assignments.**

**4. You may turn in any assignment early, but you MUST complete the assignments in the order they are given.**

**5. After you post your work on the Discussion Board section in Blackboard, comment on each other's work. PARTICIPATION IN THE DISCUSSION THREADS IS A MAJOR PART OF THE COURSE. Remember that all discussion is to be respectful, professional and courteous.**

**6. I will be lenient with your first assignments in regard to these rules, but after that your grade for an assignment will be penalized if you do not follow these instructions.**

**7. VERY IMPORTANT: I would like you to use some direct quotes from your online and text readings to support your answers, but use the quote correctly. If you need help in developing your writing style, see Diane Hacker, A POCKET STYLE MANUAL. For these assignments the use of a parenthetical reference is sufficient, although, as you probably know, the discipline of History generally demands the use of the Chicago Style.**

### **Research Tools:**

- You may want to visit the [SHSU Newton Gresham Library](#) online to help you with this project. NOTE: as an SHSU student you are eligible for an SHSU email address which will allow you access to our databases, articles online, etc. Remember that you were supposed to activate your computer account at the beginning of the class: To [activate your computer account, click here](#) and follow the instructions (your pin is your birth day, month and year with no spaces or slashes, i.e. if you were born on January

1, 1970 it would be 010170). As long as you are registered for this class, you can acquire this account. Then, when you try to enter these databases available to you as a member of the SHSU community, you just type in your user name and password and you're in.

- Don't forget my suggestions regarding the use of research tools via the SHSU Newton Gresham Library. Visit the library's [Databases and Index's](#) page and especially the databases [JSTOR](#), which contains thousands of online articles, book reviews, etc. from leading academic journals, and [America: History and Life](#), which is a great research tool for that will help you learn more about American History topics. I STRONGLY suggest that you contact the SHSU Interlibrary Services, and complete the Distance Learning form. To do so, go to [http://www.shsu.edu/~lib\\_www/ils/distance.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~lib_www/ils/distance.html) Click on link for: "Sign Up for Distance Education Library Services" and complete and submit the form. Then come back to this page to link to forms for journal, book, or dissertation request forms. You need to complete this each semester, so if you have already done this for a previous class you will need to do it again.

Once you complete this form and are officially registered with Interlibrary Loan, you are eligible to request them to photocopy the article from the SHSU holding or to find it for you from another library and they will mail a copy of the article to you, no charge. If you need a book you can't find locally, again, you can request it from SHSU's Interlibrary Loan office. If we have the book, they'll mail it to you or they'll borrow it from a different library and have it sent to you. They pay shipping to you, the loan is usually for 3 weeks, but can be renewed in some cases, and then you pay shipping back, including insurance to cover any damage or loss of book (only costs about \$2-3 whereas replacing a lost book is \$75--get the insurance!)

### General Guidelines for Written Assignments

- All material that is a direct quote or PARAPHRASED (i.e. anything that is not your original idea--remember that it's better to be safe than sorry and fail the course on grounds of plagiarism) must be cited with endnotes. For instructions on the proper format for endnotes please see [Jules Benjamin's A Student's Guide to History, 8th edition](#) (available online) and specifically, under the link for "[HOW TO WRITE A HISTORY PAPER](#)" see the instructions on

[How to Write a Footnote or Endnote for a Book](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 124-26)

[How to Write a Footnote or Endnote for a Journal Article](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 126-28)

[How to Write a Footnote or Endnote for a Web Site](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 129-30)

[Writing A Bibliography: General Form](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 130-31)

[Writing A Bibliography: Entries for Books](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 131-133)

[Writing A Bibliography: Entries for Journal Articles](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 133-34)

[Writing A Bibliography: Entries for Web Sites](#) (See printed *Guide*, chapter 5, pages 135-36)

The first page of each assignment should include your name, the date, the name of this course, my name, and the name of this institution, Sam Houston State University. All pages MUST be numbered. I do not accept papers that obviously have not been checked for spelling or careless typos. It may take you several drafts to complete your assignments to your liking. Be sure to read through the final draft at least two times before submitting it. You will have put a lot of work into this by the time you are finished--take pride in your writing and avoid sloppy errors. If you have had difficulty with writing assignments in the past, I suggest that you submit drafts of your paper to the SHSU Writing Center. They offer help with writing styles, making clear arguments, and ensuring that you submit a well-written piece. For more information, go to the "[Distance Tutoring](#)" section of the SHSU Writing Center home page.

- Be sure to read the official course policy regarding plagiarism stated at the bottom of this syllabus.
- It always is wise to save and backup all your work, even after you have sent it. If your work is ever lost in cyberspace, you will want to have a backup copy to resubmit.

### Book Review Tips:

For TIPS on writing book reviews, see Jules Benjamin's, *A Student's Guide to History* "[Writing Book Reviews](#)."

### Grading:

Your grade for this course is based on your answers to Parts A, B and C of each unit, and on the quality and quantity of your participation in the online discussions. Owing to the fact that you have approximately one month per unit to complete your readings, **ALL DEADLINES ARE FIRM**. On that note allow me to explain my policy on:

**TARDINESS:** One of the pleasures of online learning is that you can complete your assignments anytime of the day or night and work according to your lifestyle rather than mine or a regular on-campus schedule. The downfall of online learning is that it requires tremendous self-discipline or you will quickly find yourself far behind in your readings and assignments. To help students avoid this pitfall, I will reduce points for missing the deadlines. This may sound harsh, but I am doing this to help encourage you to keep pace with the course which will enable you to learn much more than if you were constantly playing "catch-up"

**Returning Grades:** I usually require one week to grade and return your assignments. I may return grades more quickly sometimes, but please give me at least one week before you contact me to ask about your grade.

### Points Available in this Course:

Unit 1 Assignments	75 points
Unit 2 Assignments	75 points
Unit 3 Assignments	75 points
Unit 4 Assignments	75 points
Participation in Online Discussions	+ or – 15 points

### Grade Scale:

Points	Letter Grade	Percentage
270-300	A	90%-100%
240-269	B	80%-89%
210-239	C	70%-79%
Below 239	F	Under 70%

### Contact Information:

If you ever have any questions about this course and your related assignments, the SHSU History program, etc. please do not hesitate to contact me. The best way to do this is via email at [his\\_tdb@shsu.edu](mailto:his_tdb@shsu.edu) **Always** include your full name and the name of the course you are taking with me in your message. You can try to reach me at my office, too, at #936-294-1483, but sometimes I work at my home office, etc. so the best method is email.

### Grading and Contact Schedule:

You are welcome to contact me at any time, but please realize that I will not always be able to respond to your message during the day of your query. Remember, too, that I take one week to return all graded assignments.

### Office Hours:

As department chair, I am normally in my office from 8 – 5 pm everyday, except when I'm in class or away on university assignments. If you would like to schedule a particular time to talk with me, you may do so by contacting Charlann Morris at 936-294-1475, or simply by sending an email to me at his\_tdb@shsu.edu.

## Course Units and Reading Schedule

This course is broken into four units of approximately one month each. Click each unit number ("Unit 1" for example) to learn more about the readings and assignments for that unit.

Unit Links	Topic	Reading Assignment	Writing Assignment
<b>Unit 1</b> Jan 10 – Feb 11	Prelude to American Religious History	Noll, <i>Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity</i>  Selections from early Christian writings	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 1 Assignments  by Feb 11.
<b>Unit 2</b> Feb 11- March 11	American Religious History: The Colonial Period	Gaustad, <i>Liberty of Conscience</i>  Morgan, <i>The Puritan Dilemma</i>  Create chapter one of the proposed source book in American religious history	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 2 Assignments  by March 11
<b>Unit 3</b> March 11 – April 11	The 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Conkin, <i>American Originals</i>  Create chapter two of the proposed source book in American religious history	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 3 Assignments  By April 11
<b>Unit 4</b> April 11 – May 4	The 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	Guastad, <i>Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land</i>	Post on Blackboard your responses to the Unit 4 Assignments  By May 4.

Meacham, *American Gospel*

Journal and review of Borg,  
*Jesus*

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; failure in the course; and/or expulsion from the university. The *SHSU Student Guidelines* academic honesty policy states:

*The university expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. 5.31 The university and its official representatives, acting in accordance with Subsection 5.32, may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. See <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide.html>*

I suggest that you read Jules Benjamin's (*A Student's Guide to History*) [discussion of plagiarism](#) as well.

Teachers at SHSU reserve the right to submit student papers to data bases designed to identify instances of plagiarism. Enrollment in this course is limited to students who are willing to allow their papers to undergo such examination.

### **ADA Accommodations**

Any student who may require an accommodation under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the instructor on this matter as soon as possible to ensure a positive learning environment.

### **Copyright Statement**

The lecture materials presented in this course are copyrighted. Reproduction of class notes for commercial purposes without the express permission of the copyright holder is prohibited.

## **UNIT 1 ASSIGNMENT - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

**Prelude to American Religious History**

Many of the issues that unite and divide religious groups in America in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium are not new, but rather have been impacting the development of religious belief and practice of religious bodies for more than 2000 years.

This unit is intended to introduce students to some of the themes that have united and divided Westerns since the emergence of Christianity from its Jewish roots.

I am giving you two web addresses for each of the online sources just in case you find one of the sites to be “dead” when you click on.

#### Part A: Secondary and Primary Source Analysis:

Question 1: Summarize the major themes and critique Mark A. Noll's *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*.

Question 2 a, b, and c: Compare the themes within each of the following sets of early Christian writings. Each set contains one canonized Christian text and one text that did not make the New Testament canon. After comparing each set, comment on the probable reasons why these texts were included in or excluded from the Christian canon. What do these writings tell us about the varieties of belief and practice within early Christianity?

a) Set 1: The New Testament Gospel of Mark and the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas

(see <http://www.westarinstitute.org/Polebridge/Title/Complete/Thomas/thomas.html> or <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/thomas.html>)

b) Set 2: The New Testament Acts of the Apostles and the non-canonical Acts of Paul and Thecla

(see <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/thecla.html> or <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0816.htm>)

c) Set 3: The New Testament Book of Romans and the non-canonical Epistle of Barnabas



(see <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lightfoot.html> or <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-hoole.html>)

Part B: Additional Primary Source Exploration: Comment on some major themes or personalities in the religious history of this period that were not covered in the assigned readings. Include a reference to additional primary sources available on the Internet that you would recommend students of religious history to explore. Why are these recommended texts worthy of our investigation?

## **UNIT 2 ASSIGNMENTS - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

### **American Religious History: The Colonial Period**

Part A: Secondary Source Analysis: Write comparative book reviews on Gaustad's biography of Roger Williams and Morgan's biography of John Winthrop. After critiquing each of the works, comment on what insights about colonial religious history can be gained from a study of these two preeminent figures. Conclude with some comments about the legacies of each of these men on the development of church and state relations in American history.

Part B: Primary Source Exploration: Create Chapter One of a source book entitled *Readings in American Religious History*. This opening chapter should include six American religious history documents located in the Charles Evans EARLY AMERICAN IMPRINT SERIES that would help college level students in American history understand the religious dimension of colonial America. Organize these documents into some meaningful order, and then: (a) justify why each document should be included in this source book, (b) write an introduction to each document for your student readings, and (c) create and answer at essay question for each selection.

## **UNIT 3 ASSIGNMENTS - - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

### **American Religious History: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Part A: Secondary Source Analysis: Summarize each chapter and then write a review of Paul Conkin's *American Originals*.

Part B: Primary Source Exploration: Create Chapter Two of a source book entitled *Readings in American Religious History*. This chapter, entitled American Religion in the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, should include six American religious history documents located in the Shaw and Shoemaker American Imprint Series that would help college level students in American history understand the religious dimension of early national America. Organize these documents into some meaningful order, and then: (a) justify why each document should be included in this source book,

(b) write an introduction to each document for your college readers, and (c) create and answer at essay question for each of your selections.

#### **UNIT 4 ASSIGNMENTS - - POST ON BLACKBOARD**

##### **American Religious History: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Part A: Secondary Source Analysis: Write comparative book reviews on Gaustad's *Proclam Liberty Throughout the Land* and Jon Meacham's *American Gospel*.

Part B: Contemporary Source Exploration: A major late 20<sup>th</sup> century development in religious studies was the Jesus Seminar and one of the leaders in the seminar was Marcus Borg. Read, journalize, and critique Borg's most recent work entitled *Jesus* (2006). (If you prefer, instead of reviewing this work by Borg, I instead you could journalize and critique the book by Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (HarperOne, 2007).

This course was designed and is maintained by Dr. Terry D. Bilhartz. Late update: Jan 2008