

REL 4010: Religion in Louisiana
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Louisiana State University
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Course Description

Students in this course will be introduced to the history of religion in Louisiana. It will be the responsibility of each student to think critically about definitions of religion and approaches to the academic study of religion. Beginning with the colonization of the Americas by Spanish, French, and English peoples, we will ask questions about the intersection of Native American, European, and African religions in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Our study of the nineteenth century will require us to think about how religion in Louisiana reflected as well as defied larger trends in the history of the American South. Emphasis will be placed on slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow. As for the twentieth century, students will reflect upon the changing face of religion in Louisiana during periods of war, depression, natural disaster, and political reconfiguration. Moving into the twenty-first century, students will develop an appreciation for archival and ethnographic research that connects academic scholarship with the general public. To achieve these learning goals, students will read five books, take two exams, and write two essays with an oral presentation component. Students will also participate in a service-learning project that connects the classroom to the museum.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will trace the development of religious groups and movements throughout Louisiana history.
2. Students will address the tension between individual religious experiences and socially constructed religious traditions.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of religion as subject to the cultural factors of race, gender, class, nationalism, sexuality, and religious identity, among others.
4. Students will develop reading, writing, and speaking skills.
5. Students will come to class prepared to discuss reading materials and apply their thoughts to questions raised during lectures.

Service-Learning Objectives

1. Students will be introduced to the professional field of public history in order to gain an appreciation for the work that goes into museum management.
2. Students will learn how to incorporate audio and visual media into scholarly and public presentations.
3. Students will develop archival and ethnographic research skills.
4. Students will come to value professional relationships, teamwork, and job proficiency.

5. Students will combine the learning objectives of the classroom with a service component in order to make relevant the importance of public knowledge and access to that knowledge.

Service-Learning

At LSU, Service-Learning is defined as a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Our Service-Learning partner for this course is the **West Baton Rouge Parish Museum** (www.westbatonrougemuseum.com). Working with museum staff, students will (1) learn about the field of public history, (2) conduct research on one of four topics in Louisiana history (Creole Catholicism and the “Big House,” Slave Religion and Slave Quarters, Religion and Reconstruction, Religion and Civil Rights), (3) draft narratives for tour guides to use at the museum for public consumption, and (4) chronicle their work in one of the following forms: photo essay, documentary, podcast, oral history, or other media. In short, this is a history class that will give you professional experience as archival researchers, cultural ethnographers, and public historians.

Students will also work closely with the staffs of Communication across the Curriculum (www.cxc.lsu.edu), the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History (<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/williams/>), and Hill Memorial Library (<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/>). Students will then apply their knowledge to produce narratives for museum guides related to the history of religion in Louisiana, complete with archival evidence, material artifacts, and audio/visual media.

Communication-Intensive

This course is certified as a “Communication-Intensive Course” and meets all of the requirements explained on the CxC Web site: <http://cxc.lsu.edu>, including the following: Emphases on formal and informal assignments in written and visual communication, class time spent on communication, 40% of the final grade based on communication projects, revisions after faculty feedback on 2 formal projects (one for each emphasis), and a student/faculty ratio of 35:1. Because it meets these requirements, students may count it toward “Distinguished Communicator” certification on LSU transcripts.

Required Texts

****This is a reading-intensive course****

Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana’s Cane World, 1820-1860*

Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*

John Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta*

William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter’s Son*

Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation—100 points

- Regular attendance in class throughout the semester is expected and will be monitored. Habitual tardiness will be counted as an absence. Students who sleep in class, surf the Internet (i.e. Facebook), and mobile text will be required to leave the classroom and will be counted absent. In case of absence or tardiness, students are responsible for making themselves aware of any announcements, handouts, changes in assignments or deadlines, and material covered in class.
- Assignments are due the day printed in the syllabus. Late work will be penalized one letter grade a day.
- Class participation and discussion are encouraged. It is recommended that you print out all online documents at the beginning of the semester and keep them in a binder so to avoid printer problems at the last minute.
- Reading quizzes will be given at the instructor's discretion. They will test your knowledge of assigned readings.

2. Midterm Essay Exam—100 points

- The midterm will be based on the class lectures and reading assignments.

3. Book Essay—200 points

- You will write a 4-5 page essay related to the reading assignments. Your choice of book review will depend on which historical subject you will be studying in accordance with the Service-Learning project.

4. Service-Learning Project—500 points

- You will conduct a major research project in conjunction with the West Baton Rouge Parish Museum on the history of religion in Louisiana. This is your opportunity to apply what you've learned in this survey of religion in Louisiana to a general public. The end result will be a creative contribution to the study of religion in Louisiana for the class, the university community, and a wider popular audience. You will be working closely with the staffs of the West Baton Rouge Parish Museum, Communication across the Curriculum, the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, and Hill Memorial Library Special Collections.
- You will be required to take a class tour of the West Baton Rouge Parish Museum (WBRPM). You will also be required to attend orientation sessions with Communication across the Curriculum, the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, and Hill Memorial Library.
- You will work in one of four groups with the mission to deliver to the WBRPM a narrative tour guide and primary source materials (photographs, documents, artifacts) that can be used by the museum staff to educate the public.
- Early in the semester, students will enter into one of the following groups: (1) Creole Catholicism and the "Big House," (2) Slave Religion and Slave Quarters, (3) Religion and Reconstruction, and (4) Religion and Civil Rights. Within each group, students will coordinate duties according to interest and skill. These duties will include but are not limited to coordinator, researcher, interpreter, media specialist, and reporter/writer.

- Each group will present their completed project to the class at the end of the semester. Each group will receive feedback from the instructor on the progress of the project throughout the semester.
- Details about the grading criteria will be provided in class. In summary, students will be required to:
 - Submit an initial project proposal (**50 points**) with group duties, abstract, bibliography, research agenda, technology plan, preliminary group goals, and critical reflection.
 - Submit an update (**50 points**) on your project that includes all of the above information revised to represent your actual progress. Presentations and discussions of projects will take place in class.
 - Submit two critical reflection papers (**25 points**) to supplement reflection in project proposals and final paper.
 - Mid-semester peer evaluations (**50 points**) that reflect your contribution to the group's objectives.
 - Final Project Submission and Presentation (**200 points**) completely edited and communicated to an audience of peers and experts.
 - Final peer evaluations (**25 points**) that reflect your contribution to the group's objectives.
 - Critical reflection (**100 points**) (4-5 pages in length) on your experience in the service-learning project group project. This is your chance to reflect on your understanding of religion in Louisiana, public history, and fieldwork. Your reflections will undergo peer review and will be subject to revision.
 - Students will deliver a packet containing all relevant materials to the WBRPM before the end of the semester.

5. Final Essay Exam—100 points

- You will take a final exam during finals week that will cover the entire semester.

Grading Scale:

There are **1000 possible points** offered in the course.

A: 900-1000, distinguished mastery of course material and assignments

B: 800-899, good understanding of course material and assignments

C: 700-799, questionable grasp of course material and assignments

D: 600-699, minimal demonstration of engagement in course material and assignments

F: below 600, failure

Class Protocol:

Consideration and Respectfulness: The study of religion in America often leads to the discovery of religious traditions and practices that differ significantly from what is familiar to students. It is essential that students approach the rich history of religion in America with a perspective that will allow them to understand those differences. Accordingly, all discussion in this course must be carried on with respect for the views of those with whom one might differ. There will be no proselytizing in class.

Plagiarism: Anyone who plagiarizes or cheats on an assignment will receive a failing grade on the assignment and be reported to the Dean of Students.

Information on plagiarism:

[http://appl015.lsu.edu/slas/judicialaffairs.nsf/\\$Content/Understanding+and+Avoiding+Plagiarism?OpenDocument](http://appl015.lsu.edu/slas/judicialaffairs.nsf/$Content/Understanding+and+Avoiding+Plagiarism?OpenDocument).

Code of Student Conduct:

[http://appl015.lsu.edu/slas/judicialaffairs.nsf/\\$Content/Code+of+Student+Conduct?OpenDocument](http://appl015.lsu.edu/slas/judicialaffairs.nsf/$Content/Code+of+Student+Conduct?OpenDocument).

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should consult the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.lsu.com/slas/ods.nsf/index>.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One: Jan. 18, 20

Introduction to the Study of Religion in Louisiana

Begin reading Follett, *Sugar Masters*

Week Two: Jan. 25, 27

Orientation: West Baton Rouge Parish Museum and Hill Memorial Library

Continue reading Follett, *Sugar Masters*

Week Three: Feb. 1, 3

Orientation: T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History and Communication across the Curriculum

Discussion of Follett, *Sugar Masters*

Begin reading Raboteau, *Slave Religion*

CRITICAL REFLECTION #1 due Feb. 3

Week Four: Feb. 8, 10

French Colonial Louisiana and the Circum-Caribbean World

Continue reading Raboteau, *Slave Religion*

GROUP PROPOSAL #1 due Feb. 10

Week Five: Feb. 15, 17

Spanish Colonial Louisiana and the Louisiana Purchase

Continue reading Raboteau, *Slave Religion*

Week Six: Feb. 22, 24

Antebellum Louisiana: Planters, Farmers, and Townsfolk

Continue reading Raboteau, *Slave Religion*

Week Seven: Mar. 1, 3

Antebellum Louisiana: Enslaved Africans and Plantation Life

Discussion of Raboteau, *Slave Religion*

Begin reading Giggie, *After Redemption*

GROUP PROPOSAL #2 and PEER EVALUATIONS due Mar. 3

Week Eight: Mar. 10 (MARDI GRAS)

Civil War

Continue reading Giggie, *After Redemption*

MIDTERM due Mar. 10

Week Nine: Mar. 15, 17

Reconstruction and Jim Crow

Discussion of Giggie, *After Redemption*

Begin reading Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*

BOOK REVIEW due Mar. 17

Week Ten: Mar. 22, 24

Sin and Salvation in New Orleans

Continue reading Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*

CRITICAL REFLECTION #2 due Mar. 24

Week Eleven: Mar. 29, 31

The Great Flood and the Great Depression

Discussion of Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*

Begin reading Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*

Week Twelve: Apr. 5, 7

Segregation and the Civil Rights Movement

Discussion of Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*

Week Thirteen: Apr. 12, 14

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS due Apr. 14

Week Fourteen: SPRING BREAK

Week Fifteen: Apr. 26, 28

Project Presentations

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS due Apr. 28

Week Sixteen: May 3, 5

Project Presentations and Course Review

Week Seventeen: **FINAL EXAM**