PRE 323W Religion in American Life  
Doane – Grand Island  

Jan-March 2015  

Tuesdays 6 p.m.- 10:30 p.m.  

*It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.* - *Aristotle*

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<th>Course Number</th>
<th>PRE 323W</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>3</td>
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**Description**

"An examination of the intellectual and social history of religion in America. Beliefs and practices of major religious groups are also examined."

**PRE 323 Religion in American Life** fulfills the requirement for a Foundational Area of Knowledge in In Search of Meaning and Values. A course that fulfills this requirement will assure that students consider the importance and significance of what it means to be human. In this class, students will work to:

1) Consider ways that humans have come to understand the meaning of existence  
2) Evaluate the philosophical or spiritual implications of human actions and policies  
3) Develop an understanding of their ethical values

PRE 323 will seek to accomplish all of these learning outcomes

**Required Books:**

Edition: 2nd

Understanding Religion and Popular Culture: Theories, Themes, Products and Practices
April 19, 2012 by Terry Ray Clark (Editor), Dan W. Clanton Jr. (Editor) • ISBN-10: 041578106X

Additional readings may be assigned. Exploring various websites throughout the course will be a regular occurrence and will be part of that particular week’s readings.

Course Objectives and Goals:

1. To explore how religion affects American life and influences politics, economics, culture, media, and other aspects of everyday life.

2. To learn basic and core beliefs of various world religions that are prominent in the United States.

3. To enhance critical thinking and research skills pertaining to religious thought and experience.

4. To explore, compare, and contrast one’s personal beliefs and understanding with others’.

How you will be graded:

Grading Rationale

Students will be evaluated with the following criteria:

50% - Class Contribution

50% - Weekly assignments/home work including a final written assignment

Class Contribution 50%

Contribution to this course is vital. Since we only meet 8 times attendance is essential. This course is highly interactive. A contribution rubric will be used each class. Each session is worth 100 points.

The rubric is the following:

1. **25 points:** Attendance for the entire class time.

2. **25 points:** Asking questions, adding to the conversation, participating in small groups, being engaged. Quality, not just quantity will be taken into consideration.

3. **25 points:** In-class assignments and exercises. Each week we will use different in-class assignments to gauge your learning and understanding and ability to articulate that understanding. These might include “5 minute-essays”, in class research, and other creative exercises.
4. **25 points:** Coming obviously prepared to class. The following will show your preparation:

   a. Each week you will share from the readings major insights and questions that arose.

   b. You will also share a weekly article or current event that you found in the past week concerning religion in America. You will share and explain these each class and we often will choose one or two to explore more in class.

5. Disrupting the class with excessive chatter and other distractions will result in deduction of contribution points. Sometimes we do not realize that talking not only disrupts the professor, but also other students. Electronic devices should only be used for note taking and in-class research as assigned. Please be respectful.

If you know beforehand that you will miss more than one class it will be difficult to be successful in this class. **Nothing we do in class can be made up. If you miss class you will receive a zero on that week’s contribution points.**

**One time only exception:** If for some extreme reason you must miss class you can earn at least partial contribution points by doing an outside project and presenting it to the class the next class. You only have one week for this. **This exception is only valid if communication is sent beforehand.**

If you miss more than one week no matter the excuse **you will not** have the opportunity to earn any contribution credit for those classes.

**It is to your great advantage to be in class every week.**

If you will not be in class please let me know when and why. If you expect exceptions then you need to let me know your status. Communication is key.

**Weekly Assignments/Home Work/Written Assignments  50%**

Each week you will have assignments to complete before the next class. These are in addition to your readings and in-class work. These assignments will have various point values.

These assignments might include short essays, research to share with class, outside interviews, etc.

There will also be a longer final written assignment at the end of the course.

**Late Assignments will not be accepted.**

If you miss class you are solely responsible to get from the instructor the assignment.
**Grading Scale**

100-95 = A  
94-90 = A-  
89-87 = B+  
86-84 = B  
83-80 = B-  
79-77 = C+  
76-74 = C  
73-70 = C-  
69-67 = D+  
66-64 = D  
63-60 = D-  
59 & below F

**How each session will work:**

Each class meeting might include lecture, group work, discussion, use of media and the exercises describe in the Contribution section above.

Come ready to participate, learn, be challenged, open up your world view and self understanding, clear up your misunderstandings, dialogue with others, share your points of views and be open to others’.

Please bring a laptop or some other electronic device (tablet, pad, phone) with Internet abilities to class if possible. If you cannot do this, you can access the Internet through Doane’s computer lab, if available when needed.

**Doane College Academic Integrity Policy:**

The Doane College Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent your own work. Any use of others’ ideas and words without proper citation of sources is plagiarism and will result in penalties to be determined by the instructor and/or the dean of undergraduate studies.

In other words DO NOT cheat, steal or “borrow” others words or ideas. I want to know what you think not what someone else does. Just don’t do it, the ramifications will be severe. In case you are confused to what is plagiarism check out [http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php](http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php).
Course Schedule (Schedule is tentative and subject to change.) One week might flow into the next depending on pace of class.

Reading assignments will be given out at the end of each class for the next week.

January 13, 2015: Introduction and Overview - Religion in America
What is religion? Why religion?
Your own religious history
How does religion impact our world and country?
Separation of Church and State
“One Nation Under God” – Whose God?
Can we really “take” God out of places?
Religious Literacy

Jan. 20, 2015 Pluralism
Christian Nation?
Melting pot of religions?
Freedom of Religion
Religion before missionaries and pilgrims – Native American Spirituality
Are all religions going to same mountain?

Jan. 27, 2015: Protestant America
Mainline and Fundamentalism
Who is a Christian?
“American Jesus”
Conservative, Moderate, Liberal, Radical – What do these terms mean in the religious context?

Feb. 3, 2015: Religious Tradition and Laws in a relativistic America
Catholics in America
Judaism

Feb. 10, 2015: Islam and Eastern Religions
What it means to be a Muslim in America?
What do Eastern religions offer Americans that monotheism does not?

Feb. 17, 2015: Religions Made in USA: including Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, and Scientology

Feb. 24, 2015: Pop Culture and Religion in American life

March 3, 2015: Trends and Hot topics in Religion in American Life
Atheism, Agnostic, Spiritual not Religious, Nones

In case a class is cancelled due to weather or other reason we will engage in a flipped classroom on blackboard. Blackboard might also be used is other ways in the course.