

## Atlantic World Religion: 19<sup>th</sup> Century(ish)

HIST 663. Spring 2024. Meets Tuesdays, 7:20pm to 10:00pm in Innovation Hall 316.

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### Course description

The "Atlantic World" paradigm gained currency among historians in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a way to understand the connections between places and peoples in Europe, Africa, and the Americas; the movement of peoples (voluntarily and involuntarily), goods, and ideas; and themes such as colonization and conquest. Religion is a key part of this story, and these "flows" are a key part of the history of religious traditions. In this course, we will range widely, both geographically and chronologically, spending time in West Africa, Europe, the United States, Haiti, and Brazil, and studying traditions such as Islam, Vodou, various forms of Protestant Christianity, and more. One of our goals is to gain an appreciation for the different methods that historians of the Atlantic World have brought to these subjects. We also will interrogate the paradigm of Atlantic World history. When is it useful? What are its limitations?

### Readings and Assignments

Nearly every week we'll read and discuss a full book-length reading. Normally, we'll also discuss one or more articles, book chapters, or primary sources. You are responsible for obtaining the books. On some occasions you'll need to purchase them. Many are available in electronic form on the university libraries website. In some instances, I will circulate a .pdf. If you have concerns about locating or affording a text, just let me know. We'll find a solution. It is never sufficient, however, to read select portions of assigned books on Google or Amazon. Preparation and participation are expected as a matter of course in a graduate class. Complete all readings before class and submit all assignments by the due date.

Some advice on reading. The vast majority of our assigned readings are argument-driven works of history. We all forget most of what we read, even within a relatively short span of time. What you want to retain, at least over the course of the semester, and especially as you prepare for class discussions, is a sense of the arguments made by our authors. When possible, seek to understand them within the context of broader historiographical debates. And assess them. Does an author back up his argument with sufficient evidence? How does her argument advance the field and connect with other works?

It's very easy to be critical of any author, especially academic authors. For starters, most of our assigned authors don't write as well as, say, Ernest Hemingway or Wallace Stegner. But then again, neither do any of us, or at least I don't. Most of the time, however, the scholars we read have produced something of value. We can learn things from them, from the questions they pose, from their methodology, or simply from the human stories they've excavated. Try to read with a measure of critical appreciation. Then feel free to pinpoint and savage their weak spots.

**Pre-circulated discussion questions (5%) and participation (5%).** Each week you should post at least one substantive question or point of discussion on Blackboard. "Substantive" means a thoughtful, detailed question that shows evidence of engagement with the reading(s), or a point of discussion that responds to the reading(s) in a meaningful way. You can raise points about the

works under discussion, the relationship between them, or their relationship to anything we've read previously. Your question or comment is due by 5:00 p.m. the day of class meetings. You are welcome to respond to the comments of others on Blackboard. I'll try to do so as much as possible, especially if others are participating that way.

**Leading discussion of primary sources (10%).** Beginning with week three, you will sign up for one week in which you will identify primary sources (beyond any assigned for the week) related to the topic, circulate them among the group, and lead a discussion of them. I can help you identify good sources; just plan ahead in advance if you want help with that. Often these sources could be ones that were explicitly discussed in the assigned readings for that week. Upload on Blackboard what you will circulate to the class by the night before the relevant class meeting. If two students present the same week, coordinate with each other so as not to duplicate sources.

**Book reviews (2 x 20%) and leading class discussion.** Over the course of the semester, you will write two reviews of books related to a given week's discussion. You may select any book from the additional readings or, with permission, any other book about the history of religion in the nineteenth-century Atlantic World. The reviews should be analyses, not summaries. *Reviews in American History* is a better model than *JAH* or *AHR* book reviews. Explain the overall argument of the book, whether it is persuasive, what sources it uses and what theoretical framework it operates within, and how it fits into the literature we have been reading. These reviews could be stepping stones to your final essay, as well as important contributions towards broadening the base of knowledge for the class. The same week your review is due, you will give a presentation about and lead a discussion of your chosen book. Reviews should be about 750 to 1000 words. Your portion of the class discussion should be about 15 minutes, with a maximum of about 20 minutes. Talk the class through the substance of the book and your response to it. Book reviews are due the night before the relevant class meeting. Oftentimes, two of you will be leading on a given week. Coordinate with each other so as to not present on the same book.

**Essay (40%).** You will write an essay of 12 to 15 pages on the topic of your choice related to the subject of the course. You must write to a genre, but you are free to select the genre in consultation with me. Some possible options: (a) a historiography paper; (b) an analysis of primary sources; (c) a podcast script; (d) a narrative; (e) a magazine article; (f) a museum exhibit. The form of the essay will be determined by the genre you select. We can clarify this assignment as necessary at the midpoint of the semester.

You will submit a proposal (a topic paragraph and a book list), which will be graded on a completion basis for 5% of the course grade. You will also submit a complete rough draft (emphasis on *complete*) for comment, which will be worth 5% of your course grade. The final paper will be worth the other 30%.

- Topic paragraph and book list due on March 15.
- Rough draft due on April 19.
- Final paper due on May 3.

All written assignments should be uploaded on Blackboard by their due date.

## **Fine print**

Standard rules for historical papers: 11- or 12-point serif font; 1-inch margins; double-spaced; follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* religiously.

Final grades will be calculated using the typical percentage-based grading scale (A = 93–100, A- = 90–92, B+ = 88–89, B = 83–87, B- = 80–82, ... F = 0–59).

You are expected to attend each class and to participate actively (exceptions made only for health reasons, religious holidays, and other university-approved excuses). Participation grades may be reduced due to repeated absences. If you wish to be excused for an absence, please email me before the absence if possible, or as soon as possible after the absence.

Late work will not be accepted for any reason. If there are unusual circumstances beyond your control, I may permit you to reschedule an assignment for another week, but you must notify me in advance if at all possible.

I will agree to an incomplete grade for this course only under the rarest of circumstances.

Students must check (and respond as necessary) to communications sent via email.

If the campus closes, or if a class meeting needs to be canceled or adjusted due to weather or some other concern, students should check their email for updates on how to continue learning and for information about any changes to assignments.

Unless otherwise specified, you should work on your own for assignments. In general, every source that you use should be acknowledged in a note or bibliography entry. Sources must be adequately paraphrased, meaning (at a minimum) that word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and the order of ideas must be made your own. Whenever you use others' exact words, you must mark them as such by quotation marks or block quotations with accompanying citations. Plagiarism consists of presenting the writing, research, or analysis of others as one's own. It applies not only to using the text of another author's work verbatim without quotation marks and accurate citations but also to the taking of specific information, analysis or opinions—even if not in the exact words of the author—and presenting them without citation in one's own paper. Using AI-assistance for any paper is also plagiarism (at least for now). It is also really unlikely to help you produce a good assignment. Any instance of plagiarism will result in, at minimum, the student receiving a grade of 0 on the assignment, and the student will not be given the opportunity to rewrite the paper.

See the [George Mason University catalog](#) for general policies. The university and I are committed to supporting diversity in the classroom as explained in the [statement on diversity](#). You are expected to know and follow George Mason's policies on [academic integrity](#) and the [honor code](#). If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703-993-2474 or through [their website](#). You are responsible for verifying your enrollment status. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please note the dates for dropping and adding courses from the [GMU academic calendar](#).

## Weekly Schedule of Readings (to be read for class on that date)

Required readings are marked with an \*. Other readings may be useful to you for the assignments.

### January 16: Introduction

\* Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Harvard, 2005), sent as .pdf attachment.

\* Peter A. Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" *William & Mary Quarterly* 63.4 (Oct. 2006): 725-742.

### January 23: Islam in West Africa

\* Ousmane Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Harvard, 2016).

\* **David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. chapters one and two.**

Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (Chicago, 2021).

### January 30: Islam in the Americas

\* Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (NYU, 2013, rev. edition).

\* Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 2010), chapter six. Skim other sections for context.

### February 6: Revolutions, Part I

\* Katherine Carté, *Religion and the American Revolution: An Imperial History* (UNC, 2021).

\* Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago, 2011), chapters one and two.

Julius Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (Verso, 2018).

James H. Sweet, *Domingo Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (UNC, 2011).

Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago, 2012).

Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (Basic, 2010).

### February 13: Revolutions, Part II

- \* Paul Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (Ohio University Press, 2016).
- \* Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (UNC, 2014), introduction and chapter three.

#### February 20: "Evangelicalism"

- \* [Nancy Towle, \*Vicissitudes\*](#) (James L. Burges, 1832). Dip into it and read as the spirit leads you.

- \* David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale, 2006).

Anna Lawrence, *One Family Under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Pennsylvania, 2011).

John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford, 2009).

John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism* (IVP, 2007).

David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (IVP, 2005).

David Komline, *The Common School Awakening: Religion and the Transatlantic Roots of American Public Education* (Oxford, 2020).

#### February 27: African Americans and West Africa

- \* Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, 2004 updated edition).

- \* Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh, *The Souls of Womenfolk: The Religious Cultures of Enslaved Women in the Lower South* (UNC, 2021).

Yes, there are two assigned books this week. For the next class, there is no book-length reading. Sometimes things in life even out.

Erskine Clarke, *By the Rivers of Water: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Basic, 2013).

#### March 12: Mormonism

- \* Book of Mormon (selections)
- \* Joseph Smith History
- \* Doctrine & Covenants, Section 132

- \* Stephen J. Fleming, "The Religious Heritage of the British Northwest and the Rise of Mormonism," *Church History* 77 (March 2008): 73-104.

- \* Christopher C. Jones, "'A Verry Poor Place for Our Doctrine': Religion and Race in the 1853 Mormon Mission to Jamaica," *Religion and American Culture* 31 (Summer 2021): 262-295.

William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minnesota, 2000).

### March 19: Judaism, Immigration

\* Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Indiana University Press, 2011).

\* Jonathan Sarna, "The Myth of No Return: Jewish Return Migration to Eastern Europe, 1881-1914," *American Jewish History* 71 (Dec. 1981): 256-268.

Avraham Barkai, *'Branching Out': German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914* (Holmes & Meier, 1994).

Haim Avni, *Argentina & the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration* (University of Alabama Press, 1991).

Laura Leibman, *Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multi-Racial Jewish Family* (Oxford, 2021).

There's a vast literature on Jewish immigration to the United States. There are many good reading suggestions on [this list](#).

### March 26: Zionism

\* Theodor Herzl, *A Jewish State* (New York: Federation of American Zionists, 1917). Originally published as *Der Judenstaat* in 1896.

\* Naomi W. Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948* (Brandeis, 2003).

Barbara Kreiger, *Divine Expectations: An American Woman in Nineteenth-Century Palestine* (Ohio University Press, 1999).

Sarah Imhoff, *The Lives of Jesse Sampter: Queer, Disabled Zionist* (Duke, 2022).

### April 2: (Black and White) American missions to Africa

\* Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijoke Njoku, *United States & Africa Relations, 1400s to the Present* (Yale, 2020), chapter five.

\* William Henry Sheppard, [\*Presbyterian Pioneers in the Congo\*](#) (Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917).

\* Benedict Carton, "From Mississippi and Memphis to Mozambique: American emancipation and the evangelical struggles of Benjamin and Henrietta Ousley and Nancy Jones, 'ex-slave' missionaries in 'Zulu East Africa,' 1850s–1900," *American Nineteenth Century History* (published online 9/2023).

Ira Dworkin, *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State* (UNC, 2017).

Kimberly D. Hill, *A Higher Mission: The Careers of Alonzo and Althea Brown Edmiston in Central Africa* (Kentucky, 2020).

David Killingray, "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s-1920s," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33 (Feb. 2003): 3-31.

Andrew E. Barnes, *Tuskegee, Colonialism, and the Shaping of African Industrial Education* (Baylor, 2017).

Tshepo Masango Chéry, *Kingdom Come: The Politics of Faith and Freedom in Segregationist South Africa and Beyond* (Duke, 2023).

Richard Elphick, *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa* (Virginia, 2012).

Jochen Arndt, *Divided by the Word: Colonial Encounters and the Remaking of Zulu and Xhosa Identities* (Virginia, 2022).

#### April 9: Religion and Revolution

\* Robert Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* (California, 1995).

\* Kapyra John Kaoma, "African Religion and Colonial Rebellion: The Contestation of Power in Colonial Zimbabwe's Chimurenga of 1896-1897," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 29 (2016): 57-84.

Euclides da Cunha, *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign* (Penguin Classics, 2010).

#### April 16: Religion, Diplomacy, and World War I

\* Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Missionary Diplomacy: Religion and Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations* (Cornell, 2024).

Jonathan Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton, 2010).

Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (HarperOne, 2014).