Senior Seminar:  
Religion in American History

Course Description

HIS 470 is the department’s capstone course. As such, its goal is to bring together and enhance the skills that students have been developing over the course of their undergraduate studies in History – skills in research, writing, communication, and critical analysis. The purpose of this course is threefold: (1) to learn about how religion connects to broader trends in American history, (2) to refine your writing and research skills, (3) to write an original research paper, using both primary and secondary sources. The final version of a paper should be 4500-5000 words (18-20 pages), including Chicago style footnotes.

The course is divided into three parts. The first part will be primarily led by the professor and focused on providing students the knowledge and skills required to write a successful research paper. It will culminate in students selecting their research topic. The second part of the course will be partially led by the professor and partially led by the students. It will help students refine their research project and conclude with students presenting their research topic to the course. The students will almost exclusively lead the final part of the course. Students will participate in collaborative work time in class to discuss their project and help other students through work difficulties. This part of the course is focused on helping students successfully complete their research project.

Grades and Assignments

Student grades will be calculated out of 700 total points:

- Topics List - 50 points
- Two Meetings with Professor - 50 points each
- Comparative Book Review - 100 points
- Research Topic Presentation - 100 points
- First Draft - 75 points
- First Draft Peer-Editing - 75 points
- Final Paper - 200 points

Topics List
Each student will turn in a list with two potential research topics and a 200-word summary of each topic. The list will be due February 15.
Meeting with Professor
Each student is required to meet with the professor twice in the semester. The first meeting will be to discuss their Topics List during the week of February 12-16. The second meeting will be during the week of April 9-13. These will be graded meetings. Students will be required to schedule the meeting with the professor. Grades will be assigned based on students being prepared for the meeting and conducting a professional meeting.

Comparative Book Review
Each student will turn in a 750-1000 word comparative book review. The books will be selected by each student to help him or her develop their individual research project. The professor must approve the selection of books.

Research Topic Presentation
Each student will give a 7-10 minute research presentation on his or her topic on March 22 or March 27. The presentation must introduce the research topic, the methodological questions used, the sources employed, the problems faced, the significance of the paper to our understanding of religion in American history, and the thesis statement of the project.

First Draft
Each student will turn in a complete first draft of his or her paper on April 19. This is NOT a rough draft. The paper must meet the same criteria as the final draft. The professor will grade this draft and provide big-picture feedback before the final draft of the paper. Each paper will also be assigned for a peer review. Half of each grade will come from the quality of edits provided by the peer reviewer. One copy of the edits for the peer-reviewed drafts will be returned to the author and a second copy will be provided to the professor.

Final Research Paper
The final research paper is due on May 3. Each student will submit his or her paper to D2L. The paper must be 4000-5000 words (15-20 pages), have Chicago style footnotes, have no grammar or formatting mistakes, and have clearly defended the thesis. If a student submits a failing research paper, the student will fail the course.

Required Materials:
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8th edition)
Various articles posted to D2L
Two books for comparative review

Recommended Materials:
**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. Any student caught plagiarizing at any point in the course will automatically receive an “F” in the course.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Attendance**

You should attend each meeting, unless there is a legitimate reason why you cannot do so. All absences must be documented. There is no official attendance policy for the course, but if a student does not come to class they will not succeed in the course.

**Accommodations**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).
Schedule
(Subject to revision)

**Part One**

Jan. 16  Snow Day
Jan. 18  Introduction
Jan. 23  Lecture on Religion in American History Part One
Jan. 25  Lecture on Religion in American History Part Two
Jan. 30  Lecture on Religion in American History Part Three

**Historiography Week**

Feb. 1   Lecture on how to read
Feb. 6   Discussion of historiography articles

**Writing Week**

Feb. 8   Lecture on the basics of writing
Feb. 13  Lecture the basics of research

**Research Topic Week**

Feb. 15  Library Visit
Feb. 20  Meet with Professor with two potential research topics

*Turn in Topics List*

**Part Two**

Feb. 22  Discussion of Book Reviews
Feb. 27  Collaborative work time on Comparative Book Reviews
Mar. 1   Collaborative work time on Comparative Book Reviews

*Turn in titles of books for Comparative Book Review*

Mar. 6   Presentations of Comparative Book Review
Mar. 8   Presentations of Comparative Book Reviews
### Spring Break Week

- **Mar. 13**: Spring Break
- **Mar. 15**: Spring Break

### Research Presentations

- **Mar. 20**: Collaborative work time on research topic presentations
- **Mar. 22**: Research Topic Presentations
- **Mar. 27**: Research Topic Presentations
- **Mar. 29**: NO CLASS - Easter Holiday

### Part Three

- **Apr. 3**: Collaborative work time
- **Apr. 5**: Collaborative work time
- **Apr. 10**: Progress update meeting with professor
- **Apr. 12**: Progress update meeting with professor
- **Apr. 17**: Collaborative work time
- **Apr. 19**: Collaborative work time
  - *First Drafts Due*
- **Apr. 24**: Collaborative work time
- **Apr. 26**: Collaborative work time
  - *Peer-reviewed First Drafts Due*
- **May 1**: Collaborative work time
- **May 3**: *Final papers due*