

AFH/EUH/WOH 3931 Religion in the Atlantic World

Professor Matthew Blake Strickland
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Class Time & Location

MWF Period 3 (9:35 – 10:25)
FLI 119

Office Hours

MW 8:30 – 9:30 (or by appointment)
FLI 020

Course Description

Atlantic History highlights the interconnectedness of diverse peoples and ideas between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. This course examines the role that religion played in the development of the Atlantic world from the voyages of Columbus to the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Moving thematically, this course will explore how religion was conceived, utilized, re-imagined, and negotiated by Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans throughout the early modern period. Themes of particular interest are: colonization, conquest, slavery, resistance, revolution, and imperialism.



Course Objectives

With this course, students will:

1. Think critically about religion, especially its interconnections with culture and politics.
2. Be more knowledgeable about early modern imperialism and its present-day legacies and consequences for Black and Indian people in the United States and Caribbean.
3. Understand the religious justifications for colonization, imperialism, and slavery.
4. Make broad and specific connections between European forms of Christianity and African spirituality, and pinpoint ways in which African spirituality endured or changed within the Atlantic milieu.
5. Understand the rise of African American Christianity and its importance for the growing Black community in the United States.
6. Make concise arguments in both written and oral form.
7. Think critically and analytically regarding historical people, events, and themes.

Required Texts

Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*

Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World*

Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*

Other required readings are available on Canvas. They are also noted in the course schedule attached to this syllabus.

Grading Scale and Assignment Summary

Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	10%
(8) Short Assignments	40%
Research Prospectus	25%
Final Exam	15%

Grade Proportion	Grade Scale	Grade Value
Participation: 100 points (10%)	940-1,000 = A	A = 4.0
Midterm Exam: 100 points (10%)	900-939 = A-	A- = 3.67
Short Assignments: 400 points (40%)	870-899 = B+	B+ = 3.33
Research Prospectus: 200 points (20%)	840-869 = B	B = 3.00
Final Exam: 150 points (15%)	800-839 = B-	B- = 2.67
	770-799 = C+	C+ = 2.33
	740-769 = C	C = 2.00
Total: 1,000 points (100%)	700-739 = C-	C- = 1.67
	670-699 = D+	D+ = 1.33
	640-669 = D	D = 1.00
	600-639 = D-	D- = 0.67
	0-599 = E	E = 0.00

Only course grades of C or better will satisfy Gordon Rule, general education, and college basic distribution credit.

Mandatory Meetings: You are required to meet with me during office hours twice during the semester. The first meeting must take place within the first four weeks of the semester while the second meeting must take place within the last four weeks. These meetings serve two purposes: 1) they allow me to get to know you and you to get to know me, and 2) these are opportunities for students to get help or insight before major assignments are due. Both should be short check-ins (5-10 minutes). While attending these meetings will not be graded, a failure to complete this requirement will result in a grade deduction.

Short Responses: You will have eight short assignments due periodically during the semester. Altogether these assignments will be worth 45% of your grade. It is expected that they follow standard formatting. I will provide specific instructions for submitting and formatting these assignments. You will also find the due date in the course schedule attached to this syllabus.

Research Prospectus: You will complete a prospectus outlining a potential research project. Basically, a prospectus is an academic plan for carrying out a longer, in-depth research project. This prospectus will be 5-6 pages, must follow standard formatting, and will contain an annotated bibliography with twenty to thirty entries. A research prospectus must lay out the research questions to be addressed, how the research fits into existing historiography, and the types of sources and methodologies to be used in addressing the topic. This assignment will be worth 20% of your total grade.

Midterm/Final Exams: You will have a Midterm and a Final. You must bring a bluebook to sit for the exams. The purpose of these exams in this course is to help you understand how most—though not all—history exams may be structured. While you will be graded, consider these exams to be low stakes practice for what you may

encounter in other courses. The exams will be a combination of identifying key terms, analyzing short quotes/excerpts, and essay questions.

*Standard Formatting: Times New Roman; 1-inch margins on all sides; 12-point font; double-spaced; no extra indentions or line spacings beyond what is appropriate in writing mechanics.

Most assignments will be submitted as a hard copy for grading and on Canvas to be checked through Turnitin. Specific requirements will be addressed for each assignment.

Course Policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Attendance:

In order to ensure success in this course, it is imperative that you attend all class meetings. Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of each class. Without showing up to class, you cannot fully participate.

Tardiness:

Come to class on time. Tardiness causes unnecessary distractions for the teacher and for students attempting to engage with the course. While it may be unavoidable sometimes, no student should be late a majority of the class. I understand this is a large campus. However, you must develop a schedule that is logistically possible (i.e. that which allows you to move quickly from one place to another).

Participation:

For the purposes of this class, participation means you are **actively** contributing to the discussion. This could include probing questions, insights regarding readings, or making connections across multiple weeks in the course. All of these involve communicating to me and the rest of the class that you are prepared and engaged with the lectures and/or material.

Late Work:

All assignments should be turned in by the due date. The instructor may accept late work for a ten-point deduction for every day the assignment is late. However, it is not guaranteed that the instructor will accept late work. It is the student's responsibility to communicate problems or concerns with the instructor.

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism constitutes intellectual theft and academic dishonesty. It is the failure to properly cite and give credit when you use the ideas, words, phrases, or arguments of other people in your writing assignments. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." For more information regarding the Honor Code, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open.

Objectivity and Classroom Respect:

People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content which may include images, texts, data, or theories from many fields. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, ideas and opinions-including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation's sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge and the pursuit of new ideas.

Course Schedule

*This schedule may change.

I. Course Intro: Religion and the Atlantic Region

Guiding Questions: What is religion? In what ways does religion impact societies and/or social interactions? How were religious beliefs similar among societies surrounding the Atlantic Ocean? How were they different? How might differing beliefs between European Christian denominations impact expansions and interactions beyond Europe?

Course Introduction (1.5 weeks) - Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, chs. 1-2

II. Early Colonization: Launching Imperial Projects

Guiding Questions: How did European empires use religion to justify colonization and conquest? How did Native Americans fit into their mindset? How did religion create inter-imperial conflicts? How did Spain's violent history of Reconquista contribute to colonization? In what ways were the colonizations and conquests by Catholic Spain and Protestant England similar? In what ways were they different? How did the religious background of historical actors affect their interaction with unknown peoples?

Religious Justifications for Imperialism (1.5 – 2 weeks) - Rolena Adorno, "The Polemics of Possession: Spain on America, Circa 1550"
- Carla Gardina Pestana, "Cruelty and Religious Justifications for Conquest in the Mid-Seventeenth-Century English Atlantic"
- Pestana, chs. 3-4
- Bartolome de las Casas, Preface and Prologue
- Increase Mather, p. 9-15

Early Encounters Between Native Americans, Africans and Europeans (2 weeks) - Thornton, "Development of African Catholic Church"
- Pestana, chs. 5-6
- Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, chs. 1-4

III. Religious Encounters

Guiding Questions: How did European empires contend with dissent in their overseas colonies? What role did the Inquisition have in Spanish colonies? In what ways did Europeans and Native Americans navigate a religious "middle ground"? How did Europeans use religious beliefs to justify slavery? What is the connection between race and Protestant Christianity? Why were some European Christian denominations more appealing to enslaved Africans than others?

Navigating Religious Encounters with Native Americans (2 weeks) - Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, chs. 5-9
- Allan Greer, *The Jesuit Relations*
Short Response #1 due

Native Americans,
Jews, and the
Inquisition
(1 week)

- Inquisition Documents (Canvas)

Race and Slavery
(2 weeks)

- Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*

African Spirituality in
Catholic Areas
(1 week)

- *Creole Religions* chs. 2-4
- Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, ch. 9

African Spirituality in
the Protestant Areas
(1 week)

- *Creole Religions* chs. 5-6
- Diana Paton, "Witchcraft, Poison, Law and Atlantic Slavery"

Short Response #2 due

IV. Enlightenment, Revivalism, Abolition, and Revolutions

Guiding Questions: *What impact did enlightenment and revivalism have on Atlantic religious history? What role did religion play in the various Atlantic revolutions? Why did many African slaves respond positively to revivalism? What role did evangelical Christianity have in the debates regarding slavery and the slave trade?*

Revivalism and African
American Christianity
(1.5 – 2 weeks)

- Pestana, *Protestant Empire* ch. 7-8
- "George Whitefield Encourages Conversion and Education" (1740)
- "Phyllis Wheatley's Homage to George Whitefield" (1770)

Religion and Anti-
Slavery
(1 week)

- Various documents on conversion and emancipation in the British Empire (1820s)
- "Quaker documents on Manumission" (1767-1777)
- "Early Slave Conversion Attempts of Francis Le Jau, an Anglican Minister" (1706, 1717)
- "The Conversion Experience of John Marrant" (1802)
- "Landon Carter Confronts the Problem of Slave Conversion" (1776)
- "Nat Turner Explains His Rebellion" (1831)

Essay due

Final Exam
(1 week)

Final exam to be taken during the exam schedule.
