

Arkansas Religious Pluralism
HNRC 300VH-009 (10531)
Gearhart Hall 130

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	Or by appointment	Or by appointment
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Overview

Arkansas has traditionally been one of the most homogeneous states, experiencing only limited immigration since the Civil War. This created what was also a largely homogeneous religious culture, with most Arkansawyers practicing some form of evangelical or mainline Protestantism. This picture has changed dramatically in the last few decades, driven by rapid economic development in Northwest Arkansas, refugee resettlement, and national trends like the overall decline in religiosity even as there has been an explosion of new religious movements and DIY approaches to spirituality.

Learning Goals

Arkansas Religious Pluralism will challenge students to understand a broad variety of new or new-to-Arkansas religious traditions, to put them into the context of a rapidly changing state, and to understand the different points of tension that arise when a homogeneous region diversifies. Each week a guest speaker or field trip along with supplemental readings will introduce students to a new religious tradition, its history in Arkansas, and its experience of integration into the larger community. Students will demonstrate their mastery of the topic through active discussion participation and a final blog post.

Readings

All readings are free and are either linked in the syllabus or available on Blackboard.

Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>
Participation	600
Blog entry	400
Total	1000

Grading Scale

A: 900-1000	D: 600-699
B: 800-899	F: Below 600
C: 700-799	

Participation and Attendance (600 points)

A readings course is, above all, a conversation about the texts. You need to come prepared AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION. Participation will be 60% of your course grade.

Each week, except for the first, you will receive a grade for your class participation. Your lowest two grades out of the remaining weeks will be dropped and the remaining weeks averaged to determine your final grade. You will receive a participation grade weekly.

- A Dynamic, informed, insightful participation.
- B Consistent participation with evidence of a careful reading of the sources.
- C Occasional participation with evidence of having consulted the readings.
- D Present but not participating to a meaningful extent.
- 0 Not present.

Note: Since two weeks of participation grades will be dropped, these may be used strategically for skips, illnesses, or family emergencies. There are no excused absences.

Blog Entry (400 points)

BLOG REQUIREMENTS:

Each student will choose a religious group discussed in the forum and compose a blog for the Honors College WWW site. The Honors College Communication Team will select blogs to publish. Here are the instructions for writing exemplary Honors College blogs:

- Each blogpost should be between 300-500 words, submitted as a Word document, double-spaced, with 1 in. margins and 12 pt. Times New Roman font. A title for the post and your personal “boiler” (see below) in italics should be included at the top of the post.
- Blogposts should engage critically with the subject under investigation.
- When referencing texts, please be sure to include a hyperlink for each citation. Footnote the assigned secondary materials as well. Do not read additional information for the blog.
- Your submissions should be both factual, as far as possible, and analytical in nature.
- Each submission should include a quick bio of you under the title in italics, what we call “boilers.”
- Please note that your boiler will not count toward your word count for the submission. For example: “Student X is a senior honors student majoring in political science at the University of Arkansas. Originally from Searcy, AR, Student X has been actively involved in activities on campus, including the Volunteer Action Center and the Honors College Ambassadors. After college, Student X hopes to pursue a graduate degree in public policy.”
- For an example of an Honors College Blog, see: <https://honorsblog.uark.edu/the-gospel-according-to-john-judaism-without-the-jews/>

Your overall task in your blog post is to present for a general audience the complex narrative of the introduction of diverse religious groups into our region.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 14 Introduction to the course and a discussion of the changing American religious landscape.

Speaker: Coon and Treat

Reading

Jones, Robert. "The Challenge of Pluralism after the End of White Christian America." In *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise*, by Eboo Patel, 113–32. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. [Available on Blackboard.]

January 21 Cherokee Spirituality

Guest: Christina Shaw, Academic Counselor & Coach, College of Engineering, U of A

Reading

Stewart-Abernathy, Leslie. "Cherokees." Encyclopedia of Arkansas.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/cherokee-553/>

Pluralism Project: Religious Freedom for Native Americans

<https://pluralism.org/religious-freedom-for-native-americans>

January 28 German Catholic Immigrants in 19th Century Arkansas

Guest: Kathleen Condray, German Program Head and Associate Professor, U of A

Reading

Sticht Schuette, Shirley. "Germans." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/germans-2731/>

Woods, James M. "Roman Catholics." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/roman-catholics-343/>

Barnes, Kenneth C. "Anti-Catholicism." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/anti-catholicism-13501/>

February 4 Latter Day Saints

Speaker: Shawn Austin, associate professor of history, U of A

Reading

Pluralism Project: Latter-day Saints Movement

<https://pluralism.org/latter-day-saints-movement>

Coppins, McKay. "The Most American Religion." *The Atlantic*, December, 2020.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/01/the-most-american-religion/617263/>

February 11 Antiochene Orthodox Christianity

Speaker: The Very Rev. John Atchison, priest, and Mr. Michael Baclig, head of men's ministries for the Diocese of the Southeast, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Springdale.

Reading

Pluralism Project: Orthodox Christian Churches

<https://pluralism.org/orthodox-christian-churches>

Pluralism Project: The Growth of Eastern Orthodoxy

<https://pluralism.org/the-growth-of-eastern-orthodoxy>

Hronas, Helen R. "Greek Orthodox." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/greek-orthodox-3643/>

February 18 Orthodox Judaism

NOTE: THIS IS A THURSDAY EVENING FIELD TRIP. A recording and/or alternative assignment will be provided for those who cannot attend.

Speaker: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Greisman, Chabad of Northwest Arkansas, Bentonville

Reading

Pluralism Project: Introduction to Judaism; God, Torah, and Israel; God: Biblical Monotheism; Torah: Covenant and Constitution; Israel: Jewish Nationhood; Post-Biblical Religion; Rabbinic Text
Diaspora Community; Kabbalah and Hasidism; Modern Jewish Culture; Zionism and Israel

<https://pluralism.org/judaism>

Rockoff, Stuart. "Jews." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/jews-2297/>

February 25 Islam

Speaker: Imam Abdellah Essalki of the Islamic Center of Northwest Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Reading

Moussa, Yousra. "Islam." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/muslims-2557/>

Pluralism Project: Introduction to Islam, The Call of Islam, Islam Means Being “Muslim,” Qur’an: The Word of God, Muhammad: The Messenger of God, One Ummah with Many Views

<https://pluralism.org/islam>

Case Study: A Young Imam in the American Midwest

https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/new_a_young_imam_in_the_american_midwest_a.pdf

March 4 **Hispanic Pentecostalism**

Speaker: Pastor Eddie Cantu, Centro Cristiano Hispano, Springdale.

Reading

Pluralism Project: Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism

<https://pluralism.org/fundamentalism-evangelicalism-and-pentecostalism>

Pluralism Project: New Immigrant Christianity

<https://pluralism.org/new-immigrant-christianity>

Leidermann, Michel. “Latinos.” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/latinos-2733/>

Wallace, Bruce. “The Latino Pentecostals.” *Drew Today*.

<http://www.drew.edu/news/2016/04/13/the-latino-pentecostals>

March 11 **Hinduism**

NOTE: THIS MAY BE A FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITY. If so, a recording and/or alternative assignment will be provided for those who cannot attend.

Speaker: Representatives of the Hindu Association of Northwest Arkansas.

Reading

Pluralism Project: Introduction (all sections)

<https://pluralism.org/hinduism>

Pluralism Project: Hinduism in America: Building a Temple, Consecration, Murti, Lamp Offerings

<https://pluralism.org/hinduism#widget-2>

March 13 **Vietnamese Buddhism in the River Valley**

NOTE: THIS IS A SATURDAY FIELD TRIP. A recording and/or alternative assignment will be provided for those who cannot attend.

Speaker: Ms. Nguyen Dao, Pho Minh Buddhist Temple, Fort Smith

Reading

Maher, Daniel. “Indochinese Resettlement Program.” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/indochinese-resettlement-program-5562/>

Pluralism Project: Introduction: All sections except Theravada and Vajrayana

<https://pluralism.org/buddhism>

Pluralism Project: Buddhism in America: New Asian Immigration and the Temple Boom and Popularizing Buddhism

<https://pluralism.org/buddhism-in-america>

Pluralism Project: The Buddhist Experience: Chanting the Sutras

<https://pluralism.org/chanting-the-sutras>

March 25 **SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MEETING**

April 1 **Sikhism**

Speaker: Sikh Gurdwara of North west Arkansas

Reading

Pluralism Project: Introduction to Sikhism (all sections)

<https://pluralism.org/sikhism>

Pluralism Project: The Sikh Experience: The Gurdwara

<https://pluralism.org/the-gurdwara>

Pluralism Project: Sikhism in America: Bhagat Singh Thind: Citizen or Alien?, The Sikh Community Today

<https://pluralism.org/sikhism-in-america>

Case Study: Fliers at the Peace Parade

https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/pluralism/files/new_fliers_at_the_peace_parade.pdf

April 8 **Atheism and Humanism**

Speaker: Lisa Elide and members of NWA Freethought

Reading

Pluralism Project: Humanism (all sections)

<https://pluralism.org/humanism>

McAinish, Garrett. "Teaching of Evolution." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/teaching-of-evolution-5991/>

April 15 **Neopaganism**

Speaker: Melissa Hall, The Four of Wands.

Reading

Pluralism Project: Paganism (all sections)

<https://pluralism.org/paganism>

Valiente, Doreen. "The Charge of the Goddess." The Official Doreen Valiente Website.
http://www.doreenvaliente.com/Doreen-Valiente-Doreen_Valiente_Poetry-11.php#sthash.nYbrjgXJ.dpbs

April 22 The First Amendment

Speaker: Mark Killenbeck, Wylie H. Davis Distinguished Professor of Law, U of A

Reading

Killenbeck, Mark. "Pandora's Cake." *Arkansas Law Review* 72, no. 4 (August 19, 2020): 769.

[Available on Blackboard.]

Four cases: *Cavanaugh v. Bartlet*, *Frazee v. Illinois*, *Peterson v. Wilmur*, and *U.S. v. Ballard*,

[Available on Blackboard.]

April 29 Wrapping up and looking to the future

Speaker: Coon and Treat

Reading

Jones, Robert Patrick. "A Eulogy for White Christian America." *The End of White Christian America.*

With a New Afterword Covering the 2017 Election. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017.

[Available on Blackboard.]