

Hartford International University, Fall 2023

American Religious Realities: Sociological and Anthropological Approaches (RS-525)

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Course modality: **14-weeks, weekly seminars, hybrid synchronous, with Canvas discussion topics**

Class time and location: Tuesdays from **7:00 pm to 9:00 pm; 77 Sherman, Room TBD**

Office hours: in person, via zoom or phone TBD (to schedule an appointment, email sthumma@hartfordinternational.edu and/or tyuskaev@hartfordinternational.edu).

Note: As the course progresses, minor adjustments to the syllabus are likely.

Description

As part of the MAIRS curriculum, this course facilitates an understanding of the scope of America's religious diversity: the nature of its current complexity and factors contributing to its emergence; the mutually influencing interactions between religious communities (their convictions, practices, and structures); and the American contextual trends, such as immigration, political issues, and social drivers like race, ethnicity, or gender. This course is taught with faculty of different traditions and backgrounds, and builds knowledge and skills for study within a multifaith setting.

Among the central themes of the Fall 2023 course are race, gender, religious diversity and transnational religions, young adults, the nones, newer religious forms, and the politics of sound. The course will engage a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches pertinent to the study of North American religious realities.

This course is **a core requirement in the MAIRS program**.

Texts*

- 1) Muna Ali, *Young Muslim America: Faith, Community and Belonging* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018)
- 2) Alisa Perkins, *Muslim American City: Gender and Religion in Metro Detroit* (NYU Press, 2020)
- 3) Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Simon and Schuster, 2010)

- 4) Isaac Weiner, *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (NYU Press, 2013)

* All books are available free of charge via DTL. All other material is available in CANVAS.

Please email sthumma@hartfordinternational.edu and/or tyuskaev@hartfordinternational.edu if you are having any difficulty accessing the texts.

Coursework and Assessment

- Class Participation: 10%
- Weekly Reflections posted in CANVAS: 20% (start posting reflections on the week of **September 12**, second week of the course)
- One presentation: 10% (student presentations will begin on **September 19**, third week of the course and will be posted as a short video or narrated PPT to Canvas)
- Midterm paper (5-6 pages): 25% (**Due October 17**)
- Final paper or project: 35% (**Due December 22**)

Learning Outcomes

- To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.
- To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion's communities exist.
- Develop an appreciation of living in a pluralistic world and dialogical skills needed to work in multi-faith and diverse settings.
- To demonstrate knowledge of the larger social and cultural dynamics affecting religious life and organizations in the 21st century and their implications for ministry setting.
- To acquire a comprehensive knowledge in Islamic Studies, Christian-Muslim Relations, and Interreligious Engagement/Interfaith Dialogue.
- To develop the competence to produce original research and written works for the benefit of religious communities, academy, and society.

Plagiarism policy – plagiarism is not tolerated, see: <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/student-affairs/student-resources/student-handbook>

Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching.

- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another – history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank.
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and welcome other opinions.
- Embodying mutuality – Learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

Schedule:

1. **September 5.** Introduction: How, What, Why

- Scott Thumma, Prologue and Chapter 1, in *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: Megachurches in Modern American Society*
- Timur Yuskaev, “A Contrapuntal Discipline: Through the Landscape of ‘Inter’ and ‘Religious’,” in Lucinda Mosher, ed., *The Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies*

2. **September 12.** Historical Trends on the Landscape

- Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

3. **September 19.** Religious Sounds

- Isaac Weiner, *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (NYU Press, 2013)

Note: This will be the week when students will begin posting and discussing their **weekly presentations on Canvas**.

4. **September 26.** Contemporary Landscapes

- Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, Chapters 9, 10, 11 & 15
- FACT 2020 and Mosques 2020 reports

5. **October 3.** Religious Ecosystems: A Case Study

- Alisa Perkins, *Muslim American City*, Introduction and Chapters 1-5 [this is for those who are able to have access to the book]
- Those who do not have access to the book, read Introduction and Chapters 1-4 of Alisa Perkins’ dissertation, *From the Mosque to the Municipality: The Ethics of Muslim Space in a Midwestern City* (posted in CANVAS)

6. **October 10.** Religious Ecosystems: A Case Study

- Alisa Perkins, *Muslim American City*, Chapter 6 and Conclusion, or
- Alisa Perkins, *From the Mosque to Municipality*, PhD dissertation, Chapters 5 and 6, and Conclusion (posted in CANVAS)
- Timur Yuskaev and Harvey Stark, “The American ‘*Ulama* and the Public Sphere,” Roberto Tottoli, ed, *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*.

7. **October 17.** Disparities of Size

*No reflections are due on this day. Instead, submit your **5–6-page midterm paper** that includes some engagement with the material assigned this week.

- Thumma, “The Shape of Things to Come”
- Thumma “Exploring the Dynamics and Challenges of Congregational Size”

8. **October 24.** Generational Challenges

- Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition*, Chapter 2, pp.33-87
- Gallup, “Millennials, Marriage and Family”
- Twenge, et al. “Youth, Religion & Generational Shifts,”
- Nieuwohof, “5 Things Netflix Is Showing Church Leaders About the Future”

9. **October 31.** Race, Religion and Multidirectional Memory: How to Listen

- Michael Rothberg, “Introduction: Theorizing Multidirectional Memory in a Transnational Age,” in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-32

(Note: No need to read Rothberg’s Introduction very closely. Focus on what is key: How might one listen to divergent remembrances? Goldschmidt’s article is an example of how to do it.)

- Henry Goldschmidt, “The Voices of Jacob on the Streets of Brooklyn: Black and Jewish Israelites in and around Crown Heights,” *American Ethnologist*, 33 (2006): 378-396

Listen to:

- Faheem Shuaibe, “Different Strokes for Different Folks: The Universal and the Particular in Qur’anic Translation and Interpretation.”
http://www.newafricaradio.com/speakers/shuaibe/index_shuaibe.html

(Note that the listening assignment might change.)

10. **November 7.** Spiritual or None but Not Religious

- Jones, et al EXODUS Why Americans are Leaving Religion— and Why They’re Unlikely to Come Back.

Select excerpts from (TBD):

- Elizabeth Drescher *Choosing our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America’s Nones.*
- Linda Mercadante, (2014). *Belief without borders: Inside the minds of the spiritual but not religious.*
- Clydesdale & Garces-Foley *The Twenty-something Soul: Understanding the Religious and Secular Lives of American Young Adults.*

11. **November 14.** A Generational Case Study

- Muna Ali, *Young Muslim America*

November 20 – 22. Reading Days, No Classes

12. **November 28.** A Diverse, Pluralistic, and Unsettled Religious Reality

- Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, Chapter 7 & 8 p.188-258
- Ebaugh & Chafetz, *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Religious Networks*, pp. 165-191
- Back to Normal? The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming Out of the Pandemic EPIC report.

13. **December 5.** Beyond Religion as a Category of Analysis

- Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship.” *Junctures*, 9 (2007)
- One more reading might be assigned, such as an excerpt from Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions.*

14. **December 12.** Concluding Discussion and Next Steps

- Prepare and present proposals for the final papers/projects.

Final papers or project are due on December 22, 2023