

**STMA 512 History of the North American Church
Fall 2008
1:30 - 4:20pm, Thursday
Rev. Dr. Joanne Carlson Brown**

206-763-2141 - home
206-932-7777 - church
206-604-9995 - cell
206-932-7778 - fax
nomatterwhat3@earthlink.net
pastor@tibettsumchurch.org

This course is an introduction to the major religious themes in North American history. Through the study of selected topics and periods, we shall explore the ways in which religion has shaped North American culture as well as the ways in which social change has influenced the religious expressions of North Americans.

Requirements

1. Do reading for the day assigned and **active** participation in class discussions.
2. 1-2 page reflection papers due at the end of each class in which you raise something from the readings that excited, angered, or puzzled you. These papers will be the spark for class discussion.
3. 4-6 page essay on one of the following books:
Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin
Charles Sheldon, In His Steps
James Baldwin, Go Tell It On the Mountain.
Topics for essays at the end of the syllabus. Due any time on or before December 4.

Books

The following books have been ordered through the bookstore:
Mark Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada
Edwin Gaustad (ed), A Documentary History of Religion in America, Vol. I & II
Rosemary Ruether & Rosemary Keller (ed), In Our Own Voices.

Class Assignments

September 25

Noll, ch. 1
Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 3-5, 24-42, 72-76
Ruether & Keller, pp. 19-21, 34-36

October 2

Noll, ch. 2-3
Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 43-46, 49-72, 77-112, 149-159
Ruether & Keller, pp. 64-67, 80-85

October 9

Noll, ch. 4-6
Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 160-176, 183-251, 266-271, 352-357
Ruether & Keller, pp. 86-89, 155-156, 169-170, 265-267

October 16

Noll, ch. 7 & 9
Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 252-266, 271-273, 280-288, 304-331, 371-427, 501-514
Ruether & Keller, pp. 36-41, 89-92, 222-231, 249-265, 267-273, 323-325

October 23

Noll, ch. 8 & 13
Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 273-280, 331-351, 357-370, 437-470
Gaustad, Vol II, 6-23, 47-58
Ruether & Keller, pp.36-41, 170-174, 343-362, 363-377

October 30

Noll, ch. 12

Gaustad, Vol. I pp. 471-500, 517-596

Gaustad, Vol. II pp. 6-23, 47-58

Ruether & Keller, pp. 94-96, 175-176, 333-336

November 6

Noll, ch. 10-11

Gaustad, Vol. II pp. 67-71, 87-188, 278-284,

Ruether & Keller, pp. 42-47, 92-101, 175-178, 209-221, 249-261,
276-286, 311-316

November 13

Noll, ch 14-15

Gaustad, Vol. II, pp. 284-298, 322-406

Ruether & Keller, pp. 209-221, 231-240, 274-276

November 20

Noll, ch. 16-18

Gaustad, Vol. II pp. 446-452, 463-473, 484-489, 494-508,

535-552, 563-568, 608-623, 628-631, 679- 708

Ruether & Keller, pp. 45-47, 49-60, 101-108, 181 - 190, 284-290, 325-330, 385-423, 447-451

November 27

Thanksgiving - No Class!!!!!! Happy Turkey Day

(but remember - you are what you eat!)

December 4

Noll, ch. 19-20

Gaustad, Vol. II pp. 286-288, 419-436, 490-494, 509-535,

559-563, 631-678, 709-719, 723-740

Ruether & Keller, pp. 47-49, 179-181, 190 -205, 240-245, 330-333, 427-431, 436-447, 463-467

Essay Topics

Uncle Tom's Cabin

In this essay you are asked to approach a work of fiction with the consciousness of an historian. In Uncle Tom's Cabin (as in most novels), a skilled artist shapes the ideas and symbols of her own culture to create a moral world. What emerges is Stowe's interpretation of reality, not a description of reality. Various characters might be said to stand for various moral positions and possibilities; the landscape on which the novel is set is painted in moral as well as descriptive tones; and both the story and the descriptions are deeply informed by the author's assumptions about human nature and the meaning of life in the world. Working with the consciousness of an historian means, in part, being aware that Stowe's world view probably differs significantly from your own. The essay may refer to your own views, but be sure to distinguish them from Stowe's.

Keeping that in mind, you can choose one of the following topics:

1) Is religion an oppressive or a liberating force in the novel? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and discussions.

2) In what ways are Stowe's understandings of race and gender similar or dissimilar? Upon what religious and moral assumptions does she base her views of race and gender? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and discussions.

In His Steps

Again, I want you to approach a novel with the consciousness of an historian. Sheldon is using each of his characters to make a point in this polemical type novel.

Pick one character who accepts Rev. Maxwell's challenge. Discuss their decision and how it affects their lives. Evaluate whether Sheldon's portrayal of that character is unrealistic or true to what could have happened. Do you think the book/author is naive? Is this a possible solution for today?

Go Tell It On The Mountain

The central event of the novel is the religious conversion of an adolescent boy who is overwhelmed by poverty and racism. Does Baldwin think that the black Pentecostal church, its theology and practice, is a solution to these problems? What role does religion/the black church play in the novel? Draw evidence from both the novel itself and our readings and class discussions.

Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand, vodka gimlet in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and screaming Woo Hoo what a ride!