

**The Nones:
Spirituality and Belief beyond Religion
Hybrid -- Fall 2015
CT/SR733
Dr. Linda Mercadante**

Course Rationale and Goals

The huge, documented rise in “nones,” those without religious affiliation marks a profound challenge and change for American religion. Rather than traditional, formerly operational categories, today popular culture is a determining factor in the “meaning making” of most everyone in society. Although this is a fluid, fluctuating landscape, it is not all superficial content. Because humans are ‘meaning-seeking’ beings, culture implicitly raises theological questions.

In order to communicate into and with this context – which, in reality, is *our* context -- church leaders and members need to learn tools of translating from theology to culture and culture to theology. We will first better understand this context, using the resources of the social sciences, and then re-examine Christian belief and behavior in this light. As we discern theological issues implicit in our culture, we will focus especially on persons who self-identify as “spiritual but not religious.”

Requirements

1. Read the syllabus! Respect the MTSO policies! Obey copy right law!

Come to class with any questions once you have “digested” the whole syllabus. If you have a question about the progression of the course, *consult the syllabus first*, then feel free to ask for clarification or more information. At the end of the syllabus are listed the policies that pertain to everyone at MTSO. Read them!

Please Note: *All PowerPoints are copyrighted. They may not be downloaded, re-used, or shared in other settings. Please respect intellectual property rights.*

2. Prepare for each class.

The reading assignments, PowerPoints, and on-line sessions are all meant to prepare you for the upcoming class. The class itself will focus on clarification of the material, intensive reflection on the content, and interaction. The on-line portion counts as part

of the in-class requirement. For class, there is a face-to-face portion (90 minutes) and an on-line portion (you should devote at least 60 minutes to this). Reading and writing assignments are the “homework” portion of the class. These should take you at least twice the amount of time you spend in the on-line and in-person class time.

3. Attendance and In-Class Contributions [15%]

This is an interactive seminar class and, as such, depends much on the participation and engagement of the members. In a seminar setting, absences are keenly felt and will detract from your grade. This includes both the online and in-person sections. Make every effort to attend and contribute so you do not let the group down. Besides attending, students are expected to keep up with the reading, make informed oral contributions in class, and participate fully in all projects and sharing of resources. For the on-line portion, you are expected to make your contributions as specified and also read your classmates’ reflections and follow a representative number of their links.

This portion of your grade Includes:

- a) Completion of readings by day of class
- b) Class discussion that reflects the readings and your own interaction with them
- c) If you are not present, you will not get credit for that day. More than 20% missed classes could result in a failing grade for the course.

4. On-Line Sessions [15%]

Your participation in on-line sessions, including submission of your comments by the deadline, will be evaluated. Timely submissions with good content that reflects the topic of the day will earn you full credit for that day.

Discussion have “closing” dates. If you do not submit your work by the deadline, you will not receive credit for that day.

No informal extensions can be given.

If you must take a *course* extension for the entire course due to medical or other critical reasons, apply with the Registrar.

Note: Although the professor will review your comments for the on-line sessions, she will not grade them unless specified as assignments. These are your chance to freely express your views. Consider them working drafts. Your having done and submitted them on time will give you full credit for that day of on-line work. The opportunity to read other students’ work and sometimes comment on them will help you broaden your own

perspective and engage with views different from your own. Please take advantage of this valuable opportunity.

Each on-line session may include:

- a) **PowerPoints**. Always check under “Lesson” and date to see if a PowerPoint is posted. If so, carefully go through it. [Visual only] What do you think the professor would say to further explain these slides? Work to understand the meaning presented, filling in content from what the reading and class discussions have taught you. Frame at least five questions based on this slide presentation. Post your questions in the appropriate place on our course website.
- b) **On-line foraging**. At times, you will be asked to search the internet for examples of themes we are discussing in class. **See instructions at end of syllabus.**
- c) **Posting**. At times, you will be asked to post your thoughts and findings online for the other students to consider.
- d) **Viewing** links or film
- e) **Reporting** on your work.

5. Extra Credit – Optional -- Due 11/30 [5% extra]

Toward the end of the course, there is an extra credit assignment available for anyone who wants to improve their grade.

6. Broadening Our Knowledge: Book Report Due 9/21 [15%]

Choose one book to read and write a 3-4 pg. report. This will be graded. Post on our course website for the other students and post a copy for the professor. Students are expected to reach each other’s book reports. This will count towards an on-line session. Students should be prepared for class discussion on their book on this day.

No informal extensions. Late papers will receive a half grade reduction for every day late.

Therefore, an “F” will be reached in just a few days.

If you must take a *course* extension for the entire course due to medical or other critical reasons, apply with the Registrar.

Format: a) Overview of book content, and strengths and weaknesses of the book (half to one page), c) theological challenges this material presents to the church and to you (one page), d) how will you make theological, practical, and ministerial use of

this information? (half to one page); d) examples from your own cultural research that illustrate what you've learned from this book (half to one page). Submit this report to the assignment section of our course site. Come to class prepared to discuss your book with others.

Book Options:

1. Leigh Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, [HarperSan Francisco, 2005]
2. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010]
3. James K.A. Smith. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2014] ISBN 978-0-8028-6761-2
4. Andrea R. Jain. *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2015] ISBN 978-0-19-939023
5. Nancy Tatom Ammerman. *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014] ISBN 978-0-19-991736-5
6. Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World--and Why Their Differences Matter*, [San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010] ISBN 978-0-06-157127-5
7. Joseph Bottum. *An Anxious Age: The Post-Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of America* [New York: Image, Penguin Random House, 2014] ISBN 978-0-385-51881-9

7. Broadening our Experience: Site Report -- Due 10/19 [15%]

No informal extensions. Late papers will receive a half grade reduction for every day late.

Therefore, an "F" will be reached in just a few days.

If you must take a *course* extension for the entire course due to medical or other critical reasons, apply with the Registrar.

Visit a site or event that would attract "Spiritual but not Religious" people. This can be a bookstore, lecture, seminar, meditation class, energy healing session, Reiki, or any other such possibility. Write about your experience paying particular attention to the beliefs, cultural "myths," behavior, dominant themes, and anything else you consider important. ***The goal is to do a theological analysis.*** Write a 3-5 page report on this. This will be graded. Submit it on our course website in the

appropriate place. If time permits, you may be asked to report on your findings in class. ***See below for detailed instructions on how to prepare this report.***

8. Final Paper

Proposal -- Due 11/16 [5%]

Final Paper -- Due 12/10 [35%]

Options:

a) Write a research paper (10-15 pgs.) making a socio-theological analysis of an aspect of culture with a clear focus on belief. This will be graded. A starting suggestion is to look through our course topics, this time focusing on the “For Further Research” readings. You can dig more deeply into one or more of the topics we’ve covered, or work on your own research interest. This must be a credible research paper, not simply personal reflections on your favorite aspects of popular culture. Submit a short proposal (2-3 pgs.) on the date specified in the syllabus (11/17), including a bibliography of works you expect to consult [minimum of five works outside our assigned class readings]. The paper should be done in the Chicago Manual of Style format (or Kate Turabian) and should be foot- or end-noted, with bibliography at the end. Format counts as part of your grade.

OR

b) Conduct your own qualitative research, locating two interviewees in two different age cohorts. Consult with instructor on the format and questions to be used. Survey the material in *Belief without Borders* for ideas and sample responses. This choice must have the prior approval of the instructor. Submit a proposal with full details to the instructor by 11/17.

No informal extensions. Late papers will receive a half grade reduction for every day late.

Therefore, an “F” will be reached in just a few days.

If you must take a *course* extension for the entire course due to medical or other critical reasons, apply with the Registrar.

Progress of the Course

Part One: Preliminary Issues and Methods

8/25 I A. Introduction: Recognizing the changing conversation.

- Introductions
- Syllabus
- What is culture?
- What is our context?
- What are your perspectives, influences, experiences with culture?
- Questions and issues raised by the social sciences
- Introducing quantitative research
- Introducing qualitative research
- Place and relationship of theology
- What does “Spiritual but not Religious” mean?
- How do you introduce the “SBNR” topic to a church?

9/1 I B. Preliminary Issues:

- Review of the changing context for American religion.
- How do theology and culture relate? Theories and methods.
- Why care about belief?
- How has religion changed in the United States since the 1950s?

Assignment:

Cobb: Introduction (pp. 1-25) and Chap. 3 (pp. 72-100)

Mercadante: Chaps. 1 and 2

For Further Research (optional):

Brown: Chaps 1 and 5

Mercadante: Preface

On-Line Session: Preliminary Issues

View and understand the PowerPoint. Fill in information from what we have studied so far. What comments do you think the professor would make about these slides? Frame at least five questions, post in the discussion section online, and come to class with them.

9/8 I C. Quantitative and Qualitative Research and Lived Religion

Assignment:

- a) Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* [Oxford 2008], chaps 1- 2 (pp. 3-44)

- b) Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* [Oxford 2007], chap. 1 (pp.16-35) [On library reserve and electronically].
- c) Mercadante, chap. 3

On-Line Session: Quantitative Research

Study closely at least one recent credible sociological survey on the changing American religious landscape. These can be found online. Write a 1-2 page report on your findings, including sociological and theological analysis, and your projections for American religion and the church. Post this for the other students.

For instance, the American Religious Identification Survey [ARIS 2008], Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, Trinity College; the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S., 2009 and 2014*; their *Religion Among the Millennials*, Feb. 2010; or Knights of Columbus, Marist Poll, *American Millennials: Generations Apart*, Feb. 2010. Also of interest on the more popular level: *Newsweek*, "Spirituality in America," Aug. 29-Sept.5, 2005; *Parade*, "Has America Become More Spiritual?" Oct. 4, 2009. The Gallup organization and the Pew Forum websites contain extensive survey materials, findings, reports, and results. Choose two or more surveys to study.

Part Two: Characteristics of the Religious and Spiritual Landscape in America

9/15 II A. Diversity

Assignment:

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* [Princeton 2005], *Intro., chaps 1, 3*

For Further Research:

- a) Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* [Princeton 2005], chap 5
- b) Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World--and Why Their Differences Matter*, [San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010]

// B. Decline in Affiliation

Assignment:

Michael Hout and Claude S. Fisher, "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference," *American Sociological Review*, 67:165-190, April 2002. [Electronic reading].

For Further Research:

- a) Joseph O. Baker and Buster G. Smith, "The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated," *Social Forces* 87(3), March 2009, pp.1251-1263. [electronic reading and perma-link below]
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=39553736&site=ehost-live>
- b) C. Kirk Hadaway, Penny Long Marler and Mark Chaves, "What the Polls Don't Show: A Closer Look at U.S. Church Attendance," *American Sociological Review*, 1993, Vol. 58 (Dec: 741-752).
- c) Frank Newport, "In U.S., Increasing Number Have No Religious Identity," May 21, 2010, Princeton, NJ, Gallup.com.
- d) Kevin D. Dougherty, Byron R. Johnson, Edward C. Polson, "Recovering the Lost: Remeasuring U.S. Religious Affiliation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46(4):483-99
- e) Mark Chaves and Phillip S. Gorski, "Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2001, 27:261-81.
- f) David Voas, Daniel V.A. Olson, and Alasdair Crockett, "Religious Pluralism and Participation: Why Previous Research is Wrong," *American Sociological Review*, 2002, Vol. 67 (April: 212-230)
- g) Darren Sherkat, "Tracking the Restructuring of American Religion: Religious Affiliation and Patterns of Religious Mobility, 1973-1998," *Social Forces* 79(4):1459-93
- h) Philip Schwadel, "Period and Cohort Effects on Religious Nonaffiliation and Religious Disaffiliation: A Research Note," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (2010) 49(2): 311-319.

On-Line Session: Qualitative Research

- a) View and understand the PowerPoint. Fill in information from what we have studied so far. Make a few comments on these slides (a paragraph to a page max). What was the professor trying to convey? Post your comments in the discussion section online, come to class with them. .
- b) Read the posted interview(s) from Dr. Mercadante's research and take some notes on your observations, particularly theological. Post a brief theological analysis (1-2 pages) for your classmates to read. Post in the discussion section online. Read your classmates reports.

For Further Research:

Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* [Oxford 2007], chaps. 2, 13
 Michele Dillon and Paul Wink, *In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice, and Change* [Univ. of California, 2007] ISBN 978-0-520-24901-1
 Courtney Bender, *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination* [Chicago 2010]

9/22 Book Report Due by end of 9/21

Submit this report to the professor in the appropriate place in the assignments section of our course website. No extensions given. Every day late will cause a half grade reduction until an "F" is reached.

// C. Meaning-Making and Marketing

Assignment:

Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, chap.4 (pp.106-129)

For Further Research:

R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* [Oxford 1994]

// D. Health and Healing

Assignment:

McGuire, chap.6 (pp.119-158)

For Further Research:

Dillon and Wink, chap. 9

On-Line Session: Book Reviews

Post your book review on the discussion section for students to read. Read each book review posted by the other students and write a one paragraph response to each one. Try to be constructive, helpful, and honest. Share what you think are the strong points of the report as well as areas that could be improved. Gather up all your comments and post in the discussion section so other students can see your comments. [Don't forget to post your own book review for the professor in the assignments section of our course website.]

9/29 II E. Believing Without Belonging?

Assignment:

- a) Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys of Religion*, [Baylor 2008], chaps. 16-17
- b) Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but not the Church: Insights from the Emerging Generations*, [Zondervan 2007], chaps.5,6,9
- c) Mercadante, chap. 4

For Further Research:

- a) Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging (Making Contemporary Britain)* [Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994]
- b) Michael Hout & Claude S. Fischer, "Unchurched Believers: Fewer Americans Have a Religion But Religious Beliefs Haven't Changed Much" American Sociological Association, San Francisco, Aug. 8, 2009.
- c) The Pew Forum, "Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths," Dec. 2009.
- d) Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but not the Church: Insights from the Emerging Generations*, [Zondervan 2007], chaps.7,8,10

II F. Hybridity

Assignment:

- a) Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, chap. 7 (pp.188-229)
- b) Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, chap 8 (pp.185-213)

On-Line Session: Believing without Belonging? Hybridity

- a) View and understand the PowerPoint. Fill in information from what we have studied so far. Frame at least five questions and post online.
- b) After having read our assignments for the last few classes, what is your assessment of the challenge to American religion from the growing diversity and decline in affiliation? Do you observe and agree that the non-religious are mostly "unchurched believers," that they are "believing without belonging" or have people's beliefs changed as well? What about hybridity? How common do you think it is? In what populations? What do you think will be the outcome on American religion of changing beliefs and hybridity? Write 1- 2 pages on this. Post in the discussion section online for the other students. Read your classmates' reflections.

For Further Research

Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, chap.10

10/6 // G. Historical and Generational Differences

Assignment:

- a) Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*, [Harper Collins, 1994], chap. 8 (pp.213-238) [On library reserve and electronically].
- b) Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby-Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* [Princeton 2007], chap.5 (pp.89-111) [On library reserve and electronically].
- c) Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* [Oxford, 2009], chap. 4 (pp.103-142) [On library reserve and electronically].
- d) Christian Smith with Melinda Landquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* [Oxford, 2005], chaps.4 (pp.118-171) [On library reserve and electronically].

For Further Research:

- a) Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby-Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* [Princeton 2007], chaps.2,6
- b) Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in American since the 1950s*
- c) Wade Clark Roof, *Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* [Princeton, 1999], chaps. 1, 2, 4, 6
- d) Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* [Oxford, 2009], chaps.2,3
- e) Christian Smith with Melinda Landquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* [Oxford, 2005], chap.5
- f) Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* [Oxford 2011]

On-Line Session: Beliefs and Practices

What are the beliefs and spiritual practices of people you know and/or have observed from the generations we've read about? What do you observe in popular culture, such as internet, music, YouTube, etc.? How have your own beliefs been influenced by our culture? Write 1-2 pages. If possible, include some links for students to view. Post this for your classmates in the discussion section. Read the other students' reflections.

10/13 Mid-Term Recess – Reading Week

Part Three: Theology and Popular Culture

10/20 Site Visit Report Due by end of day 10/19

Submit this 3-5 page report in the appropriate section in our course site. Instructions below. No extensions. Every day late will result in a half-grade reduction until failure is reached. ***See instructions at the end of the syllabus.***

III A. Pervasive and Diffused

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chaps 1-2
- b) Forbes, Intro

III B. The “Spiritual but not Religious” Phenomenon

Assignment:

- a) Fuller *Spiritual But Not Religious*, Introduction (pp. 1-12, and chap 5 (pp.123-151).
- b) Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, Chap. 6 (pp.112-135) [available electronically]

On-Line Session: Religion and Popular Culture

Find one example for at least two of these topics: f a) religion *in* popular culture, b) popular culture *in* religion, and c) popular culture *as* religion. [For help, skim chapters in Forbes’ book.] Forage for examples from our culture, including music, videos, television, film, sports, comics, public events, internet sites, advertising, publications, etc. Then answer this: In what ways do you see the SBNR movement impacting or effecting the church? In what ways has it already made its way *into* the church and changed it? Can you think of beliefs, behaviors, and/or practices that you witness, or are aware of in yourself and/or people you know, that demonstrate either acceptance of or resistance to the SBNR impulses? Write 1-2 pages of your reflections and include some links you have discovered. Post this in the discussion section for other students to ponder. Read the other students’ reflections.

For Further Research

- a) Fuller *Spiritual But Not Religious*, Introduction and chaps.1-3, 6
- b) Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, Chap. 10

- c) Wouter J. Hanegraaf, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* [New York: SUNY, 1998]
- d) Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1996] ISBN978-0-631-19331-6
- e) Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, "The Spiritual and the Religious: Is the Territory Changing?" Faith and Life Series, Westminster Cathedral, April 17, 2008.
- f) Peggy Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway, "'Being Religious' or 'Being Spiritual' in America: A Zero-sum Proposition?", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:2 (2002) 289-300,
- g) Malcolm Hamilton, "Eating Ethically: 'Spiritual' and 'Quasi-Religious' Aspects of Vegetarianism," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2000, pp. 65-83.

Part Four: Theological Tools and Doctrinal Themes in Culture

10/27 IV A. Can We Discern Theological Themes?

Assignment:

Lynch, chaps. 2 (pp.20-42)

IV B. Tools for Discerning

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap 4 (pp.101-132)
- b) Vanhoozer, chap.1 [On library reserve and electronic reading].
- c) Lynch, chaps 5 (pp.93-110); 9 (pp.184-194)

On-Line Session: Popular Myths and Beliefs

- a) What are the "myths" in our popular culture? What do they say about popular "theology" or beliefs? Write 1-2 pages and post for students. If possible, include internet links that illustrate your points. Read your classmates' reflections.
- b) Forage for examples from culture that illustrate points in the Lynch readings. These can be from music, videos, television, film, sports, comics, public events, internet sites, advertising, publications, etc. Post some of your findings in the discussion section on our course site so other students can understand what you've found. View the other students' files.

11/3 Themes

IV C. 1. God

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap. 5 (pp. 135-76)
- b) Stark, chaps.9 (pp.75-78), 14 (pp.115-123)

c) Mercadante, chap. 5

On-Line Session: God as seen in culture

Do some intensive internet, magazine, television, radio and other media foraging about how God is seen in our culture. Reflect on this (1 page) theologically and include a few of the best examples you find about how God is seen and promoted in the internet. Post this in the discussion section for students to ponder. Read your classmates' postings.

For Further Research:

- a) Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, *America's Four Gods: What We Say about God--and What That Says about Us* , [New York: Oxford University Press, 2010]
- b) George Barna, *Futurecast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World* [Tyndale 2011]

11/10 IV C. 2. Human Nature

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap. 6 (pp. 177-210)
- b) Stark, chap.13 (pp.101-112)
- c) Mercadante, chap. 6

On-Line Session: Human nature as seen in culture

Do some intensive internet, magazine, television, radio and other media foraging on the topic of human nature as seen in our culture. Reflect on this theologically and include a few of the best examples so students can ponder them (1 page). Post this in the discussion section for your classmates. See what your classmates' have posted.

11/17 IV C. 3. Sin and Evil

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap. 7 (pp.211-228)
- b) Stark, chap.10 (pp.79-85)

IV C. 4. Community and Salvation

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap. 8 (pp.229-261)
- b) Mercadante, chap. 7

Online Session: Sin, evil, community, salvation in culture

Do some intensive internet, magazine, television, radio and other media foraging on these themes. Post a least one example of each topic: sin, evil, community and salvation, explaining how they are seen and promoted. Write up some of your reflections about these examples (2 pages). Post this in the discussion section for your classmates'. Read your classmates' reflections and see their links.

Research Paper Proposal

Describe your ideas for your final project in a one-page report with bibliography. Post for students to ponder and also turn this in on the course site for the professor. If time, you may be asked to report on your project in class.

11/24 Break

12/1 IV C. 5. Life-after-death

Assignment:

- a) Cobb: chap. 9 (pp.262-290)
- b) Stark, chap. 8 (pp.69-74)
- c) Mercadante, chap. 8

On-Line Session: Afterlife in culture

Do some intensive internet, magazine, television, radio and other media foraging on this theme. Reflect on what you find (1 page) and include some of the best examples of how life-after-death is seen and promoted. Post this for your classmates in the discussion section. Review other students' contributions.

Extra Credit: Choose one article or one or more chapter(s)

Write a one-page summary of your reading choice from the articles below. Then answer this: As you ponder everything we've learned this term, and read your article, do you think we are witnessing secularization? Or has liberal Protestantism actually pervaded the culture? Or do you have another theory? Post this for the other students. If time, we may ask you to share your reflections in class.

Theories: Secularization or the Triumph of Liberal Protestantism?

For Further Research:

- a) Leigh Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, [HarperSan Francisco, 2005], Intro., chaps.1,6, Epilogue

- b) Phillip E. Hammond, "The Extravasation of the Sacred and the Crisis in Liberal Protestantism" in R. Michaelson and W.C. Roof, eds., *Liberal Protestantism*, [Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1986].
- c) S. Gorski "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern..."

For the state of the argument and clarifications of various versions of the secularization thesis, see:

- a) Phillip... "... Europe, CA. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review*, 2000, Vol. 65, (Feb: 138-167).
- b) Phillip E. Hammond, *The Dynamics of Religious Organizations: The Extravasation of the Sacred and Other Essays*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000].
- c) Mark C. Taylor, *After God* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007]

12/8 Putting it all together: Kumare...and Your Work

On-Line Session: Kumare

View the documentary *Kumare* [available on Netflix and other places]. Write 1-2 pages about the needs, hopes, and beliefs shown in this film. Do you see any generational differences? What cultural "motifs" are most prevalent here? What cultural "myths"? Post in the discussion section on our course website so other students can read your reflections. Read other students' remarks. Come to class prepared to discuss the film and the reflections.

If time, we may also ask you to describe your research project.

Papers Due 12/10

Texts

Kelton Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*, [Blackwell, 2005] ISBN 978-1-4051-0698-6

Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* [Oxford 2008] ISBN 978-0-19-536833-8

Linda Mercadante, *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious* [Oxford 2014] ISBN 978-0-19-993100-2

Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys of Religion*, [Baylor 2008] ISBN 978-1-60258-178-4

Robert Wuthnow *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* [Princeton 2005] ISBN 978-0-691-13411-6

Supplemental

Nancy Tatom Ammerman. *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014] ISBN 978-0-19-991736-5

Nancy Tatom Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* [Oxford 2007] ISBN 978-0-195305418

Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, eds., *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, [U. of CA, 2000] ISBN0-520-22028-5

Robert Fuller *Spiritual, But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* [Oxford, 2001] ISBN 0-19-514680-8

Andrea R. Jain. *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2015] ISBN 978-0-19-939023

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Instructional Aids

For Your Site Visit and Media Foraging: Reading a Cultural Text *[with the help of Vanhoozer]*

1. Understanding a cultural "text," presentation, or event :
 - a. What are the vision and aims of this "text"? What faith is being expressed?
 - b. What means are being used to achieve those aims?
 - c. Does this "text" speak primarily to reason, the imagination, the emotions?
 - d. What are its "rhetorical form" and its "propositional content"? Its "root metaphor"?
 - e. What does the "text" want us to believe?
 - f. What kind of "world" is being created in and through the "text"?
 - g. What kind of effects could this "text" produce?
 - h. What kind of person would be produced?
2. Analyzing the "text":
 - a. What interpretative methods help make sense of this "text": historical, psychological, social, educational, economic, musical, moral, political, etc.?
 - b. What can you infer about the "text's" producer(s), the text as cultural product, and the consumers of this text?
 - c. What "powers" is the "text" serving?
3. General theological analysis:
 - a. In what ways does it imprison human imagination and existence?
 - b. In ways, does it liberate?
 - c. What does the text say about being human?
 - d. What is its view of human flourishing?
 - e. What is seen as blocking that and why?
4. Christian theological analysis:
 - a. Analyze this cultural text in light of the doctrines of

- i. Incarnation
- ii. General revelation
- iii. Common grace
- iv. Imago Dei (Vanhoozer, pp.42-44)

5. Response and Action:

- a. What response or action could you make in order to be an 'agent of redemptive change' in light of this cultural "text"?
- b. Could you "adapt" or "poach" aspects from this and use it for religious/Christian/your purposes?
- c. Can you (do you want to) subvert the uses and intentions of this cultural "text"?
- d. How could you take counter-hegemonic measures in response?

Site Visit Report Assignment

Prepare a 3-5 page report, following the guidelines and pattern on the sheet "Reading a Cultural Text." Suggestions are given below. For further elaboration, please consult the "Reading..." sheet and texts.

1. **Understanding the Site** [½ to 1 page]

- a. Briefly describe the site. Give all details [address, website, principal leaders, etc.]
- b. What kind of "world" is being created?
- c. What is being appealed to? Imagination, reason, emotion? Explain.
- d. What does this site want us to believe?
- e. What would the ideal person, formed by this site, be like?

2. **Methods and General Analysis of Site** [½ page]

- a. What methods work best to analyze this site? [see "Reading..." sheet]
- b. What can you infer about the site creator(s) or leader(s) and the participants?
- c. What "powers" are being served?

3. **General Theological Analysis of Site** [1 to 1 ½ pages]

- a. In what ways does this liberate (open) and/or imprison (constrain) one's imagination and actual life?
- b. What does this site imply about being human?
- c. According to the site (its standards, its implication), what is 'human flourishing'?
- d. According to the site, what blocks humans from flourishing?

4. **Christian Theological Analysis** [1 to 1 ½ pages]

(Adapt to major beliefs of own religion, if other)

Analyze this site in light of the doctrines of:

- i. Incarnation
- ii. General revelation
- iii. Common grace

iv. Imago Dei

5. **Response and Action** [$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 page]

- a. How might you be a 'redemptive change agent' in light of this site?
 - b. How might you adapt aspects from this site and use it for religious or Christian purposes?
 - c. How do your beliefs and actions run counter to and/or coordinate with this site?
 - d. If this site is part of a 'hegemonic drift,' how could you be counter-cultural in its wake?
-

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean’s Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted

without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school's policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school's writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

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