

English 9121B
The American Secular

Instructor: Bryce Traister

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Course-Meeting: W 9:30-12:30 Alumni Hall 101

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm, and by appointment (if you are making an appointment to see me, please contact amcfarl2@uwo.ca, and indicate you are a student in this class).

Course Description

The course will consider an origins story of America's peculiarly religious secularism, tracing the conflict--often a collaborative one--from the earliest times of New England settlement through the colonial period and into the 19th century. We will consider religious writing and literary fiction, as well as contemporary and recent critique of secularism.

House Rules

This is a graduate class. Prepared attendance is expected; you will note the marks for each are separate. You will not receive participation marks for attending class faithfully and sitting quietly in the class letting your peers do the work of the seminar. While I reserve the right to evaluate the quality and kind of your contribution, it is difficult to do so without any record to evaluate. Each day's reading will be the basis of that day's seminar; please note you are expected to prepare the indicated reading for our first class on January 7.

Accommodation Requests

Requests for substantial accommodation on medical grounds must go through the Chair of Graduate Studies, who will then advise me. If you are too sick to come to a class, I appreciate knowing in advance, and, as a word to the wise, I advise not showing up at the Grad Club later in the day.

Term Work

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	
3 short (2pp) papers	TBA	15%
Participation	Constant	20%
Attendance	Always	10%
Presentation	TBA	20%
Term Paper	April 30	35%

Short Papers

This is a close reading exercise designed to allow students to engage with that day's primary material. Select a passage; read it closely; extrapolate to what you consider to be a significant aspect of the text, or that day's readings taken together. Your paper is **due by noon on the Tuesday prior to the class meeting.**

Presentation

This is a 20 minute (maximum) presentation to the class on a topic of your choice, so long as the topic is clearly related to one of the texts we are reading that day in class. Given the size of the class, there will be quite a few meetings in which we will hear two presentations, so it is important that you and the other presenter for that day

coordinate so as not to present on the same topic. I am of course happy to assist with that.

Term Paper

This is a 10 page paper – a conference paper, if you will. If you are quite fired up about something and wish to write a longer paper, you must consult with me beforehand.

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf
Academic Handbook, Exam, Course Outlines Page 4.

Book and Reading List

Warner, Michael, Ed. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Harvard UP)
Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland: or, the Transformation* (Penguin)
Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*
Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
A coursepack available on the course OWL website
A clutch of essays in Leanne’s office (“LT”)

Reading Schedule

Date	Reading		Presentations
January 7	Rowlandson, <i>Sovereignty and Goodness of God</i> (OWL); Taylor, “Western Secularity” (LT); Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”		
January 14	Edwards, “Divine and Supernatural Light” (OWL); “On Spiders” (OWL); “A Faithful Narrative” (OWL); Jonathan Isreal, “Which Enlightenment” (OWL)		1 Presenter
January 21	Creveceour, “What is an American?”; (OWL (OWL); Foucault; “What is Enlightenment?” (OWL); Cowdell, from <i>Rene Girard and Secular Modernity</i> (OWL); Brown, <i>Wieland</i> ;		2 Presenters
January 28	Brown, <i>Wieland</i> (cont) from Weber, from <i>The Protestant Ethic</i> (OWL) Durkheim, from <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> (OWL)		1 Presenter
Feb 4	Emerson, “Nature” (OWL);		2 Presenters

	“Divinity School Address” (OWL); Asad, from <i>Formations of the Secular</i> ; Bellah, Robert. “Confronting Modernity” (VS)		
Feb 11	Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” (OWL), “The Poetic Principle (OWL); “Ligeia” (OWL); Milbank, “A Closer Walk...” (VS) ; Bilgrami, Akeel. “What is Enchantment” (VS)		2 Presenters
Feb 18	Reading Week		
Feb 25	Melville, <i>Moby-Dick</i> ; Brown, Wendy. “The Sacred, the Secular and the Profane” (VS);		2 Presenters
March 4	Melville, <i>Moby-Dick</i> ; Cazanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms” (LT); Juergensmeyer, “Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence” (VS)		1 Presenter
March 11	Hawthorne, <i>Scarlet Letter</i> ; Butler, Jon. “Disquieted History” (VS); Sheehan, Jonathan. “What Was Disenchantment?” (VS)		2 Presenters
March 18	Hawthorne, <i>Scarlet Letter</i> ; Gole, Nilifur, “The Civilizational, Spatial...” (VS)		2 Presenters
March 25	Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> ; Connolly, “Belief, Spirituality, and Time” (VS); Mahmood, Saba. “Can Secularism Be Other-Wise” (VS)		2 Presenters
April 1	Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> ; Calhoun, “Secularism, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere” (LT)		1 Presenter
April 8			