Religion 267. Religion & the Media

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Office hours: Thursday 2-4 and by appointment

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Religion in the West has been inextricably involved with communications media for two millennia. This course will begin with an overview of the evolution of religion and media in Western culture, and then turn to how the American news media has gone about the business of turning religion into news. We will conclude with a brief look at religion in other forms of contemporary media, with particular attention to new media. The course requirements are: a midterm examination (30 percent); 5 blog posts (30 percent); and a term paper (40 percent). The term paper will be a 10-page analysis of news coverage of a recent religion story or story with a significant religious angle. Attendance is expected and will be recorded: An unexcused absence will result in the loss of 2 percentage points in your final grade up to a total of 10 points. Other than the book assigned and available at the bookstore, readings will be posted on Moodle. The blog posts will appear on your personal Moodle blog, to which only you and the instructor will have access. You will submit the term paper electronically by email. No laptops in class except by special permission.

***Assigned text***

Mark Silk, *Unsecular Media*

***Classes***

1. Sept. 6. Introduction

2. Sept. 8. Before Printing I

Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10.

Hillgarth, The Conversion of Western Europe, 350-750, pp. 51-63, 131-40.

**Sept. 8. 9/11 Common Hour Panel Discussion; 4:30 Talk at Cinestudio**

3. Sept. 13. Before Printing II

Thompson, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy*,

chapters 1, 4.

4. Sept. 15. Printing and the Protestant Reformation

Eisenstein, “The Advent of Printing and the Protestant Revolt: A New

Approach to the Disruption of Western Christendom.”

5. Sept. 20. The Media Awake in America

Buddenbaum and Mason, *Readings on Religion as News*, 1-41.

6. Sept. 22. Disestablishment and the Beginning of American Mass Media

Buddenbaum and Mason, 43-88.

7. Sept. 27. The Penny Press and Beyond

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapters 1-2.

Marvin Olasky, “Democracy and the Secularization of the American Press.”

Buddenbaum and Mason, pp. 89-100.

J.R. McDowell, “Defending the Corruption Story.”

**September 29: No Class**

8. Oct. 4. Catholics and Mormons

### Buddenbaum and Mason, pp. 101-35, 251-64.

Steven M. Avella, “Dolan Does Gotham,” *RIN*

Jan Shipps, “Polygamy Returns,” *Religion in the News* (*RIN*)

Mark Silk, “Romney’s Assimilationist Act”

9. Oct. 6. Religion and Bias in News Coverage

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 3.

Christian Smith, “Journalistically Ignorant Reporters,” *Books and Culture*

Mark Silk, “Journalistically Ignorant,” *RIN*

Gal Beckerman, “Why Journalists Don’t Get Religion,” *Columbia Journalism*

*Review*

**Oct. 11: Trinity Day (no class)**

**Oct. 13: Midterm**

10. Oct. 18. Topoi in the News

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 4.

11. Oct. 20. Good Works

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 5.

Dennis R. Hoover, “Charitable Choice and the New Religious Center,” “The Perils

of Polling,” “Faith Based Administration.” *RIN*

David Stricoff, “After Katrina, ”*RIN*

Colin M. Adams, “Winning Hearts and Minds in Kashmir,” *RIN*

Andrew Walsh, “Men in Green,” *RIN*

Shannon Smith, “Snatching Babies for Jesus,” *RIN*

**Blog post: Good Works (A)**

12. Oct. 25. Church and State

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 6.

Buddenbaum and Mason, 211-24, 365-80.

Anne C. Loveland, “The God Squadron,” *RIN*

Reid Vineis, “Onward Christian Soldiers,” *RIN*

Marc Stern, “Sharia Isn’t OK,” *RIN*

**Blog post: Tolerance (B)**

13. Oct. 27. Presidential Politics

R. Stephen Warner, “Civil Religious Revival,” *RIN*

Dwight N. Hopkins, “The Wright Neighborhood,” *RIN*

Ryan Lizza, “Leap of Faith”

Bill Keller, “Asking Candidates Tougher Questions about Faith”

Forrest Wilder, “Rick Perry’s Army of God”

**Blog post: Tolerance (A)**

14. Nov. 1. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 7.

Rebecca Fowler, “The Televangelical Scandal that Wasn’t,” *RIN*

Walsh, “The Scandal of Secrecy,” “Bishops Up Against the Wall,”

“Losing Patience with the Vatican,” *RIN*

Butler, “The Fall of Eddie Long”

**Blog post: Hypocrisy (B)**

15. Nov. 3. Cults and their leaders

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 8.

Buddenbaum and Mason, 411-25.

Benjamin Dorman, “Aum Alone,” *RIN*

Andrew Walsh, “Cult Fighting in Massachusetts,” *RIN*

Christine McCarthy McMorris, “Scientology’s Terrible…Year,” *RIN*

Eugene V. Gallagher, “Texas v. Mormon Fundamentalists”

**Blog post: False Prophecy (A)**

16. Nov. 8. Jews, Muslims and Other Others

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 9.

Buddenbaum and Mason, pp. 381-410.

Jerome Chanes, “The Madoff Disgrace,” *RIN*

Christian Jacobson, “Islam in Virginia,” *RIN*

Silk, “Islam is Everywhere,” *RIN*

Adam Rothstein, “Jihad for Journalists.”

John Cosgriff, “There’s a Muslim in the House,” *RIN*

Andrew Walsh, “Political Islamophobia,” *RIN*

**Blog post: Inclusion (B)**

17. Nov. 10. The Supernatural

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 10.

S. Elizabeth Bird, “Writers, Text, and Audience: Tabloids as Folklore.”

Christine McCarthy McMorris, “Amazing Graceland,” *RIN*

Benjamin Dorman, “Tokyo’s Dr. Phil,” *RIN*

Christopher Goffard, “Harold Camping is at the Heart of a Mediapocalypse”

**Blog post: Supernatural Belief (A)**

18. Nov. 15. Decline

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 11.

Buddenbaum and Mason, 265-80, 411-25, 458-63, 475-96.

Walsh, “Returning to Normalcy,” *RIN*

**Blog post: Declension (B)**

19. Nov. 17. Commentary as Coverage: Religion News Blogging

Silk, *Unsecular Media*, chapter 12.

Silk, “Blogging the Religion Beat,” *RIN*

Silk, “Apologia Pro Bloga Sua,” *RIN*

**Blog post: Comment plus comment**

20. Nov. 22. Telling Religion’s Own Story

Charles Chaput, “World Youth Day and Religious Freedom”

**Blog post: Comment plus comment**

**Nov. 24: Thanksgiving (no class)**

21. Nov. 29. The Medium and the Message

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* chapters, 1, 2, 30.

22. Dec. 1. Beyond the Printed Word: Movies, Radio, and TV

Alison and Gediman, *This I Believe* (selections)

23. Dec. 6. A Look at Cinematic Religion

24. Dec. 8. Televising Religion in Prime Time

**Term Paper Due**