# RELIGIOUS STUDIES 332/ HISTORY 389

# Mormonism

**Fall 2014, T/Th 12:00 - 1:15, Robinson B224**

**Prof. John Turner**

**Office: Robinson** B444**, Phone: (703) 993-5604, Email:** [**jturne17@gmu.edu**](mailto:jturne17@gmu.edu)

**Office Hours: M/W, 12:15 - 1:15 or by appointment**

“*I see no faults in the church. Let me be resurrected with the Saints, whether to heaven or hell or any other good place—good society, what do we care if the society is good? [I] Don’t care what a character is if he’s my friend. A friend, a true friend, and I will be a friend to him. Friendship is the grand fundamental principle of Mormonism, to revolution[ize and] civilize the world, [to] pour forth love*.*"* -- Joseph Smith, Jr, 1843

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The first part of the course introduces students to the religious culture of antebellum America, the prophet Joseph Smith, the new scriptures Smith introduced (the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, and his many revelations), innovations in rituals and theology (baptism for the dead, the endowment ceremony, and sealing in marriage), Mormon conflicts with other Americans and the U.S. government, and plural marriage. During the second half of the course, students will examine later developments within a variety of branches of Mormonism, including conflicts over polygamy and theocracy, the church's preservation of its own history, and the recent intersection of Mormonism and politics.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**: By the end of this course, students should have an understanding of the prophetic career of Joseph Smith, Latter-day Saint Scriptures and their meaning for contemporary Mormons, distinctive Latter-day Saint rituals, and the basic outlines of Mormon history. Through comparative readings of different accounts of key events in Mormonism's early history, students should refine their ability to read texts critically and assess historical evidence. Finally, students should demonstrate an ability to conduct their own research into the history of Mormonism using available primary sources.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

Though I’m responsible for the mix that resulted, I thank Professors Kathleen Flake, Tona Hangen, and Laurie Maffley-Kipp for giving me their insights and loaning me their words in the design of this course.

**Class Procedures:**

The format of this class will be a combination of lecture and discussion, with an emphasis on the latter. Students should come to class having read the assigned material and should be prepared to discuss those readings in class. Materials on Blackboard should be printed and brought to class. Grades are based upon short assignments, a research paper, reading quizzes and class participation.

**Required Reading:**

Spencer Fluhman, "*A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014 paperback).

Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004 paperback).

Joanna Brooks, *The Book of Mormon Girl: A Memoir of American Faith* (Free Press, 2012 paperback).

Other reading as noted on the daily schedule of classes. You must have these readings with you to discuss in class.

In addition, [MormonWiki](http://www.mormonwiki.com/Main_Page) and [The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*](http://www.lib.byu.edu/digital/Macmillan/) contain hundreds of articles written by Mormon and non-Mormon scholars on every issue that you might want to know about. If you have questions as you go along or if you want more suggestions for reading on any given topic, these sites can help. The official church sources for information about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are available at three sites. The information is often redundant but designed for three audiences: [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org/?lang=eng) for [members](https://www.lds.org/?lang=eng), [Mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org/people) for non-members, and [Newsroom](http://www.mormonnewsroom.org) for media outlets.

**Grade Evaluation:**

Twelve-page research paper: 40% (guidelines attached)

Short writing assignments (ten): 5% each

Reading quizzes and class participation: 15%

The above adds up to a shade more than 100%.

**Plagiarism Warning:** All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code.  You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu.  All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. There will be no tolerance for plagiarism in the assignments for this course. Plagiarism consists of presenting the writing, research or analysis of others as one’s own. It applies not only to the lifting of the verbatim text of another author’s work without quotation marks and accurate citation, but also to the taking of specific information, analysis or opinions—even if not in the exact words of the author him/herself—and presenting them without citation in one’s own paper. This applies both to material in printed format and to material found on internet sites. Any instance of outright plagiarism, as described above, will result in the student receiving a grade of “F” on this paper; and the student will not be given the opportunity to rewrite the paper. Consistently insufficient citations (e.g., citations that do not give accurate page numbers) will significantly lower the student’s grade on the paper, even if they do not rise to the level of outright plagiarism.

**Attendance and Participation**: Students are expected to attend all class sessions. For most students, whether or not they attend class is the single best indicator of their performance in the course.

15% of your grade will derive from discussions and from occasional quizzes at the start of class. You are expected to maintain active and engaged participation in the discussion, and to faithfully attend. Regular, informed, and substantive contributions will raise your attendance grade; lack of participation, using electronic devices to distract yourself and others, or absences will lower it. It is difficult to participate well in absentia, after all.

You should come to class every day with one question and one comment about the reading. What struck you as interesting? What confused you? Offering one of each every day will gain you an A for participation. Perfect attendance without opening your mouth (and a reasonable performance on any in-class reading quizzes) will earn you a D for participation. Poor attendance and no participation (and poor performance on any in-class reading quizzes) will earn you 0/15 for participation.

**Classroom Etiquette:** The use of cell phones for texting, browsing, twittering, e-mail or voice mode is not permitted in class, they must be switched off and hidden. Please buy hard copies of the books. You may use your laptop to access other assigned readings (typically available as .pdf's) when we are discussing those readings. Otherwise, no laptops, netbooks, tablets, e-book readers without express permission from the instructor. Students must activate their GMU e-mail accounts: students are responsible for making sure that they receive e-mail communications sent by the instructor. Finally, come on time!

**Disability Services**:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the professor and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

**Important Semester Enrollment and Withdrawal Dates:**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.

Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

Last Day to Add: 9/2/2014

Last Day to Drop: 9/2/2014 (no penalty); 9/26/2014 (two-thirds penalty)

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean

and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

**Policy on late papers:** Papers received after their due date will be docked one half-grade for every day they are late.

**Policy on late short assignments**: No late short assignments. Due at the start of class.

A few words of advice from a historian of American religion (Tona Hangen):

1) All religions are true to their believers. All religious rituals, acts, beliefs, and doctrines make sense in context. If something doesn’t make sense to you, then you need more context. Don’t think “how could they believe that?” but instead seek understanding: “Why was this believable to them?”

2) No religious concept should be dismissed as weird, crazy or abnormal. There is no “normal.” You can certainly have your own opinions and personal beliefs about religion, but those are not central to our classroom discussion.

3) As much as is possible, approach your scholarship as a scholar, rather than as a believer or a skeptic. While religious doctrines will be discussed, it is never with the intent to prove a religion right or wrong. Please do not use our class as a platform for either proselytizing your faith to convert others, or debunking the faith of others to weaken their commitment. Our class is made up of a variety of faiths and degrees of religious involvement which we should all respect.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**Course Schedule:**

Read all assignments for the date on which they are listed. Unless a hyperlink is provided, readings other than assigned textbooks are provided via Blackboard.

Aug. 26 -- Introduction

Aug. 28 -- Joseph Smith's "First Vision"

Read: Richard Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction*, chapter one

Smith, "First Vision" (two versions)

**Write: What are the main differences between the 1832 and 1838/39 versions of Smith's "First Vision?" What might explain those differences? [2 pages, double-spaced] Prior to the start of class, submit electronically via Blackboard as "Short Assignment #1."**

Sept. 2 -- The Book of Mormon

Read: Paul Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography*, chapter two

Then, choose one of the following two sets of readings:

*If this is your first exposure to the Book of Mormon*, read [the following Selections](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm?lang=eng):  
1 Nephi 1-4 – the beginning   
2 Nephi 2, 29 (as in, chapter two and chapter twenty-five) – the fall; a prophecy about latter-day Bible readers and anticipating multiple texts  
3 Nephi 1, 11-12; 15-17 – the resurrected Christ’s appearance in the New World  
4 Nephi 1 – the effects of Christ’s appearance   
Ether (pay particular attention to the role of Jesus Christ in this book)  
Moroni 10 – the end

*If you are familiar with the Book of Mormon*, read excerpts from the Community of Christ’s version of the Doctrine and Covenants (on Blackboard) and go to the Church’s website for the most recent and very important [Section 163](http://www.cofchrist.org/D&C163/section163.asp).

For discussion: Does the BOM read like scripture (and what does that mean?) Could an uneducated farm boy have written/dictated the BOM? What is your explanation of the BOM's origins?

Sept. 4 -- Early Mormon History: An Overview

Sept. 9 -- Revelation and Theology  
Read: [Book of Moses 1](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/moses?lang=eng)   
 [Book of Abraham, chapters 3-5](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr?lang=eng)   
 King Follett Discourse [.pdf -- skim through the introductory materials and then carefully read the sermon itself]  
LDS Church, “[Becoming Like God](https://www.lds.org/topics/becoming-like-god?lang=eng)”  
Watch:  
Matt Slick, Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, “[Are you studying with the Mormons or thinking of joining the Mormon church](http://carm.org/thinking-of-joining-mormonism) (5 min.)  
[We Lived with God](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR8qIrJcJh4)” (4:00)  
[We Can Find Happiness](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epNjOrfmdlA) (6:18)

Sept. 11 -- Polygamy

Read: [Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132](https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132?lang=eng)

George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 1-16, 38-51

Richard L. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, excerpts

Sept. 16 -- Joseph Smith, conclusions

Read: Philip Barlow, “To Mend a Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith's Project”

Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Tracking the Sincere Believer"

Alex Beam, "A Prophet Without Honor"

Lawrence Foster, "The Psychology of Religious Genius"

**Write: A one-sentence summary of the main *argument* for each chapter (including the introduction. Thus, four sentences, one summarizing each reading. Then a one-page response. Submit electronically as "Short Assignment #2."**

Also, by Sept. 16, email me your choice of documents for the Sept. 18 presentation.

Sept. 18 -- Student Presentations on Document from Joseph Smith Papers website

Prepare:

1. Locate a document of interest at josephsmithpapers.org.

2. Prepare a five-minute presentation introducing that document to the class. Focus on: context, content, unanswered questions. What is interesting about this document? Also, pay attention to the way that the website (and, thus, the Joseph Smith Papers project editors) introduce and frame the document.

**Your presentation will be graded as one of the short assignments for this course.**

Sept. 23 -- *Peculiar People*  
Read: Fluhman, introduction and chapters 1-2  
**Write: A one-sentence summary of the main *argument* for each chapter (including the introduction. Thus, three sentences, one summarizing each chapter. Then a one-page response. Submit electronically as "Short Assignment #4."**

Sept. 25 -- *Peculiar People*  
Read: Fluhman, chapters 3-5  
**Write: A one-sentence summary of the main *argument* for each chapter (including the introduction. Thus, three sentences, one summarizing each chapter. Then a one-page response. Submit electronically as "Short Assignment #5."**

Sept. 30 -- Concluding discussion on *Peculiar People*

Oct. 2 -- Exodus and Settlement  
Read: Bringhurst & Hamer, *Scattering the Saints*, introduction

October 4-5 is General Conference. Watch one of the four sessions. **Write a two-page response. Submit electronically as Short Assignment #6 by class time on Oct. 7.**

Oct. 7 -- Mountain Meadows Massacre (part 1)  
Reading: Turner, *Brigham Young*, chapter ten

Oct. 9 -- Mountain Meadows Massacre (part 2)  
Read: Richard Turley, "The Mountain Meadows Massacre"  
 Will Bagley, "The Problem with a Guilty Mass Murderer"  
Write: Do you find Turley or Bagley's account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre more persuasive? Why? **Write a 1.5-page response. Submit electronically as Short Assignment #7.**

Oct. 14 -- no class

**Research topics/questions due to me by email by October 15.**

Oct. 16 -- Race and Mormonism  
Read: [Primary sources in class]

Oct. 21 -- The LDS Church and the U.S. Government  
Read: Flake, introduction and chapters 1-2

**Write: A one-sentence summary of the main *argument* for each chapter (including the introduction. Thus, three sentences, one summarizing each chapter. Then a one-page response. Submit as "Short Assignment #8."**

Oct. 23 -- The Abandonment of Polygamy and Theocracy  
Read: Flake, chapters 3-4

Oct. 28 -- Transition and the Emergence of Fundamentalism  
Read: Flake, chapters 5-6 and epilogue  
**Write: A one-sentence summary of the main *argument* for each chapter (including the epilogue). Thus, three sentences, one summarizing each chapter. Then a one-page response. Submit electronically as "Short Assignment #9."**

Oct. 30 -- Class Visit from Missionaries

**Research paper bibliographies due by email by October 31.**

Nov. 2 -- Attend local LDS Fast and Testimony Meeting, details to follow  
Write: **A two-page response of any sort to the services. Submit electronically as "Short Assignment #10" by 12:00 p.m. on Nov. 4.**

Nov. 4 -- No class

Nov. 6 -- Mormonism and Gender   
Read: Proclamation on the Family [.pdf]

Neil J. Young, "'The ERA Is a Moral issue': The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 623-644.

"[Missions Signal a Growing Role for Mormon Women](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/us/a-growing-role-for-mormon-women.html?_r=0)," *New York Times*, 1 March 2014.

Nov. 11 -- Joanna Brooks (part 1)  
Read: Brooks, *Book of Mormon Girl*, first half

Nov. 13 -- Joanna Brooks (part 2)  
Read: Brooks, *Book of Mormon Girl*, second half

Nov. 15 -- Visit to LDS Visitors Center in Kensington, Md.  
Watch “[Why Mormons Build Temples](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-x_-TQivCx8)"

Nov. 18 -- Temple Ordinances

Nov. 20 -- International Mormonism  
Watch in class: *Johnny Lingo* (1969)

Dec. 2 -- Visit from Community of Christ [formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints]

**Research papers due by the start of class on Dec. 4. Submit electronically.**

**Research Paper**

Your primary assignment this semester is to write a 12-page research paper on an aspect of Mormonism. The exact topic is at your discretion (in consultation with your instructor). You must utilize a combination of primary and secondary sources for this essay.

Choosing the topic (really, the question) is your most important task. It is crucial to choose a research question that will hold your interest throughout the semester and one that you can reasonably study within a short period of time.

If you are unsure, think about the topics on the syllabus this semester. Perhaps one generates a research question. If you are uncertain, you might watch *The Mormons*, a 2005 PBS documentary. You might read a brief overview of Mormonism, such as the short books by Richard Bushman and Matthew Bowman.

One you have your question, begin exploring both secondary and primary sources immediately. I might recommend a book or two. I am also happy to help you discover and sort through primary sources.

# Expectations and Recommendations

1. **12 pages, double-spaced, normal-sized font (Times New Roman 12-point font typically passes for "normal-sized") with normal margins**.

2. **Paper will be graded for both content and writing** (grammar, spelling, style). Quality of writing and content are necessarily closely related, as difficulties with grammar, etc. detract from your argument. Likewise, clear sentences and good choices of words strengthen your argument.

3. **Make an argument**. At or near the beginning of your paper, include a thesis statement that clearly structures your essay

4. **Cut to the chase**. Again, since you have a limited amount of space, do not follow tangents.

5. **Citations**. Use footnotes and a consistent method of citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.).

6. **Originality.** Your essay must be your own original work, composed without assistance from others (in the class or not) or undocumented sources. You are welcome to discuss the assignment with others in the class; however, when it comes to writing the essay, it is not a group assignment. Please see the university plagiarism policy for more details. See also my handout on plagiarism.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment of Grades for Papers Your essay will be closely scrutinized (and receive a grade from 0 to 25) in the following five areas:  **Thesis Statement** **and Argument** -- Does the essay have a clear argument and thesis statement?  **Evidence** -- Is the argument / thesis supported by evidence from the assigned readings?  **Writing** -- Is the essay free of spelling and grammar mistakes? Is it clearly and eloquently written? Does the essay use the required system of citation appropriately?  **Organization** -- Does the essay progress clearly and logically? Does the organization of paragraphs and sentences effectively advance the essay's argument / thesis?  I will then add those four grades to compute the overall grade for the essay. I also reserve the prerogative to award bonus points for intellectual creativity and engagement (i.e., does the essay make a particularly compelling or thoughtful argument, etc.?) |  |

You are not required to submit a draft of this essay; however, I would be pleased to discuss with you your thoughts / concerns about the essay or any drafts that you submit.

Research Paper Resources

Secondary Sources (mostly)

<http://sites.lib.byu.edu/mormonhistory/> (this is an extremely helpful database, esp. for finding secondary sources)

*BYU Studies*. [https://byustudies.byu.edu/](https://byustudies.byu.edu/%20) (articles on Mormon history, theology, and culture, mostly written by faithful members of the Church)

*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (articles on Mormon history, theology, and culture) <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/>

*Journal of Mormon History* <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mormonhistory/>

*Utah Historical Quarterly* <http://history.utah.gov/historical_society/historical_quarterly/index.html>

*Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [http://lib.byu.edu/digital/Macmillan/](http://lib.byu.edu/digital/Macmillan/%20) [This is a great place to begin if you need a quick source of information on things Mormon]

Primary Sources

LDS Scriptures are available at [http://lds.org/scriptures/](http://lds.org/scriptures/%20) [Especially in the case of Joseph Smith's revelations, you should consult the original sources when possible]

A variety of early Mormon periodicals and other publications are available at:

http://lib.byu.edu/digital/mpntc/

In particular, one might consult *The Evening and the Morning Star*, *Messenger and Advocate*, *Times & Seasons*. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* is a wonderful source of information about Nauvoo-era Mormonism, but it is not yet available electronically.

For 19th-Century Utah Mormonism, there are several important newspapers available at Utah Digital Newspapers (http://digitalnewspapers.org/), including the church-owned *Deseret News*, and the non-Mormon *Valley Tan*, Corinne *Reporter*, and *Salt Lake Tribune*. 19th-Century newspapers often make for very good reading.

The *Joseph Smith Papers* website has published and made available online a large number of documents written by, signed by, or about Joseph Smith. <http://josephsmithpapers.org/thepapers>

Utah State University Press has made available online its series of diaries and other documents written by 19th-century women: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_lifewritings/>

For primary sources on Mormon pioneers, see <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/> and  
<http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/>

Historical Topics

Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

First Vision (a variety of narratives)

Mormons in Missouri

Kirtland Temple

Kirtland Bank

Anti-Mormonism in Illinois

Early conversions to Mormonism

Mormonism in England

Pioneer Trek

Handcart emigration

Political conflicts in Utah (there would be a host of subtopics)

Mormon Reformation 1856-1857

Mountain Meadows Massacre

Utah War

Policy of various presidents toward the Latter-day Saints

Priesthood Ban

Latter-day Saints and Indians / Lamanites

Plural marriage

1890 Manifesto

Development of fundamentalist churches

Mormons and the Equal Rights Amendment

Mormons and California's Proposition 8

Latter-day Saint missionary expansion

Ordain Women

Theological / Ritual Topics

Baptism

Endowment (Latter-day Saints regard the content of this ceremony as sacred and secret)

Sacrament (for instance, why water instead of grape juice?)

Apostasy

Exaltation / Theosis

Atonement

Latter-day Saints and Interreligious Dialogue

Stance of evangelicals, Catholics, or mainline Protestant toward LDS Church

Hymns

Living prophets

Significance of Book of Abraham; Book of Mormon; Joseph Smith Translation

Race in Mormon scriptures

Other ideas

Mormon artwork, esp. representations of Jesus

Latter-day Saint Primary (children's) programs and publications