

## **Mormonism: How an American Faith Became a New World Religion**

### **(Religious Studies 190)**

Professor Robert A. Rees

Tu/Th 2:00-3:30 pm

bobrees2@gmail.com

219 Dwinelle

415-888-8125 (h); 415-747-1230 (c)

### **Course Description**

Mormonism is a distinctly American religion that has grown from six members in 1830 to a worldwide membership of 14,000,000, becoming, as one critic predicted, “the first major faith to appear on earth since the Prophet Mohammed rode out of the desert.” Emerging from the “burned-over district” of Western New York during the Second Great Awakening, Mormonism claims to be a restoration of primitive Christianity with modern prophets, continuing revelation, a set of unique doctrines, and its own sacred texts, including the Book of Mormon. This course examines the origins, history, and evolution of Mormonism, including the religious and cultural context out of which it emerged, the foundational visionary experiences of its first prophet (Joseph Smith), and its reflection of the stresses and strains within the dominant American religious culture. Topics include such subjects as the persecution of Mormons, their exodus to the Great Basin Kingdom, polygamy and family life, the Latter-day Saint Plan of Salvation, the “Mormon Moment,” and the future of Mormonism.

### **Course Objectives**

- To examine the cultural and religious context in which Mormonism emerged as a unique American religion;
- To introduce students to the core beliefs and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;
- To consider Mormon doctrine, theology and practice within the Judeo-Christian tradition;
- To discuss the tensions within Mormonism itself and between the Church and American society;
- To assess the future of Mormonism as a world religion.

## Student Responsibilities

Students are expected complete the reading assignments prior to class and be prepared to engage in class discussions. They are also expected to complete the following assignments:

- Autobiographical Sketch: So that we can get to know one another better, each student is to provide a brief (one page) sketch/overview of his/her life to be shared by e-mail with the class by **Sept. 12** (we will exchange e-mail addresses during the first week of class).

### Complete one of the following two assignments:

- A short (3-5 page) critical paper/class presentation. Peruse a sampling of the LDS blogs listed on page 4 and write a paper about your impression of the issues Mormons are discussing in the blogosphere. **Due 3 October**.

- Creative/imaginative project: This can take the form of a poem, play, short story, hymn, visual expression, photographic essay, etc.—some attempt to engage the imagination in understanding and communicating some aspect of Mormon religion or culture. An alternative way to complete this assignment is to do a brief critical paper/ presentation on an existing Mormon work of the imagination (e.g., Mormon hymns/music, a short story or novel, paintings, poetry, graphic novel, etc.). All projects require the approval of the instructor. **Due November 14**.

- Extracurricular activity reports: Come to class prepared to discuss your observations/ impressions of the following:

i. Latter-day Saint service: Attend a three hour block of Sunday meetings at an LDS Church (Locations and meeting times to be provided). To be discussed in class on **November 28**.

ii. LDS General Conference broadcast: Watch at least one of the two-hour LDS General Conference broadcasts (either **October 6** or **7** at either 9:00am or 1:00pm. Broadcast specifics to be announced in class). To be discussed in class on **October 10**.

- An extended (8-10 page) critical/research paper on some aspect of Mormon history, doctrine, or religious practice chosen by the student and approved by the instructor (A list of suggested topics will be distributed at the second class meeting). Students need to have chosen their topic no later than the sixth meeting (**October 3**) and submitted the completed paper by **December 5**. Students will make a 10-15 minute presentation of their thesis, findings and conclusions during the last day of class (**December 14**). Armand Mauss's "The Literature Base for Mormon Studies as a Distinct Academic Sub-discipline" will be e-mailed to enrolled students.

Style: typed, double spaced, 12 point font following the Turabian's style manual, which is based on the Chicago Manual of Style. There is a handy online "quick guide" at: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)

## **Grading**

20% general class participation

15% extracurricular activity reports; religious survey

20% short paper/creative assignment

35% major paper

10% class presentation on the major paper

Grading is based on the Pacific School of Religion formula found at: <http://www.psr.edu/grades>.

Late papers will be docked one-half grade point per day.

## **Course Texts**

The following texts are required:

- Richard Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, ) NB:

To get an overview of Mormonism, students are expected to have read this brief introduction by the third class session **(September 19)**.

- *Matthew Bowman, The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012). Hardcover or kindle (new and used copies available from Amazon).

- A Course Reader (R) is available at Copy Central

- LDS Scriptures (*The Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*) are available on-line or as free downloadable texts at [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org). Free (book of Mormon) or inexpensive print editions are available from LDS.org or from Amazon or other on-line sources. We will also be looking at some biblical passages, but I assume you have a bible (Latter-day Saints use the KJV, but any translation will do.)

Readings marked (S) are selections from LDS scriptures

Readings marked \* are available online; those marked (\*) will be sent to class members or distributed in class.

Note: Students wishing an official overview of LDS “Gospel Principles” can go to <http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,11-1-13-1,00.html>. For an official “Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” see: <http://www.lds.org/gospellibrary/ourheritage/OurHeritage35448000.pdf>.

There are a number of blogs that provide good information, opinion and perspectives on things Mormon, including the following:

- By Common Consent
- Times and Seasons
- Feminist Mormon Housewives
- Bloggernacle Times
- Juvenile Instructor
- Worlds Without End: A Mormon Studies Roundtable

A longer list is available at <http://www.ldsblogs.org/>

## **Class Schedule**

### **8/29 Introduction and Course Overview; Belief, disbelief, & unbelief; the varieties of religious experience**

- William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture 1, “Religion and Neurology”; “Lecture 20, “Conclusions,” <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JamVari.html>
- Stephen Jay Gould’s NOMA (non-overlapping magesteria), [http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould\\_noma.html](http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html)
- Religious vs. spiritual

**In-class:** Assorted videos from YouTube

**Note:** Autobiographical Sketch due via email before the next class meeting

### **9/3 How to Approach the Study of Religion**

- Faith and Reason—“carrying water on both shoulders”
- Countering bias and stereotypes
- “All truth is circumscribed into one great whole”: Truth and the World’s

Religious Traditions

- “Holy envy”
- “Keystones”: seven principles for reading and interpreting sacred texts (from

Margaret & Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology*) (R)

- Givens, “Introduction: The Longing Soul” (*The God Who Weeps*)

In Class: Kathryn Schultz, “On Being Wrong” (TED talk)

## 9/5 Religion in America: Beginnings to 1830; Puritanism and the great awakenings; Emerson and the Break from Puritanism

- Jon Butler, “Religion in England’s First Colonies” (R)
- Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God,” <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.sinners.html>
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown,” <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=HawYoun.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1>
- Emerson, “The Divinity School Address,” <http://www.emersoncentral.com/divaddr.htm>

## 9/10 Joseph Smith and “The Restoration of all things”; “The First Vision”

- Joseph Smith-History (S)
- Bowman, Ch. 1, “Joseph Smith and the First Mormons: to 1831”
- Richard Bushman, “Revelation,” *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 35-61 (R)
- Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 16-44 (R)
- Harold Bloom, *The American Religion*, 91-110 (R)
- Various versions of Joseph Smith’s “First Vision” and the construction of memory (R)

- “Accounts of the First Vision,” <http://www.lds.org/topics/accounts-of-the-first-vision?lang=eng>
- Comparison of First Vision accounts: <http://www.annuitech.com/ms/ftp/Jim/ComparisonChart.pdf>

In-class: PBS Documentary, *The Mormons* 1.1-1.4 “Revelation”

## 9/12 The Book of Mormon: A New World Bible

- Moroni’s and the Gold Plates
- Translation
- The Witnesses to the Book of Mormon
- Robert A. Rees, “Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon and the American Renaissance” [http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V35N03\\_91.pdf](http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V35N03_91.pdf)
- Anthony Hutchinson, “The Word of God is Enough: The Book of Mormon as Nineteenth-Century Fiction”: <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=10105>
- T. Givens, “A Marvelous Work and a Wonder: The Book of Mormon as Sacred Sign” (R)
- Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1-8 (S)

## 9/17 Christ in the New World

- Hardy, Chapter 7, “The Day of the Lord’s Coming” (R)
- Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 11-13
- Prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14-16)
- Christ appears to the Nephites (3 Nephi 8-28)
- Robert A. Rees, “Children of Light: How the Nephites Established Two Centuries of Peace”\*

- Christ in Ohio, D&C 76 1:24

## 9/19 Other Voices, Other Visions: Continuing Revelation and the Unfolding of the Restoration

- Terryl Givens, "Making Scripture: The Mormon Cannon," Ch. 4, *The Latter-day Saint Experience in America* (R)
- 2 Nephi 29:6-14; D&C 4, 136; Abraham 1, Moses 1
- "Categorizing Mormon Doctrine," <http://www.withoutend.org/categorizing-mormon-doctrine/>\*
- Philip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, Ch. 6 (R)
- "Givens & Givens, Chapter 1, "His Heart Is Set Upon Us"

Guest lecturer, Sheila Taylor, Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Graduate Theological Union

## 9/24 Little Zions: Ohio and Missouri

- Bowman, Ch. 2, "Little Zions" (1831-1839)
- Terryl Givens, "Manners, Habits, Customs and Even Dialect: Sources of the 'Mormon Conflict'" (R)
- Consecration
- The Restoration of the Priesthood
- The beginning of temple building

In class: Segment from *Trouble in Zion: A Documentary*



## 9/26 The Persistence of Persecution

- Givens, "These War-like Fanatics": Anti-Mormonism in American History (R)
- Review of Patrick Q. Mason's *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South.*, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/51.2SeferovichMormon-62ca2611-0ad7-4258-a45e-b3ca9efb5b63.pdf>\*
- Spencer Fluhman, "Barbarism: Rhetorics of Alienation" (R)
- Read and view samples of anti-Mormon expressions on the Internet by Googling "anti-Mormon" and "You-tube anti-Mormonism"; come to class prepared to discuss your observations and impressions

## 10/1 The City of Joseph: Nauvoo the Beautiful, the Beginnings of Polygamy, the Martyrdom

- Bowman, Ch. 3, "City of Joseph, 1839-1846"
- Richard Bushman, "Stories of Eternity" & "Confrontations," *Rough Stone Rolling*, 436-446, 526-550 (R)
- John Taylor, "The Martyrdom" (R)
- "Praise to the Man" (Mormon hymn)

## 10/3 Come, Come, Ye Saints: the Mormon Exodus to the West;

- Bowman, Ch. 6, "Come, Come, Ye Saints"
- Josea Stout, "Crossing the Plains," <http://mldb.byu.edu/abp-toc.htm>
- Mary Goble Pay, "Death Strikes the Handcart Company," <http://mldb.byu.edu/abp-toc.htm>
- Clinton Larson, "A Letter to Israel Whiton, 1951," <http://mldb.byu.edu/abp-toc.htm>

- Iris Cory, “Mary Goble Pay”
- William Clayton, “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (Mormon Hymn) PBS Documentary

## 10/8 Polygamy

- Bowman, Chapter 5, “The Rise and Fall of Polygamy”
- Annie Clark Tanner, from *Mormon Mother: An Autobiography* (polygamous wife)
- Modern Fundamentalist Polygamists
- Polygamy and Mormon Feminism

PBS Documentary “Polygamy”

## 10/10 Mormon Cosmology: The LDS Plan of Salvation (Pre-existence, Mortality)

- D & C 93; Abraham 3, Moses 7, Ether 3 (S)
- Douglas Davies, Ch. 8, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (R)
- Margaret Toscano, “Is There A Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology?” <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/issues/133.pdf>\*
- Eugene England, “The Weeping God of Mormonism” <http://www.eugeneengland.org/selected-writings/personal-essays>\*
- D&C 19, 76 (S)
- Givens & Givens, Chapter 2, “Man Was In the Beginning with God”

## 10/15 The Plan of Salvation: The Kingdoms of Glory

- Givens & Givens, Chapter 4, “None of Them Is Lost”
- Joseph Smith, “King Follett Discourse, ”<http://mldb.byu.edu/follett.htm>
- Melvin J. Ballard, “The Three Degrees of Glory,” [http://scottwoodward.org/Talks/html/Ballard,%20Melvin%20J/BallardMJ\\_TheThreeDegreesOfGlory.html](http://scottwoodward.org/Talks/html/Ballard,%20Melvin%20J/BallardMJ_TheThreeDegreesOfGlory.html)

## 10/22 Gods, Angels, Demons, Humans

- Eugene England, “**Perfection and Progression: Two Complementary Ways to Talk about God,**” [http://www.eugeneengland.org/selected-writings/personal-essays\\*](http://www.eugeneengland.org/selected-writings/personal-essays*)
- Givens & Givens, Chapter 3, “We Are that We Might Have Joy”

PBS Documentary

## 10/24 Mormons and Politics

- Arnold K. Garr, “Joseph Smith: Campaign for President of the United States” [http://www.lds.org/ensign/2009/02/joseph-smith-campaign-for-president-of-the-united-states\\*](http://www.lds.org/ensign/2009/02/joseph-smith-campaign-for-president-of-the-united-states*)
- “Joseph Smith’s [political] Views,” By Common Consent, [http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/12/19/joseph-smiths-views/\\*](http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/12/19/joseph-smiths-views/*)
- The Reed Smoot Senate Hearings, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reed\\_Smoot\\*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reed_Smoot*)
- Eugene England, “Why Utah Mormons Should Become Democrats: Reflections On Partisan Politics,” [http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=19103\\*](http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=19103*)
- Avi Steinberg, “What Joseph Smith’s Candidacy Can Teach Mitt Romney,” *Business Week*, [http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/12/19/joseph-smiths-views/\\*](http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/12/19/joseph-smiths-views/*)

## 10/29 Is a Mormon Theology Possible?

- James Faulconer, “Why A Mormon Won’t Drink Coffee but Might Have a Coke: The Atheological Character of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”; [http://jamesfaulconer.byu.edu/papers/coke\\_not\\_coffee.pdf](http://jamesfaulconer.byu.edu/papers/coke_not_coffee.pdf)\*

- Adam S. Miller, “Introduction,” “Benedictus,” “Recompense,” “A Manifesto for Mormon Theology,” “Humanism, Mormonism,” “Shipwrecked” (all from *Rube Goldberg Machines: Essays in Mormon Theology*) (R)

### 10/31 “All Are Alike Unto God”: Racism and Mormonism

- 2 Nephi 26:33 (S)

- Armand Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*, Ch. 9 (R)

- John G. Turner, “Why Race Is Still a Problem for Mormons” [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/opinion/sunday/racism-and-the-mormon-church.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/opinion/sunday/racism-and-the-mormon-church.html?_r=0)

- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Border Crossings”; [http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V27N02\\_13.pdf](http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V27N02_13.pdf) \*

- Robert A. Rees, “Black African Jews, the Mormon Denial of Priesthood to Blacks, and Truth and Reconciliation” <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/134-62-67.pdf>

In class: clips from *Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons*

### 11/5 Mormon Temple Worship

- Read the various sections under <http://www.lds.org/church/temples> (including “Why Latter-day Saints Build Temples,” “What Happens in Temples,” “Inside Temples,” etc.)

- Mormon sacred garments (Robert A. Rees, “Is Nothing Sacred? Thoughts on Mormon Undergarments” [http://www.mercurynews.com/top-stories/ci\\_21445133/robert-rees-is-nothing-sacred-thoughts-mormon-undergarments](http://www.mercurynews.com/top-stories/ci_21445133/robert-rees-is-nothing-sacred-thoughts-mormon-undergarments)

- Hugh Nibley, “What is A Temple?” <http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/selected-articles/what->

[temple](#)

In class: video on Mormon temples

## 11/7 Modern Mormon Feminism

### High Priority:

- Peruse the following websites: <http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/>; <http://ordainwomen.org/>
- Read: <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/56963037-78/women-mormon-church-priesthood.html.csp>
- Listen to the podcast at <http://mormonstories.org/alternative-feminist-approaches-to-ordain-women/>
- Peruse The Mormon Women Project at <http://www.mormonwomen.com/>

### Lower Priority:

- Cecilia Konchar Farr, "Dancing Through the Doctrine," Dialogue 28.3 (1995): 1 – 12. [http://66.147.244.190/~dialogu5/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Dialogue\\_V28N03\\_15.pdf](http://66.147.244.190/~dialogu5/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Dialogue_V28N03_15.pdf);
- Lynn Matthews Anderson, "Towards a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Saint Scripture," Dialogue 27.2 (1994): 185 – 203. [http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V27N02\\_13.pdf](http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V27N02_13.pdf)

- Grethe Ballif Peterson, “Priesthood and Latter-day Saint Women: Eight Contemporary Definitions” (R) Guest Lecturer: Dr. Sheila Taylor, Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Graduate Theological Union

## 11/12 Mormons, Gays and Proposition 8

### High Priority

- Read LDS Church statement on gays and same-sex marriage: <http://www.lds.org/topics/same-gender-attraction?lang=eng>
- Read selections from <http://mormonsandgays.org/>
- Read selected blogs from [www.nomorestrangers.org/](http://www.nomorestrangers.org/) (I blog on this site)
- Robert A. Rees, “Requiem for a Gay Mormon,” <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2000/03/Requiem-For-A-Gay-Mormon.aspx#>
- Robert A. Rees, “‘In a Dark Time the Eye Begins to See’: Personal Reflections on Homosexuality among the Mormons at the Beginning of a New Millennium” [http://www.ldsfamilyfellowship.org/docs/darktime\\_eyesee.pdf](http://www.ldsfamilyfellowship.org/docs/darktime_eyesee.pdf)

### Lower Priority

- Peruse the links at <http://mormonsformarriage.com/?p=75>

In class: Film: “Families are Forever” Documentary Film 11/19

## 11/14 Ecclesiology and Dissent

- Richard Poll, “What the Church Means to People Like Me” <http://www.zionsbest.com/people.html>

html

- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Lusterware” (R)
- Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Freedom of Conscience: A Personal Statement” [http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V26N04\\_214.pdf](http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V26N04_214.pdf)\*
- Robert A. Rees, “A Crisis of Faith or a Crisis of Reason?”\*
- Robert Kirby, “Five Kinds of Mormons,” <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/54003962-80/mormons-church-percent-believe.html.csp>
- Givens and Givens, “Help Thou My Unbelief,” *The God Who Weeps*
- Robert A. Rees, “Why I Stay” (\*)

*In Class: PowerPoint presentation*

### **11/19 Mormonism as a World Religion**

- Bowman, Ch. 8, “Towards a Global Church”
- **Rodney Stark, “The Basis of Mormon Success: A Theoretical Application”;** <http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/latter-day-saint-social-life-social-research-lds-church-and-its-members/2-basis-mormon-succ>\*
- Pew Survey: “Mormons in America – Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society,” <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/01/12/mormons-in-america-executive-summary/#beliefs>

### **11/21 Joseph Smith: Reassessment After Two Centuries**

- The Library of Congress Bicentennial Celebration of Joseph Smith, <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/insights/?vol=25&num=3&id=424>
- Wayne Hudson, “The Prophethood of Joseph Smith,” in *Joseph Smith, Jr.: Reappraisals After Two Centuries* (R)

- Harold Bloom, “The Religion-Making Imagination of Joseph Smith,” in *The American Religion*, 91-110 (R)

- Excerpts from Jane Barnes’ *Falling in Love with Joseph Smith: My Search for the Real Prophet\**

In class: “History vs. Hagiography: The Changing Image of Joseph Smith”

**11/26 Mormonism: The Eternal Perspective**

- Givens & Givens, Chapter 5, “Participants in the Divine Nature”

**11/28 THANKSGIVING**

**12/3 Summing Up: Mormonism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**12/10 *Review for Final Exam***

**12/16 Final Exam**