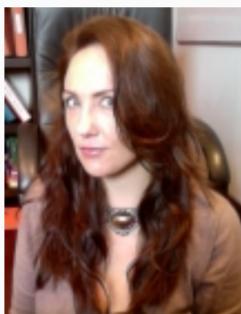


GENERAL INFORMATION

Professor Information

**Instructor:** Erin Weston**Office:** MMC - DM 208B**Office Hours:** By appointment**Website:** <http://erinston.fiu.edu/faculty/full-time/faculty/erin-weston/>**Phone:****Email:** Please use Blackboard messages.

Course Description And Purpose

Since the 1960s, there has been a vast increase in New Religious Movements around the world. We will investigate the beliefs, practices, and symbolism of several New Religious Movements. Additionally, we will look at how these groups formed in order to better understand their relationships with more traditional mainstream religions and society at large. We will also look at how these groups attract followers, and some of the accusations posed against these groups and their leaders. More generally, students will ponder the relationship between human rights, religious freedom, and the role of government.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Express a general understanding of the scholarly categories of: religion, church, sect, cult, denomination, and New Religious Movement.
- Explain key theories about how and why New Religious Movements develop, and how they generate and maintain a following.
- Compare and analyze the New Religious Movements in relation to their more mainstream counterparts by exploring their beliefs, practices, and symbols.
- Articulate one's own beliefs about the role of New Religious Movements in the larger religious world, and how other aspects of society, including governments, ought to respond to these groups.

Global Learning Objective

- **Global Awareness:** Students will be able to situate New Religious Movements within interrelated contemporary and historical contexts.
- **Global Perspective:** Students will be able to develop an analysis of a core religious concept (e.g., the nature of God, reincarnation, karma, justice, etc.) via the perspective of multiple New Religious Movements.
- **Global Engagement:** Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in an ongoing dialogue about current global concerns in order to address problems arising from the interaction between global concerns and local religious beliefs and practices as manifested in New Religious Movements

This is a Global Learning Discipline-Specific course that counts towards your Global Learning graduation requirement.

Disclaimer

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

The ideas and materials presented in this course do not necessarily represent the ideas and beliefs of the professor, nor those of the university at large. The beliefs systems found within these various new religious groups, cults, and sects will range from curious and benign to racist, homophobic, misogynist, incendiary and downright dangerous. One goal of the course is to provide the students with a wide range of examples to explore in order to better understand the true diversity found within the realm of the religious. In addition to the scholarly articles in your textbooks, I have provided a variety of source materials. Some of these materials, e.g., videos and websites, are "official" sources from the groups, while other sources may be produced by members. Conversely, I have also added some materials that were clearly created by the various groups' detractors to allow for additional perspectives. There are also non-academic materials, for which I cannot attest to their veracity, but I felt that they add important elements at least in regards to the popular beliefs about the groups.

It is also important to note that I, nor the university, do not endorse or deny the validity or right to exist of any particular group, no matter how personally offended I may be by their beliefs and practices. While religion can be personal, this is an academic course taken for college credit and thus students are expected to examine the topics rigorously. Religion shall not be exempt from the scrutiny placed on any and all academic subjects.

This means that class participants can expect academic freedom to express their views. Students are not being graded on their opinions, beliefs, or values. I sincerely encourage (and expect!) that students will contribute to discussions honestly. Feel free to free to critique and analyze the various groups' ideas and practices, as well as your text and other materials. Given that this is an academic setting, it is important to do our best to refrain from polemical attacks by avoiding disrespectful or divisive commentary, and articulating our criticism into well-substantiated arguments.

As the student, it is your job to THINK and decide what you believe in regards to these and any other materials. As the professor, it is my job to present you with a wide variety of theoretical constructs and source material and to help you understand these materials as you go through the learning process and expand your vision of reality.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Policies

Please review the [policies page](#) as it contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU and additional information on the standards for acceptable netiquette important for online courses.

Technical Requirements & Skills

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently, and learning to use your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that there is a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the "[What's Required](#)" webpage to find out more information on this subject.

Please visit the [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

Accessibility And Accommodation

Please visit our [ADA Compliance](#) webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

Please visit [Blackboard's Commitment Accessibility](#) webpage for more information.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.
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Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: **Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources, or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism** – The use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

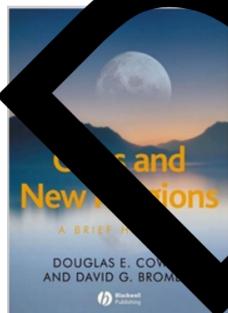
Expectations Of This Course

This is an online course, meaning that most of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as for a traditional course; in fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills that can make them more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **Review the how to get started information** located in the course content
- **Introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
- **Take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with Blackboard
- **Interact** online with instructor/s and peers
- **Review** and follow the course calendar

Textbook



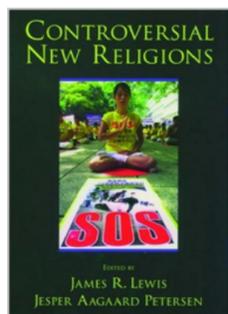
Controversial New Religions: A Brief History

Douglas E. Cowan and David G. Bromley

Blackwell Publishing: MA (2008)

1405161280

978-1405161282



Controversial New Religions

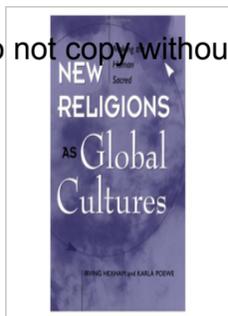
James R. Lewis (Editor) & Jesper Aagaard Petersen (Editor)

Oxford University Press, Oxford: UK (2005)

0195156838

978-0195156836

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.



New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe

Westview Press, Boulder: CO. (1997)

0813325080

978-0813325088

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore](#).

COURSE DETAIL

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **Messages**.

The message feature is a private, internal Blackboard only communication system. Users must log into the blackboard system to send/receive/read messages. There are no notifications in Blackboard to inform users when a new message has been received; therefore, it is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication.

This is the best method to communicate with your instructor privately.

Blog Forums

There will be six blog topics. All students are required to participate in at least five topics (at least 250 words), so you will have one "free" topic that you can skip without a penalty. Students must post well thought-out comments based on the required work throughout the semester. Participation is required and represents 15% of your final grade. Both the quantity and the quality of your posts will contribute to your grade. Discussions must be posted during the period they are assigned and are due by 11:59 pm on the Monday which ends that particular lesson.

Once you have composed your original posting, take some time to carefully review other postings. Pick two that are most interesting to you and provide meaningful, detailed, and constructive feedback.

Keep in mind that forum blog posts are viewed by the whole class, and care should be taken when determining what to post.

Quizzes

There will be ten short online quizzes throughout the semester which will help you to prepare for the exams. Quizzes will be based on the materials found in the PowerPoints, Readings and Videos. Each quiz will cover one section and will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and true/false questions. There will be 10 questions on each quiz and once you open the quiz you will have 15 minutes to complete and submit it. You will have two attempts at each quiz and the highest grade will be used. All of the quizzes will be averaged together for a final grade which is worth 15% of your final grade. A quiz will be available from Thursday 12:00 am till Sunday 11:59 pm of the given week.

Please note that the inclusion of relevant websites is only for student interest and will not be featured in the quizzes.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact [FIU Online Support Services](#).

Exams

There will be two non-cumulative exams based on the readings and materials covered throughout the course. Each exam which will be comprised of 50 multiple choice, true and false, fill in the blank, and short essay questions, and each question will be worth 2 points. Each exam will be worth 20% of your final grade and can only be attempted one time. Once you open an exam, you will have 60 minutes to complete and submit it.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact [FIU Online Support Services](#).

Paper & Presentation

There will be one paper analyzing a New Religious Movement (NRM) with an accompanying presentation. The paper will be at least 1500 words double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 font. This is a formal academic essay and students must cite their sources. MLA is the preferred citation style in Religious Studies.

Submission: Students must submit their essays to Turnitin via Blackboard. Review the detailed [Turnitin Instructions](#) on how to submit your assignments and how to review the Grademark comments (feedback).

Each person will create a presentation for the class, which will either be a PowerPoint or a video presentation. These presentations will be shared with the class through the blog. Students are expected to review their classmates' presentations and the final quiz will be based on the presentations.

Grading

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Weight
Exam 1 (Midterm)	1	20%
Exam 2 (Final Exam)	1	20%
Paper	1	20%
Quizzes	10	15%
Presentation	1	10%
Blog/Student Introduction (Participation)	7	15%
Total	21	100%

Letter	Range	Letter	Range	Letter	Range
A	Above 93	B	83 - 86	C	70 - 76
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 69
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	< 59

Date	Tasks
<p>August 21 - 28</p>	<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>Review and fully familiarize yourself with the course and site. Print and read the course syllabus and course calendar.</p> <p>See "How to Get Started" in the Course Content</p> <p>Obtain the texts and read ahead for Lesson 1</p> <p>Student Introduction Video, due Mon., August 28, 11:59 pm</p>
<p>August 28 - September 5</p>	<p>Lesson 1 - Introduction</p> <p>Lesson 1 (PPT)</p> <p>Readings: Chapter 1 - "The Great Anti-cult Crusade" - (Hexham & Poewe) Chapter 1 – "Cults and New Religions: A Primer" – (Cowan & Bromley) Chapter 5 – "The Unification Church/The Family Federation: The Deprogramming Controversy" – (Cowan & Bromley)</p> <p>Video Playlist</p> <p>Quiz 1 Due: Tuesday, Sept. 11, 11:59 pm (extra day for holiday)</p>
<p>September 4 - 11</p>	<p>Lesson 2 - The Problem of Defining New Religious Movements</p> <p>Lesson 2 (PPT)</p> <p>Readings: Chapter 2 – "From Cults to New Religions and Global Culture" – (Hexham & Poewe) Chapter 2 – "The Church of Scientology: The Question of Religion" – (Cowan & Bromley) "Three Types of New Religious Movements" – (Roy Wallis)</p> <p>Video Playlist</p> <p>Quiz 2 Due: Monday, September 11 September 25, 11:59 pm Discussion #1: Monday, September 11 September 25, 11:59 pm</p>
<p>September 11 - 18</p>	<p>Lesson 3 - New Religious Movements in a Global Context</p> <p>Lesson 3 (PPT)</p> <p>Readings: Chapter 3 – "New Religions as Global Cultures" – (Hexham & Poewe) Chapter 9 – "Wicca and Witchcraft: Confronting Cultural Fears" – (Cowan & Bromley) Chapter 16 – "Come On Up, and I Will Show Thee": Heaven's Gate as a Postmodern Group" – (Chryssides - Lewis & Petersen)</p>

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Chapter 17 – "The Raelian Movement: Concocting Controversy, Seeking Social Legitimacy" – (Palmer - Lewis & Petersen)

Video Playlist

Quiz 3 Due: Monday, ~~September 18~~ **September 25**, 11:59 pm

Lesson 4 - New Religious Movements and Neoshamanism

Lesson 4 (PPT)

Readings:

- Chapter 4 – "New Religions and Primal Experiences" – (Hexham & Poewe)
- Chapter 12 – "The Theosophical Society" – (Santucci – Lewis & Petersen)
- Chapter 14 – "From Atlantis to America: JZ Knight Encounters Ramtha" – (Harley – Lewis & Petersen)
- Chapter 2 – "Spirit Revelation and the Unification Church" – (Beverley – Lewis & Petersen)
- Santo Daime – (Steven Mizrachs)

Video Playlist

Quiz 4 Due: Monday, October 2, 11:59 pm

Lesson 5 - Modern Myth Making

Lesson 5 (PPT)

Readings:

- Chapter 5 – "Myths, Mythology, and Fragments" – (Hexham & Poewe)
- Chapter 3 – "Transcendental Meditation: The Question of Science and Therapy" – (Cowan & Bromley)
- Chapter 7 – "The Branch Davidians: The Problem of Mass Media" – (Cowan & Bromley)
- Chapter 15 – "Heart and Soul: A Qualitative Look at the Ethos of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness" – (Santucci – Lewis & Petersen)
- Chapter 16 – "Inventing L. Ron Hubbard: On the Construction and Maintenance of the Hagiographic Mythology of Scientology's Founder" – (Christensen – Lewis & Petersen)
- Chapter 3 – "Deconstructing Reality: Conspiracy Theories about Jonestown" – (Moore – Lewis & Petersen)

Video Playlists

Quiz 5 Due: Monday, October 16, 11:59 pm (extra day for holiday)

Discussion #2 Due: Monday, October 16, 11:59 pm

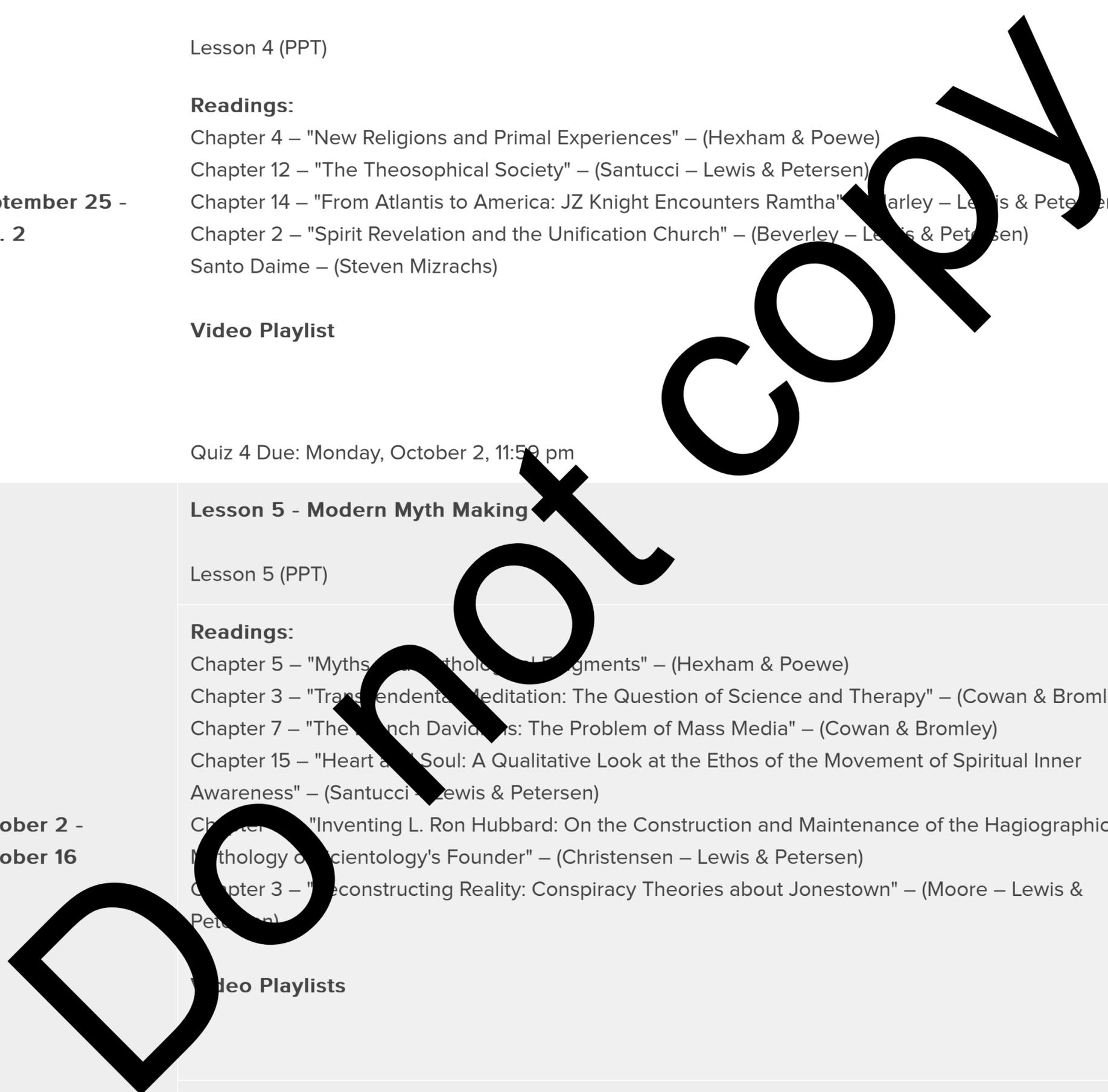
September 25 - Oct. 2

October 2 - October 16

October 16 - 23

Exam 1 (Midterm) Due: Monday, October 23, 11:59 pm

Lesson 6 - Abrahamic and Dharmic Based New Religious Movements



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Lesson 6 (PPT)

Readings:

Chapter 6 – "Yogic and Abramic Religions" – (Hexham & Poewe)

Chapter 6 – "The Children of God/The Family International: The Issue of Sexuality" – (Cowan & Bromley)

Chapter 1 – "A Family for the Twenty-first Century" – (Chancellor – Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 5 – "Family Development and Change in the Hare Krishna Movement" – (Rochford – Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 6 – "When Leaders Dissolve: Considering Controversy and Stagnation in the Osho Rajneesh Movement" – (Goldman - Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 7 – "Sokka Gakkai: Searching for the Mainstream" – (Kisala - Lewis & Petersen)

"The Veil in Their Mind and on our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women" – (Hassan - Hammadfar)

"Christian Science" – (Daschke & Ashcraft)

Video Playlists

Quiz 6 Due: Monday, November 6, 11:59 pm

Discussion #3 Due: Monday, November 6, 11:59 pm

Lesson 7 - Joining New Religious Movements

Lesson 7 (PPT)

Reading:

Chapter 7 – "The Membership Process" (Hexham & Poewe)

Chapter 4 – "Ramtha and the New Age: The Question of the Dangerous Cult" – (Cowan & Bromley)

Chapter 9 – "The Falun Gong: A New Religious Movement in Post-Mao China" – (Ownby - Lewis & Petersen)

"The Rastafarian" – (Daschke & Ashcraft)

"Nation of Islam" – (Daschke & Ashcraft)

Video Playlists

Quiz 7 Due: Monday, November 13, 11:59 pm

Discussion #4 Due: Monday, November 13, 11:59 pm

Lesson 8 - New Religious Movements and Violence

Lesson 8 (PPT)

Reading:

Chapter 9 – "How Dangerous Are New Religions?" – (Hexham & Poewe)

Chapter 8 – "Heaven's Gate: The Question of Cults and Violence" – (Cowan & Bromley)

Chapter 4 – "Explaining Militarization at Waco: The Construction and Convergence of the Warfare Narrative" – (Wright – Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 8 – "Aum Shinrikyo and the Aum Incident: A Critical Introduction" – (Repp – Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 18 – "White Racist Religions in the United States: From Christian Identity to Wolf Age Pagans" – (Gardell – Lewis & Petersen)

Chapter 19 – "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames" – (Petersen – Lewis & Petersen)

**October 23 -
November 6**

**November 6 -
November 13**

November 13 - 27



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Video Playlists

Quiz 8 Due: Monday, November 27, 11:59 pm

Discussion #5 Due: Monday, November 27, 11:59 pm

Paper Due: Monday, November 27, 11:59 pm

Lesson 9 - The Future of New Religious Movements in a Global Culture

Lesson 9 (PPT)

Chapter 8 – "New Religions: New Visions" – (Hexham & Poewe)

Chapter 10 – "Rethinking Cults: The Significance of New Religious Movements" – (Kaufman & Tomley)

"Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model" – (Rodney Stark)

"The Global Rise of Religious Nationalism" – (Mark Juergensmeyer)

Video Playlists

Quiz 9 Due: Monday, December 4, 11:59 pm

Student Presentations

Students will post their presentations on the discussion board on youtube.com by **Wednesday, December 6 at 9:00 pm**. This will give students until Sunday evening to ask questions, post comments, and take the quiz. Remember to utilize the key theoretical ideas that you learned over the semester in your analyses. Additionally, remember that you are critiquing the work of your classmates, so try to focus your comments and critiques on the ideas and not personalize them. :-)

Quiz 10 Due: Monday, December 11, 11:59 pm

Discussion #6: Monday, December 11, 11:59 pm

**November 27 -
December 4**

December 4 - 11

December 11 - 16

Final Exam – Monday, December 11 - Saturday, December 16, 11:59 pm

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