

RELG 027
Christian Nationalism:
 White Supremacy & Antisemitism
Spring 2026
 Professor Kessler

Class Times: Tuesday and Thursday 1:15 - 2:30
 Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 - 3:00 &
 By Appointment
 Email: kessler@swarthmore.edu

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the expanding and variegated landscape of Christian Nationalism in the U.S. and beyond. It situates Christian Nationalism in the U.S. as part of the history of Christianity and American history, rather than an aberration or something new. Along the way we explore constructions of race and gender, and we examine how racism, antisemitism, and patriarchy are foundational elements in and of Christian Nationalism. We also explore the influence of Christian Nationalism on U.S. politics and the challenges it poses to the separation of church and state, and to democracy, as we look to the future.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to:

- introduce the varieties of Christian Nationalism in the contemporary US
- historicize contemporary US Christian Nationalism/Supremacy
- explore the role of Christian Nationalism in Jan. 6 Insurrection and its aftermath
- examine the roles racism and patriarchy play in Evangelicalism and Christian Nationalism
- examine the roles anti-Judaism and antisemitism play in Christianity
- think critically about constructions of race and gender in Christian Nationalisms
- explore the connections between religion (Christianity) and politics in the United States
- develop skills for productive, rigorous, and nuanced conversations about complex, emotional topics

Course Requirements:

- Active participation. Please come to class ready to engage with the readings and contribute to class discussion. (20%)
- For each class bring at least two questions based on the readings that would be appropriate questions for a quiz and/or midterm exam. These questions will also form part of class discussion (20%)
- Quizzes (20%)
- Midterm Exam in class March 5th (20%)
- Final Exam (20%)

Course Policies:

Accommodations:

"If you believe you need accommodations for a disability or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W) via email at studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the Office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the [Student Disability Services website](#). You are also welcome and encouraged to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. I am committed to your success and will do what I can to support your learning process. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services."

Plagiarism:

Academic integrity is expected; all work submitted must be your own and original for this class. Please properly cite *all* sources you've integrated by others. If you have questions please feel free to speak with me and to consult the Student Handbook on Academic Misconduct:

https://www.swarthmore.edu/student-handbook/academic-policies#academic_misconduct

Books:

Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten Story of the Christian Front (2021)

Charles R. Gallagher - available through Tripod

Preparing for War: The Extremist History of White Christian Nationalism and What Comes Next (2023)

Bradley Onishi - available through tripod

The Violent Take It by Force: The Christian Movement That Is Threatening Our Democracy

Matthew D. Taylor

Money Lies and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy (2025)

Katherine Stewart

Furious Minds: The Making of the MAGA New Right (2025)

Laura Field - available through tripod

Additional Readings will be posted to Moodle

Course Schedule

January 20: Intros

BNC: The Role of Religion During the Jan 6 Insurrection (July 28, 2021)

<https://youtu.be/NL4964ikxH0?si=pbDqw9dW3mGSC78b>

MSNBC: Rachel Maddow on the Racism and Antisemitism of Christian Nationalism (July 25, 2022)

https://youtu.be/BU9TDyYJc84?si=cxSxFnZqOq_rPvef

Ava DuVernay on Origin (January 19, 2024)

<https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/ava-duvernay-origin>

Evangelical Book Burning (Tennessee, 2022)

https://www.reddit.com/r/facepalm/comments/sjtllr/evangelical_book_burning_in_tennessee/

Arson suspect setting fire to synagogue in Jackson, Mississippi

<https://youtu.be/WF9Ho-2fJ4s>

BBC: How a New Christian Right is Changing US Politics (Nov 28, 2022)

https://youtu.be/cnG-BI98-_0?si=TNHA1t0RZAjnz1qs

Part 1: “Christian Nationalism” & Its Racist Foundations (ca. 1950s)

- January 22 Evangelicalism and Christian Nationalism
 Bradley Onishi, *Preparing for War*, Prologue & Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-44)
 Prologue
 Ch 1 - Would I Have Been There?
 Ch 2 - Extremism Is a Virtue
- January 27 “The New South” and “Racism is the foundation of White Christian nationalism”
 Onishi, *Preparing for War*, Chapters 3-5 (pp. 45-96)
 Ch 3 - The New South Rises
 Ch 4 - Segregation is a Religious Right
 Ch 5 - The Cross and the Flag
- January 29 Christian Nationalist Bodies and Values
 Onishi, *Preparing for War*, Chapters 6-7 (pp. 97-137)
 Ch 6 - The Pure American Body
 Ch 7 - Killing Democracy to Save the Nation
- February 3 Conspiracies, Insurrection, and Myths
 Onishi, *Preparing for War*, Chapters 8-10 (pp. 138-198)
 Ch 8 - Real Delusions
 Ch 9 - Insurrection
 Ch 10 - MAGA Myths
- February 5 The Redoubt
 Onishi, *Preparing for War*, Chapter 11 and Epilogue
 Ch 11 - Right Flight
 Epilogue - Those with Eyes to See

Part 2: Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, White Supremacy & Christianity

- February 10 Anti-Judaism
 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (1974)
 Ch. 4 “The Social Incorporation of the Negative Myth of the Jews in Christendom” pp. 183-226
 Cynthia Baker, *Jew*, Introduction pp. 1-15
 David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation* (2019)
 “Introduction” pp. 1-13
 “Ten Theses on Emancipation” pp. 354-356
- February 12 White Supremacy
 Shane Burley and Ben Lorber, *Safety Through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism* (2023)
 Ch. 7 “A Race Apart: Antisemitism and the White Nationalist Movement, pp. 139-159
 Ch. 8 “A Christian Nation: Antisemitism & the Christian Right” pp. 160-177
 Eric Ward “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism” (2017)

Part 3: America, Antisemitism, the Christian Front (1930s-1940s), and Catholic Theology

- February 17 American Antisemitism
 Tony Michels, "Is America 'Different?' A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism" (2010) pp. 201-224
- Charles Gallagher, *Nazis of Copley Square* (2021)
 Introduction, pp. 1-16
 Ch1 "The Idea of a Christian Front" pp. 18-30
 Ch 2 "Soldiers for the Body of Christ" pp. 31-51
- Rachel Maddow's "Ultra" Podcast
 Episode 1: Trip 19
 Episode 2: Brooklyn Boys
- February 19 *Nazis of Copley Square* cont'd
 Ch. 3 "Terror in the Name of Christ" pp. 52-75
 Ch. 4 "What's the Matter with Me?" pp. 76-92
- Maddow's "Ultra" Episode 3: The Day
- February 24 *Nazis of Copley Square* cont'd
 Ch. 5 "A Rather Bold Agitator" pp. 93-118
 Ch. 6 "A Nazi in Boston" pp. 119-134
 Ch. 7 "Hitler's Spymaster on Beacon Hill" pp. 135-147
- Maddow's "Ultra"
 Episode 4: A Bad Angle
 Episode 5: Shut It Down
- February 26 *Nazis of Copley Square* cont'd
 Ch. 8 "Rifles and Rhetoric" pp. 148-162
 Ch. 9 "Kissing Hitler" pp. 163-180
- Maddow's Ultra Episode 6: Bedlam & Episode 7: Rinse, Repeat
- March 3 *Nazis of Copley Square* cont'd
 Ch. 10 "Questions of the Most Delicate Kind" pp. 181-208
 Ch. 11 "Underground" 209-219
 Conclusion, pp. 220-238
- Maddow's Ultra Episode 8: Ultra Vires
- March 5 **In Class Midterm and Take Home Midterm Due**

March 10 Spring Break

Watch: God & Country https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/god-country?utm_campaign=Video&utm_medium=MARC&utm_source=aspresolver

March 12 Spring Break

Part 3: The New Apostolic Reformation & A New Map of Christianity for/in Today's World

March 17 Christian Nationalisms
 Nilay Saiya "The Varieties of American Christian Nationalism" in *Politics & Religion* 18 (2025) pp. 171-189
 Shane Burley "A Fifth Column: New Trends in White Christian Nationalist Antisemitism" from *On Christian Nationalism: Critical and Theological Perspectives* (2025) pp. 110-149

March 19 Redrawing the Map
 Matthew Taylor, *The Violent Take It by Force* (2024)
 Introduction pp. 1-14
 "A Televangelist in the White House" pp. 15-49

March 24 Building the NAR
 Taylor, *The Violent Take It by Force*
 Ch. 2 "The Genesis and Genius of the New Apostolic Reformation" pp. 49-78
 Ch. 3 "Generals of Spiritual Warfare" pp. 79-110

March 26 The Seven Mountains and Global Christianity
 Taylor, *The Violent Take It by Force*
 Ch. 4 "The Second Apostolic Age" pp. 111-140
 Ch. 5 "Seven Mountains" pp. 141-173

March 31 War & Worship
 Taylor, *The Violent Take It by Force*
 Ch. 6 "Worship Is a Weapon" pp. 173-204
 Ch. 7 "A Governmental War" pp. 205-240
 Conclusion 241-254

April 2 No Class - Passover

Part 4: Historical Roots of Christian Nationalism/Christian Supremacy

April 7 Births of a Nation: 1619; 1776; 1690; 1493
 Philip Gorski and Samuel Perry, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (2022)
 Ch. 2 "The Spirit of 1690" pp. 46-75
 Robert P Jones, *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy and the Path to a Shared American Future* (2023)
 Prologue, pp. 1-26

- April 9 The Symbol of the Cross
James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011)
Introduction, pp. xiii-xix
Ch. 2 “The Terrible Beauty of the Cross and the Tragedy of the Lynching Tree” pp. 30-64

Recommended: Cone, Ch. 1 “Nobody Knows De Trouble I See” pp. 1-29
- April 14 Constantine’s Cross at Auschwitz and the Capital
James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews* (2001)
Ch 1 “Sign of Folly” pp. 3-12
Ch 17 “The Story of Constantine” pp. 165-171
Ch 18 “The Cross and the Religious Imagination” pp. 172-177
Ch 19 “The Vision of Constantine” pp. 178-194
Ch 20 “The True Cross” pp. 195-207
- April 16 Premodern Theology & Racism
Lindsay Kaplan, *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity* (2019)
Introduction, “Theology, Inferiority, Racism” pp. 1-17
Ch 1, “*Servitus Judaeorum: Biblical Figures, Canon Law, and the Construction of Hereditary Inferiority*” pp. 19-56
- Part 5: Back to the Present: Anti-democracy and Post-liberalism, and Christian Revival**
- April 21 Christian Globalism
Katherine Stewart, *Money Lies and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy* (2025)
Ch 8 “The Rise of the Spirit Warriors” pp. 159-180
Ch 9 “God and Man in Las Vegas” pp. 181-194
Ch 10 “No Exit” pp. 195-212
- April 23 MAGA Thought & Religion
Laura Field, *Furious Minds: The Making of the New MAGA Right* (2025)
Preface xxiii-xxiv
Ch 1 “Introducing the MAGA New Right” pp. 1-25
- April 28 Furious Indeed
Ch 4 “Postliberalism” pp. 77-99
Ch 10 “Common Good Constitutionalism” pp. 220-251
Ch 11 “The End of Men” pp. 252-275
- April 30 Behold, the Fury: Christian Nationalism
Ch 12 “Christian Nationalism and Revival” pp. 276-302
Ch 13 “Conclusion ‘Ecce Furor’” pp. 303-324