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instructor: Jeanne Halgren Kilde
course title: Sacred Space in America
institution: Macalester College
date offered: Fall, 2000

stable URL: www.vafweb.org/resources/syllabi/kilde1.pdf

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Sacred Space in America

Religious Studies 50 - 01
Fall 2000 -- T-Th 2:45 – 4:15

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Macalester College
Office Hours: Wed 1:00 – 3:00
Thurs. 4:30- 5:30

Course Description and Goals

The sacralization of significant places is an important religious and cultural practice. By sacralizing space, human beings define and clarify events, activities, and meanings of heightened significance, and they demonstrate how they conceive of power -- divine (or supernatural) power as well as human power. Because every religious group perceives of these elements and accomplishes these tasks in a particular fashion, sacralized space appears in a variety of different forms, and the processes by which space is sacralized vary also. This course, then, examines sacralized spaces as a means of illuminating the diversity of American religious life.

The course is organized around three units. First, we will examine religious architecture -- Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. We'll look at how religious architecture expresses religious belief and practice, how it articulates conceptions of power, and how it presents a public "face" of the individual congregation. Next, we will focus on sanctified landscapes, including cemeteries and burial grounds, battlefields, and geographical sites. Again, each of these types of sacralized places has served as sites of contestation over power. Lastly, we'll examine the conceptualization of "America" as a sacred space in and of itself, an idea that expresses itself in the physical manifestations of "civil religion."

This course is intended to raise your awareness of the relationship between belief and place and to help you develop critical tools to discern how religious places function to articulate religious and social ideas and to announce those ideas to the broader public. Negotiations and contests over religious space are often marginalized or even ignored by both scholars and the general public, yet spatial meanings are very powerful. Desecrations of and infringements on Native American, Jewish, Muslim, and African American Christian spaces are frequently the most public form of opposition and hatred these groups face. Similarly, the most authoritative manifestations of American civil religion and the on-going belief in American exceptionalism are found in the landscape itself. Learning to use the unique lens of religious space, you will gain a perspective on religious practice integrally linked to social interaction, as well as a deeper understanding of the cultural processes through which social identity is negotiated.

Required Readings:

American Sacred Space, Eds. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Norris, Kathleen. *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993).

Linenthal, Edward T. *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Sloane, David C. *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Course Requirements

25% 3 Religious Site Analysis Papers, 5-6 pages in length. These site analyses will be done in response to class field trips as well as independent field work visits. During the semester, the class will visit a number of religious sites. At least one but no more than two of these papers will deal with (a) site(s) visited with the class. The remaining paper(s) will be based on individual student visits to religious sites.

Due Dates: Tuesday, October 10; Thursday, November 9; Tuesday, December 14
Site Analyses are due by 5:00 p.m. on these dates.

25% Critical writings -- in-class and outside. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to write several brief one-page, analyses. These may be of specific religious sites, of various authors' ideas about religious sites, or responses to assigned readings. These will be graded and returned to the student. At the end of the semester, students will select 5 of these short writings to submit for this portion of the final grade. Due dates TBA.

40% Independent research project. This project must focus on a specific issue related to religious space, a specific site, or a specific means of interpreting religious space. The format for the assignment is open. You may write a researched analysis paper (15-17 pages), or your final product may take another form: film/video/photographic, literary, computer-generated website, music, etc. You may do a creative project. Students will

individually contract the final requirements of this project with the instructor. Final project will be formally presented to the class at the end of the semester.

List of 3 project ideas due – Tuesday, October 3

Formal project proposal due – Friday, October 13

[This will include a discussion of the subject and its significance, an hypothesis or anticipated analytical position, a detailed account of the work to be done, and a 10-entry bibliography]

Draft due – Friday, December 1

Oral Presentation -- TBA

Final paper due -- at the **beginning** of the Final Exam Period

10% Participation. Students are expected to attend class prepared to discuss the assigned work and to contribute to further out-of-class discussion on the e-mail discussion list, **reli50-05@macalester.edu**. I will evaluate Participation several times throughout the semester. This portion of the course grade will also consist of two **optional** oral examinations (midterm and final).

Rule and Regulations

Students must complete **all** papers in order to receive a grade in the course.

Attendance at class sessions is expected. More than 3 absences will affect grades.

Late papers will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade (+ or - equivalent) for each day late.

Students will be held to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism or cheating in any fashion will result in an automatic F for the course.

Tentative Calendar

Changes to the calendar will be announced in class and on the discussion list. Students are responsible for keeping informed of such changes. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings for the day. **NB:** Site visits schedule are likely to change.

Week 1

Th 9/7 Course introduction

Week 2

Tu 9/12 **Approaches to sacred space**

Read: Mircea Eliade, "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred," in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, pp. 20-67, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1987 [1957]).

Th 9/14 **Continue Approaches**

Read: Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, chpts 1 and 2

Week 3

Tu 9/19 **Read:** Smith, chpts. 3 through 5

Th 9/21 **Read:** Tamar Frankiel, "Ritual Sites in the Narrative of American Religion" (e-reserve)

Week 4

Tu 9/26 Religious Buildings -- plans and power. **Read:** Kilde "From *Domus Ecclesiae* to Meetinghouse: Dynamics of Power and Space in Christian Architecture" (e-reserve)

Th 9/28

Site visits -- Macalester-Plymouth Presbyterian Church and St. James Church on the Hill (Episcopalian)

Week 5

Tu 10/3 Site visits – Central Presbyterian Church and First Baptist Church

Due: 3 Independent Research Project Ideas

Th 10/5 Site visits – Church of the Assumption, Cathedral of St. Paul

Week 6

Tu 10/10 Site visits – Mount Zion and Temple Aaron

Due: Site Analysis #1

Th 10/12 Site visit -- Vietnamese Buddhist Association (tentative)

Fri 10/13 **Due: Formal Independent Research Project Proposal**

Week 7

Tu 10/17 Meaning of Death and Cemeteries **Read:** David C. Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, Prolouge –p.95

Th 10/19 **Read:** Sloane, 96-190

Sat 10/21 Site visit Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis

Week 8

Tu 10/24 **Read:** Sloane, 190-end

Th 10/26 **Fall Break – No Class**

Week 9

Tu 10/31 Speaker: Peter Harle on Tibetan Buddhist home shrines in America

Be reading: Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*

Th 11/2 **Sacralizing landscapes:** Norris

Week 10

Tu 11/7 **Native American landscapes.**

Read: Robert S. Michaelson, “Dirt in the Court Room: Indian Land Claims and American Property Rights”

in Chidester and Linenthal.

Accounts of Taos Indians and Blue Lake watershed

Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association (1988)

Tu/Wed Evening (TBA) **Film:** *Anishinabe Grandmothers*

Th 11/9 **Other sacralized lands.**

Read: Bron Taylor, “Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island,”

in Chidester and Linenthal

Due: Site Analysis #2

Week 11

Tu 11/14 “O Beautiful for Spacious Skies” **America as Sacred Space--Power and Identity**

Read: Rowland A. Sherrill, “American Sacred Space and the Contest of History” in Chidester and Linenthal **and** Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields*, “Forward” and “Introduction”

Th 11/16 **Read:** Edward T. Linenthal, chpts 3 and 4 (87-171)

Gettysburg and Little Big Horn

Analyze Internet sites prior to class

Week 12

Tu 11/21 **No Class**

Th 11/23 **Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class**

Week 13

Tu 11/28 **America as Sacred Space-- Power and Identity**

Read: Matthew Glass, ““Alexanders All””: Symbols of Conquest and Resistance at Mount Rushmore” in Chidester and Linenthal

Public monuments -- Vietnam War Memorial

Public monuments -- Washington, D.C.

Th 11/30 **Sacralizing the Memory of WWII**

Read: Chidester and Linenthal: “Locating Holocaust Memory” (220-61) **and** Linenthal, chpt 5 on Pearl

Harbor

Fri 12/1 **Due: Draft of Independent Research Project**

Week 14

Tu 12/5 Student Presentations. **Attendance Required**

Th 12/7 Student Presentations. **Attendance Required**

Week 15

Tu 12/12 Student Presentations. **Attendance Required**

Th 12/14 Student Presentations. **Attendance Required**

Due: Site Analysis #3

Final exam period. Wednesday, December 20. 1:30 – 3:30.

Student Presentations and Course Conclusion.

Attendance Required

Due: Independent Research Project due by 1:30 at the latest. No exceptions.