Course Description

Approaching the historical study of religions in the United States as a specialization of the discipline of religious studies, this graduate seminar reflects on interpretive problems raised in the scholarly literature of the last three decades. The course begins with an overview of U.S. American religious history and historiography, and builds to a series of thematic explorations both of the role of religion in the U.S. past, and the varying ways in which historians and scholars of religion account for its impact. Chronologically, the seminar addresses pre-colonial conditions through the postwar decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the classic historiographical trio of race, class, and gender, we will also explore questions of Protestant hegemony, pluralism, practice, spirituality, nature, experience, sexuality, and nationalism.

Core Readings

