ROWAN UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM PROPOSAL

PROPOSAL TITLE: New Course: New Religious Movements

CHECK APPROPRIATE: ☐ UNDERGRADUATE   ☑ GRADUATE   ☑ SEMESTER HOURS

SPONSOR(S): D. Ashton, J. Grace

DEPARTMENT/TELEPHONE #

CHECK ONE: ☐ COURSE   ☐ MINOR PROGRAM   ☐ CONCENTRATION   ☐ SPECIALIZATION

☐ ACHIEVEMENT CERTIFICATE   ☐ CERTIFICATION PROGRAM   ☐ MAJOR PROGRAM

Step #1 (Department)

10/24/97 Approved (Date)

Not Approved (Date)

David L. Thompson
Dept. Curriculum Chair

10/24/97 Reviewed (Date)

David L. Thompson
Dept. Chair.

Step #2 (Receipt)

SCC# 97-98-933

2-5-98 Date Received Senate

Step #3 (School)

Reviewed Date: 1/17/98

☑ Recommend to Approved

☐ Recommend NOT to Approve

Forward for Open Hearing:

☑ WITHOUT Reservations

☐ WITH Reservations:

Comments: suggest consultation with Sociology

Shaun Richberg
School Committee Chair

Step #4 (Academic Dean): ☐ Recommended   ☐ NOT Recommended   ☐ Conditionally Recommended (See Comments)

Comments:

Dean Signature/Date ____________________________

Step #5 (Senate Curriculum Committee):

Open Hearing Date:      Approved by Curriculum Committee Date:

Returned to Sponsor(s) for the following reason:

Step #6 (Senate) Date announced/voted on at Senate:      If voted on: ☐ Approved   ☐ NOT Approved

D. awarded to Executive Vice President/Provost

Senate Curriculum Committee chair Signature/Date ________________
PROPOSAL FOR THE COURSE "NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS"

I. Details

A. Course title: New Religious Movements
B. Sponsors: Dianne Ashton, Philosophy/Religion
             James H. Grace, Philosophy/Religion
C. Credit Hours: 3
D. Course Level: 300
E. Curricular Effect: This course will be required of
                      students majoring in Religion and Philosophy with an
                      emphasis in Religion Studies. It will also be open to
                      all other students at Rowan university who have taken
                      one course in either Philosophy or Religion Studies. We
                      hope that it also will fulfill General Education
                      requirements at the upper level. It is a
                      Multicultural/Global course.
F. Prerequisite: One course in either Philosophy or Religion
                   Studies.
G. Implementation:
   1. Time: Fall semester, 1998
   2. Scale: At least one section of this course will be
              offered every third semester, depending on student
              demand.
H. Adequacy of:
   1. Staffing: The Philosophy/Religion Department
                  presently has two members who are qualified to teach
                  this course. It is expected that other current or new
                  staff may be interested in teaching this course
                  subsequently.
   2. Library Facilities and Holdings: The
      Philosophy/Religion Department has over the past ten
      years ordered many books that address this topic and
      related issues. With these, and future additions, the
      library's collection will continue to suffice for the
      purpose of an undergraduate course on this topic.
   3. Space Needs: One classroom with blackboards and with
                  seating for thirty, at least once every third semester,
                  will be needed for this course.

II. Rationale

A standard world religions textbook offers brief overviews
of twenty-one new religions and discusses the ways in which
various secular philosophies function, in some manner, as
publishers report a 5.3% drop in book sales overall but a 5.1%
rise in sales of books on religion. Hollywood blockbusters
illustrate American interest in the return of angels mentioned in
the Bible (John Travolta in "Michael") as well as the spiritual
dimension of space exploration (Contact). Despite common wisdom
on the secular nature of the modern world, the last 200 years has
seen new religions arise as well as a sharp increase in the
number and variety of religious organizations and popular support
for them. As governments removed their support for a single religious institution widespread popular interest and energy created new religious movements.

The scholarly studies of these movements and trends devolve primarily on sociology and history. This scholarly foundation provides a rigorous grounding for an upper division course in New Religious Movements. As an upper division course, it would look closely at both the religions themselves (beliefs, rituals, ethics, cosmology, structure) and at the historical circumstances and the cultural context in which they emerged. Thus, this course will offer students a way to understand a continuing phenomenon of the contemporary world.

This course will offer new material. These religions are seldom covered in the course, Religions of the World, which focuses on the major historical traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some new religions, such as the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), are covered in the course, Religion in America, but only those that have made a major impact, or that reveal some widespread cultural or historical American dilemma (such as varieties of communitarianism in Antebellum America). The course herein proposed, New Religious Movements, will look at new religions as a contemporary phenomenon worldwide.

III. Essence of the Course

A. Course Objectives: A student who successfully completes this course should have minimally acquired the following:

1. Some appreciation of the sociological conditions that give rise to new religious movements.
2. Some understanding of the beliefs, rituals, cosmology, ethics, structure of some new religious movements.
3. Some understanding of the historical circumstances that have supported or triggered the rise of a new religion or religious movement.
4. An appreciation of the role religion plays in providing meaning to a wide variety of human experiences.
5. The critical acumen to discern the ambiguous role of religion in both challenging and supporting contemporary social structures.

B. Topical Outline/Content

A. Introduction:
1. Overview of worldwide growth of religions and religious movements over the last 200 years.

B. Case Study of a New Religious Movement.
Religions to be studied will be drawn from at least three continents (Africa, Asia, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America are possibilities) to be selected at the discretion of
the instructor.

1. Discussion of the new religion
2. Discussion of the historical circumstances of its emergence and growth.
3. Application of analyses.

C. Case study # 2
D. Case study # 3

C. Evaluation and Grading At the discretion of the instructor students may be evaluated on the basis of examinations, journals, class participation, research projects, and other written assignments.

D. Course Evaluations SIRs and peer review as well as students' qualitative assessments presented at the end of the course concerning what they liked most or least about i) the course, ii) the instructor, iii) the material used, e.g., texts, tests, audio-visuals, etc., iv) suggestions to improve the course.

E. Consultations The following persons have been consulted informally about the content and structure of this course: Prof. Colleen McDannell, University of Utah; Prof. John Raines, Temple University; Prof. David Watt, Temple University. Their suggestions were incorporated into this proposal.

F. Additional Information:

Selected Bibliography

Adler, Margot, Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today Beacon Press, 1986


Davidman, Lynn, Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism University of California Press, 1992

Ellwood, Robert and Partin, Harry B., Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America Prentice Hall, 1986

Fishman, Sylvia Barak, A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community Free Press, 1994

Hadden, Jeffrey K. and Anson Shupe, Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier Henry Holt, 1988
Holloway, Mark, Heavens Upon Earth: Utopian Communities in America, 1680-1880 Dover, 1966
Miller, Timothy, ed., When Prophets Die: The Post-Charismatic Fate of New Religious Movements SUNY Press,
Mintz, Jerome, Hasidic People 1993
Shipps, Jan, Mormonism, The Story of a New Religious Tradition University of Illinois Press, 1985

G. Catalog Description
300 Level
Prerequisite: one course in Philosophy or Religion Studies or permission of the instructor
NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS 3 s.h.
This course will examine the development of new religious movements both within North America and around the world. It will explore new religious trends, religions that identify themselves as new, and the ways scholars understand and misunderstand them.