

(INDS 258)

# AMERICAN MINORITY RELIGIONS



## goddesses, guns, and gurus

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Americans often claim to value religious freedom and diversity. But how do we respond when religious minorities take more than one spouse, interact with aliens, or stockpile weapons for the end of the world? **This class explores common characteristics and popular depictions of minority religions in contemporary American culture.** Students will read the speeches and correspondence of charismatic leaders, consider religious innovation since 1945, and analyze popular culture portrayals (including films, graphic novels, and fiction) of minority religions in the United States. In particular, we will attend to the ways gender and sexuality have influenced contemporary beliefs, practices, and popular (mis)understandings of American minority religions.

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify and analyze ways religious worldviews influence diverse communities
- Use critical and theoretical tools to examine primary and secondary sources
- Recognize and explain how religious practices and beliefs shape and are shaped by American culture, politics, and economics.

#### { required texts }

*The Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1945*  
Eds. Harvey and Goff (2005)

*Voices of a People's History of the U.S.*  
Eds. Zinn and Arnove (2004)

*Salvation on Sand Mountain*  
Covington (1996)

All other assigned readings  
will be available on Lyceum

# EXPECTATIONS

This is an intermediate course. While I do not expect that you know anything about the traditions we will discuss or about American religion in general, I do assume a basic familiarity with the humanities as a discipline. If you are unfamiliar with humanities scholarship—particularly reading and analyzing scholarly articles or writing scholarly essays in keeping with standard humanities styles—you might find some course assignments challenging. Please be sure to read directions closely and seek additional assistance as needed well in advance of deadlines.

Regardless of your academic background, I ask that you **treat every student and every concept you encounter with scholarly respect**. Challenge your assumptions and your position(s) of privilege. Speak from your own experiences and understandings of the issues, and assume that each class member operates from hir own best intentions. As scholars of religion and American culture, **it is not our job to evaluate the truth or validity of any tradition**. We only scrutinize the evidence we have, so that we might position that tradition's beliefs, practices, teachings, and products in the broader context of American religions.



## CLASS FORMAT

Each class will center on discussion of the assigned texts; some will combine lecture and presentation elements as well. None of these work unless you **attend regularly and read the assignments**. Please come to class ready to analyze and respond to the primary documents and secondary sources assigned, as well as to the contributions of your fellow students. (The handouts on Lyceum, "How to Read a Primary Source" and "How to Read a Secondary Source," will come in handy here.) Participating in the discussions will be easier if you bring your readings to class with you, so be sure to print them ahead of time.

**Your active engagement in these exercises is essential.** Please note that "engagement" includes attentive listening as well as speaking.

### How do I know if I'm [PARTICIPATING?]

Attendance isn't enough. To succeed in this class, you must fully engage in activities and discussions. These criteria determine your participation grade. In short: speak up!

### EXCELLENT

You're present, prepared, and engaged. You consistently refer to the readings, lectures, and class discussions from other weeks. You encourage other students' comments and questions in a productive and respectful manner.

### GOOD

You're present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.

### ADEQUATE

You're present and prepared, but limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.

### MINIMAL

You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights. ("I agree with hir.")

# GRADING

In this course, you will be graded on **how** you think, not **what** you think.

In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance.** You will be graded on how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to think **critically and synthetically** about course themes develops throughout the semester.

## Percentages

- 5% debate
- 10% participation
- 10% book review
- 20% midterm project
- 25% reading notes
- 30% final project

## Rubric

- A = 94–100
- A- = 93–90
- B+ = 89–87
- B = 86–83
- B- = 82–80
- C+ = 79–77
- C = 76–73
- C- = 72–70
- D+ = 69–67
- D = 66–60
- F = 59 and below



## Clarification

- A work far exceeds basic requirements. The work is of excellent quality.
- B work exceeds basic requirements. The work is good or very good.
- C work meets basic requirements. The work is satisfactory.
- D work does not meet most of the basic assignment requirements. The work is poor but passing.
- F work fails to meet most of the requirements of an assignment or of the course.

# ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Please note that there is no attendance grade for this class – **you must participate in the conversation to receive credit for attending.** Unless granted an exception due to hospitalization, family emergency, or another extenuating circumstance, students who miss three or more classes will lose two points per missed class from their final grades. **Students must meet with me once before the midterm.** Contact me before 1 October to schedule this meeting.

Please don't arrive late for class: it distracts me and your classmates, and it's very rude. Also, please turn off your cell phones before arriving for class. Anyone found using their phones, laptops, tablets, etc., for reasons unrelated to class will be asked to leave the discussion and may not make up any missed work.



# TECHNOLOGY

Unless you have learning accommodations which require their use, **laptops and other devices are only permissible in the classroom for specific class activities.** You are also required to use certain technologies to complete your assignments. Most importantly, you need to know how to create a PDF document and submit such

documents via Lyceum in a timely manner. You are responsible for learning how to negotiate these technologies. I will not accept any electronic submission that is not in PDF format, and I only accept electronic submissions via Lyceum. I will not accept assignments as \*.doc or \*.docx files or sent to my email address.

# PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

You plagiarize when you present someone else's thoughts, words, or ideas as your own without proper attribution. Please don't cheat or plagiarize – you will fail the course. You must complete this **plagiarism tutorial** and submit a passing certificate before 15 September if you intend to remain in the course.

If you're still unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the "What is Plagiarism?" handout available on Lyceum or **Bates' Academic Integrity Policy**. "I didn't know" is not a valid excuse. Go know.

# SOURCES

All sources consulted for this class and for your projects must be of scholarly import. Scholarly sources are written by experts with formal academic training in the areas in which they are writing and are published by academic presses. For each and every assignment, **every source you use—whether you're directly quoting or merely referring to it—must be cited.** Religious Studies as a discipline uses Chicago style; use Chicago style citations for all class assignments. See the Chicago style quick guide on Lyceum for further instructions.

There are very few circumstances under which websites are permissible as sources for assignments in this class. If you're using a website as a reference, it must be a credible academic website. (Hint: about.com and Wikipedia are *not* academic websites.) Some websites that might be of interest:

- [Religion Dispatches](#)
- [Religion in American History](#)
- [Religion and Politics](#)
- [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#)
- [frequencies](#)





# ACADEMIC ACCESSIBILITY AND SUPPORT

If you need in-class or testing accommodations because of accessibility issues, if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in the event of a building evacuation, please inform me as soon as possible.

Students who require accommodations for testing must pre-register with [Bates' Learning Differences Office](#) and inform me of these accommodations during the first week of class. Please note that you are responsible for making timely arrangements with Learning Differences and me regarding your testing accommodations.

## WRITE BETTER

There are a number of helpful handouts and guidelines for writing on our Lyceum site, including a handout on writing for religious studies. For further assistance, please come to office hours, make an appointment with Bates' [Peer Writing and Speaking Center](#) or visit their [website](#).



## ASSIGNMENTS

### { MLK/X debate }

Each student will participate in an in-class debate regarding the questions "What is American religion? What should it be?" Students will divide into two teams and draw on primary source materials to provide the perspectives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Contributions to this debate should be drawn directly from these religious leaders' writings, speeches, interviews, public appearances, or other

pertinent primary source material (including but not limited to sacred texts). You will also submit a one page reflection paper on this exercise, drawing directly on these primary sources to support your response to the posed questions. Submit your response as \$YOURLASTNAME.pdf via Lyceum by midnight on Sunday, 28 September. Please review the assignment sheet for further instructions.

### { book review }

You must submit an academic-style book review of a memoir written by a member of an American minority religion. A list of memoirs will be provided with the assignment sheet. You are also welcome to propose alternative memoirs for review (contingent upon my prior approval). Your book review should provide a summary of the text, an assessment of its significance, and an evaluation of its correspondence (or lack thereof) with course materials. You will present your review during our course discussion of these memoirs and share your review via our class's Google Drive folder. Review the assignment sheet for further instructions.

# ASSIGNMENTS (CONT.)

## { midterm project }

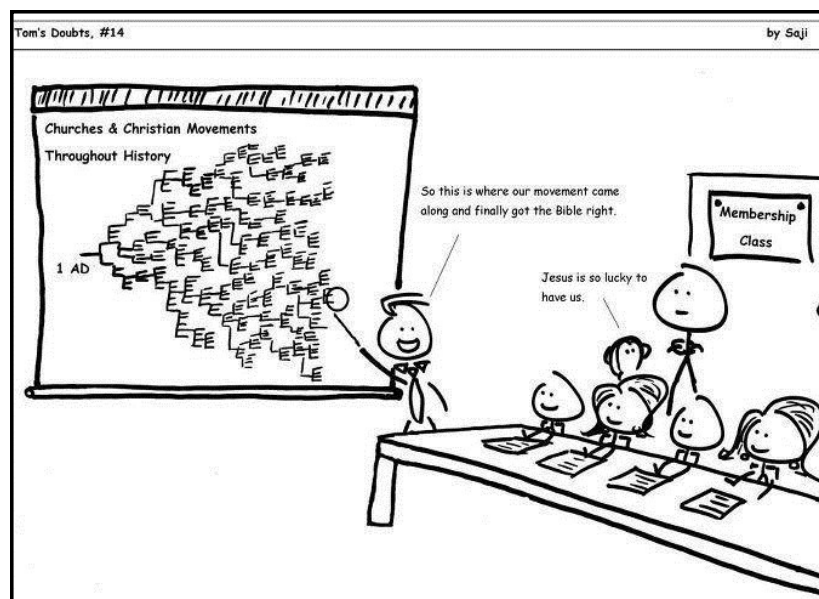
Your midterm project will include individual and collaborative elements. Each student will gather five primary sources relevant to a tradition, theme, or major historical event we have discussed so far this semester. You will identify key descriptive terms and phrases appearing in each source and brainstorm about possible research projects you might pursue starting with these sources.

Students will choose groups based on shared interests and work together to create a timeline that demonstrates how this tradition/theme/historical event changed over time and what we can learn from these historical shifts. The format of these timelines is entirely up to the groups, but creativity counts. Groups will present their timelines during our midterm exam period, after which each student will submit a description of your proposed research project (including your research question, proposed methodology, and anticipated challenges to your research). Review the assignment sheet closely for further instructions.

## { reading notes }

Learning to read, understand, and think critically about challenging material is a key skill for liberal arts scholarship. For this reason, one of our regular writing assignments will be creating reading notes for assigned primary and secondary sources. This will help you become a more careful reader of these texts and jump-start your preparation for your final project.

Detailed instructions for creating reading notes are available on Lyceum. You are responsible for providing reading notes for one source assigned on the days marked RN on the following schedule. **Reading notes are due on Lyceum by midnight before class.** You must also bring your reading notes to each class discussion. You will also post your analysis of these sources to our class Facebook page by midnight before class. You are encouraged but not required to respond to other students' analyses as well. These responses count toward your participation grade.



## { final project }

For your final project, each research group will **create your own new religion**. Your group as a whole will present on its religion during our final class meetings; each group member will also submit an individual report on this project.

For your presentation: give your religion a name and explain its central teachings. (Does your religion have a deity or deities? If so, describe them. If not, describe the central principle(s) around which you've organized your religion.) Describe or create sacred texts, music, clothing, food, art, or other material culture objects relevant to your religion. Tell us what inspired the creation of this religion: what cultural needs, desires, inequities, or injustices are you responding to? To whom would your religion appeal and why?

In your paper, describe the content of your presentation and provide analysis of your new religion's teachings and practices. In what ways does your religion build on mainstream religions or other minority traditions we've discussed this semester? In what ways is your religion innovative? Finally, consider the significance of your religion. Why is this innovation important? What does it contribute to the American religious landscape? What resistance or intolerance might you face as a member of this religion?

As with all projects, please consult the assignment sheet for further instructions.



## NOT A BENE

**This syllabus is a blueprint, not a contract.**

As we progress through the semester, I may shift assignments and requirements.

But I promise I will not add more readings or assignments than are currently listed here.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- 15 September Plagiarism tutorial and syllabus quiz due
- 26 September MLK & Malcolm X debate (in class)
- 1 October Pre-midterm meetings must be scheduled by today
- 13 October Midterm presentations
- 27 October Book discussion: *Salvation on Sand Mountain*
- 14 November Memoir discussion
- 11 December Final project presentations



# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>getting started</b>		
W 3 September	Introductions	
F 5 September	America: Religions and Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moore, preface to <i>Religious Outsiders</i></li> <li>Albanese, "The Elephant in the Dark"</li> </ul>
M 8 September	No class	
W 10 September	What Makes a Minority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goodwin, "Thinking Sex and American Religions"</li> <li>Killerman, from <i>The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook</i></li> <li>Introduction and conclusion to <i>Religious Intolerance in America</i></li> <li>Killerman, "30+ Examples of Christian Privilege"</li> </ul>
<b>1945–1960</b>		
F 12 September RN RN 1	Before the War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States</li> <li><i>Reynolds v. the United States</i> (1878)</li> <li>Immigration Act of 1924</li> <li>Wenger, "We Are Guaranteed Freedom"</li> <li>Gordon, "The Liberty of Self-Degradation"</li> </ul>
M 15 September RN RN 2	World War II and Minority Religions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Introduction"</li> <li>Herberg, from <i>Protestant-Catholic-Jew</i> (HG)</li> <li>Vonnegut, from <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i> (Voices)</li> <li>Kochiyama, "Then Came the War" (Voices)</li> <li>"Directive for the Disestablishment of State Shinto"</li> </ul>
W 17 September RN RN 3	Cold War and McCarthyism <b>need to discuss debate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Mainline Religion and the Cold War"</li> <li>Robeson, Unread Statement re: Un-American Activities (Voices)</li> <li>Stone, "But It's Not Just Joe McCarthy" (Voices)</li> <li>Day, "Our Brothers, the Communists" (HG)</li> </ul>
<b>The 1960s</b>		
F 19 September RN RN 4	Change From Within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Religion and the Counterculture"</li> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Religion and the Civil Rights Movement"</li> <li>Ginsburg, "America" (Zinn)</li> <li>Kennedy, "Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association" (HG)</li> <li>Daly, from <i>The Church and the Second Sex</i></li> <li>King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (HG)</li> </ul>
M 22 September RN RN 5	Immigration and International Conflict  <b>Muhammad Ali (!!)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "New Immigrant Communities"</li> <li>Immigration Act of 1965</li> <li>Berrigan, "Berrigan at Cornell" (HG)</li> <li>King, "Beyond Vietnam" (Voices)</li> <li><del>X</del> "Malcolm X Speaks Out Against the Vietnam War" (Voices)</li> <li>Herrerra-Sobek, "Two Poems on Vietnam" (Voices)</li> </ul>



# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
W 24 September <del>RN</del> RN 6	Radical Religious Innovation (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Popular Religion"</li> <li>Hubbard, "Two Rules for Happy Living" (HG)</li> <li>Bornstein, from <i>A Queer and Pleasant Danger</i></li> <li>X, "Message to the Grassroots" (Voices)</li> <li>Muhammad, from <i>Message to the Blackman</i></li> </ul>
F 26 September	Debate: MLK and Malcolm X	<p>Students will divide into two teams and debate from the perspectives of these two religious leaders, drawing on speeches, correspondence, interviews, and other pertinent primary source materials.</p> <p><b>The question:</b> What is American religion? What should it be?</p>
M 29 September RN RN 7	Goddesses and Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Religion and Gender"</li> <li>Rich, from <i>Of Woman Born</i> (Voices)</li> <li>Daly, from <i>Gyn/Ecology</i> (HG)</li> <li>Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly"</li> <li>Brownmiller, "Abortion is a Woman's Right" (Voices)</li> </ul>
<b>1969–1980</b>		
W 1 October RN RN 8	Embodied Theologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cone, "The White Church and Black Power" and "God is Black" (HG)</li> <li>Deloria, from <i>God is Red</i> (HG)</li> <li>Lincoln, "Who Will Revere the Black Woman?" (Voices)</li> <li>Warner, "Tongues Untied"</li> <li>Giovanni, "Ego Tripping"</li> </ul>
F 3 October RN RN 9	Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chavez, "The Mexican American and the Church"</li> <li>Milk, "In Defense of Jim Jones"</li> <li>Peoples Temple primary sources</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Screening: "Jonestown: Life and Death of Peoples Temple" (Part 1)</p>
M 6 October RN RN 10	Revolutionary Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hutchinson, "Why Did So Many Black Women Die?"</li> <li>Chidester, "Rituals of Exclusion and the Jonestown Dead"</li> <li>Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones"</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Screening: "Jonestown: Life and Death of Peoples Temple" (Part 2)</p>
W 8 October RN 11	Brainwashing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barker, from <i>Making of a Moonie</i></li> <li>Palmer, "Lovers and Leaders in the Rajneesh Movement"</li> <li>ISKCON, "Philosophy"</li> <li><i>LA Times</i> articles re: Orange County ISKCON</li> </ul>
F 10 October	Workshop for midterm presentations	
M 13 October	Midterm presentations	
W 15 October	Fall recess	
F 17 October		
M 20 October RN 12	Free Exercise (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harvey and Goff, "Politics and Religion since the 1960s"</li> <li>Heffron v. ISKCON</li> <li>Wisconsin v. Yoder</li> <li>Engel v. Vitale</li> <li>Clay v. United States</li> <li>Peltier on the Trail of Broken Treaties Protest (Voices)</li> </ul>

# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>1980s–2000</b>		
W 22 October	Screening: Jesus Camp	
F 24 October RN 13	Charisma, Trance, and Spirit Possession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 16:15-20 (any translation)</li> <li>• Brown, from <i>Mama Lola</i></li> <li>• Kaldera, "Open to the Divine"</li> </ul>
M 27 October	Reason and Ecstasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covington, <i>Salvation on Sand Mountain</i></li> <li>• Orsi, "Snakes Alive: Religious Studies Between Heaven and Earth"</li> </ul>
W 29 October RN 14	Apocalypse Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallagher, "Negotiating Waco"</li> <li>• Reavis, "Winning in the Bedroom"</li> <li>• Thibodeau and Whiteson, from <i>A Place Called Waco</i></li> <li>• 911 calls from Mt. Carmel</li> </ul>
F 31 October	Screening: "Red State" (optional)	
M 3 November	Free Exercise (II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISKCON v. Lee</li> <li>• Smith v. Employment Division</li> <li>• Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board v. Pinette</li> </ul>
<b>2001–present</b>		
W 5 November RN 15	War and Terror <b>must talk about final projects!!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Fatwa Against Terrorism"</li> <li>• Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"</li> <li>• Lasar, "To Avoid Another September 11..." (Voices)</li> <li>• Maulik, "Organizing in Our Communities" (Voices)</li> <li>• "History of Hate: Crimes Against Sikhs since 9/11" (HuffPo)</li> </ul>
F 7 November RN	Sacred Texts and Scriptural Literalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church of Scientology, "Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion"</li> <li>• Wright, from <i>Going Clear</i></li> <li>• Tom Cruise v. Gawker</li> </ul>
M 10 November RN 16	Women's Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hammer, from <i>More Than a Prayer</i></li> <li>• News items on LDS "Ordain Women" movement</li> <li>• Hunt, "Pope Francis and the American Sisters"</li> <li>• Pike, "All Acts of Love and Pleasure Are My Rituals"</li> </ul>
W 12 November RN 17	Masculinities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kintz, "Tender Warriors"</li> <li>• Farrakhan, "Minister Farrakhan Challenges Black Men"</li> <li>• Blain and Wallis, "Men and 'Women's Magic'"</li> </ul>
F 14 November	Memoir discussions	(new assignment: record 3 minute reviews)
M 17 November RN 18	Sexual Difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennion, "Many Faces of Polygamy"</li> <li>• Gibson, "However Satisfied a Man May Be"</li> <li>• Wessinger, "Culting"</li> <li>• Snyder v. Phelps</li> <li>• Goodwin, "Sexuality in New Religious Movements"</li> </ul>
W 19 November RN 19	Women's Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mormon Women Bare Project</li> <li>• Posner, "Corporations Have Consciences and Contraceptives Are Cheap"</li> <li>• Hammer, "(Muslim) Women's Bodies, Islamophobia, and American Politics"</li> <li>• Mustafa, "My Body Is My Own Business"</li> </ul>

need to pull one of these topics for 17 Nov absence

# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
F 21 November	No class	
24-28 November	Thanksgiving Break	
M 1 December	Reflections: Gaza	Readings TBA <a href="#">I think we're doing a workshop on Monday, yes? Switch sched.</a>
W 3 December	Reflections: Ferguson	Readings TBA
F 5 December	Final project workshop	<a href="#">AND new and improved timeline!</a>
R 11 December 10:30–12:30	Final exam: group presentations	

## EXTRA CREDIT

For up to three points on your final grade, you may write a 750–1000 word analysis of a film that depicts a minority religion in the United States. Summarize the plot and discuss the way the film portrays the minority religion in question. Who directed and wrote the film? Who is the intended audience? Based on your viewing, what do you think the film wants you to believe about American minority religions? Does the film correspond with or contradict what we've learned in class? Be sure to refer to assigned primary and secondary sources.

This is the only extra credit assignment I will offer this semester. If you choose to take advantage of this opportunity, the assignment is due on Lyceum by Monday, 19 May, at 11:55 pm.

## CLASS FACEBOOK PAGE (PARTICIPATION PLUS!)

You will post your analyses of assigned sources to the class facebook every time you complete reading notes for a class. However, you're also welcome—and encouraged—to post other items of interest to the blog as well. Feel free to post links to news items, youtube links, reviews of films or television episodes, or anything else you think might be relevant to class discussions. For those of you less comfortable speaking up in class, this is another way for you to earn participation credit.

Please keep all posts "safe for work." If you're not sure if something is appropriate for sharing, ask me before posting.

### RECOMMENDED TEXT

If you are unfamiliar with American religions, I strongly recommend purchasing Albanese's *America: Religions and Religion* to supplement the required texts.





One might claim that Jonestown was the most important single event in history of religions, for if we continue...to leave it ununderstandable, then we will have surrendered our rights to the academy.

JZ Smith, "The Devil in Mr. Jones"

# AMERICAN MINORITY RELIGIONS

(INDS 258)

## — [ section info ] —

Instructor: Dr. Megan Goodwin  
Email: [mgoodwin@bates.edu](mailto:mgoodwin@bates.edu)  
Office: Hedge 213  
Office hours: MW 3pm–4:30 pm or by appointment  
Class meets: MWF 1:10pm–2:30pm