

# American Sacred Space

## Religious Studies 258, Fall 2004

### Professor Thomas S. Bremer

**Office:** Clough 204 **Phone:** 843-3139 **Home:** 726-4540 (not after 9PM)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-4:00 and other times by appointment

This course will introduce students to sacred spaces of the United States through the study of spatial theories and investigation of particular places regarded as sacred. Our explorations will include not only churches and other more traditionally religious spaces, but also places of national importance, of cultural interest, and of personal attachment. We will consider throughout the course what makes a place sacred—are there criteria for determining the sacrality of place? The importance of experience will be emphasized in field trips to sacred sites in Memphis.

Students also will have opportunities to further develop their skills in critical reading, coherent writing, and effective verbal expression. These abilities will be cultivated through productive engagement with texts, through regular writing exercises and active participation in classroom discussions, and through verbal presentations in class.

### **Texts:**

- Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*
- Elizondo and Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral*
- Meyer, *Myths in Stone*
- Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*
- Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*
- Doss, *Elvis Culture*
- Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*

### **Course requirements:**

#### ***Participation***

Class meetings will involve critical discussion of the assigned readings. Consequently, active participation by all students is paramount. Students must read carefully and critically the assigned readings before class and should be prepared to contribute to our discussions. Students will be evaluated on their direct contributions to classroom discussions.

**Students with extracurricular activities (especially athletes)** that will require them to miss one or more classes during the semester should talk to me in advance of their anticipated absence. All absences that are not approved in advance will adversely affect your grade; **to receive partial participation credit for approved absences**, you may write a one-paragraph critical analysis of the assigned reading for that day and turn it in at the next class meeting.

#### ***Daily Exams***

Students will answer an exam question on WebCT before most class sessions. The question will cover that day's reading assignment and will test your ability to read

closely and critically. To get credit, you must complete the exam during the allotted time before class starts (details in the WebCT section below)—**NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ALLOWED.**

### ***Field Trips***

Three Saturday morning field trips (September 11, and October 30, November 13) are planned for this course. All students are expected to participate in these experiences. We will have lunch together following our visits to the sites in order to reflect on our experiences. Details of these excursions will be discussed in class. Any student who will be unable to attend one or more of the field trips should meet with me to make alternative arrangements.

### ***Essays***

Two papers of 1000-1500 words (approximately 4-6 pages) will be due on September 21 and October 12. Details about the essays will be distributed later. **Note the due dates carefully—LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** For each of these essays you must turn in **a hard paper copy with a signed pledge and a virus-free electronic copy**, either as an email attachment or on a disk.

### ***Research Project***

All students must research a twentieth-century American sacred space in terms of its history, the traditions that regard it as sacred, and how it relates to questions of identity. You will present your research verbally in class and also in a essay of 2500-3000 words (approximately 10-12 pages) due on December 15 (again, **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**). The assignment for both the classroom presentation and the final essay will be distributed before the fall break. Like the essays you must turn in **a hard paper copy with a signed pledge and a virus-free electronic copy of your final paper**, either as an email attachment or on a disk.

### ***Student Integrity***

All papers and exams should be your own work. **Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code, and I will be diligent about reporting all violations to the Honor Council.**

**Students with a documented disability** in need of special accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services and also see me to discuss your situation.

### ***Computers***

Please check your Rhodes College e-mail account frequently for announcements and other matters concerning this course.

**WebCT:** We will be using WebCT on a regular basis in this class, primarily for the daily exams, but also for class readings and on occasion for links to useful information regarding the course. To access WebCT, on the “QUICK LINKS” pull-down menu at the upper right corner of the Rhodes home page, click on “WebCT (login).” Your Rhodes’ ID number and PIN (same as for Banner) will serve as your WebCT ID and your password. If you have trouble logging in, call the Rhodes Help Desk, extension HELP (4357).

Once you access the class home page on WebCt (titled “American Sacred Space”), you will find links to the course syllabus, documents (for access to the class readings), and the daily exams. Regarding the latter, the exam for each class will be available

between noon on the day before class and 12:15 on the day of the class. You will be allowed one attempt of up to thirty minutes to complete the exam. Most of the exams will ask you to write a paragraph on a particular theme or aspect of the day's reading assignment.

### **Grades:**

Class Participation:	20%
Daily Exams:	20%
Field Trips	10%
Essays:	20% (10% each)
Research Presentation	10%
Final Paper	20%

### **Schedule of classes and reading assignments:**

Readings highlighted in aqua with an asterisk [\*] are on WebCT.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Thurs, Aug. 26: Beginnings***

**Readings:** Course syllabus (complete and sign the Acknowledgement form, and bring it to class)

### ***Tues, Aug. 31: Sacred Space and Profane Space***

**Readings:** Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 8-65

### ***Thurs, Sept. 2: Sacred Time and Profane Time***

**Readings:** Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 68-113

## **CHURCH SPACES**

### ***Tues, Sept. 7: San Fernando Cathedral***

**Readings:** Elizondo and Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral*, pp. 1-41

### ***Thurs, Sept. 9: No class—field trip on Saturday***

### ***Saturday, Sept. 11: Field trip***

**Church of the River and Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (9:00 AM through lunch—meet at 8:30 AM)**

### ***Tues, Sept. 14: The Sacred in the City***

**Readings:** Elizondo and Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral*, pp. 43-97

### ***Thurs, Sept. 16: Soul of the City***

**Readings:** Elizondo and Matovina, *San Fernando Cathedral*, pp. 99-113

## NATIONAL SPACES

**Tues, Sept. 21: *American Civil Religion***

**Readings:** \* Bellah, "Civil Religion in America"

**First essay due.**

**Thurs, Sept. 23: *Civil Religion in the Spaces of Washington, D.C.***

**Readings:** Meyer, *Myths in Stone*, pp. 1-20 and 76-98

**Tues, Sept. 28: *Civil Religion in the Spaces of Washington, D.C.***

**Readings:** Meyer, *Myths in Stone*, pp. 101-105 and 160-193

**Thurs, Sept. 30: *Remember the Alamo***

**Readings:** Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, pp. 1-7 and 53-86

**Tues, Oct. 5: *Pearl Harbor***

**Readings:** Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, pp. 175-212

## CONTESTED SPACES

**Thurs, Oct. 7: Thurs, Sept. 9: *Contesting Sacred Spaces***

**Readings:** Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, pp. 1-42

**Tues, Oct. 12: *Native American Spaces***

**Readings:** Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, pp. 43-96

**Film:** *In the Light of Reverence*

**Second essay due.**

**Thurs, Oct 14: *Turtle Island***

**Readings:** Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, pp. 97-151

**Tues, Oct. 19: FALL RECESS**

## CULTIC SPACES

**Thurs, Oct. 21: *Elvis Culture***

**Readings:** Doss, *Elvis Culture*, pp.1-67

**Tues, Oct. 26: *Saint Elvis***

**Readings:** Doss, *Elvis Culture*, pp.69-113 and 255-259

**Thurs, Oct. 28: *Graceland Pilgrimage***

**Readings:** \* Davidson, Hecht, and Whitney, "The Pilgrimage to Graceland"

**Saturday, Oct. 30: Field trip**

Graceland (10:00 AM through lunch—meet at 9:30 AM)

**Tues, Nov. 2: *Burning Man***

Readings: \* Pike, "Desert Goddesses and Apocalyptic Art: Making Sacred Space at the Burning Man Festival"

**Extra credit film: *Smoke Signals* (7:00, Orgill Room)**

**INTERLUDE**

**Thurs, Nov. 4: *Student Research Presentations***

**Tues, Nov. 9: *Student Research Presentations***

**Thurs, Nov. 11: *Student Research Presentations***

**Saturday, Nov. 13: Field trip**

National Civil Rights Museum (10:00 AM through lunch)

**Tues, Nov. 16: *Student Research Presentations***

**Thurs, Nov. 18: *Student Research Presentations***

**Tues, Nov. 23: *No Class—free day to work on final research papers***

**Thurs, Nov. 25: *Thanksgiving Recess***

**HEALING SPACES**

**Tues, Nov. 30: *House Made of Dawn***

Readings: Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, pp. 7-125

**Thurs, Dec. 2: *House Made of Dawn***

Readings: Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, pp. 127-191

**Tues, Dec. 7: *Sustaining American Sacred Spaces***

Readings: Review syllabus, papers, etc.

**Final Research Paper due 3:30 PM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15 at my office, 204 Clough (LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!).**

## Student Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and read carefully a copy of the syllabus for Religious Studies 258, "American Sacred Space" taught by Professor Bremer in the fall semester 2004. I understand that I am responsible for fulfilling all obligations, for completing all assignments on time, and for adhering to all policies as specified in the syllabus. I also acknowledge that failure to do so will adversely affect my grade in this class. I further understand that the professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, and that I will be notified of any such changes by email at my Rhodes College email address.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your anticipated major (or academic interests if you don't know about a major)?**

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**What is your interest in taking this class, and what do you hope to learn?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_