Introductory
RELS0087 Religion in America – Daniel Vaca
MWF 10-10:50; Wilson Hall 109

From Native American traditions and Puritan migrations in the seventeenth century to Barack Obama’s “crypto-Islam” and debates over gay rights in the twenty-first: American history is religious history. For centuries, religion has shaped how Americans have carried out their everyday lives, interacted with others, understood themselves, and perceived the wider world. Focusing primarily on religious life in the United States, this course invites students to explore the debates and thematic tensions that have oriented the relationship between religion and society in North America. Requiring no prerequisites, this introductory course takes up such varied issues as race, ethnicity, science, gender, capitalism, pluralism, sexuality, and secularism.

Intermediate
RELS0845 Religious Freedom in America – Daniel Vaca
M 3-5:20; Sayles Hall 204

“Religious freedom,” former Secretary Hilary Rodham Clinton remarked in 2009, “provides a cornerstone for every healthy society.” It is, Clinton continued, “a founding principle of our nation.” As Clinton’s remarks illustrate, the concept of religious freedom is central to how people perceive the history of the United States and its position in the world today. But what is religious freedom? Does it actually exist? Has it ever? This seminar invites students to ask and answer these and other questions about the contested concept, engaging such varied issues as race, secularism, law, media, money, pluralism, and foreign policy.