Many in mainstream America relate suspiciously to new religious groups, often labeling them “cults” and warning young people not to associate with them. However, new religious movements have characterized the American religious scene since colonial times, with newly emerging religious groups coming onto the scene periodically. In the last generation, such diverse groups as Wicca, ISKCON, the Children of God, and the Nation of Islam, have attracted much attention and at times controversy.

The course intends to explore the characteristics of new religious movements, learn how they make their early beginnings and point to the relationship between new religious groups and mainstream society. We will also look at central features of new religious movements, such as the role of charismatic leadership, messianic faith, gender and sexuality and the manner new religious groups relate to the American polity, its symbols, and values. Likewise, we will pay special attention to the manner Americans have related to new religious movement. In additions to essays, we will watch documentaries, listen to music, and read books.

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Tuesdays and Thursdays
9:30PM-10:45PM

General Education Requirements: SS, NA