

Contemporary Paganism: Now. It's History. It's Future.

Meadville/Lombard Theological School

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ABOUT THE COURSE

Contemporary Paganism, (goddess spirituality, Wicca, reconstructionist Pagans -Norse, Druids, etc) have come into their own in the last 20 years. In fact the website adherents.com lists Paganism as the 19th most popular religion with a million adherents. In the US, figures by scholars range from about 300 thousand to 750 thousand. There are more than 5000 Pagan websites, more than 350 annual festivals, and more than 100 Pagan Pride events each year. Moreover, a religion once seen as conceived in rebellion, often countercultural and marginal has become much more mainstream over the last decade and has often found a welcoming home in Unitarian Universalist churches and associations. There are now at least 15 graves of veterans that have headstones with pentagrams; Pagans have their own seminaries, and they have at least one peer reviewed scholarly journal. There are occasional Pagan Studies courses, and this diverse movement is beginning to encounter many of the same issues that all religions deal with.

Readings:

Adler, Margot, *Drawing Down the Moon, Witches, Druids, Goddess Worshipers and Other Pagans in America*, (Penguin, New York, 2006) chapters 1-3, chapter 13, pp. 410-456.

Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, (Oxford, Oxford, 1999), chapters 18 and 18, Uncle Sam and the Goddess and Coming of Age.

Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, (Harper& Row, San Francisco, 1979), if you have never read it, you should.

Taylor, Bron, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (U of California, Berkeley, 2010) Chapters 2-4, but dip in anywhere.

Requirements: 1. complete the readings.

2. Write a short paper (4-5 pages) on either *Dark Green Religion*, or Starhawk versus Hutton, or the religions of paradox and play chapter, or the feminism chapter in *Drawing Down the Moon*, or on one of the following books: *Coming to the Edge of the Circle: a Wiccan Initiation Ritual*, by Nikki Bado-Fralick or *Witching Culture* by Sabina Magliocco. Or a topic of your choice that I like.

3. Write a short ritual that seems to fit in to the Pagan or environmental themes we are reading and discussing. It can be a ritual for *any* purpose, but it should do what ritual does, i.e. change the atmosphere, and create a sense of connection and community.