

# “PURE AMERICA”: Religion, Race, Nation

## A Straight White American Jesus SEMINAR

### Course Description

What is the relationship between how we envision the national body and how we treat actual bodies? How have White Christian nationalists sought to create a straight, White, patriarchal, native-born, and Christian image of the national body through movements designed to “purify” our public square? How is White Christian nationalism the original purity culture?

This course shows how our visions of the nation affect how we treat physical bodies. It examines White Christian nationalism and its impulses to racism, xenophobia, queerphobia, and patriarchy through the metaphor of the national social body.

### Topics

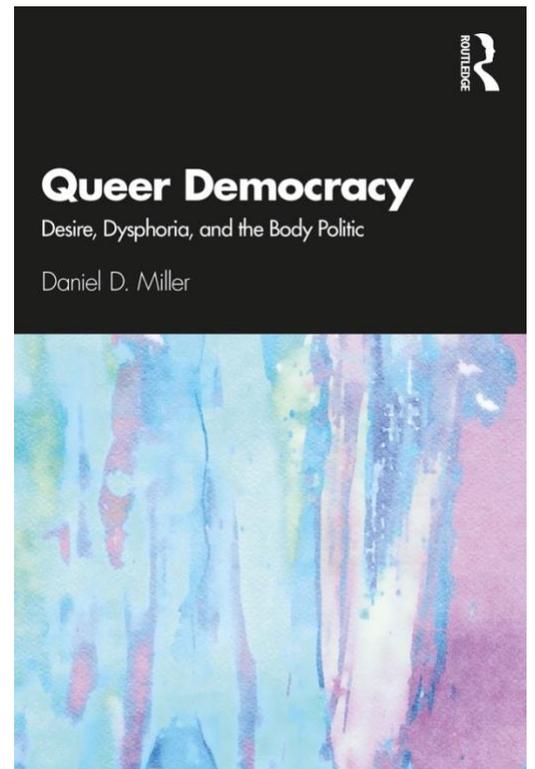
*Week 1: The Social Body: How Should the Country Look and Feel?*

In our first week together, we’ll introduce the idea of society as a kind of body. Where does this metaphor come from? How has it developed over time? How has it shaped Western conceptions of society? How does using this metaphor help explain the rise of Christian nationalism in recent years and the manifestation of White supremacy, racism, transphobia, and xenophobia?

*Week 2: The Pure American Body: Slavery, Family Values, and Xenophobia*

*Week 3: The Original Purity Culture: Sex, Christian Nationalism, and National Renewal*

*Week 4: Feeling Right: Body Dysphoria and the Promise of Queer Democracy*



## Every week will include three main components:

- **Exclusive Course Video:** Lecture and Discussions by Dan Miller and Brad Onishi. Students will be asked to watch these 15-20 minute videos before the weekly live seminar each week.
- **Assigned Readings:** One chapter a week from Dan Miller's *Queer Democracy* or other works to be read before the weekly live seminar each week.
- **Weekly Live Seminar:** a weekly two-hour seminar in the evening.
  - This will be a discussion-based format
  - The discussion will be based on the videos and assigned readings
  - Each participant will have a chance to ask questions, contribute ideas, and converse with the instructor and the class as a whole.

*Additionally:* In the final week each participant will schedule a **30-Minute Office Hours meeting** with Professor Miller to talk over questions, ideas, and anything else related to the course.

## What's Included:

- Four Two-Hour Live Sessions (8 Hours Total)
- Five Exclusive Videos (18-20 Minutes Each)
- One Office Hours Meeting (30 Minutes)
- Participation in the Seminar Discord Server
  - Including Weekly Discussion Topics
- Weekly Assigned Readings
- Straight White American Jesus Mug



## Details:

- **Dates and Times** for the Weekly Seminars:
  - September 8, 15, 22, 29
  - 5pm PST/8PM EDT
- Limited to 12 participants
- Price: \$400

## Professors:



**Dan Miller, PhD** is Associate Professor of Religion and Social Thought and Chair in the Department of Liberal Studies at Landmark College. His first book, *The Myth of Normative Secularism* (Duke University Press 2016), was a 2016 INDIES award finalist in the category of political science. His second book, *Queer Democracy*, was published by Routledge in 2021. He has also published in *Constellations*, *Soundings*, *Political Theology*, and *Method and*

*Theory in the Study of Religion*. Dan served as a Southern Baptist Minister before attending graduate school at Oxford University and Syracuse University.



**Bradley Onishi**, is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Skidmore College and Visiting Faculty at the University of San Francisco. A TEDx speaker, he has written for the *New York Times*, *Huffpost*, *Religion & Politics*, *The LA Review of Books*, *The Conversation US*, *Rewire.News*, among other outlets. He has appeared on NPR-affiliate programs and nationally ranked podcasts. His monograph, *The Sacrality of the Secular*, appeared from Columbia University Press in 2018; he has published in journals such as *JAAR*, *Sophia*, *Religions*, and *The American Book Review*.

Brad was a pastor at a California megachurch in Yorba Linda (birthplace of Richard Nixon!) before attending Oxford University, L'institut catholique de Paris, and the University of California Santa Barbara.

# Course Outline

## **Week 1 (September 8): The Social Body: How Should the Country Look and Feel?**

- **Topic:** In our first week together, we'll introduce the idea of society as a kind of body. Where does this metaphor come from? How has it developed over time? How has it shaped Western conceptions of society? How does using this metaphor help explain the rise of Christian nationalism in recent years and the manifestation of White supremacy, racism, trans-phobia, and xenophobia?
- **Readings:** Daniel Miller, *Queer Democracy*, Chapter 1: "Dysphoric Desire: Fantasizing the Social Body"

## **Week 2 (September 15): Week 2: The "Real" American Family: Slavery, Xenophobia, and Purity**

- **Topic:** In our second week together, we'll expand on this idea of society as a kind of body to explore how Christian nationalists imagine the American social body. What is their vision of what the American national body should be like? To answer this question, we'll investigate what Christian nationalists have to say about the family, and how their understanding of the "proper" family shapes their understanding of what a "pure" American social body is. This will include a historical examination of proslavery theologies and the far reaches of White Christian xenophobia.
- **Readings:** Excerpt of Chapter 2: "The Birth of Family Values" from Bradley Onishi's *Preparing for War: How White Christian Nationalism Birthed MAGA Nation*

## **Week 3 (September 22): The Original Purity Culture: Sex, Christian Nationalism, and National Renewal**

- **Topic:** In our third week together, we'll turn our attention to the specific role that ideals of "purity" have played in Christian nationalists' imagined American body. We will see that White Christian nationalism is the original "purity culture." It desires an American social body rid of any foreign or domestic "impurities." This will set the stage for understanding how the "purity culture" that developed in the 1990s was an outgrowth of the

centuries-old racist and xenophobic impulses in White Christian nationalism.

- **Readings:** Excerpt of Chapter 4: “The Original Purity Culture,” from Bradley Onishi’s *Preparing for War: How White Christian Nationalism Birthed MAGA Nation*

#### **Week 4 (September 29) Feeling Right: Social Dysphoria and the Promise of Queer Democracy**

- **Topics:** In our final week together, we explore *queer democracy* as a counter-politics to Christian nationalism. We will see how a truly democratic is a “queer” social body, why Christian nationalists fear this, and how Christian nationalism represents an anti-democratic denial of the fundamental nature of the social body. In opposition to Christian nationalism, we will advance a conception of “queer democracy” that embraces the social body’s “impurity” and queerness by extending liberty and equality to previously marginalized and oppressed members of the social body.
- **Readings:** Daniel Miller, *Queer Democracy*, Chapter 5: “American Dysphoria: Christian Nationalism”

[Register at Straightwhiteamericanjesus.com](https://straightwhiteamericanjesus.com)