REL 2011: Religion, Interpretation and Analysis

Professor Janet McDaniel
jmcdanie@fiu.edu
Office Hours: DM 301B, T @ 12:30 – 1:45. or by appointment

Course Description: This is a Gordon Rule class that serves as an introduction to the study of religion. The course explores the ways in which people understand and express religious experience.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to articulate 6 dimensions of religion and be able to apply them to a religious system.
- Students will be able to recognize that one’s personal worldview affects or preconditions the understanding of a given subject.
- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess the interrelatedness of religious belief with global issues.
- Students will be able to appreciate the need to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world e.g. the affinities between secularized and traditional religious views.
- Students will perform a site visit to better understand a community’s perspective.

Required Texts:


Course Requirements:

Class Participation: 10 points

- Attendance is mandatory. Attendance counts as being present for the entire class period. Missing more than 5 class periods will lower your grade by 5 points.
- Classroom conduct and respectful discourse Students will behave in a courteous manner during class. Talking in class is disruptive and shows a lack of respect for the lecturer and your fellow students. Persistent, argumentative interrupting of the lecturer will result in removal from class until a meeting is set with myself, and if necessary the chair of the REL department. Your grade can be lowered by 5 points if you are continually disruptive.
- FIU/Panthersoft email as well as Blackboard email.
- Being prepared for and participating in class discussions
- Completion of the Global Learning Requirements
Additional Responsibilities:

- Communications must be through Blackboard email.
- Checking Blackboard email before each class.
- Understanding your course progress which includes checking that grades are recorded accurately in the grade-book. Notification of any such discrepancies must be emailed to me before final exam week. **No grade change will occur if you wait until after grades are submitted to notify me of discrepancies.**
- Any questions or disagreements with grades must be sent via Blackboard email and discussed before the end of the semester.

Use of Electronics: Laptops are permitted only for the purpose of taking notes. If you use your laptop for any other reason during class, you will lose this privilege and then set a meeting with me before resuming use. You will lose the privilege to use your laptop for the rest of the semester with a second violation. Use of all other electronic devices is prohibited during class (this means, phones are off, no texting, no phone calls). You will be asked to leave the classroom upon a second violation. The use of audio recording is permitted only by permission and is for your personal use only. Absolutely no video recording during class. No recordings may be uploaded on the internet.

Course Work: Full descriptions, rubrics, dates etc..see below and posted on Blackboard.

**Worldview Essay:** 15 points. Formal essay format, 1000 words min.

**Site Visit:** 15 points Formal essay format, 1000 words min

**Required Article:** 15 points: Formal essay format, 1000 words min.

**Class Exams:** There will be 2 Multiple Choice exams, each worth 10 points. Dates posted on Blackboard. Multiple Choice questions on the last exam meet a Global Learning Requirement.

**Project:** 25 points, 1500 word min. You will choose a visual topic (e.g. artist, art subject, architecture, music video, video game) that highlights at least 4 of the 6 dimensions of religion. Formats for project can include paper, video, powerpoint or a unique proposal.

**Citations and Format:** Formatting, Bibliographies and citations must be in MLA or Chicago Style format. See www.easybib.com or http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html for assistance. You are also encouraged to utilize the university’s Center for Excellence in Writing, GL 120 http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/

The final week of class will be utilized for the embedded text questions and exam.
**Academic Conduct**

**Plagiarism** is 1) copying any written material (including our text, my notes, another person’s paper) without using proper citation – this includes material from the internet; 2) Incorporating another person’s ideas without giving proper credit/citation (literary theft). Plagiarism will result in a 0 and be subject to the policies set forth by the university.

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.  

FIU Code of Academic Integrity  
[http://www.fiu.edu/~dwyere/academicintegrity.html](http://www.fiu.edu/~dwyere/academicintegrity.html)

**Grading Scale:** This is a Gordon Rule class and the University requirement to complete the requirement is a C (not a C-)  
Grades are based on accumulated points, 100 in total

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<td>A</td>
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**Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges**

Every attempt will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. If you require accommodations, you need to register with the Disability Resource Center, if you have not done so already. Students with extended time may take exams in the DRC or through Adaptive Release function on Blackboard. Exam format choice must be sent to me via email by the end of the 3rd week.
Class Calendar

(subject to change: students will be given reasonable notice to any changes)

Updates to class calendar will be posted on Blackboard

8/26

• Introduction: Explanation of class content and course requirements

8/28 – 8/30

• What does it mean to be a Global Citizen?
• What is a Worldview?
• What is Social Location?
• Why Study Religion? Understanding our Culture, Ethnocentricity
• Ninian Smart’s Model of the Six Dimensions of Religion
• Readings: “Introduction” in Worldviews, pp. 1 – 10

9/2 Labor Day: No Class

9/3 Last day to drop without $$ penalty

9/4, 9/6, 9/9, 9/11

• Writing Requirements: Project & Site Visit Explanations
• What is a Worldview?
• Why Study Religion? Achieving a Global Perspective
• Gender and Self Identity
• Readings: “Chapter 1: “Exploring Religion and Analyzing Worldviews”
• How do we study Religion? Methods of religious exploration: Past and Present
• Apologetics & Religious Studies
• Assignment: Begin Writing Assignment #1, My Worldview

9/13, 9/16

• Major Themes in World Religions
• Some Major Religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Asian Religions
• Nationalism and Secular Humanism
• Readings: “Chapter 2: Worldviews, An Inventory.”
9/18, 9/20, 9/23

- Readings: “Chapter 3: The Experiential Dimension.”
- Ways of Experiencing the Sacred
- Sacred Space/Sacred Time,
- Concepts of the Divine or Ultimate Reality
- **Due** Writing Assignment #1, My Worldview Date: TBA

9/25, 9/27, 9/30

- Readings: “Chapter 4, The Mythic Dimension.”
- Ways of Interpreting Myth
- History and Myth
- Metaphors and Parables
- Modern Use of Myth: Music Videos and Gaming Mythologies

10/2, 10/4, 10/7

- Readings: Chapter 5, The Doctrinal Dimension.”
- Sacred Scripture
- Authority and Interpretation: Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Reader-Response Criticism
- Social Function of Doctrine: Doctrine and the Community’s Worldview
- Arguments for the existence of God
- Theodicy: God and Suffering
- Soteriology: Salvation and Liberation
- **Exam 1**

10/9, 10/11, 10/14, 10/16

- Readings: “Chapter 6, The Ethical Dimension.”
- Ethics and Morals: Religious and Secular
- Comparing Religious Ethics
- Kombai Video and Discussion
- **Due 10/12 Project Proposal**

10/18, 10/21, 10/23, 10/25

- Readings: “Chapter 7, The Ritual Dimension.” and Appiah Article: *The Case for Contamination*
- Rituals of Sacrifice
- Rituals of Passage: Life Cycle and Calendar/Seasonal
- Iboga Drug Ritual Video and Discussion
- Appiah Article: In Class Group Discussion **Group discussion is a global learning requirement.** We will utilize 2 days (specific dates tba) for in class discussion. You only have to attend one day. You will receive extra credit for attending both days. Being absent both days will result in a reduction of your class participation grade.
- **Due** Appiah Article: Date TBA
10/28, 10/30, 11/1

- Readings: “Chapter 8, The Social Dimension.”
- Social Theories of Religion
- Types of Religious Communities
- Religion and the Secular State
- Relationship between Religion and Society/Social Constructions – Gender
- Due 11/2 Site visit Paper

11/4, 11/6, 11/8

- Readings: “Chapter 9, Reflections on the Twentieth Century.”
- Separation of Religion and State
- Capitalism
- Environmentalism
- Feminism
- Fundamentalism
- Homosexuality

11/11 No School: Veteran’s Day

11/13, 11/15, 11/18, 11/20, 11/22

- Cults and Sects
- Video on cults and Sects: Questions on Final taken from video
- Due 11/19 Semester Project: Late Projects will lose 2 points per day late!

NO Class Week of Thanksgiving – can be used as makeup days if we are not on schedule

12/2, 12/4, 12/6

- Presentation of Projects for Extra Credit: Time Permitting

Final Exam TBA