Course Description:
What is a “World Religion”? What makes Christianity and Buddhism both “religions”? What makes what Christians and Buddhists do comparable? For that matter, what makes Christians in 5th-century Rome and 21st-century Miami both Christians? This course will survey the origins, doctrines, texts, and practices of several of the major religious traditions of the world today: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. We will examine these traditions in multiple geographical and historical settings, emphasizing points of contact, communication, and change. Further, we will examine these religions not merely as abstract sets of beliefs, but as living traditions rooted in the lives of people who practice these faiths.

Course Objectives:
1. To introduce students to the concepts, theories, and methodologies of the Comparative Study of Religions.
2. To provide students with the “raw materials” for the study of religion by introducing the basic beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, and select scriptures of some of the major world religions.
3. To facilitate informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.
4. To challenge the student to enter sympathetically into the worldview of the religious traditions selected for study.
5. To provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable the student to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religiously plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own “worldview.”

Course Requirements and Grading:
1. Attendance (15% of the final grade)
   Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to participate in class discussions and activities, and to come to class having completed all assigned readings. Absences will only be excused in cases of illness or emergency with appropriate documentation.
2. Midterm Exam (25% of the final grade).
   Covers the Abrahamic Religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Vocabulary, Short answers, and Two Essays. Exam Date: Friday, October XX.
3. **Final Exam** (25% of the final grade)  
   Covers the Eastern Religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism) with one comprehensive essay. Similar format as the Midterm Exam. **Exam Date: TBA**

4. **Paper and Site Visit Report** (35% of final grade)  
   All students must attend a religious service of a **tradition outside of their own** and prepare a report and scholarly analysis of their observations. A list of religious organizations and details about the assignment can be found on the course Blackboard page under the “Site Visit” tab. The final report is due, posted to the Turnitin folder on the course Blackboard page by **Wednesday, December 11 at 11:59 PM**.

**Policies:**
1. Late papers will lose a full letter grade per day and will not be accepted after four days beyond the due date.
2. All student work must conform to University policies regarding academic honesty.

**Grading scale:**
- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 88-89
- B 83-87
- B- 80-82
- C+ 78-79
- C 73-77
- C- 70-72
- D+ 68-69
- D 63-67
- D- 60-62
- F 0-59

**Required Readings:**
The following textbook is available for purchase or rental at the FIU bookstore:  
**Additional materials will be posted on Blackboard under the “Readings” tab.**

**Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:**

**Introduction: The Comparative Study of Religion**  
Week 1 (Aug 26-30): *Introduction to the Comparative Study of Religion*  
Reading: Fisher, Chapter 1, pp. 1-32.

**Part I: The Abrahamic Faiths**  
Week 2 (Sep 2-6): Judaism, Part I: Where *did* God get the idea to create a world?  
   Monday, Sep 2: NO CLASS, LABOR DAY  
   Reading: Fisher, Chapter 8, pp. 239-264.

Week 3 (Sep 9-13): Judaism, Part II: “Why do we have to follow all these rules, anyway?”  
   Reading: Fisher, Chapter 8, pp. 264-297.

Week 4 (Sep 16-20): Christianity, Part I: A New Covenant…with Convents.  
   Reading: Fisher, Chapter 9, pp. 298-334.

Week 5 (Sep 23-27): Christianity, Part II: “To be guided by scripture alone”  
   Reading: Fisher, Chapter 9, pp. 334-380.

Week 6 (Sep 30-Oct 4): Islam, Part I: If you take monotheism seriously…  
   Reading: Fisher, Chapter 10, pp. 381-410.

Week 7 (Oct 7-11): Islam, Part II: Is there “a Muslim World”?
Reading: Fisher, Chapter 10, pp. 411-439.

**Monday, Oct. 14:** Midterm Exam

**Part II: Religions of “The East”**

Week 8 (Oct. 16-18): Hinduism, Part I: The Vedas, or How to Keep the Universe in Order
Reading: Fisher, Chapter 3, pp. 73-97.

Week 9 (Oct. 21-25): Hinduism, Part II: Sex, Love, and Devotion
Reading: Fisher, Chapter 3, pp. 97-120.

**Site Visit Proposal Due Friday, Oct. 25 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard**

Reading: Fisher, Chapter 4, pp. 121-134.

Week 11 (Nov. 4-8): Jainism, Part II: Jains in the World; and Buddhism, Part I
Reading: Cort, “Introduction” to *Jains in the World*;
The Jain Declaration on Nature;
Pravin K. Shah, “My Visit to a Dairy Farm.”
Fr: Buddhism: The Life and Legend of the Buddha
Read, Fisher, Chapter 5, pp. 135-141.

Week 12 (Nov. 11-15): Buddhism, Part I: Turns out Nirvana Isn’t Just a Band…
Mon: NO CLASS: VETERANS’ DAY
Reading: Fisher, Chapter 5, pp. 141-160.

Week 13 (Nov. 18-22): Buddhism, Part II: The Great Vehicle goes to China and Japan

Week 14 (Nov. 25-29):
NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE AND THANKSGIVING BREAK
(Work on Site Visit Paper)

Week 15 (Dec 2-6): Orientalism, and Wrap-Up
Reading for Mon: Said, “Introduction” to *Orientalism*
Wed: Course Wrap-Up
Fri: Exam Review

Final Exam: Date and Time TBA (Week of Dec. 9-13)

**Site Visit Report Due Wednesday, December 11 at 11:59 PM on Blackboard**