REL 2011
Introduction to Religion

FALL 2016 Syllabus and Learning Guide

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When and where do we meet?
Class Discussions: Tue/Thu 12:30-1:45 pm in GC 280
Office Hours: Mon/Wed 12 pm in DM 301B
Questions? Religious Studies Department: 305-348-2186

What will we be doing together?
Our world is steeped in religion and this course is designed to probe parts of its complex nature. We will explore the various elements and dimensions that make up most religions around the globe today. Essentially, we will try to engage in an earnest study of religion.

We will discuss these elements and dimensions through case studies based on a range of different traditions. Case studies that will especially highlight how these religions are interacting with ecology, politics, and women today. Class assignments, group discussions, exams, as well as a site visit essay are all geared to make us really think and analyze the ins and outs of world religions. In essence we will explore how they are important in the lives of people and societies, especially in this increasingly globalized world and economy.

What could you walk away with upon completion of course?

• You will understand how an individual’s identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences
• You will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
• You will be able to explain the history and development of the belief systems and practices of various religious communities
• You will be able to start applying critical thinking to important topics in the field of religious studies, especially as related to ecology, politics, and women.
• You will be able to appreciate the need and willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world
• You will be able to evaluate your own and others’ religious views as they relate to understanding other cultures and solving common problems
Required Texts (2)

   
   **ISBN-10:** 013600380X or **ISBN-13:** 978-0136003809


Gordon Rule Course

This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college level writing skills” throughout your assignments. You will not receive any credit as a Gordon rule course for a C- or lower upon completion of this course. Your written assignments must show good control over grammar, style, and structure. A clear thesis, supporting material, and conclusion must be evident. **You should try to utilize the writing lab to improve writing if needed.**

Grade Components

**20% PARTICIPATION 40% EXAMS 40% WRITING**

- **20%** Preparation/Group Participation/Attendance
- **5%** Beginning Reflection (2 pg)
- **10%** Site Visit Draft (3 pgs)
- **20%** Mid-term Exam
- **20%** Site Visit Final Draft (6 pgs)
- **5%** Ending Reflection (2 pg)
- **20%** Final Exam (Non-cumulative)

Time Management/DUE DATES:

SEPTEMBER

9/1 – **WRITE 2 PAGE REFLECTION**

WEEK 5- **READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD**

9/27 – **WRITE 3 PAGE SITE VISIT ESSAY DRAFT**
OCTOBER

WEEK 7- READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD

10/11 AND 10/13- EXAM MIDTERM M/C AND ESSAY

WEEK 9- READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD

NOVEMBER

WEEK 11- READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD

WEEK 13- READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD

11/28- FINISH WRITING 6 PAGE SITE VISIT ESSAY

DECEMBER

WEEK 15- READ ASSIGNED ARTICLE PREPARE 3X5 INDEX CARD

12/1- WRITE 2 PAGE REFLECTION

12/6- EXAM FINAL M/C AND ESSAY

Preparation/Participation/Attendance

- You are allowed two absences but keep in mind your own responsibilities and how it might affect your grade. Any religious observances should be discussed with me ahead of time.
- You will be responsible for reading and preparing a 3x5 index card for six articles that will assigned from the anthology Studies in World Religions throughout the semester. They will come to class with the 3x5 ready for group discussion on a central question assigned (on last page). Each group will share the conclusions of the group discussion with class. Anthology topics include but are not limited to: Sexual Pleasure, Human Rights, Pollution, Suicide, Homosexuality, Women Ordination etc.
- More instructions will be posted on Blackboard.
- All readings are to be done for the day they appear on the course calendar.

Beginning and Ending Reflections

- A short 2-page paper reflecting on your site visit will handed in twice through turnitin.com. One at the beginning of the course reflecting on visiting a religion and sacred space completely alien to you. You could describe your preconceived notions, fears, and expectations. At the end of the semester you will revisit your beginning reflection and analyze what you really learned from the experience.
- A handout with specific requirements will be posted on Blackboard.
Site Visit Draft and Final Essays

You will write a 6 page essay during the semester.

The essay will be handed in twice:

- As a draft worth 10% of the final grade to be turned in via turnitin.com
- As a final paper worth 20% of the final grade to be turned in via turnitin.com.

For each essay, you will be doing field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of their own religious tradition. A handout with specific requirements will be posted on Blackboard.

Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your turnitin.com electronic receipt AND therefore confirmation of assignment submission until you have received your final grade for the course.

Mid-term Exam

The mid-term will be a timed 50 question multiple choice exam and a timed mid-term essay. The essay will target major concepts and ideas in the study of religion from the PowerPoint Lectures and Primary Text. Review posted on Blackboard.

Final Exam

The final will be a timed 50 question multiple choice exam and a timed mid-term essay. The essay will target major concepts and ideas in the study of religion from the PowerPoint Lectures and Primary Text. Review posted on Blackboard.

No make-up final exams will be allowed unless previously scheduled in advance.

Turnitin

The reflections and site visit papers will all be submitted through www.turnitin.com by 11:59 pm on the due dates specified on the course calendar.

Turnitin ID: TBA
Password: TBA

Grading Scale

Each assignment will be graded on the following criteria

60% Content
20% Grammar
20% Style and Structure
Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm if you need further clarification. **Offenders will receive a 0 for the plagiarized assignment.**

Late Policy

For each late day I will deduct 5% off the total percentage for that assignment. The latest day an assignment will be accepted is FIVE DAYS after its original due date with a 25% deduction from the late assignment. If you are experiencing any kind of emergency that prevents a timely submission I must be notified in advance for a possible extension.

*Again, there will be no make-up final exams UNLESS previously scheduled.*

Course Calendar

**ALL POWERPOINTS TO BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD***

All TED talks and documentaries are short clips

**Week 1 and 2: Studying AND Defining Religion**
- Readings: Chapter 1 and 2 from Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)
- Readings: Studies in World Religions (SWR) Introduction
- 2 page Beginning Reflection due on 9/1 through turnitin.com by 11:59 pm

**Week 3: The Sacred and the Holy**
- Small Assignment (SA): Craft a definition of religion based on the class discussion/lecture and assigned readings
- Readings: Chapter 3 Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)

**Week 4: Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine**
- Readings: AS Chapter 4
- SA: Bring a “myth” from a tradition to discuss in class

**Week 5: Sacred Ritual**
- Readings: AS Chapter 5
  - Film: “Inside Mecca”
- SWR: First article week: Ecology 1, articles assigned
Week Six: Sacred Ritual Cont.
- Draft of site visit essay due on 9/27 through turnitin.com by 11:59 pm

Week 7: Sacred Scripture
- Readings: AS Chapter 6
- Film: “Inside the Koran”
- SWR: Second article week: Ecology 2, articles assigned

Week 8: Midterm
- A 50 MC objective exam and short answer essay to be done in class on 10/11 and 10/13 respectively, buy BLUE BOOKS

Week 9: Concepts of the Divine
- Readings: AS Chapter 8
- SWR: Third article week: Politics 1, articles assigned

Week 10: Cosmogony
- Readings: AS Chapter 9
- SA: Bring a cosmogony from a tradition to discuss in class

Week 11: The Human Problem
- Film: PBS Special “The Buddha”
- SWR: Fourth article week: Politics 2, articles assigned

Week 12: The Human Problem Continued
- Readings: AS Chapter 10

Week 13: Theodicy
- SWR: Fifth article week: Women 1, articles assigned

Week 14: Theodicy Continued
- Readings: AS Chapter 11
- Final draft of site visit essays are due on 11/28 by 11:59 pm through turnitin.com

Week 15: Soteriology
- Readings: AS Chapter 13
- Film: The World’s Biggest Festival: Kumbh Mela
- 2 page Ending Reflection due on 12/1 through turnitin.com by 11:59 pm
- SWR: Sixth article week: Women 2, articles assigned

Final Exam
- Finals Week: 12/5-12/10: Check University Final Exam Schedule: Posted for 12/6
Each of you will be preparing and discussing 6 of the following questions in a group throughout this semester

Ecology Part 1: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism

1. Debate: Can development and technology coexist with the sacred?
2. Discuss the implications for ecological concerns based on the statement: “The trees can speak, the rocks can speak, the pebbles and the sand, the ants and insects, everything is able to speak.”
3. Discuss the implications for ecological concerns based on the statement: “One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water, and vegetation disregards his own existence, which is entwined with them.”

Ecology Part 2: Judaism, Christianity, Islam

1. Debate: List the strengths and weakness of eco-theology.
2. Debate: List the pros and cons of dominion theology.
3. Discuss Islam as a “green” religion.

Politics Part 1: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism

1. Discuss the role and influence of religion and social media on elections.
2. Debate: List the pros and cons of a political party made up entirely by monks.
3. Debate: What constitutes suicide? Should Sallekhana be deemed suicide and therefore illegal in India?

Politics Part 2: Judaism, Christianity, Islam

1. Debate: Can a democracy exist without full secularism?
2. Discuss the politicization of homosexuality.
3. Discuss suicide bombing within Israel. Knowing the Qur’an explicitly prohibits suicide how do we understand the disconnection between scripture and action?

Women Part 1: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism

1. Debate: List the pros and cons of an arranged marriage.
2. Debate: List the pros of cons of fully ordaining women.
3. Debate: How can sacred scriptures empower or disempower women?

Women Part 2: Judaism, Christianity, Islam

1. Debate: List the pros of cons of fully ordaining women.
2. Debate: What is the overlap of sexual education and religious teaching? List the pros and cons for abstinence-only programs.
3. Debate: How do women’s rights within the Muslim world overlap with culture?
References

Academic Advising
http://undergrad.fiu.edu/advising/cv.html

***This syllabus is subject to change as the course develops but any changes will be notified in a timely fashion.

Last Revised: 8/8/2016