FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
REL 3308 B51
Studies in World Religions
Fall 2016
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Hospitality Management (HM), 242
Dr. Jayne A. Klein

Office Hours:  Tuesday, 12:30-1:30 p.m.  Phone: (954) 924-8227
Office: TBA  e-mail: martinj@fiu.edu

Course Description

Ever since the beginning of humanity’s existence on Earth, religion has been a singularly powerful influence on the lives of a vast majority of its occupants, and it seems likely that it will remain so for as far into the future as our minds can project. While there are some who view religion as a singularly powerful means for promoting goodness and morality in the world, there are others who see it as the source of most of the hatred and violence in the world. Whatever one’s opinion, however, it is incumbent upon all of us today to develop a familiarity with several of the World’s major religions, so that we may be better able to understand our neighbors in what, today, is an enormously complex, interdependent, and global world.

This course will introduce students to some of the World’s major and most enduring religious traditions – both Eastern and Western – by exploring their basic beliefs, practices, rituals, associated narratives, and relevant figures.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Analyze the differences and similarities between the religions studied.
- Analyze the historical development of the religious traditions presented.
- Compare and contrast religious societies and cultures in their local, national, and global contexts.
- Recognize the different ways of being religious and of interpreting the sacred, or the holy.
- Appreciate the importance that the various religious traditions discussed throughout the semester hold for their practitioners.

Other required readings will be in the form of handouts, which the professor will distribute to you at various times during the course of the semester; or they will be posted on the Library Course Reserves.

Attendance and Class Participation:

Ten percent of your final grade depends on regular attendance and class participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **Regular attendance and punctuality are expected of all.** Only two **unexcused** absences will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence beyond that will cause a drop of one rung on the final grading scale, i.e., from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, and so on. If you will be unable to attend a particular class, you are expected to inform the professor **beforehand** (whenever possible) via e-mail or telephone and explain your reason.

You are all expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading material, to present your ideas to the class, and to ask questions.

*NOTE: The professor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus at any time. Students will receive verbal and/or written notification of any modifications, should they be made.

Grade Point Distribution:

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<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Attendance and Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Exam #1 – Thursday, September 15</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>Exam #2 – Midterm Examination – Thursday, Oct. 20</td>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>Exam #3 – Final Examination – Thursday, Dec. 8</td>
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You will also have an opportunity to earn extra credit by conducting a research project, which will entail attending a service at a house of worship of your choice (other than that of the religion you were raised in or you are currently practicing) and writing a 3-5-page paper about your experience. For successful completion of this assignment, you will receive 15 points added to your lowest exam grade. Further instructions will be distributed separately.

Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-99</td>
<td>76-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>75-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>69-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>63-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83-80</td>
<td>60-0</td>
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Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule

Week beginning Tuesday, August 23 (Week #1)

Introduction to the course: course overview; review of course syllabus; defining religion; theories about the origin of religion; main characteristics of Basic religions

Film: Zeitgeist (part one) – see Power Points on Library Course Reserves

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction/Overview; Chapter 1 (Basic Religions); and Chapter 3 (African Religions) – all of this material has been posted, for your convenience, on the Library Course Reserves

Week beginning Tuesday, August 30 (Week #2)

Basic Religions (continued)

Introduction to African Religions

Film: Sorcerers of Zaire


Week beginning Tuesday, September 6 (Week #3)

African Religions (continued)

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Middle Passage

Reading Assignment: Power Points on Library Course Reserves (Papal Bulls and Transatlantic Slave Trade)

Week beginning Tuesday, September 13 (Week #4)

Film: The Middle Passage

Thursday, September 15 – Exam #1 – this exam will cover all introductory material; the theories about the origins of religion; Basic religions; and African Religions (including films viewed)

Reading Assignment: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)
Week beginning Tuesday, September 20 (Week #5)

Hinduism – lecture and discussion

Week beginning Tuesday, September 27 (Week #6)

Hinduism (lecture and discussion continued)

**Film:** Mystic India

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 6, Buddhism

Week beginning Tuesday, October 4 (Week #7)

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

**Film:** Excerpts from *Little Buddha*

Week beginning Tuesday, October 11 (Week #8)

Buddhism (continued)

**Film:** *Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama*

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

Week beginning Tuesday, October 18 (Week #9)

Introduction to Judaism (lecture & discussion)

**Thursday, October 20 – Midterm Examination** (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

Week beginning Tuesday, October 25 (Week #10)

Judaism (continued)

**Film:** *A History of God, Part I*

Week beginning Tuesday, November 1 (Week #11)

Judaism (lecture & discussion continued)

Film: The Mystery of the Jews (you tube)

**Reading Assignment:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 13 (Islam)
Week beginning Tuesday, November 8 (Week #12)

Islam: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

Film: A History of God, Part 3

Week beginning Tuesday, November 15 (Week #13)

Islam (continued)

Film: Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way

Reading Assignment: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 12 (Christianity)

Week beginning Tuesday, November 22 (Week #14)

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

Film: A History of God, Part 2

Note: Thursday, Nov. 24 – Thanksgiving Day – University closed

Week beginning Tuesday, November 29

Christianity (lecture and discussion)

Note: Thursday, Dec. 1 is last day of class

Week of Tuesday, December 6 – Final exam week

Thursday, Dec. 8 – Final Exam (on Judaism, Islam, and Christianity)