Course Description: This course constitutes an overview of the main theories of the study of religion and reflection on what exactly is the object of inquiry in the field of Religious Studies. Also, to engage thinking with historical and systematic surveys of the main religions of the world including general and basic knowledge of religious systems that started in ancient times to the contemporary expression of these in our area.

Goals: Students must demonstrate an understanding of religion as a complex phenomenon as well as acquire basic knowledge and comprehension of the main religions of the world including their followers, beliefs, and their influence in the present.


Requirements: This course fulfills two requirements. First is the Gordon Rule Requirement. According to the guidelines, students must present at least three different written works (papers). These must demonstrate “college level writing skills”. According to FIU, all written work at this level must: (1) Have a clear thesis or controlling idea; (2) Have a thesis supported with adequate reasons and evidence; (3) Be organized clearly and logically; (4) Show sustained analysis and critical thought; (5) Show knowledge of conventions of standard written English; and (6) Show awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery method. In addition, this course fulfills the requirements for the Global Learning for Global Citizenship initiative. According to FIU, students will: (1) Be able to demonstrate an understanding of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems; (2) Be able to assemble a multi-perspective analysis of an issue; and (3) Demonstrate a willingness to accept shared responsibility for solving global, international, and intercultural problems.

Grading Criteria: Three papers are required to satisfy the Gordon Rule Requirement. Therefore, three papers are required to pass this course. Each paper is worth 25% of the final grade. Attendance and participation are very important to this course. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and read their assigned readings, which will be given at the end of each class, so students can participate in class discussions, which is worth 25% of the final grade. No late papers will be accepted unless emergency circumstances are present. As members of the academic community, students are expected to recognize and uphold standards of intellectual and academic integrity.
Per FIU requirements, the objectives for all sections of REL 2011 include appropriate adaptations to the following:

a. Students will be able to interpret and explain in an organized, critical, and analytical fashion the meaning and structure of a selected group of religious texts or practices.

b. Students will be able to explain, interpret, evaluate, and describe in an organized, critical, and analytical fashion the context, history, influence, and structure of one or more religious communities as they exist in a given society.

c. Students will be able to apply critical thinking to important topics in the field of religious studies. (Global Awareness)

d. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives. (Global Perspective)

e. Students will be able to appreciate the need for a willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world. (Global Engagement)

**Paper #1**: Students will choose a site to visit and submit a paper on a religion that is not the student’s own. It is important that you enter sympathetically into the religion that you will be visiting. You do not have to agree with what you see or hear, but you should make an effort to understand it. Papers are due on Feb. 17th. Additionally, papers must be a minimum of four pages and five pages maximum in length, double-spaced, using 12-size font, and include proper citations, where needed, as well as include the following:

Discuss the history and origins of the religion as well as the founder or most influential person. Compare and contrast your own beliefs with those of the religion and sect/branch visited. Then, describe your actual visit. Was it a positive or negative experience? Did it leave/make an impression on you or your views? Was it what you thought it would be or not? Explain.

**Paper #2**: A take home Mid-Term Exam on Chapters 1-5 which will be due, in class, in person on Mar. 24th. Exams will be distributed one week prior on Mar. 10th.

**Paper #3**: A take home Final Exam on Chapters 6, 8-10 which will be due, in class on Apr. 28th. Exams will be distributed one week prior on Apr. 21st.
Title: “World Religions”  
Author: Warren Matthews  
ISBN#: 0-495-00709-9  
Thomson Wadsworth Pub.  
5th edition, 2007  
Required Text-35  
* Yes, I will be using the same text next semester.

Prof. Miles  
REL 2011/Spring 2011  
Week by Week…Readings and Discussions

Week 1: Introduction to course (syllabus, rules, and grade expectations) as well as getting to know each other, a little-Group 1 (Dreams). Understanding Diversity (looking up terms: stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and hate crimes) Group 2 (Understanding Diversity).

Week 2: Introduction to world religions including important terms and definitions (i.e., religion, religious studies, theology, sect, cult, etc.). “Out of a Cult” video. Common features of most religions (Read Intro. Ch. pp. 2-4).

Week 3: Why religions exist, per theorists (Tylor and Frazer, Freud, Durkheim, Marx, & Eliade). Group 3 (Why do you think religions exist?). “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” video.

Week 4: Indigenous religions of North America and South America (Read Ch. 1 pp. 15-37) Group 4 (Religious v. Spiritual). Discussion will include common features and various tribes.

Week 5: Religions of Africa (Read Ch. 2 pp. 41-59). Group 5 (Magic and Witchcraft articles). “Witchcraft in America” video. Discussion will include various groups and related topics such as Santeria and Vodou.
Week 6: Read up on topic of “karma” including Vishnu article (answer the two questions at the end). Group 6 (If karma is real/true, what good and bad can come of it). Paper #1-Site visit due (in person, in class).

Week 7: Hinduism (Read Ch. 3 pp. 65-96). Discussion will include sacred writings, caste system, stages of life, and contemporary issues. “Gandhi” article.

Week 8: Buddhism (Read Ch. 4 pp. 101-137). Discussion will include the life of the Buddha and his main teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, Ten precepts, Three Jewels, etc. “Human Rights and Moral Practice”—Dahlia Lama video and article.

Week 9: “Pursuit of Happiness” video, articles, and discussion. Group 7 (People and things that make you happy).

Week 10: SPRING BREAK : )

Week 11: Religions of China and Japan (Read Ch. 6 pp. 169-203). Discussion will include Taoism, Confucius, and Shinto. Group 8 (Confucius quotes). Paper #2-Midterm due (in person, in class).

Week 12: Judaism (Read Ch. 8 pp. 233-269). Discussion will include sacred writings, main beliefs, branches, rites of passage, dietary laws, etc. “Holocaust” video and article.

Group 9 (Afterlife).

Week 13: Christianity (Read Ch. 9 pp. 275-316). Discussion will include Jesus’ life story and his teachings, including miracles, as well as basic beliefs.

Week 14: Islam (Read Ch. 10 pp. 321-355). Discussion will include main teachings, including both pillars of belief and observance, as well as jihad (Muslim and non-Muslim views) and Muslim marriages.

Week 15: Global Learning. Group 10 (“The Case for Contamination” article) and quiz (extra credit).

Week 16: Final Exam due (in person, in class).