REL 6935: SEMINAR ON SACRED SOURCES
Wednesdays, 11:00am-1:45pm
Course Coordinator: Dr. Oren B. Stier
Office: DM301C
Office hours: Mon. 11:00-12:00; Weds. 10:00-10:45; or by appointment
Phone/voicemail: 305-348-6729
Email: stiero@fiu.edu

Additional Instructors:
- Dr. Aisha Musa (amusa@fiu.edu)
  - Office hours:
- Dr. Erik Larson (larsone@fiu.edu)
  - Office hours:
- Samani Chaitanya Pragya (c.pragya@rediffmail.com)
  - Office hours:

This syllabus is available via http://casgroup.fiu.edu/religion/pages.php?id=1815

Course Orientation:

Description: This course aims to familiarize students with the methods involved in the study of the sacred sources of several religious traditions (which include written and oral texts, as well as other primary material upon which religions are founded). As an intensive, team-taught seminar, varying in theme and roster of instructors each year, it serves as a required core course for MA level students. Each of the four instructors offers a three-week unit on primary textual traditions in his/her area of expertise, linked by a common theme. This year, the theme is “Violence/Non-violence,” and the individual traditions to be studied are Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and Jainism. Students are expected to begin each unit with basic knowledge of the religious traditions being discussed, though the first meeting of each unit will serve as an intensive introduction to the key sources and hermeneutical techniques for each tradition.

Goals:
- Students will gain focused and specialized knowledge of textual and interpretive traditions in a seminar setting.
- Students will learn ways to identify, describe, analyze, and compare the essential sources of world religions.
- Students will be introduced to a selection of methods utilized in analyzing those sources.
- Students will learn to see religious sources in context: “religion” will emerge as something concrete, grounded, and “real,” in harmony and/or in conflict with other worldviews in its surroundings.
- Students will develop critical thinking, oral communication, and academic essay-writing skills through lectures, class discussions of course readings, and individual writing assignments.

Required Texts:

Required Articles/Chapters/Excerpts (available electronically; see below)
Schedule of Lecture/Discussion Topics and Readings:

1/12: Introduction to the Seminar (Stier, Musa, Larson, Pragya); Theoretical Approaches (Stier)
Readings:

1/19: Judaism (Stier): Jewish Texts and Contexts
Readings:
- Excerpts from Torah, Midrash, and Mishnah

1/26:  Judaism (Stier): Interpreting the Akedah (I)
Readings:
- Spiegel (required book)

2/2: Judaism (Stier): Interpreting the Akedah (II)
Readings:
- Spiegel

2/9: Islam (Musa): Muslim Texts and Contexts
Readings:
- Selection of Quranic verses

2/16: Islam (Musa):
Readings:
- Majid Khadduri (translator) The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani’s Siyar, pp-25-36, 75-94

2/23: Islam (Musa):
Readings:
- Translation of Sahih Bukhari, Book 52: Fighting for the Cause of Allah
  <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/052.sbt.html>

3/2: Christianity (Larson):
Readings:
- Due: Take-Home Midterm (Judaism and Islam) via turnitin.com

3/9: Christianity (Larson):
Readings:
- 

3/16: Spring Break

3/23: Christianity (Larson)
Readings:
- 

3/30: Jainism (Pragya): Jain Canonical Literature, Its Style and Language
Readings:
Readings:
• Prasnavyakarana (Chapters 1,6) [missing details]
• Upasakadasha [missing details]

4/13: Jainism (Pragya): [topic?]
Readings:
• Dashavaikalik (Ch. 4, 6, and 7) [missing details]

4/20: Passover holiday—no class
Work on term papers and final exam!
Due on 4/22: Take-Home Final Exam (Christianity and Jainism) via turnitin.com

4/27 (tent.): Course conclusions (during final exam time slot: check schedule!): Faculty Panel (Stier, Musa, Larson, Pragya)
Due on 4/29: Term Papers: 2 hard copies to each relevant instructor plus one reference copy via turnitin.com

Assignments and Grading:
• Students will write two take-home exams comprising a total of four essays, one for each unit of the course, each at least 750 words. Each essay is worth 10% of the final course grade (20% per exam for a total of 40% of the final grade).
• Each student will write a term paper comparing some aspect(s) of two of the traditions studied; lists of suggested readings will be provided.
  o 1-2 page proposals, with bibliographies, are due no later than March 23 and are worth 5% of the final grade (revisions may be required in order to receive a grade)
  o Final 12-15 page papers are due no later than April 29 and are worth 40% of the final grade
• Class participation and attendance are worth 15% of the final grade

Grading Criteria:
All student work will be assigned numerical grades, corresponding to the following letter grades, according to the criteria below. Final grades will be calculated according to the percentages outlined above and converted to final letter grades for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>“As” are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and engagement with the material on an appropriate but impressive academic level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-97</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>“Bs” are awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>“Cs” are awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards but marked with errors, and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>“Ds” are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-87</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-77</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-67</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.</td>
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Course Regulations and Expectations:
• READINGS must be completed by the date for which they are assigned. Careful preparation of readings is essential for success in this course!

• ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS are due via www.turnitin.com by 11:59pm on the date indicated. I recommend you register immediately: go to turnitin.com (select “New Users” if you are new to the site) and enroll in the “REL6935-Spring 2011” section with enrollment ID [insert ID here] and password “scripture.” In the interest of fairness, deadlines are firm and will not be extended except in case of emergencies. Late assignments without authorized extensions will be penalized five percentage points for each day late, or part thereof, up to a 30 point penalty; due to the grading deadline, late term papers will not be accepted. Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your turnitin.com electronic receipt until you have received your final grade for the course.

• STANDARDS for citation and referencing must be adhered to. I recommend MLA style (see http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html and follow the link to MLA style), but any standard format is acceptable as long as you are consistent. All written assignments must be composed using a standard word processing program, formatted in 10-12 point standard fonts, and double-spaced.

• SPELLING, grammar, neatness, clarity, style, organization, etc. all DO count! Poor writing will affect your grade. Strive for clarity and use your computer’s spell-check program wisely.

• RE-WRITE and revise your essays before turning them in; do not ask to do so afterwards. Ask yourself, Is this clear? Am I communicating my thoughts well? Would a friend in another class understand what I am saying?

• PLAGIARISM and any and all forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is stealing someone else’s words or original ideas. Plagiarism occurs in two forms: (1) uncredited quotations (including words copied from elsewhere but not bracketed by quotation marks and quotations without proper citations and documentation) and (2) uncredited paraphrases. In both cases, to avoid plagiarism, students must properly cite the source material. Only commonly known facts and concepts, general material learned in the course of research and study, and students’ original ideas do not require citation. Students found violating standards will fail the course and will be reported directly to the Office of Academic Affairs.

• ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY in class are expected. Tardiness is disruptive; please be considerate of your colleagues. The professor reserves the right to refuse entrance to any student who is late, and to eject students for disruptive behavior. Since this is a once-weekly seminar, strive for perfect attendance: any absence after the first will be penalized and reflected in your grade; more than four absences will earn a zero for the class participation grade component.