

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
**REL 3308, Spring 2015, Section B53**  
**Glenn Hubert Library, Room 170**  
**Studies in World Religions**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**  
**Dr. Jayne A. Klein**

**Office Hours: Tuesday: 2:00-3:00 p.m.**  
**Office: ACI, 160**

**Phone: (305) 919-5927**  
**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 a number 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 history, 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 context.
- Recognize the different ways of being religious and of interpreting the sacred.
- Appreciate the importance that the various religious traditions discussed throughout the semester hold for their practitioners.

**Textbook:** Hopfe, L.M., and Woodward, M.R. Religions of the World. 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, *or* 12<sup>th</sup> edition. Copyright © 2004 by Pearson Education, Inc. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.

(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 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.

**Lateness**, particularly if it is disruptive and/or habitual, will have a similar negative impact on your grade. If you will be unable to attend a particular class, you are expected to inform the professor beforehand 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 /or written notification of any modifications, should they be made.**

### **Grade Point Distribution:**

- 10% Attendance and Class Participation
- 30% Exam #1 – Thursday, February 12
- 30% Midterm Examination – Thursday, March 19
- 30% Final Examination – Thursday, April 30

There will also be an opportunity to earn extra credit in this course. The professor will announce the details no later than the second week of class.

### **Grading Scale:**

94-99	A	74-76	C
90-93	A-	70-73	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
84-86	B	64-67	D
80-83	B-	60-63	D-
77-79	C+	Below 60	F

### **Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule**

#### **Week of Tuesday, January 13**

Introduction to the course: course overview and review of course syllabus;  
discussion of various assessments of the term “religion;” some theories about the origins of religion

***Reading Assignment for Thursday, Jan. 15 & Tuesday, Jan. 20:*** Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction /Overview (pp. 1-10) and Chapter 1(Basic Religions, pp. 15-28) – on-line at Library Course Reserves

**Week of Tuesday, January 20**

***Lecture and Discussion:*** Characteristics of Basic religions

***Film:*** Excerpt from the film “Zeitgeist”

***Reading Assignment for week of January 27:*** Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 3(African Religion); and Laurenti Magesa, African Religion, Chapter 2, “The Moral Universe” (on-line at Library Course Reserves)

**Week of Tuesday, January 27**

***Lecture and Discussion:*** African Religions

***Film:*** *Sorcerers of Zaire*

**Week of Tuesday, February 3**

***Lecture and Discussion:*** African Religions (continued)

Papal Bulls, the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Middle Passage

**Week of Tuesday, February 10**

***Film:*** *The Middle Passage*

**Thursday, February 12 – Exam #1**

***Reading Assignment for week of February 17:*** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

**Week of Tuesday, February 17**

***Lecture and Discussion:*** Hinduism

***Reading Assignment for week of February 24:*** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 6 (Buddhism)

**Week of Tuesday, February 24**

***Lecture and Discussion:*** Hinduism (continued)

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

**Week of Tuesday, March 3**

*Lecture and Discussion:* Buddhism (continued)

*Film:* *Compassion in Exile: The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet*

**Week of March 9-14 – Good News – Spring Break!**

**Week of Tuesday, March 17**

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

**Thursday, March 19 – Midterm Examination** (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

*Reading assignment for week of March 24:* Hopfe and Woodward,  
Chapter 11 (Judaism)

**Week of Tuesday, March 24**

*Lecture and Discussion:* Judaism

**Week of Tuesday, March 31**

*Lecture and Discussion:* Judaism (continued)

Islam: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

*Reading Assignment for week of April 7:* Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter  
13 (Islam)

**Week of Tuesday, APRIL 7**

*Lecture and Discussion:* Islam (continued)

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

*Reading Assignment for week of April 14:* Hopfe and Woodward,  
Chapter 12 (Christianity)

**Week of Tuesday, April 14**

*Lecture and Discussion:* Islam (continued)

*Film:* *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

**Week of Tuesday, April 21** (last week of class)

**Film:** *A History of God, Part 2*

**Lecture and Discussion:** Christianity (continued)

**Thursday, April 30, 9:45-11:45 a.m. – *Final Exam*** (on Judaism, Islam, and Christianity)