

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
REL 3308 U05: STUDIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS**

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Class Times:	M, W, F 11:00-11:50 AM	Office:	GL 150
Semester:	Spring 2015 January 12-April 25, 2015	Office Hours:	Mondays, Wednesdays 10:00-10:50AM
Classroom:	GC 140	Email:	Please use Blackboard course email

*For a person who has conquered his lower self by the divine self, his own self acts as his best friend. But for that person who has not conquered his lower self, his own self acts as his worst enemy.*

***Bhagavad Gita***

*In ancient times there were great Taoist Sages.  
Their way of living was so deep, so subtle, it cannot be directly explained.  
Instead, here is how they looked:  
Cautious, as if crossing the ford of a stream in Winter  
Alert, as if surrounded by danger  
Polite, as if they were always a guest  
Yielding, like ice that is on the verge of melting  
Sincere, like an uncut block of wood  
Receptive, like a valley  
Opaque, like muddy water.*

***Tao Te Ching***

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This comparative religions course examines the world's major eastern and western religions, both ancient and contemporary. From historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological and archeological perspectives they reveal their mysteries. The religious beliefs, rituals, practices, creation stories, scriptures, myths and spiritual leaders of indigenous peoples, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the New Age are studied with an eye toward understanding the similarities and differences between them.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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

- Understand the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern and Western religions.
- Discern the major similarities and differences between Eastern and Western religions, including cultural and historical contexts, as well as local, national and/or international contexts.
- Be aware of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
- Appreciate the early bases and origins of religion among Indigenous Peoples and Shamanic cultures.
- Critically engage the issue of religious diversity in national and international context (Global Engagement).
- Analyze issues in the field of religions studies from multiple approaches (Global Perspective).
- Evaluate the interrelationship between his/her own and others' religious views as they relate to understanding other cultures and solving common problems (Global Awareness).

**TEXTBOOK AND TOP HAT**

In addition to handouts, there are two books that students will read in this course and one that is recommended for your research papers. Additionally, we participate in Top Hat teaching tool.

- *Living Religions*, 9th edition, by Mary Pat Fisher, Pearson Prentice Hall Publisher.
- Recommended: *MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Modern Language Association Publisher, ISBN: 9781603290241.
- In this course we will be using **Top Hat** as an integrative teaching tool all semester. This is a mandatory requirement of the course, the same as having the required textbook. You should have received an email

from Top Hat in your FIU email with the invitation and sign up procedures. Once you have signed up and gained access, you can participate in class via Smartphone (Apple and Android), iPad, Laptop or Tablet. Please bring a mobile or computing device to class, so you can sign in for attendance and follow any interactive questions and homework assignments in class. Thank you.

## Top Hat Access Course

- **Course SMS Response Number**  
Using a mobile phone? You can text your responses here:  
+1 (315) 636-0905
- **Course URL**  
Using a browser? Here's the course URL:  
tophat.com/e/112537 Course Code
- **Mobile Apps**  
Using a smartphone? Download a mobile app  
Available from the Apple Store or Google Play

## COURSE POLICIES

If you, the student, continue in this course, then you agree to the policies and procedures of this course. The student is responsible to know those policies and procedures as stated in this syllabus. This syllabus is subject to change, but any changes will be announced in class and by Blackboard email to all students.

### Attendance

Students are to arrive on time and stay until the class period is over. If you need to leave early, discuss with me before class. Repeated tardiness is counted as an absence for that day.

### Respect, Courtesy and Communication

- It is the student's responsibility to be attentive, respectful, keep up with the work, and hand in assignments on time.
- There will be no texting or leaving class to take a cellphone call. Cellphones are only used for taking notes and class participation!
- There is no surfing or social media on computers in class! Computers are only used for taking notes and class participation!
- If a student is having any difficulties with the assignments, readings, papers, tests, punctuality, attendance, or medical issues, they should speak to the professor before it becomes a problem. Good communication will always lead to a successful resolution of the issue.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive needed accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with disabilities must register with the Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify a faculty member who has a student with a disability enrolled in his/her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements must be made.

### Religious Holidays

By university policy, students must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance that he/she wishes to observe a religious holy day. The student will be excused from class without penalty. The student is still responsible for the material and will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up any work missed after discussion with the instructor.

## ACADEMIC AND CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

### Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

- Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the *Student Handbook*.
- **Plagiarism** is the theft of someone else's intellectual property: their ideas, theories, concepts, opinions, or words. It consists of the unattributed (no reference citation) quotation of the exact words of a published text, or the unattributed borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public at large, must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate MLA citation procedure. Only widely known facts, or thoughts and observations original to the student do not require citations.
- You may not submit a paper that you have submitted for another class or one that you submitted previously for this course. **All work is required to be fresh, original and new.**
- Student papers with extensive quotations from sources mechanically inserted (cut and paste) into the paper for the sake of padding or bulk will not be accepted.
- Less is better than more when it comes to quotations. You should only quote if it is essential to your point or the quote is exceptionally powerful and succinct. In college, you must learn to paraphrase. That means putting the author's words and ideas into your own words. Since it still is the author's idea, opinion, comment or theory simply restated in your own words, it still needs to be cited.
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will cause the guilty student to be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs and possibly fail the class. Whenever a student is unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism, they are encouraged to consult their professor.

## Behavioral Misconduct

Any student who is subject to sexual harassment, stalking, physical or verbal abuse should immediately speak to the instructor. The university has policies to protect students in these instances and the instructor will immediately refer the student to the appropriate program or resource.

## GRADING

Course Requirements	Weight
Ten Online Quizzes (4.2% each)	42%
Final Quiz 10 (6%)	6%
Writing Rules Quiz	2%
Discussion / Participation	10%
Movie Essay	15%
Jerusalem Case study	20%
Attendance	5%
Extra Credit Paper	2%
Total	102%

Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range
A	93-100	B-	80-83	D+	67 - 69
A-	90 - 92	C+	77 - 79	D	64 - 66
B+	87 - 89	C	74 - 76	D-	60 - 63
B	84 - 86	C-	70 - 73	F	0-59

## Grading Rubrics

### Who Receives an A Grade?

- This student provides consistent, excellent, high quality work on all assignments.
- This student actively participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits superior college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a case study essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate solid research to support his/her paper's arguments.
- This student turns in all assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates near perfect attendance and punctuality.
- This student is highly motivated to learn and improve academic skills.

#### **Who Receives a C Grade?**

- This student provides consistent, average quality work on all assignments.
- This student participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits average college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a case study essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate basic research to support his/her paper's arguments.
- This student turns in most or all assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates good attendance and punctuality.
- This student shows average motivation to learn and improve academic skills

#### **Who Receives an F Grade?**

- This student provides extremely poor quality work on most or all assignments that does not meet even minimal academic standards.
- This student may not participate in class and Discussion Boards at even a minimal level and is unable to provide knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student does not exhibit college level writing skills and has not mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a case study essay.
- This student does not know how to or fails to conduct and demonstrate research skills to support his/her paper's arguments.
- This student does not turn in assignments on time or fails to turn in assignments.
- This student may demonstrate extremely poor attendance and punctuality.
- This student has not shown the motivation to learn and improve their academic skills.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Textbook and Readings**

Students are expected to keep up with coursework and be prepared for the each class by making sure they have read all the materials for that class and turned in any assignments on time.

### **Attendance**

It is my requirement and a requirement of the university that you attend class on a regular basis. This is 5% of your grade and is calculated by the percentage of times present and absent. However, if you miss more than three classes, a greater percentage is deducted. The 5% Attendance grade is for regular attendance, but missing too many of the classes in the course is not acceptable and leads to failure. Much of the course is based on lecture, discussion and participation, and not just taking quizzes or turning in papers.

### **Quizzes**

Students will take nine online quizzes (4.2% each), one Final Quiz (6%), and one Writing Rules Quiz (2%): Multiple Choice, Matching, Fill-in-the-blank, and True/False. Quizzes will be based on both lecture and textbook material (about a 50-50 ratio), so passing will require **regular attendance, taking good notes, and reading the textbook**. It is not recommended that you take these quizzes as an open book test as they are time limited and you will not have time to look up material and answer all of the questions. In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Online Learning Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

## Discussion/Participation

This is 10% of your grade. Students are expected to actively participate in class by making relevant comments, and asking and answering questions. You must also answer Top Hat questions and participation exercises, including Homework. It is mandatory that students participate in the Team Discussion Forums, particularly for the Appiah Essay. A minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each) is required for each assignment. Doing the minimum earns you a C (75%); anything more brings a higher grade, as long as comments are substantive and thoughtful. Keep in mind that forum discussions are public, and care should be taken when determining what to post. If you need to send a private message to an instructor or student, please use Blackboard email.

## Movie Essay

Think, Pair, Share and One 750 Word Opinion Essay (20%): Each Team will watch one of these movies, as assigned below, participate in a group discussion on the movie, and write an essay. Follow these instructions: Explain, discuss, and analyze the themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, and how the story affected you. **Do not retell the story for me, although you will need to refer to plot, storyline and characters from time to time. Analyze!** Compare what you have learned about other religions and religious practices to discuss common themes and similarities or significant differences. You must demonstrate significant participation in the discussion (three or more comments/opinions) for your paper to be accepted.

1. Team 1: *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, Graham Greene)
2. Team 2: *The Last of His Tribe* (Jon Voight, Graham Greene)
3. Team 3: *The Mission* (Robert DeNiro, Jeremy Irons)
4. Team 4: *Thunderheart* (Val Kilmer, Graham Greene)
5. Team 5: *Gandhi* (Ben Kingsley)
6. Team 6: *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese)
7. Team 7: *Schindler's List* (Liam Neeson)
8. Team 8: *The Education of Little Tree* (Graham Greene, James Cromwell)
9. Team 9: *Whale Rider* (Keisha Castle-Hughes)
10. Team 10: *The Passion of Christ* (Jim Caviezel)
11. Team 11: *Monsoon Wedding* (Naseeruddin Shah)
12. Team 12: *Five People You Meet in Heaven* (Jon Voight)
13. Team 13: *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (N!xau)

## Case Study

**Jerusalem—Sacred City or City of War?** Think, Pair, Share and One 1000 Word Case Study Research and Opinion Essay (25%): Each team will **research, discuss and debate** a solution to the Case Study. Each Team will break itself down into the various factions mentioned in the study. For example, two members will represent the Palestinians, two members will represent the Israelis, two members will represent the League of Arab States, and two members will represent the American Government, and so on. The Case Study instructions will explain what to do. At the end each team member will write an essay: Part I discusses the ancient and current history of the conflict. Part II shows your research results and your position (subteam) for the negotiating party you represented. Part III: describes in detail the Peace Plan you and the Team developed as a resolution: boundaries, governance of Jerusalem, realistic implementation strategies. You must demonstrate significant participation in the discussion (three or more comments/opinions) for your paper to be accepted. You must provide proof of your research with citations in the body of the text and a separate Works Cited page per MLA guidelines.

## Extra Credit

The student may write one Extra Credit Essay (2%) from the following choices.

- 500 Word Movie Review on *The Peaceful Warrior* with Nick Nolte, or *The Da Vinci Code* with Tom Hanks, or *Joshua* with Tony Goldwyn. Explain and discuss the themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, how the story affected you, and what it means today.

Or

- 500 Word Movie Review on *Jesus Camp*. Analyze the movie, especially what you liked/disliked about the religious training depicted and the larger issues of the separation of religion and state in our country.

Or

- 500 Word Movie Review on *Judgment at Nuremburg* with Spencer Tracy, Marlene Dietrich

## WRITING AND RESEARCH POLICIES

Each type of paper (opinion and case study research) will be graded according to the following criteria.

- **OPINION ESSAY**

- **Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)**

- Understanding: How well do understand the subject?
- Clarity: How well did you explain, present, and discuss the topic? Will the reader understand what you are talking about?
- Accuracy: How accurate are you with the facts and issues?

- **Strength of Argument (30%)**

- Strong Thesis Statement: Is your Thesis Statement clear and to-the-point, and does it tell your audience exactly what the paper is about?
- Rationale: Did you build your case logically and step-by-step?
- Details/Examples: Did you give adequate details and provide useful examples to make and fill out your points?
- Coverage: Did you cover the topic adequately enough to make the essential points?
- Connections and Transitions: Did you provide good transitions from topic to topic and paragraph to paragraph.

- **Strength of Organization and Structure (25%)**

- Outline: Did you outline the paper so it is organized and logical in its presentation?
- Title: Did you provide a clear and interesting title?
- Introduction: Did you provide a clear and interesting introductory paragraph that adequately introduces the essay? Is your Thesis Statement in the introduction?
- Paragraphing: Do you understand how to paragraph and provide good transitions between paragraphs, that is, one paragraph should naturally lead into another.
- Focus: Does your paper stay focused and on track?
- Conclusion: Do you provide a clear summary and concluding paragraph that pulls the paper together and provides a logical conclusion to the subject?

- **Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (20%)**

- Diction: Do you demonstrate good word choice, that is, use of the correct word?
- Grammar: Do you demonstrate a good knowledge of the fundamentals of grammar?
- Sentence Structure: Do you write solid sentences that are clear, concise and focused—not wordy, fragments, run on or overly complicated?
- Interesting Style: Do you write in a way that interests the reader—variety of words, challenging ideas, vibrant language?
- Glittering Generalities: Are your sentences too general and vague, or are they backed up with specific facts, examples and details?

- **CASE STUDY/RESEARCH PAPER**

- **Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)**

- **Strength of Argument (20%)**

- **Strength of Organization and Structure (20%)**

- **Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (15%)**

- **Strength of Research (20%)**

- Strength of Sources: Did you provide the required reference sources? Remember that dictionaries, encyclopedias, and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources, nor are direct sources such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and so on.
  - MLA: Did you follow MLA format?
  - Citation: Did you properly cite all the information sources in the body of the paper. Remember that anything that does not come from your own brain needs to be cited, that is, anyone else's words, ideas, theories, concepts, comments, and so on that you quote, paraphrase, summarize.
  - Works Cited: Did you provide a separate and properly formatted Works Cited page?
- We use *The MLA Handbook* for writing papers in this course. You must know how to perform parenthetical referencing to provide appropriate citations for your sources.
  - Read *Dr. Norris' Excellent Tips for Writing Papers* on Blackboard to guide you in writing your essays. All written assignments are formal essays and should follow college essay format.
  - All essay assignments will be turned in through **Turnitin** in Blackboard on the day they are due. There is a grade penalty of one grade decrease per day for late papers.
  - **You may write more than the minimum word requirement, but not less without penalty. In fact, some of your papers may need more than the minimum to adequately cover the topic and make your points.**
  - While there is a wealth of sound research information at your disposal on the Internet, there is a greater deal of dubious material, so please be discerning. Acceptable authorship includes individual, recognized experts, educational institutions (e.g. Institute of Reformation History, Stanford University), publicly supported national or international institutes (e.g. World Health Organization), and other well-known institutions with solid reputations (e.g. World Council of Churches). Go to <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide-headings.aspx> for excellent religious studies sources. This site will also be posted on Blackboard in Student Resources.
  - Please take advantage of the (free) Writing Lab that will provide you with someone to go over your papers for grammatical, format, and content issues before you hand it in. Stop by to set up an appointment with them in PC 247! Their website also contains examples of MLA style and other helpful tools: <http://casgroup.fiu.edu/writingcenter>. This site will also be posted on Blackboard in Student Resources.