

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
Department of Religious Studies  
REL 2011 Religion: Analysis and Interpretation  
Spring 2015

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Instructor: Mr. Curtis Lanoue  
Office Hours: Friday 5:30 PM  
Office: PC 332

Class Hours: F 6:20—9:05 P.M.  
Class Room: PC 332  
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### TEXTBOOK

James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. ISBN 9780136003809

Additional readings will be accessible through Blackboard.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- List and explain the multiple methods for the study of religion.
- Critically reflect on the divine/holy/sacred and its relation to religion.
- Summarize the basic commonalities between many religions including their possible origins, shared characteristics, and social functions.
- State in their own words some of the well-known definitions of religion as well as their strengths and weaknesses (Durkheim, Geertz, etc.).
- Provide several typologies for grouping the religions of the world as well as how these groupings can lead to biases (preliterate vs literate, Western vs Eastern, monotheistic vs polytheistic, World religions vs tribal religions, etc.).
- Explain how one's religion affects their worldview.
- List and describe various ways that religion is a source of both good and evil in the world, especially in a global political sense.
- Explain how the study of religion could pertain to their own (probable) major.
- Understand the importance of fieldwork in the study of religion as well as the basics of how to perform it.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Chapter quizzes, attendance, and participation in class discussion 10 points**

Each week (except Week 1) we will have a quiz over the previous week's readings. These quizzes will make sure you (1) have read the readings and (2) understand them. They will be open book multiple choice, T/F, short response questions. There will be a time limit for each question to ensure that you've done the readings beforehand. You can drop your lowest two quizzes.

### **Research Proposal 5 points**

This is a *hypothetical* proposal for a research project. First, use your declared major/probable major/major-at-random-from-the-fields-of-study-offered-at-FIU. Next, think of how you could use that major as a basis for a research project studying religion. Imagine you are applying for a grant and must describe what your project will study and how it will study it (methodology). To do this well will require 250-500 words. Spelling, grammar, and academic style will be part of your grade for this and every subsequent writing assignment.

### **Midterm Essay 25 points**

This will meet part of Gordon Rule requirements. The midterm will be take home and submitted online. 6-8 pages. The question/topic will be made available the week of midterms.

### **Final Exam Essay 15 points**

This will meet part of Gordon Rule requirements. The final will be take home and submitted online. 6-8 pages. The question/topic will be made available the week of finals.

### **Final Exam Objective 15 points**

Similar in structure to chapter quizzes but cumulative in content.

### **Site Visit Assignment 30 points total**

This assignment has several parts. First, choose a religious tradition that (1) interests you and (2) will be easy enough to observe “in action.” Because you will need to interview a religious leader and attend a religious ceremony, you may want to choose traditions that your friends or family are members of. This may **NOT** be your own religion or the religion in which you were raised. South Florida has a huge diversity of active religious traditions. The five major world religions are well represented as well religions such as Santeria, Vodou, Wicca, etc.

Part 1: Write a 250-500 summary of the religion you choose. You should include many of the topics discussed in Livingston: myth, ritual, scripture, cosmogony, theodicy, soteriology, etc. Wikipedia is your friend (but don't copy and paste)! **5 points**

Part 2: Use your summary to prepare for an interview with a religious leader from the tradition you chose. Make sure to ask questions related to the topics addressed in your summary, but also focus on understanding the ritual/activity you will be attending. Attending a funeral ceremony will require different understanding than a wedding. Be certain to ask any questions or doubts you have about your attendance at the activity. What is required of you? What is forbidden? Etc. Write a 500-700 word summary of your interview. **5 points**

Part 3: Attend a ritual/activity. While at the activity, you should be a participant observer. Do **NOT** take notes during the activity out of respect. This will require you to be well prepared. Know what you are looking for **IN ADVANCE**. Any photos you would like to include should be taken before or after the ceremony and make sure you have permission. This assignment is the culmination of this entire course. You will summarize parts 1 and 2 of this project, but don't copy and paste. Your paper should have roughly two parts: (1) your

description of the activity and (2) your analysis of it. To do this paper properly will require 6-8 pages. **20 points**

**Extra Credit 5 points total** (note: you can do both assignments but will receive a maximum of 5 points)

Attend a Theta Alpha Kappa Coffee Hour (usually fourth Thursday of each month from 3:30—5:00 PM. Along with being generally social, converse with a Religious Studies Department faculty member and (1) ask them for their cocktail party/elevator speech. Be an active listener, i.e. do NOT take notes DURING the conversation. (2) Ask them for an example of their work relating to their research field. Read it (assuming it is article length. For books, choose the introductory chapter). (3) Include a summary of their elevator speech and their written work in your 250 words. Make sure to include how they have used one or more of the various methods for analyzing religion that we have learned. **5 points**

Attend a presentation related to the study of religion (visit religion.fiu.edu for upcoming event information). Write a 250 word summary. Make sure to include how they have used one or more of the various methods for analyzing religion that we have learned. **5 points**

## GRADING CRITERIA AND COURSE POLICIES

This is a Gordon Rule class, so yes, your writing ability will be graded as well. Writing assignments will be graded based on four criteria:

- A clearly defined central idea
- Adequate support for the central idea
- Clear and logical organization
- Appropriate style and grammar

Buy a style handbook. Whether MLA, APA, Chicago, Turabian, etc. is not as important as choosing one and being consistent.

Understanding higher order thinking skills (HOTS) will help in writing your essays and papers. You will want to answer questions containing words such as: judge, predict, compare/contrast, evaluate, what might happen if . . . , etc. Your writing should NOT focus on answering questions that include: define, list, restate, who/what/where/when, etc. A search of “higher order thinking” will help a lot.

Late work will be deducted 5 percentage points per day late.

Grading Scale:

94-100 A	77-79 C+	60-63 D-
90-93 A-	74-76 C	0-59 F
87-89 B+	70-73 C-	
84-86 B	67-69 D+	
80-83 B-	64-66 D	

## UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS: GLOBAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
  - Course Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape the actions of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.
- Global Perspectives: Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
  - Course Learning Outcome: Students will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals/persons — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.
- Global Engagement: Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
  - Course Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in negotiation regarding actions of global import within the context of the class simulation.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As a Gordon Rule course, written assignments are required of all students in order to fulfill the State-mandated standards for this course. This will be fulfilled by the mid-term and final exams and the site visit project.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

### FIU Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellence in 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 to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct that 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 Honors College Student Handbook.

Academic misconduct includes:

- Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources, or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations or other work; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Cheating violates both University and College codes.
- Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source, and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, commits plagiarism. Plagiarism violates both University and College codes.

- Unacceptable behavior – Students who show repeated or egregious disrespect for classmates or instructors, are disruptive, or consistently violate course rules are subject to the sanctions of the Honors College.

## COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 January 16

Syllabus review, expectations, guidelines.

Introduction to chapters 1 and 2.

Discuss site visit assignment and cover chapter outline of Livingston.

Week 2 January 23

Finish reading ch 1 and 2 by class.

Quiz on ch 1-2.

Classroom discussion on ch 1-2.

Week 3 January 30

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 3 and 5.

**Research proposal assignment due (Turnitin through Blackboard)**

Week 4 February 6

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 4, 6 starting on page 112.

**Part 1 of site visit assignment due (Turnitin through Blackboard)**

Week 5 February 13

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 7 & 8.

Week 6 February 20

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 9 & 10.

Week 7 February 27

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 11 & 12 through page 276 (stop at abortion).

Week 8 March 6

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 13.

**MIDTERM submitted online (Turnitin through Blackboard)**

Week 9 March 13

**Spring Break**

Week 10 March 20

Finish reading/quiz/discussion ch 14 & 15

**Part 2 of site visit (interview) (Turnitin through Blackboard)**

Week 11 March 27

Finish reading/quiz/discussion Weber and Baum on secularization (Blackboard).

Week 12 April 3  
**Good Friday NO CLASS**

Week 13 April 10  
Finish reading/quiz/discussion Malinowski & McFague on science and religion (Blackboard).

**Part 3 of site visit.**

Week 14 April 17  
NO CLASS

Week 15 April 24  
Finish reading/quiz/discussion Schussler-Fiorenza and Mir-Hosseini on women and religion  
(Blackboard).

**Last in person class.**

**Extra credit due.**

Week 16 May 1

**FINAL**

There are five articles for the final exam essay portion. You will pick ONE of them.

**Essay will be submitted online.**

**Objective will be online.**