REL 2011: Introduction to Religion  
Department of Religious Studies  
Instructor’s Name: Andres Arrazola  
Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.  
Location: GL 150  
E-mail: aarra001@fiu.edu

Course Description

This course is a foundational course offered by the Religious Studies Department. The course incorporates the study of scripture, belief and practices, and the historical and social context of religion. This course introduces the field of Religious Studies by looking at topics and themes such as doctrine, ritual, scripture, mysticism, pilgrimage, and myth across two or more religions while also introducing methodological approaches to the comparative study of religion. In all, by studying the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religion, students will gain insights into similarities across religions as well as the most salient elements of religious traditions such as scripture, rituals, and institutions.

Course Objectives

1) To analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in personal, social, and global contexts.

2) To understand and discuss the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religious truth claims and meaning making practices.

3) To develop proficiency in analyzing texts, rituals, behaviors, beliefs and practices of a variety of religious traditions. Because the student will be constantly utilizing various theoretical discourses he/she will be able to analyze the many ways in which concepts, statements, beliefs, and judgments relate to practice, action, and other concepts and beliefs, as clarified through theoretical discourse. Thus the student will develop the skill of evaluating how plural theoretical structures may work together to create an adequate understanding of religion.

4) To better understand religious belief and practice within various religious traditions and areas of the world it will contribute to a richer understanding and appreciation of the diversity of religious activities throughout the world.
Course Requirements/Assessments

- Attendance: 20%
- Participation: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Exams: 25%
- Three Essays: 20%
- Presentation: 15%

Essays

**Essay One** – Choose one of the films we watched in class and apply the Smart’s six dimensions of religion to the analysis. The emphasis of the paper should be on how all six dimensions of a religion reinforce each other. The paper should be no more than 5 pages and use the typical formatting guidelines, such as double space, 10 – 12 inch font, and 1.0-inch margins. A cover page is necessary to include the title of the paper, your name, class, date, and any other identifying information you wish.

**Essay Two** – Describe the religion you created with your group and demonstrate how all six of Smart’s dimensions of religions are incorporated. There should be a logical reinforcement of each dimension to each other so to structure the religion into a cohesive whole. The religion should also be rational, understandable, and meaningful. The paper should be no more than 5 pages and use the typical formatting guidelines, such as double space, 10 – 12 inch font, and 1.0-inch margins. A cover page is necessary to include the title of the paper, your name, class, date, and any other identifying information you wish.

**Essay Three** – The third essay will be a hand written essay to be produced during the final covering topics from the textbook and discussed in class. More information on this essay will be discussed during the semester.

Quizzes and Exams

Throughout the course, quizzes will be administered at the professor’s discretion. The aim of the quizzes is to assess the level of engagement by the students of the assigned reading. Also, there will be a midterm and a final exam that will assess all of the materials discussed in class. The final exam will not be cumulative.

Group Project/Presentation

Students’ will form into groups at the beginning of the semester with the intent of constructing their own religion by the end of the semester and will present their religion to the rest of the class. The group must show a mastery of the six dimensions of religion as discussed in class. There must be a rationale for the religion and each element of the religion must be reinforced somehow across the different dimensions.
Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>0-59</td>
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Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, helping another student to cheat, plagiarism, turning in the same paper for two different courses (including those in two different semesters), purchasing papers written by others, manipulating attendance records, and falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.

Course Materials


Weekly Schedule

**Week of Jan. 11th: Introduction**

**Week of Jan 18th and Jan 25th: Doctrinal Dimension**

Reading – Smart “Doctrinal Dimension”

Quiz – Friday January 29th

Martin Luther King Day January 18th – no class.

**Week of February 1st and 8th: Ethical Dimension**

Reading – Smart “Ethical Dimension”

Quiz – Friday February 12th

**Week of February 15th and 22nd: Mythical Dimension**

Reading – Smart “Mythical Dimension”

Quiz – Friday February 26th
Week of February 29th and March 7th: Ritual Dimension
Reading – Smart “Ritual Dimension”

Midterm – Monday February 29th
Quiz – Friday March 11th

Week of March 14th – Spring Break (No Class)

Week of March 21st and March 28th: Social Dimension
Reading – Smart “Social Dimension”
Quiz – Friday April 1st

Week of April 4th and April 11th: Experiential Dimension
Reading – Smart “Experiential Dimension”
Essay 1 Due Friday April 8th
Quiz – Friday April 15th

Week of April 18th: Group Project Workshop

Week of April 25th: Group Project Presentation Week
Essay 2 Due Friday April 29th

Final Exam TBA (May 2 – May 7th – Final Exam Week)

Syllabus Is Subject To Change