REL 2011-U10 (88026) Introduction to Religion: Analysis and Interpretation
Fall 2019

Days and Times: M, W, F 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Room: Paul Cejas Architecture 150

Instructor: Adam D. Gorelick
Office Hours: M, W 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m., DM 302
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**PLEASE NOTE:** This syllabus is subject to change. Students should e-mail the instructor with any questions about the assignments and schedule.

**Course Description**
This course introduces methods of critical reflection on religion and some of their applications to fundamental topics such as knowledge, value, the sacred, the individual, and human society. While we will identify, examine, and respect the particularity of specific examples from diverse religious traditions, we will also highlight some broad analytical themes applicable to religion in general. We will interpret these cross-cultural themes using methods from various academic disciplines.

**Course Outcomes**
Students will be able to...
- Apply critical thinking skills to various topics in the field of religious studies.
- Explore the origins, nature, functions, and definitions of religion.
- Bracket out personal bias and attempt to understand the point of view of religious adherents.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems—as pertaining to the development and practice of religions.
- Analyze topics in religious studies through multi-perspective analyses of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world and to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
- Conduct field research to better understand a religious community.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, etc.

**Texts**

Additional selected readings and other materials will be assigned through Canvas.

**Gordon Rule Course**
This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college level writing skills” throughout your assignments. **You will not receive any credit as a Gordon rule course for a C- or lower upon completion of this course.** Your written assignments must show good control of grammar, style, and structure. Your papers must have a clear thesis, supporting material, and a conclusion.

**Guidelines for Written Work**
All written work must consistently adhere to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide. Students are advised to carefully proofread all papers before submitting them. All students are encouraged to take advantage of the University resources for writing to be found in the Center for Excellence in Writing, a full-service writing center providing writing assistance and feedback to university students. For more information, go to [http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/](http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/).

All written work is submitted through Canvas as turn-it-in assignments, which means that the instructor will be aware of plagiarism. Plagiarism can result in expulsion from the university and will have a negative effect on your entire career. All written work must include your name, Panther ID number, course number and the name of the professor on the title page. It must be double spaced, have 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) and be typed in 12 point font, Times New Roman or Calibri.

**Religious Holidays**
Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

**Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges**
Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/) (DRC), if you have not done so already.” Please note that if you have a student who is registered with the DRC, you will receive notification about the student’s disability and a detailed description of accommodations the student will require.

**Academic Conduct**
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 to 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.

Note: Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and written assignments are to be submitted to turnitin.com.

Grading Scale
94 - 100 A
90 - 93 A-
87 - 89 B+
84 - 86 B
80 - 83 B –
77 - 79 C+
74 - 76 C
60 - 73 D
0 - 59 F

Course Requirements
Attendance and Participation – 15% of final grade

Quizzes – Quizzes will be unannounced and will cover material from the readings and lectures. 15% of final grade

Midterm Essay Exam – The midterm exam will be a take-home essay exam. Students will answer two of three questions (in total, 1000-word minimum). See below for dates. 20% of final grade

Final Exam – The final exam will be multiple-choice. See below for date. 20% of final grade

Site Visit Background Research Paper – Students will conduct field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. In preparation for this field study, students will research the religious tradition in question. Students will not only identify the tradition broadly but also specify any relevant sectarian affiliation. Additionally, student will place the religious tradition’s history within the sociological context of the freedom of religion. Has this religion enjoyed state sponsorship or suffered institutionalized persecution in some regions during its history? How were the effects of this? Using a minimum of 2 academic sources beyond the textbook, students will prepare a short research paper (500-word minimum) presenting their findings and articulating their understanding of the tradition in question. 10% of final grade

Site Visit Essay – As per above, students will conduct field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. Students will take notes on site and prepare a (1250-word minimum) paper applying Ninian Smart’s dimensions as an analytical tool. Also, as with the background research paper, students will consider the sociological
context of the freedom of religion. Additional guidance will be provided on Canvas. **20% of final grade**

**Calendar**

**Week 1 (8/26 to 9/1)**
- Class introductions, syllabus review, course plan, what is religion?
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 1

**Week 2 (9/2 to 9/8)** **No Class on Labor Day, Monday 9/2**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 2

**Week 3 (9/9 to 9/15)**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 3

**Week 4 (9/16 to 9/22)**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 4

**Week 5 (9/23 to 9/29)** **Deadline to choose location for Site Visit Project: 9/29, 11:59 p.m.**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 5

**Week 6 (9/30 to 10/6)** **No Class on Rosh Hashanah, Monday 9/30**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 6

**Week 7 (10/7 to 10/13)** **No Class on Yom Kippur, Wednesday 10/9**
- **Deadline to submit preliminary bibliography for Background Research Paper:**
  - Wednesday, 10/9, 11:59 p.m.
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 7

**Week 8 (10/14 to 10/20)** **Midterm Take-Home Essay Exam: avail. 10/14; due 10/21, 11:59 p.m.**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 8

**Week 9 (10/21 to 10/27)**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 9

**Week 10 (10/28 to 11/3)**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 10

**Week 11 (11/4 to 11/10)** **Background Research Paper: Due 11/10, 11:59 p.m.**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 11

**Week 12 (11/11 to 11/17)** **No Class on Veterans Day, Monday 11/11**
- **Reading:** Livingston ch. 12
Week 13 (11/18 to 11/24)
   Reading: Livingston ch. 13

Week 14 (11/25 to 12/1) **No Class on Turkey Sandwich Day, Friday 11/29**
   Reading: Livingston ch. 14

Week 15 (12/2 to 12/7)
   Reading: Livingston ch. 15

Week 16 (12/8 to 12/14)
   Finals Week – No regular class meetings, just the final exam period
   Final Exam Wednesday, 12/11, 9:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., PCA 150
   Site-Visit Essay with Field Notes: Due 12/13, 11:59 p.m.