Why Should I Care about Religion?
Maybe Jesus was a Buddhist monk. Where exactly did your yoga class come from? Why are Native Americans some of the best eco-advocates today? Is Judaism a religion, a culture, or a tribe? Is God dead? God may be alive, but is he a woman? It might be good to wonder if religion is a force for good or evil to begin with? Can we still be spiritual without being religious?

- These are not just entertaining questions, but are highly relevant to your personal and professional development in our globalized world. In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore these questions and many more that emerge as we investigate humanity, religion, and the cosmos.

How can this course help you advance in your career?
You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will train you to make important connections between your career and the world of the sacred and the profane. You will be able to explore the variety of religious expressions and frameworks that shape societies around the world, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

- Religious literacy will greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or
not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.

- Our approach is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from many fields of study such as philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This enhances your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

1. **Canvas:** All students are required to regularly utilize Canvas for this course. Through this website, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload the assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and access grades.

2. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, and absences will affect your grade. If you know that you will have a conflict, notify the instructor in advance. Timely attendance is also critical, therefore recurrent lateness will affect your participation.

3. **Class Participation:** It is critical that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This class requires small group work and critical reflection. Not only will the quality of your participation in class affect your final grade, but also lack of participation will make this a very long class meeting. **DO NOT BE LATE TO CLASS!!!**

4. **Class Facilitation:** You will be required to present weekly readings and facilitate class discussion throughout the semester by yourself as well as in collaboration with one or two of your classmates. At the beginning of each class, designated students will present a short list of questions (2 or 3) based on summaries made from the assigned readings and bring them to class with the intention of using them for the peer review exercise, and to facilitate discussion.

5. **Quizzes:** Quizzes will include key terms from the chapters as well as religious concepts. This is to ensure that the student is reading the text and following the class discussions as well.

6. **Creating Your Own Religion:** This assignment is divided into two (2) segments. The purpose of this project is to create a new religion discussing it’s historical origins, contemporary practice, and changes and adaptations that have developed in recent years with the religion’s movement toward globalization and modernity. The exact details for successful completion of this project is detailed at the end of this document in Appendix I.

*Students are encouraged to make use of FIUs Center for Excellence in Writing at; https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html*
**GRADING CRITERIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class attendance</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>Film Report 1</td>
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<td>Film Report 2</td>
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**GRADING GRID**

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*Additional readings may be assigned by the instructor*

**Gordon Rule Requirement**

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words, double spaced – approximately four (4) pages – 12-Pt Font, Times New Roman Font, and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points).

*Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives*
*By: Lewis Vaughn*

MLA (7th ed.) citation:
**Global Learning Objectives**

As a Global Learning course, students will meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions.
- Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

*This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, please visit: [https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/](https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/)

**Plagiarism**

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

- A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
- Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
- Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at [http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm](http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm) if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F (0 points) for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

**Accessibility and Accommodation**: The Disability Resource Center (DRC) collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at (305) 348–3532 or visit its office at the Graham Center (GC) 190.

* I do not allow the use of recording devices in my classroom at any time. The only exception to this is if the student requires academic accommodation as stated by the Disability Resource
**Center. In this case, the student is allowed and encouraged to record the lecture, however, the recorded information is for personal use and “will not be shared, duplicated or disseminated to others” as stated by the disability center.**

**This is a Cellphone FREE environment, DON’T TEXT AND LEARN, it’s hazardous to your health!**

***Subject to change. I reserve full right to amend, alter, and otherwise change this syllabus at any time.***

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

*Please Note: Schedule and assignments subject to change by professor.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COURSE CONTENT: TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 1:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AUG 26 - 30</td>
<td><strong>WELCOME AND INTROSCTIONS!!!</strong></td>
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<td>8/26: In-depth review and discussion of syllabus</td>
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<td>- Assign presenters</td>
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<td>- Preliminary in-class written assignment: open topic</td>
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<td>8/28 – 8/30:</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>The Beginning of Understanding</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Lead discussion of assigned reading</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 2:</strong></td>
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<td>SEP 2 - 6</td>
<td><strong>LABOR DAY – NO CLASS!!!</strong></td>
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<td>9/2: <strong>Indigenous Religions: American Indians</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Vaughn pgs. 41–45, 65–67</td>
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<td>- Lead discussion of assigned reading</td>
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<td>9/4: <strong>Indigenous Religions: African Diaspora/Candomble</strong></td>
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<td>- Vaughn pgs. 67–71</td>
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<td>- Candomblé Beads and Identity in Salvador Da Bahia, Brazil</td>
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<td>- Lead discussion of assigned reading</td>
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<td>9/9–9/11 <strong>Quiz #2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 3:</strong></td>
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<td>SEP 9 - 13</td>
<td><strong>Indigenous Religions: African Diaspora/Candomble</strong></td>
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<td>- Vaughn pgs. 67–71</td>
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<td>9/13: <strong>Quiz #2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 4:</strong></td>
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<td>Week</td>
<td>Dates</td>
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- Lead discussion of assigned reading |
|         | 9/20: Current event news item | | |
- Lead discussion of assigned reading |
|         | 9/27: Current event news item | | |
10/4: Current event news item  
- **Quiz #3** |
- Lead discussion of assigned reading  
10/18: Current event news item  
- **Quiz #4** |
| WEEK 9 OCT 21 - 25 | 10/21 – 10/25 | *Film Report 1 presentations  
*Film Report 1 due on Canvas by 5pm Friday 10/25 |
| WEEK 10 OCT 28- NOV 1 | 10/28–10/29: Jainism | - Vaughn pgs. 133–142, 147–153  
- Lead discussion of assigned reading  
11/1: Current event news item  
- **Quiz #5** |
- Lead discussion of assigned reading  
11/8: Current event news item  
- **Quiz #6** |
- Lead discussion of assigned reading  
11/15: Current event news item  
- **Quiz #7** |
- Lead discussion of assigned reading |
### ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR WEEKS 2, 3, 4, 5, 6


The purpose of this project is to create a new religion discussing its historical origins, contemporary practice, and changes and adaptations that have developed in recent years with the religion’s movement toward globalization and modernity. By the second week of classes, students will come to class prepared to hand in a short abstract of an idea for their project. It is helpful to think about a known religion, one that is personal to you, or any of the ones made available in the reading materials assigned for this class and use this information as a tool to structure your own religion. Though this assignment allows you to extract ideas and doctrines from established religious, your final work must be completely unique, innovative, and compelling.

**Here are the topics that Part I of your project should address:**

- Name of your religion
- Give a detailed creation myth for your religion
- Main belief/s of your religion (doctrine)
- Holy figure/deities/gods
- Rituals/ceremonies/initiations/rites of passage
- Sacred text/oral tradition
- Symbol/s
- Foods/dietary dictums
- Dress/particular garments or ritual wear
- Language
- Approximately when (what century) and how was this religion or philosophy established?
- How was the faith originally practiced?
- What were some of the main beliefs that can be traced to original scriptures and texts at the faith’s beginnings?
- What were the turning points for this faith? What are some crucial events that changed how it was practiced by followers? What are some significant decisions made by the
followers/leaders that may have changed the original intent and practices of the founder?

- Were there any divisions that appeared in the faith (ex. different sects that broke away)? What differences caused these divisions, and what were the results of the divisions occurring?
- Were there important changes as the faith spread from one place to another? How did it spread and who made that possible? Were there conflicts between this faith and others, and what were the consequences?
- What is the current state of the faith? Would the original founder or leaders recognize it as it is practiced today? What elements have remained throughout the centuries?

*You should describe as much as possible your religion with examples, details, and stories.

This paper will adhere to the following guidelines:
Must be typed in 12pt. font
Times New Roman font
Double-spaced
Five (5) page maximum – 1500-2000 words total

Part II
For Part II of your project, students will do a formal visual presentation of their work using either PowerPoint or Prezi. Please feel free to explore your creativity as much as you want! The aim of this section of the assignment is to assist you in learning how to turn the written word into an artistically designed visual educational product. Cyberspace will provide you with a plethora of material in order for your project to be successful, so copy/paste and save-image somewhat unreservedly.

Order of Presentation/Slides
1) Introduction: Your first slide should contain the name of the religion, your name, and one (1) or more images that represent the faith. You will be stating a thesis while showing this slide, but do not type a thesis statement on this slide or the slide following it. This is not a text-heavy presentation; it’s a visual representation of what you will be saying and teaching to others.

2) Origins: Start with a brief description of how this faith began and how it spread initially. Images of early beliefs and practices of the faith can be included here.

3) Changes and Major Turning Points: You might want to structure your spoken presentation around a timeline, so that it is easy for listeners to follow along. Discuss any migrations/diasporas that the religion has made, and decide which ones count as turning points in the religion. Explain why each turning point is a crucial one.

4) Present Day: You must address major continuities here if you have not already done so for this your religion, as in which beliefs and practices have persisted (Hint: It may not be “all of them”).
5) Conclusion: Include one (1) or more images to sum up the presentation. Again, there should be few words on this slide. You will be saying out loud which of the turning points you identified have been most significant to the religion or philosophy and/or why the faith is worthy of study.

6) Works Cited: Your final slide(s) must include an alphabetical list of all sources in your research, formatted according to MLA guidelines. For access to citations, please visit https://www.worldcat.org. If there are any questions as to how to use this site, please feel free to contact me.

Rehearsing the Presentation:
Your spoken presentation will be an explanation of the images in your essay and how they represent the defining features of your new religion. The presentation should be 10-15 minutes long, and most of it will be about changes/turning points in the religion. A good rule of thumb is more-or-less one (1) “slide” per two (2) minute, unless you have several slides which you can speak very quickly about.

For the Introduction to your presentation, you need strong and clear spoken statements about:
- to what extent has this faith has changed
- which of those changes qualify as turning points
- to what extent has this faith has stayed the same

Just as a precaution, be prepared to describe the images in your presentation if they don’t show up on your slides. You will not lose points if you present without them, and it helps if you’ve thought about this situation ahead of time, so you don’t panic or get flustered.

You will be speaking to your classmates – peers and colleagues – so if you have a naturally quiet voice, a tendency to speak very quickly, or a tendency to mumble, work on that while you rehearse. Practice making eye contact versus looking at your notes or the computer screen the majority of the time. Plan on asking audience members if they have any questions at the end of your presentation.

A warning to students who put off work: DO NOT PROCRASTINATE! Staying home to finish a project is the same as skipping class, and this will count against your grade, and it is a bad coping strategy for when you are stressed. Smart is as smart does – start your research and your work early so procrastination will not happen to you!