Instructor: Andres Arrazola
Contact: aarra001@fiu.edu

When and Where do we meet?

Class discussions: 3:00 – 3:50 PC 439
Office Hours: Mondays 10:00 – 10:50 GL150, or by appointment

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.

How will you succeed in this course?

**Essays**

**Essay One** – Write an essay detailing what you have learned at your site visits to the class. You must apply the six dimensions of religion learned in class and demonstrate how they manifested themselves during your site visits. The focus of the paper should be a description of how each of these dimensions was present during your visit. The paper must detail the date of each observation described in the paper. Also, consider how the textbook describes the religion researched and if the description is reflected well or poorly by your site visit. Each member of the group must write their own paper. You must use standard formatting such as 10 – 12 inch font and 1.0 inch margins in your paper. The paper should be 5 – 7 pages long.

**Essay Two** – The second essay will be a handwritten 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 performing a site visit of a particular house of worship. The site chosen should be of a religion different from the one practiced by the members of the group or a religion of familiarity. The group will present the information based on the site visit using Smart's dimensions of religion.

**Required Text**

![Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives](image)

ISBN-10: 0195332369

*Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor.*

**Course breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Landmarks</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Percentage of final Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Papers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100 point</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examinations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100 point</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>100 point</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Talk/Activity/Quizzes</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 point</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 point</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
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**Goals**

- Analyze and interpret the universal dimensions of the sacred.
Discover the relevance and practice of religion in everyday life.
Recognize the academic impact of religion as an interdisciplinary field.
Identify the role of religion as a transformational force for the self and society.
Develop a critical and open-minded approach to religion that questions assumptions.
Explore religion as a platform that increases civic engagement and global awareness.

Objectives

1. Understanding the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization.
2. Recognize the strength of utilizing different approaches, theories, and methodologies to better understand the universal forms of religious experience and expression such as sacred symbols, rituals, myths, scriptures, ethics, and communities.
3. Identify religious themes and patterns that shape our everyday life.
4. Analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in our individual, cultural, economic, and political contexts.
5. Critically engage the issue of religious diversity and dialogue in national and international context.
6. Reflect upon and enhance student’s potential for moral agency and compassion.

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 and will be submitted through in class via hardcopy. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style and long quotes should be avoided.

Global Learning Objectives

As a Global Learning course, students will be meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:
1. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
2. Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
3. Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

**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:
1. A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
3. 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 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.

**Calendar**

Week of August 26th: Introduction Week.
Weeks of September 2nd and 9th: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Jainism.
Weeks of September 16th and 23rd: Hinduism.
Weeks of September 30th and October 7th: Buddhism.
Weeks of October 14th and October 21st: Judaism. Midterm – October 14th
Weeks of October 28th and November 4th: Christianity.
Weeks of November 11th and November 18th: Islam.
Week of November 25th: Catch up week
Week of December 2nd: Presentation week. Essay 1 due Friday December 6th.
Week of December 9th: Finals Week. 12/13 Final Exam

Syllabus is subject to change