Why Should I Care about Religion?
Why do bad things happen to good people? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand current events? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to your major? These are just some of the questions that we will explore throughout the semester.

- This course is interested in examining the different expressions, practices and interpretations of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although no particular tradition will be favored, materials from several traditions will be chosen to exemplify thematic topics in the experience of the Sacred. We will also focus on the tenets of religions, dispelling common misconceptions and assumptions and looking into the emergence of new practices among the post-denominational generation.

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 understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

- Religious illiteracy can 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 anthropology, 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.

**LEARNING OUTCOME**

*Advantages of this course:* You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within the humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will:

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
- Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
- Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
- Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

**TEACHING METHODOLOGIES**

Our approach for this course is **interdisciplinary**, which means you will learn how to critically draw from theories reflecting diverse fields of study to include, but not limited to, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, and ecology.

- This course is taught in **seminar style** as opposed to a lecture format. This means that as a collective – professor/students – we help guide one another to understand the ideas reflected in the assigned material through a group discussion format.
ZOOM PROTOCOLS

Zoom is the new room! As we help one another navigate the ongoing global crisis that Coronavirus has become, important modalities have been designed to help us survive new challenges to our academic responsibilities. Zoom-synchronous teaching requires weekly Zoom sessions that are an important component of the overall learning experience. There are three crucial elements necessary for Zoom sessions to successful:

- **Confidentiality:** Zoom sessions are conducted in simulated classroom like settings. This means you do not sign in from your cars, bathrooms, public areas, or accompanied by anyone other than yourself. Also, appropriate attire is required. Information discussed during Zoom sessions are only for students registered in the given course.
- **Considerations:** Take into account the opinions of others. Avoid over-imposing your personal views on those of your colleagues. Do not disrupt the organization of a Zoom session by engaging in distracting activities.
- **Respect:** The contents of this course are by nature highly sensitive. Recognize the beliefs and customs of your colleagues with the utmost dignity and mindfulness.

COVID19 ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLANNING

The following resources are set up to assist both instructors and students with academic continuity information and guides for the Fall 2020 semester:

- [https://repopulation.fiu.edu](https://repopulation.fiu.edu)
- [https://canvas.fiu.edu/coronavirus/](https://canvas.fiu.edu/coronavirus/)

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course. More information about prerequisites can be found in the FIU course catalog.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Canvas:** All students are required to regularly utilize Canvas for this course. Here, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and monitor progress. If you should encounter any technical issues with Canvas, please contact then directly at: [https://canvas.fiu.edu/support/](https://canvas.fiu.edu/support/)

**Attendance:** Show up to Zoom!!! Each and every one of you is an essential part of the overall learning experience of this course. Timely attendance in weekly Zoom sessions is mandatory and graded on a point scale, thus absences will greatly affect your overall grade. If you need to be absent, kindly notify me in advance.

- **Class Participation / Facilitation:** This class focuses on the importance of developing critical reflection skills. Students are highly encouraged to come to Zoom sessions prepared to critically discuss and challenge the assigned materials.

**Discussion Forums:** Each week two (2) students will be designated as facilitators for that week’s topic by providing two (2) discussion questions each, extracted from the assigned
materials. On Mondays, these questions are posted to the week’s Discussion Board allowing your colleagues ample time to post their reactions. Our weekly Zoom sessions will work off of these posts.

**Summaries:** Weekly summaries are designed to critically analyze the key terms and concepts from the assigned readings and discussions for each week. These assignments offer students the rare opportunity to develop their writing skills in scholarly, academic fashion.

**Synthesis Essay:** The final project for this class asks the student to write a synthesis essay on how religion is impacting a current social movement or global crisis. Suggested topics and guidelines are in the assignment titled: *FINAL ESSAY: A SYNTHESIS PROJECT*

*Students are encouraged to make use of FIUs Center for Excellence in Writing at: [https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html](https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html)*

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### GRADING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>WEIGHT BY POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance/ participation/facilitation (ZOOM)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Reflections</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synthesis Essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
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### GRADING GRID

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<tr>
<th>LETTER GRADE</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>D</td>
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A, A-: awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing an impressive academic level.

B+, B, B-: awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.

C+, C: awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.

D: awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.

F: awarded for unacceptable work.

*Late work automatically receives a deduction of two (2) points.*
Textbook

| Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion  
| By: James C. Livingston  
| MLA (7th ed.) citation:  

*Additional readings will be assigned by the instructor during the semester.*

**GORDON RULE REQUIREMENT**

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write one major assignment. This final paper will be at least 1500-2000 words, double spaced – approximately four (4) pages, Times New Roman 12 pt. Font, and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using Chicago Manuel of Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers processed through Turnitin 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) for the course.

**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? 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.

See the University Code of Academic Integrity at http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm 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.

**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. 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.

**ATHLETES:** Please have Ms. Ayssa Roza – the Associate Director of the SAAC – email me all your travel and practice itineraries during the first week of class.

**DO NOT PROCRASTINATE!** A warning to students who put off work: Smart is as smart does – start your research and your work early so procrastination will not happen to you! Procrastination can lead you to lose precious time, pass by good opportunities, not meet important goals, ruin your career, and even damage your reputation. In the words of good ole Benjamin Franklin “Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today.”

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COURSE CONTENT</th>
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</table>
| **WEEK 1:**
AUG 24 – AUG 28 | Welcome to Introduction to Religion  
Professor - student meet and greet!  
• In-depth review and discussion of course outlook and directives  
• New teaching modalities in the era of COVID19  
• Canvas  
AUG 25: Discussion Forum 1  
AUG 28: Weekly Reflection 1 |
| WEEK 2: AUG 31 – SEP 4 | ~Types of Religion~  
| | Agents of Worship in Religion  
| | AUG 31: Discussion Forum 2  
| | SEP 4: Weekly Reflection 2  
| WEEK 3: SEP 7 – SEP 11 | ~What is the Academic Study of Religion?~  
| | SEP 7: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS  
| | SEP 8: Discussion Forum 3  
| | SEP 11: Weekly Reflection 3  
| WEEK 4: SEP 14 – SEP 18 | ~Sacred Symbols~  
| | SEP 14: Discussion Forum 4  
| | SEP 18: Weekly Reflection 4 
| | SUBMIT ABSTRACT FOR FINAL PROJECT  
| WEEK 5: SEP 21 – SEP 25 | ~Deities~  
| | SEP 21: Discussion Forum 5  
| | SEP 25: Weekly Reflection 5  
| WEEK 6 SEP 28 – OCT 2 | ~Hermeneutics~  
| | SEP 28: Discussion Forum 6  
| | OCT 2: Weekly Reflection 6  
| WEEK 7 OCT 5 – OCT 9 | ~Religion and Music~  
| | OCT 5: Discussion Forum 7  
| | OCT 9: Weekly Reflection 7  
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<th>OCT 12 – OCT 16</th>
<th>~Religion and Sexuality</th>
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<td>OCT 12: Discussion Forum 8</td>
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<th>OCT 19 – OCT 23</th>
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<td>OCT 23: Weekly Reflection 9</td>
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<td>OCT 30: Weekly Reflection 10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NOV 2: Discussion Forum 11</td>
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<td>NOV 6: Weekly Reflection 11</td>
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<td>NOV 13: Weekly Reflection 12</td>
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<td>NOV 20: Weekly Reflection 13</td>
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<td>WEEK 14</td>
<td>NOV 23 – NOV 27</td>
<td><del>Diversity, Coexistence, and Interfaith Dialogues</del></td>
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<td>NOV 16: Discussion Forum 14</td>
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<td>NOV 20: Weekly Reflection 14</td>
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| WEEK 15 | NOV 30 – DEC 4 | ~ Religions and Social Movements~
|         |                | Mobilizing Activism                             |
|         |                | NOV 30: Discussion Forum 15                     |
|         |                | DEC 4: Weekly Reflection 15                     |

| FINALS WEEK | DEC 7 – DEC 11 | CHECK FIU ONESTOP FOR FINALS SCHEDULE         |

**!*!*! IMPORTANT !*!*!**

**SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!! Because teaching and learning are creative and fun processes, I reserve the absolute right to amend, alter, change, transform, adapt, modify, readjust, and/or revise this syllabus at any time, all in the interest of enhancing the student’s overall learning experience. Any changes to the syllabus are discussed with students in a timely manner.**