

Religious Studies Department
REL 2011 Introduction to Religion -HYBRID
Fall 2021
Biscayne Bay Campus

Instructor: Valeria Schindler
Email: vschindl@fiu.edu
In person Class: W10am-11:15am
Classroom: AC One 264

Office: TBA and Via Zoom
Office Hours: W 8:30am-9:45am
Appointments via Zoom

Why should we care about religion?

Sociologist Emile Durkheim saw religion as a part of the human condition, and while the content of religion might be different from society to society over time, religion will, in some form or another, always be a part of social life. Therefore, you do not need to be a religious person in order to be in contact with 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, and one of the many courses that complete the Global Learning requirement. 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.

What are the Objectives of the course?

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization.

- Dissect the universal forms of religious experience and expression such as sacred symbols, rituals, myths, scriptures, ethics, and communities.
- Identify religious themes and patterns that shape our everyday life.
- Recognize the strength of utilizing different approaches, theories, and methodologies to better understand the study of religion.
- Evaluate the interrelationship between the student's own and other's religious views in order to avoid uninformed assumptions.
- Develop college-level academic writing and communication skills.
- Better understand how an individual's identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences.

What is important to learn as a global citizen? What about University Requirements for the Global Learning Objectives?

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

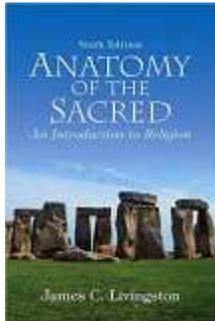
1. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
2. Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
3. Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively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

How does a hybrid course work?

In a hybrid course, 50% of the time dedicated to the course is in person, engaging in learning, clarifying concepts, debating, working in groups, and discussing and developing each of the concepts covered in the course. This course is taught in "reversed classroom" style, in which most of the work in class is done by students, and I will be there to clarify your questions and guide you in your work.

The other 50% of the time takes place outside the class, and it will be your responsibility to acquire all the knowledge required for the activities in class. This includes reading the textbook, writing papers, watching videos, reading articles, providing opinions on different topics, and posting weekly in a discussion board. My responsibility is to provide you with material and activities for you to apply and put into practice the concepts learned in the readings, as well as clarify all the questions that may arise from them. Your responsibility is to read the textbook and complete all assignments in a timely manner. This will enable us using the time in class to actively apply the concepts.

What will help us answer the questions posed in our course?



Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion 6th ed., by James C. Livingston [Prentice Hall] ISBN-10: 013600380X

- **Required Text:** *this is the mandatory book for the class, but feel free to read as many articles related to the class as you want and share them with the rest of the class.*

How will you and I evaluate your progress?

- **Six 10-questions quizzes** – from which the lowest score will be dropped at the end of the semester. The quizzes will be available for four (4) days in Canvas, opening on Thursday and closing at the end of the day on Sunday. Students have 10 minutes to complete each quiz. You will have the chance to take each quiz twice, and the highest score will be kept as your final.
- **Midterm and Final Exams.**
 - **Midterm:** will cover the first half of the semester and will include 50 multiple choice and true and false questions. Students will have 55 minutes to complete it. The midterm will be available for 24 hours only.
 - **Final:** will cover from second half of the semester and will include multiple choice, and true and false questions. Students will have 55 minutes to complete it. The final will be available for 24 hours only on the determined by the university. You can consult Panthersoft later on in the semester for the date.
- **A 1000-1500 words opinion paper on globalization and religion.** Is globalization “contaminating” religion? Students will have to read an article on globalization posted in Canvas and use the arguments that appeal them the most to build their opinion on the topic. Detailed information is provided in Canvas. This essay has two parts:
 - 1)An introduction with a clear thesis and the way you are going to prove it will be submitted first for a peer review, with a complete or

incomplete grade. Incomplete grades will result in a 10-point deduction from the final essay.

- 2) Final essay submission. Details and rubric are provided in Canvas
- **A 1000-1500-words essay. “Experiencing religion around me.”**
In this assignment students will be required to keep a journal for 5 days and then write a reflection paper stating how religion appears in their every-day life. Students need to submit the journal first and then they will have time to work on the reflection paper. Detailed information and rubric are provided in Canvas.
- **Online activities.** Every week after covering a topic, you will have to submit one or two activities. Each activity will become available under the corresponding module and is due at midnight on Sunday. All the due dates are listed on the course’s calendar. I do accept late submissions for the activities, with a 20-point deduction per late day. Points will also be deducted for poor grammar or typos, and not well justified answers.
- **Group Work: Create your own religion.** Throughout the semester, you will be applying the knowledge gained by creating a religion. This will be done in groups in class, but collaboration in Canvas outside the classroom will be required. Your group will be set up in Canvas and you will have access to different tools to collaborate. You will be required to post your progress online and I will monitor it weekly providing you with feedback. Each group will present their religion at the end of the semester to the entire class. A rubric is available in Canvas on the modules for the last two weeks of the semester with details on scoring.
- **Online Reflection:** Before covering each topic in class, you will have to read the textbook, post in the online discussion, and answer to someone else’s post. There will be a prompt on the week’s discussion that you will have to address, and then you will have to comment on at least one of your peers’ posts. Your first submission should be done by Friday night, and you will have time until Sunday (due date of the discussion) to submit your comment. You will automatically lose 40 points if you don’t respond to another student’s post, and you will receive a zero grade if you do not post. Since these are intended to be online “discussions” (similar to conversations), late submissions or make ups will not be allowed under any circumstances. The online reflection is due on Sunday.

- Attendance and participation:** Attendance to in person class is mandatory, and students are expected to engage in class discussion. Missing more than 2 classes (unexcused absences) in the semester will result in a zero grade for attendance and participation. Arriving late, leaving early, or stepping out of the class for long periods of time may incur an absence penalty. Participation includes coming ready for class by reading the material prior, contributing to discussions, and being attentive to lectures and student presentations. Participation also includes introducing yourself in the online forum.
- Exit Ticket:** Each student will have a chance at the end of the class to fill out an exit ticket, which is going to be something related to what happened during the meeting. **The exit ticket is worth 5% of the grade for attendance and participation**

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Quizzes	6	100	500 (lowest score will be dropped)	15%
Midterm Exam	1	100	100	10%
Final Exam	1	100	100	10%
Opinion Paper on Globalization and Religion	1	100	100	10%
Essay: Experiencing Religion around me	1	100	100	15%
Online Activities	15	100	1500	10%
Group Work- Create your own religion	1	100	100	10%
Online Reflection	13	30	390	10%
Attendance and participation	1	100	100	10%
Total	39	N/A	3800	100%

Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range
A	95 and Above	C+	76-79
A-	90-94	C	70-75
B+	87-89	D	60-69
B	83-86	F	Below 60
B-	80-82		

A's are awarded to exceptional work in class and assignments

B's are awarded for good to very good work.

C's are awarded for average to above average work.

D's are awarded for barely passing with below average work.

F's are awarded for unacceptable work.

How will you succeed in this course?

- **Attending and participating in class:** Be ready to be an active learner and participate in discussions and activities in class. In order to maximize your learning experience, I ask you that you refrain from using your phone or your computer for other things but taking notes.
- **Complete the assigned reading and online reflection before coming to class:** They are due on Sunday. If you know the material, you will be able to actively participate in class. I might also bring your online reflection post to class to talk about it.
- **Check Canvas at least 5 times a week.** I will be monitoring your participation. To log into Canvas go to www.canvas.fiu.edu and use your Panthersoft credentials.
- **Submit essays on time.** They are all due on Sundays. There will be 2 points taken off your final grade for the essay per late day, up to 16 points total. If students don't submit the essay by the latest deadline, students will receive a zero grade.
- **Submit online activities on time:** they are due on Sunday at 11:59pm.
- **Take Quizzes and tests on time:** I understand things happen, so if you let me know in advanced you won't be able to take a quiz, I will re-schedule it for you. However, there will be no make-up dates for the final exam.
- **Extra Credit.** Sometimes some students may need an extra help, and it usually involves attending a special lecture and writing a one-page summary of the lecture (for one point) and a two-page analysis linking the lecture to the content of the class (for up to two points). A maximum of 6 extra credit points

could be awarded, and are added to the final grade. Please refer to the list of events provided on Canvas.

- **Using FIU's resources to help you.** Click on the links below to access information
 - [Center for Excellence in Writing](#): To help you draft, revise, or polish any written work.
 - [Center for Academic Success](#): To help you with reading skills, study techniques, and grammar.
- **Be open minded and have fun!**

What are the school policies for this course?

This is a Gordon Rule course and you must attain at least a C to receive any credit as a Gordon rule course. Under the Gordon Rule, FIU requires that student papers: 1) have a clear thesis or controlling idea; 2) have a thesis supported with adequate reasons and evidence; 3) be organized clearly and logically; 4) show sustained analysis and critical thought; 5) show knowledge of conventions of standard written English; and 6) show awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery method.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the theft of intellectual property of others, including their ideas, concepts, and words. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Please visit <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm>

The expectation is that students will submit their own original work. Previously Submitted Coursework will not be admitted.

To clarify what constitutes plagiarism for this university. Offenders will receive an "F" on the paper.

Some examples of plagiarism are:

- Papers acquired online or from other sources that were not produced by the student that have submitted them.
- Copying material and ideas from other sources without attribution.
- Using other students' work.

Behavioral Misconduct: Any student who is subject to sexual harassment, stalking, or physical or verbal abuse should immediately speak to the instructor. The university has policies to protect students in these instances and the instructor will immediately refer the student to the appropriate program or

resource. Remember, this is a course in which different ideas are welcomed, even if they do not agree with our own notions.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive needed accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with disabilities must register with Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify a faculty member who has a student with a disability enrolled in his/her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements must be made.

Religious Holidays: By university policy, students must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance that he/she wishes to observe a religious holyday. The student will be excused from class without penalty, but will still be responsible for the material studied in the class.

For University's deadlines, please refer to <http://onestop.fiu.edu/academic-calendar/>

Important Note: *This syllabus is a contract and can be amended determined by the demands of the course. It outlines everything you need to know for this course. Please make sure you have read it carefully.*

Course Calendar

	Due Online Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks	Due in Person Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-introduction in Discussion board • Online Activity: Answer questions on syllabus - • Online Reflection on Chapters 2 and 3 – • Read Chapters 1,2, and 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the course • Review of syllabus • Summary of chapter 1, The Study of Religion and in-class hands on activity
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take quiz on Chapters 1 and 2 • Read Chapter 4 • Online Activity: Read article on fact or opinion and take the quiz • Online Reflection: on chapter 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of chapters • Watch video on syncretic religions and discuss • Watch video on Ramadan-phenomenology exercise • Team activity: What discipline would be best? • Group activity on sacred space, time, and symbols
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 5 • <i>Take quiz on chapters 3 and 4</i> • Online Activity: Look for a religious myth and explain why it is important for that tradition and what is the message that it provides. Also, think if there are any doctrines coming from that myth. Students can post a video of the myth, or write the myth, always citing the source used. • Online Reflection on chapter 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the topic covered: What is a sign, symbol, myth, and a doctrine • Group work: Make your own religion. This assignment will be developed throughout the entire semester. The class will be divided into groups. This week they will create a myth for their religion. It could be a creation myth, or a myth that explains a phenomenon.
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 6 • Online Activity: Look for a religious ritual and categorize it. - • Online Reflection on chapter 6 • Submit introduction to essay on globalization for Peer Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the topic. Categorization of rituals • Watch videos of different rituals and recognize what type of ritual is it and why. In the case of rites of passages, recognize the three acts as described by Van Gennep • Make your own religion group work: Pick a type of ritual and

	Due Online	Due in Person
	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks
		create one. If possible, link it to the myth created last week
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 7 • Quiz on chapters 5 and 6 - • Submit Peer review on essay on globalization and Religion • Online activity: Each student will be assigned either a typology of a sect (manipulationist, conversionist, utopian, revolutionist) and look for one example that fits the category (different than the one mentioned in the textbook). Explain the sect and why it fits into that category - • Online Reflection on chapter 7 -10/7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of topic: Styles of scripture, uses, canonization • Look at actual scriptures and see their differences. Bring scriptures from home • Make your own religion group work: Design a scripture for the religion. What is its style? What is it used for? Is it canonized? When? Why?
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 8 • Online Activity #1: Watch a video on the Westboro Baptist church and debate: is it a cult or a sect? • Online Activity #2: Midterm review • Online reflection on chapter 8 • Take Midterm Exam- • Submit 5-day journal - 	
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 9 • Online Activity: Watch movie "The history of God" and answer questions - • Online reflection on chapter 9 • Submit essay on globalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the topic, presenting examples on each type of conception. • Make your own religion group work: Start fine tuning the religion. What type of religion is it? Polytheistic, monotheistic, dualist, pantheistic, nontheistic? Work on characteristics of deities that fit into the category used.

	Due Online	Due in Person
	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 10 • Take quiz on chapters 8 and 9 • Online activity: Read the article about the religious Mullahs and answer questions • Online reflection on chapter 10 - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short introduction to concepts • Game: What Cosmogony? Class will be divided in different groups. I will show different videos of cosmogonies that fit into each category and students need to tell what category and why. The winner team will get a price to be decide by the entire class • Make your own religion group work: Create a creation myth that fits into the type of religion they are creating. Make sure it fits into one of the categories. Of the myth created previously is a creation myth, adjust it to fit the type of religion and a specific category of a myth
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 11 • Online activity: Reflect on what is to you your "human problem". What do you think you should do to overcome it? • Online reflection on chapter 11 - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch video on suffering and catastrophes in our world and discuss what religion does or says about it • Overview on the chapter. Focus on what Stoicism, objectivism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism states about suffering. Watch videos • Make your own religion group work: Think of what is the human problem according to the religion.
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 12 • Take quiz on chapter 10 and 11 • Online Activity: Watch documentary of God and Evil and answer questions • Online reflection: on chapter 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of topic. Watch videos on different types of theodicies • Group work Make your own religion: Come up with a theodicy that fits your religion.

	Due Online	Due in Person
	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit essay religion around me 	
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 13 • Online Activity: Read article: "Mother Teresa left Hillary Clinton in stunned silence of abortion" and answer question on what argument you think is more valid (thinking of ethics) and why. - • Online reflection on chapter 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter overview. Talk about different types of ethics, focus on ethics of virtue and do an exercise on how it will work on each student • Group work make your own religion: Think if your religion has moral exemplars or prophets. What does make them one of them? What types of ethics does your religion have?
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 14 • Quiz on chapters 12 and 13 - • Online Activity: Watch video on new religious movements in the US and answer questions • Online reflection on chapter 14 • Last day to submit any written assignment 11/22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter overview • Group game: Divided in group they need to say what example, out of all the ones I present, fits each type of soteriology. Get extra points by explaining the example. Prize to be determined by the class. • Group work make your own religion. Think of a soteriology that fits your religion.
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine tune your religion in your group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview on chapter, define secularization and religious pluralism • Debate: Is globalization good or bad for religion? Does our knowledge of religion accentuate our differences? This would be a good way of closing down the topic of their reflection essay. • Group work Make your own religion: Time to fine tune and

	Due Online	Due in Person
	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks	Topics, Learning Resources, and Tasks
		get ready to present next week
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on your presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group presentation
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take final exam. Date TBD by the university 	