

## REL 2011: Introduction to Religion

**Instructor: Niurca Márquez**

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### About your Professor

Hello Class, my name is Niurca Márquez and I am looking forward to sharing this semester with you all. I have a long history with FIU and Religious Studies as I completed both my BA's here (Dance and Spanish) and an MA's in LACS with Dr. Terry Rey as my thesis director (2001). Shortly thereafter, I took a long break from academia and dove into my artistic practice. Over the past 10 years I've been slowly making my way back. I am a movement artist/researcher and my work examines notions of identity, cultural memory and ritual within contemporary frameworks. I have an MFA in Choreography from Jacksonville University (2017) in addition to my MA in LACS. I am a trained somatic educator and I use my body-centered work to service communities undergoing processes of healing and self-realization. As a Latinx artist and activist on the margins advocating for silenced voices, I am particularly interested in the multiple layers of communication and understanding in rooted movement and ritual practices that lead to liaisons with political and social discourse. I am currently working on the use of Embodied Practice and Practice as Research models in interdisciplinary teaching and learning as a way to address issues of equity and access. Having built a career on collaboration and intercultural exchanges, I use this cross-cultural understanding in my approach to the study of religion and religious practice. At FIU, I am the COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) Faculty Fellow for the Honors College. I am also part of the THINC initiative funded by the Mellon Foundation to create a SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) Culture at FIU including Course Redesign (REL 3185: Healers and Mediums), the creation of a "Miami Cannon" for the Honors College funded by the Teagle Foundation and "Designing Alternative and Digital Strategies to Build US-Colombia Multidisciplinary Intercultural Identities" funded by 100K Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund with support from the U.S. Department of State. Welcome!

### Course Description and Purpose

This is a Gordon Rule class that serves as an introduction to the study of religion. The course explores the ways in which people understand and express religious experience. This course's scope includes the exploration of concepts such as deity, theodicy, cosmology, ritual, as well as religious social implications in society.

Throughout the course the student will also be exposed to specific rituals, myths, doctrines, ethics and symbols from various different world religions and cultures.

### Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other aspects of daily life.
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts
- Evaluate their own religious views in regards to other cultures and paradigms of the religious

- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of the religious.
- Think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary.
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious community.

**Course Work: Full descriptions, rubrics, dates etc..see below and posted on Canvas.**

- **Site Visits (2 – varying focus):** 20 points Formal essay format, 800 words min.
- **My Worldview Essay:** 20 points Formal essay format, 1000 words min.
- **Final Exam:** There will be 1 Multiple Choice exam, worth 20 points.
- **Project:** 20 points, 1500-word min. You will choose a visual topic (e.g. artist, art subject, architecture, music video, video game) that highlights at least 4 of the 6 aspects of religion discussed in class. Formats for project can include paper, video, PowerPoint or a unique proposal.
- **Attendance and Class Participation:** 10 points (Only 3 **excused** absences are allowed before I deduct points).
- **Class Discussions:** 15 points. Do your homework (read) and you'll be fine.

**The final week of class will be utilized for the final project and exam. We will not meet during finals week.**

### **Global Learning Objectives Targeted**

- Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world

### **Important Information**

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)

\*The professor reserves the right to change or modify the syllabus at any time during the semester.

\*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/>

### **Textbook**

Title: Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion

Author: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall, Edition: 6th

ISBN: 013600380X

ISBN-13: 9780136003809

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Late Papers**

Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.

Avoid leaving assignment/quiz submissions for the last minute before a deadline. "Heavy user traffic" during this timeframe may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

### **Assignment Submissions**

All work has to be submitted through Canvas. Canvas does not allow instructors to submit on behalf of students. Please do not email your assignments to your instructor.

If you encounter errors or issues submitting an assignment, click on "Help" inside Canvas Course (located on the left-hand panel inside the course) and select Chat with Canvas Support (student). A live chat with Canvas support can fix the issue immediately.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. 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

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>

Offenders will receive a grade of "F" for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.

\*\*Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

### **Extra Credit**

10 points max per student. I will provide lectures you can attend in order to receive it.

### Academic Conduct

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a zero. Plagiarism is 1) copying any written material without using proper citation – this includes material from the internet, our text and my notes; 2) incorporating another person’s ideas without giving proper credit/citation (literary theft). 3) Copying or “fixing up” a previous paper written by yourself or another student.
- 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 honestly to 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.

### Dates

#### Course Content Calendar

**Class Work:** Review and familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, calendar of due dates, and how content items are setup under Modules and Assignments.

#### Section I - The Study of Religion

Topic: Defining Religion. Why Are Humans Religious? Why Study Religion?

**Read: Chapter 1 p. 1-14**

Topic: The Perspective of the Student–Commitment and Objectivity. The Ways Religion Is Studied. Interpreting and Explaining Religion.

**Read: Chapter 2 p. 15-34**

Week 1 and 2  
Aug 23-Sep 5

#### **Class Work:**

Discussion of the following topics:

- Why are humans religious?
- Why Study Religion?
- Interpreting and explaining religion  
(How the study of religion is interdisciplinary by nature)

Week 3  
Sep 6-12

#### Section II. Universal Forms of Religious Experience and Expression

Topic: The Sacred and the Holy. The Concept of Sacred Power. The Holy as Mysterium Tremendum and Fascinans. Sacred Space and Sacred Time. Religion as Ultimate Concern.

Axis Mundi.

**Read: Chapter 3 p. 35-52**

**Note: No class on 9/6 due to Labor Day or 9/10 due to Site Visit**

**DUE: Start Site Visits**

## Dates

## Course Content Calendar

Week 4 Sep 13-19	<p><b><u>DUE: Site Visit #1 Essay due 9/17</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Class Work:</u></b> Discussion on sacred power, sacred space, objects and ritual in relation to myth, symbols and doctrine. Case Study of the case of Norse Mythology with guest speaker Aragorn Vitali (Friday 9/17/21)</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Symbolic Communication. Religious Symbols, Myth and Doctrines.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 4 p. 53-73</b></p>
Week 5 Sep 20-26	<p><b><u>Class Work:</u></b></p> <p>Ritual Action. Types of Sacred Ritual. Ritual and Sacrifice. Rituals as Sacraments.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 5 p. 74-95 (Monday and Wednesday)</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Sacred Ritual in a variety of contexts. Ritual in secular spaces.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 6 p. 96-122</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Pervasive Role of Sacred Scripture. Using the Term Scripture. Some Distinctive Features of Sacred Scripture.</p> <p><b><u>DUE: Write Worldview 9/27/21</u></b></p>
Week 6 Sep 27-Oct 3	<p><b>Class Work:</b> Class participation exercise on the interpretation of scripture.</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Authority and Canonicity of Scripture. The Reception and Uses of Scripture. The Interpretation of Scripture.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 6 p. 96-123 (Monday)</b></p> <p>The Reciprocal Relationship between Religion and Society. Types of Religious Communities. Voluntary Religious Communities. Protest and Change in Voluntary Religious Communities. The Sect. The Cult: New Religious Movements.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 7 p. 124-150 (Wednesday and Friday)</b></p>
Week 7 Oct 4-10	<p><b>Class Work:</b> Discussion of potential Site Visits and final decisions made.</p> <p><b>Section III. Universal Components of a Religious Worldview</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Polytheism and the Worship of Nature. Dualism. Pantheism and Monism. Monotheism.</p> <p><b>Read: Chapter 8</b></p> <p><b><i>*Begin considering the second Site Visit you might want to do</i></b></p>
Weeks 8 and 9 Oct 11-24	<p><b>Class Work:</b> Discussion on Religion and Society: Social Justice and Evolution of Religion</p> <p>Continued discussion on Polytheism, Pantheism, Monotheism</p> <p><b>Action Exercise:</b> Today, we start a cult. Just Kidding. Maybe.</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Practical Basis of Cosmogony. Emergence or Procreation from a Primal Substance or Being. The Sexual Union of a Primal Male and Female. Creation by Conflict and the Ordering of Chaos. Creation by a Divine Craftsman.</p>

## Dates

## Course Content Calendar

Creation by Decree or from Nothing. The Rejection of Cosmogonic Speculation. Cosmogony Today.

**Read: Chapter 9 p. 183-210**

Week 10  
Oct 25-31

**Class Work:** Lets talk about science and religion, philosophy and religion, balance in religion, good, evil and sex.

**Topic:** Modern Views of Our Human Plight. Stoicism. Christianity. Theravada Buddhism. Confucianism.

**Read: Chapter 10 p. 211-234**

**Site Visit #2 Essay Due 10/31/21 at 11:59pm**

Week 11  
Nov 1-7

**Class Work:** Presentation on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

**Topic:** The Persistent Demand for Theodicy. Theodicy of "Mystical Participation." A Future, This-Worldly Theodicy. Other-Worldly Theodicy. Dualism. The Karma-Samsara Theodicy. Monotheistic Theodicies.

**Read: Chapter 11 p. 235-258**

**Topic:** Virtues and Obligations. The Sources and Norms of Moral Authority.

**Read: Chapter 12 p. 259-286**

**DUE: Site Visit**

Week 12  
Nov 8-14

**Class Work:** Discussion on Moral Authority.

**Topic:** Ways of Salvation and Liberation. The Way of Grace through Faith. The Way of Devotion. The Way of Action and Obligation. The Way of Mediation and Insight. Goals of Salvation and Liberation. Psychic Wholeness and a Healthy Social Order. Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life. Samadhi and Nirvana.

**Read: Chapter 13 p. 287-338**

**DUE: Work on your Project and Study for Final**

Week 13 and 14  
Nov 15-21

**Class Presentation:** Guest Lecture by Professor Grisel d'Elena on Fundamentalism

**Section IV. The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity View**

**Topic:** Secularization and Pluralism. The Reactions of Religious Fundamentalisms Today. The Characteristics of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism. The Status and Roles of Women in Religion. Relations between Religion and State.

**Read: Chapters 14-15 p. 339-398**

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE NEXT WEEKS**

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Week 15 & 16  
Nov 22-Dec 5

**Due: In Class project presentations!**

**Take Final Exam - will only be available Monday- Sunday till 11:59pm**