

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
REL 3308 U01: STUDIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS**

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| Instructor: | Thomas Norris | Phone: | (305) 348-2186 |
| Class Times: | TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM | Office: | GL 150 |
| Semester: | Fall 2021 August 23-December 4, 2021 | Office Hours: | By Appointment |
| Classroom: | C&P 107 | Email: | Please only use Canvas course email |

For a person who has conquered his lower self by the divine self, his own self acts as his best friend. But for that person who has not conquered his lower self, his own self acts as his worst enemy.

Bhagavad Gita

*In ancient times there were great Taoist Sages. Their way of living was so deep, so subtle, it cannot be directly explained. Instead, here is how they looked:
Cautious, as if crossing the ford of a stream in Winter
Alert, as if surrounded by danger
Polite, as if they were always a guest
Yielding, like ice that is on the verge of melting
Sincere, like an uncut block of wood
Receptive, like a valley
Opaque, like muddy water.*

Tao Te Ching

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This comparative religion course examines the world's major eastern and western religions, both ancient and contemporary. From historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, and archeological perspectives they reveal their mysteries. The religious beliefs, rituals, practices, creation stories, scriptures, myths and spiritual leaders of indigenous peoples, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the New Age are studied with an eye toward understanding the similarities and differences between them.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern and Western religions.
2. Compare and contrast the major similarities and differences between Eastern and Western religions, including cultural and historical contexts, as well as local, national, and/or international contexts (Global Perspective).
3. Analyze the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
4. Explore the early bases and origins of religion among Indigenous Peoples and Shamanic cultures.
5. Respond sensitively to the issue of religious diversity in national and international context (Global Engagement).
6. Examine issues in the field of religious studies from multiple approaches.
7. Correlate economic, sociological, anthropological, archeological, psychological, scientific, historical and theological principles in studying religions.
8. Evaluate the interrelationship between his/her own and others' religious views as they relate to understanding other cultures and solving common problems (Global Awareness).

9. Analyze religious scriptures and writings from different religions and cultures.
10. Develop a personal learning process and plan required for his/her success in this religious studies course.

Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Proctored Exam Policy

All quizzes and exams are online. There are no proctored exams or quizzes.

TEXTBOOK AND COURSE MATERIALS

Religions of the World

ISBN-13: 9780133794229

by Hopfe, Woodward, Hendrickson

You may purchase your textbook online at the FIU Bookstore.

The Wind is My Mother by Bear Heart

ISBN-13: 978-0425161609

You may purchase your textbook online at the FIU Bookstore.

***Recommended Book: MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook,
Modern Language Association***

Expectations of this Course

You are responsible for carefully reading the syllabus and weekly calendar, meeting deadlines as posted, and submitting mature, thoughtful work. Some of this material may be new, personal, or controversial, so please maintain an open-minded and considerate attitude, allowing others time to reflect and communicate.

As a student in this course, you are expected to:

- Review the how to get started information located in the course content.
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week in the appropriate discussion forum.
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas.

- Interact online with instructor/s and peers.
- Log in to the course 3-4 times per week.
- Respond to Canvas Messages within 1 day.

As the instructor, I will:

- Log in to the course at least 6 days per week
- Respond to Canvas Messages within 1 day
- Grade assignments within 14 days of the assignment deadline

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AND PLAGIARISM

- 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 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*.
- **Plagiarism** is the theft of someone else’s intellectual property: their ideas, theories, concepts, opinions, or words. It consists of the **unattributed** (no reference citation) quotation of the exact words of a published text, or the **unattributed** borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public at large, must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate MLA citation procedure. Only widely known facts, or thoughts and observations original to the student do not require citations.
- You may not submit a paper that you have submitted for another class or one that you submitted previously for this course. **All work is required to be fresh, original and new.**
- Student papers with extensive quotations from sources mechanically inserted (cut and paste) into the paper for the sake of padding or bulk will not be accepted.
- Less is better than more when it comes to quotations. You should only quote if it is essential to your point or the quote is exceptionally powerful and succinct. In college, you must learn to paraphrase. That means putting the author’s words and ideas into your own words. Since it still is the author’s idea, opinion, comment or theory simply restated in your own words, it still needs to be cited.
- **Plagiarism** will not be tolerated and will cause the guilty student to be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs and possibly fail the class. Whenever a student is unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism, they are encouraged to consult their professor.

Textbook and Readings

Students are expected to keep up with coursework and be prepared for each class by making sure they have read all the materials for that class and turned in any assignments on time.

Attendance

Regular **in-person class attendance is required** to pass this course. Students are to arrive on time, and stay until the class period is over. If you need to leave early, discuss with me before class. Repeated tardiness is counted as an absence for that day.

Attendance counts for **5% of your final grade** and it is calculated by the percentage of times present and absent. However, if you miss more than three classes, a greater percentage is deducted.

Respect, Courtesy, and Communication

- It is the student's responsibility to be attentive, respectful, keep up with the work, and hand in assignments on time.
- **Cell phones** must be turned off during class. There will be no texting or leaving class to take a telephone call.
- There is no surfing or **social media** on computers in class! Computers are only used for taking notes!
- If a student is having any difficulties with the assignments, readings, papers, tests, punctuality, attendance, or medical issues, they should speak to the professor before it becomes a problem. **Good communication** will always lead to a **successful resolution of the issue**.

Religious Holidays

By university policy, students must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance that he/she wishes to observe a religious holy day. The student will be excused from class without penalty. The student is still responsible for the material and will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up any work missed after discussion with the instructor.

Behavioral Misconduct

Any student who is subject to sexual harassment, stalking, 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.

Course Communication

Course Communication - how to contact your professor. Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

Team Discussion Forums

You will be required to participate in the following three (3) online Team discussions:

- Film: Movie Essay
- Book: *The Wind is My Mother* by Bear Heart
- Case Study: Jerusalem Case Study

A minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each) is required for each forum. Doing the minimum earns you a C (75%); anything more brings a higher grade, as long as the comments are substantive and thoughtful.

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements. Quizzes in this course are not

compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance, please contact FIU Online Support Services.

Students will take nine online chapter quizzes, one Midterm Quiz, two Final Quizzes, and one Writing Rules Quiz: Multiple Choice, Matching, Fill-in-the-blank and True/False. Quizzes will be based upon both lecture and textbook material (about a 50-50 ratio), so passing will require regular attendance, taking good notes, and reading the textbook. It is not recommended that you take the quizzes as an open book test as they are time limited and you will not have time to look up material and answer all the questions.

Assignments

For assignment availability, detailed instructions, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the important information about assignments page.

This is a **Gordon Rule course** with a three-paper requirement, and you must attain at least a "C" to pass 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.

Please review each assignment's general requirements below, along with the assignment **grading rubrics** online in the *Assignment Dropbox* section of the course.

General Guidelines

- We use The **MLA Handbook** for writing papers in this course. You must know how to perform parenthetical referencing to provide appropriate citations for your sources.
- Read **Dr. Norris' Excellent Tips for Writing Papers** in **Canvas** to guide you in writing your essays. All written assignments are formal essays and should follow college essay format.
- All essay assignments will be turned in through **Turnitin** in Canvas **Turnitin Assignments** on the day they are due. There is a grade penalty of one grade decrease per day for late papers.
- **You may write more than the minimum word requirement, but not less without penalty.** In fact, most of your papers will need more than the minimum to adequately cover the topic and make your points.
- While there is a wealth of sound **research information** at your disposal on the Internet, there is a greater deal of dubious material, so please be discerning. Acceptable authorship includes individual, recognized experts, educational institutions (e.g. Institute of Reformation History, Stanford University), publicly supported national or international institutes (e.g. World Health Organization), and other well-known institutions with solid reputations (e.g. World Council of Churches).
- Please take advantage of the (free) FIU Writing Center that will provide you with someone to go over your papers for grammatical, format, and content issues before you hand it in. Visit our [Writing Resources](#) webpage for guidance and assistance with writing assignments.

Weekly Research or Opinion Questions

You will be presented with a weekly question or topic to research out of class. You must submit your responses online **before the next scheduled Remote Zoom meeting**. Students are expected to actively participate in class by making relevant comments and asking and answering questions.

Movie Essay

Think, Pair, Share a **750 Word** Opinion Essay: Each Team will watch two of these movies, as assigned from the list below, Think, Pair, Share and One 750 Word Opinion Essay (10%): Each Team will watch the two movies assigned to their team, participate in a three week group discussion comparing the movies, and write an essay on the comparison. For the essay follow these instructions: Explain, discuss, and analyze the **themes of the movies**, the **spiritual and religious traditions**, and **how the stories affected you**. Although you need to reference the plot, storyline and characters so your readers will know what you are talking about, do not retell the full stories for me. Analyze! Compare what you have learned about other religions and religious practices to discuss common themes and similarities or significant differences. You must demonstrate significant participation in the team discussion (three or more comments/opinions) for your paper to be accepted, participate in a group discussion comparing the movies, and write an essay on one of them.

1. *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, Graham Greene)
2. *The Last of His Tribe* (Jon Voight, Graham Greene)
3. *The Mission* (Robert DeNiro, Jeremy Irons)
4. *Thunderheart* (Val Kilmer, Graham Greene)
5. *Gandhi* (Ben Kingsley)
6. *Kundun* (Martin Scorsese)
7. *Schindler's List* (Liam Neeson)
8. *The Education of Little Tree* (Graham Greene, James Cromwell)
9. *Whale Rider* (Keisha Castle- Hughes)
10. *The Passion of Christ* (Jim Caviezel)
11. *Monsoon Wedding* (Naseeruddin Shah)
12. *Five People You Meet in Heaven* (Jon Voight)
13. Team 13: The Gods Must Be Crazy (N!xau)

Your paper will not be accepted if you do not participate in the Team Discussion Forum. The paper should reflect some of your discussion points. If you use outside sources, you must cite according to MLA format and add a Works Cited page.

Case Study

Jerusalem—Sacred City or City of War? This is a two-essay process. Each essay is a minimum of 1000 words.

1. **Essay 1 Research Paper covers Part I:** This paper discusses the ancient and current history of the conflict. It goes into detail about the ancient history, then the situation beginning in the 19th Century, and finally since WWII. Discuss the socio-political situation as it currently stands, as well as the politics and background of the negotiating position of your Subteam. Include some of the key points of your Subteam's negotiating position. Why and how did you get there?
2. **Essay 2 Peace Treaty Paper covers Parts II and III:**
 1. In **Part II** describe in detail your Subteam's negotiating position, including key negotiating points, problems in the negotiations, how they were resolved, and what compromises you were willing to make.
 2. In **Part III** describe in detail the Peace Treaty Plan you and the Team developed as a resolution: boundaries, governance of Jerusalem, realistic implementation strategies. Include maps for clarity. Break down not only what the plan entails, but how will it be implemented. How realistic is it?

You must demonstrate significant participation in the discussion (three or more substantive comments/opinions) for your papers to be accepted. You must provide proof of your research with citations in the body of the text and a separate Works Cited page per MLA guidelines.

Extra Credit

The student may write one Extra Credit Essay (2%) from the following movie choices.

1. 500 Word Movie Review Essay on *The Peaceful Warrior* with Nick Nolte, or *The Da Vinci Code* with Tom Hanks, or *Joshua* with F. Murray Abraham and Tony Goldwyn. Explain and discuss the religious themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, how the story affected you, and what it means today.
2. 500 Word Movie Review Essay on *Jesus Camp*. Analyze the movie, especially what you liked/disliked about the religious training depicted and the larger issue of the separation of religion and state.
3. 500 Word Movie Review on *Judgment at Nuremberg* with Spencer Tracy, Marlene Dietrich. Explain and discuss the religious themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, how the story affected you, and what it means today.

Grading

Who Receives an A Grade?

- This student provides consistent, excellent, high quality work on all assignments and exams.
- This student actively participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with knowledgeable, insightful, and relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits superior college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate solid research to support their paper's arguments.
- This student demonstrates superior observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
- This student turns in all assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates near perfect attendance and punctuality.
- This student is highly motivated to learn and improve academic skills.

Who Receives a C Grade?

- This student provides consistent, average quality work on all assignments.
- This student participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with relevant comments and answers to questions.
- This student exhibits average college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student knows how to conduct and demonstrate basic research to support their paper's arguments.
- This student demonstrates adequate, average observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
- This student turns in all or most assignments on time.
- This student demonstrates good attendance and punctuality.
- This student shows average motivation to learn and improve academic skills.

Who Receives an F Grade?

- This student provides extremely poor-quality work on most or all assignments that does not meet even minimal academic standards.
- This student does not participate in class and Discussion Boards at even a minimal level and is unable to provide knowledgeable, insightful, and relevant comments and answers to questions.

- This student does not exhibit college level writing skills and has not mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
- This student does not demonstrate college level observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit. • This student does not know how to or fails to conduct and demonstrate research skills to support their paper's arguments.
- This student does not turn in assignments on time or fails to turn in assignments.
- This student may demonstrate extremely poor attendance and punctuality.
- This student has not shown the motivation to learn and improve their academic skills.

COURSE GRADING RUBRICS

OPINION ESSAY

- Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)
 - Understanding: How well do understand the subject?
 - Clarity: How well did you explain, present, and discuss the topic? Will the reader understand what you are talking about?
 - Accuracy: How accurate are you with the facts and issues?
- Strength of Argument (30%)
 - Strong Thesis Statement: Is your Thesis Statement clear and to-the-point, and does it tell your audience exactly what the paper is about?
 - Rationale: Did you build your case logically and step-by-step?
 - Details/Examples: Did you give adequate details and provide useful examples to make and fill out your points?
 - Coverage: Did you cover the topic adequately enough to make the essential points?
 - Connections and Transitions: Did you provide good transitions from topic to topic and paragraph to paragraph.
- Strength of Organization and Structure (25%)
 - Outline: Did you outline the paper so it is organized and logical in its presentation?
 - Title: Did you provide a clear and interesting title?
 - Introduction: Did you provide a clear and interesting introductory paragraph that adequately introduces the essay? Is your Thesis Statement in the introduction?
 - Paragraphing: Do you understand how to paragraph and provide good transitions between paragraphs, that is, one paragraph should naturally lead into another.
 - Focus: Does your paper stay focused and on track?
 - Conclusion: Do you provide a clear summary and concluding paragraph that pulls the paper together and provides a logical conclusion to the subject?
- Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (20%)
 - Diction: Do you demonstrate good word choice, that is, use of the correct word?.
 - Grammar: Do you demonstrate a good knowledge of the fundamentals of grammar?
 - Sentence Structure: Do you write solid sentences that are clear, concise and focused—not wordy, fragments, run on or overly complicated?
 - Interesting Style: Do you write in a way that interests the reader—variety of words, challenging ideas, vibrant language?
 - Glittering Generalities: Are your sentences too general and vague, or are they backed up with specific facts, examples and details?

RESEARCH PAPER

- Knowledge of Subject Matter (20%)
- Strength of Argument (25%)

- Strength of Organization and Structure (20%)
- Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (15%)
- Strength of Research (20%)
 - Strength of Sources: Did you provide the required reference sources? Remember that dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, Theopedia, and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources, nor are direct sources such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and so on.
 - MLA: Did you follow MLA format?
 - Citation: Did you properly cite all the information sources in the body of the paper. Remember that anything that does not come from your own brain needs to be cited, that is, anyone else's words, ideas, theories, concepts, comments, and so on that you quote, paraphrase, summarize.
 - Works Cited: Did you provide a separate and properly formatted Works Cited page?

FIELD SITE VISIT/RESEARCH PAPER

- Knowledge of Subject Matter (25%)
- Strength of Organization and Structure (15%)
- Strength of Grammar and Writing Style (15%)
- Strength of Research (15%)
- Strength of Reflection (15%)
 - Personal Background information: Did you discuss your own religious background and your reaction to the religious service you attended for your Site Visit?
 - Reflection: Do you provide personal information and insights that reflect an inner process of evaluation and how the subject applies to your life?
 - Personal Examples: When appropriate, do you mix in personal examples as you make your points throughout the paper?
- Strength of Interview (15%)
 - Interviewee: Did you identify the name and position of the person you interviewed? Was the person you interviewed a good subject for the paper?
 - Questions: Did you ask well thought out, clear questions that adequately covered the topic?

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- While there is a wealth of sound research information at your disposal on the Internet, there is a greater deal of dubious material, so please be discerning. Acceptable authorship includes individual, recognized experts, educational institutions (e.g. Institute of Reformation History, Stanford University), publicly supported national or international institutes (e.g. World Health Organization), and other well-known institutions with solid reputations (e.g. World Council of Churches). Go to <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide-headings.aspx> for excellent religious studies sources. This site will also be posted on Canvas.
- Please take advantage of the (free) Writing Lab at the Center for Excellence in Writing that will provide you with someone to go over your papers for grammatical, format, and content issues before you hand it in.

| Course Requirements | Number of Items | Points for Each | Total Points Available | Weight |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Movie Essay (10%) | 1 | 100 | | 10% |
| Jerusalem Case Study Research Paper (15%) | 1 | 100 | | 15% |
| Jerusalem Case Study Peace Treaty Paper (15%) | 1 | 100 | | 15% |
| Team Discussion Forums (9%) | 3 | 100 | | 10% |
| Weekly Research Questions (5%) | 15 | 100 | | 6% |
| Quizzes (2.8% each) | 9 | 100 | | 25% |
| Writing Rules Quiz (2%) | 1 | 100 | | 2% |
| Midterm Quiz (4%) | 1 | 100 | | 4% |
| Two Final Quizzes (4% each) | 2 | 100 | | 8% |
| Attendance (5%) | 1 | 100 | | 5% |
| Extra Credit Essay (2%) | 1 | 100 | | 2% |
| Extra Credit for Voting | 1 | 100 | | 1% |
| Total | 10 | N/A | 1200 | 103% |

| Letter | Range% | Letter | Range% | Letter | Range% |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| A | 95 or above | B | 83 - 86 | C | 70 - 76 |
| A- | 90 - 94 | B- | 80 - 82 | D | 60 - 69 |
| B+ | 87 - 89 | C+ | 77 - 79 | F | 59 or less |