

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

Introduction to Religion

REL 2011–U09

Fall 2021

---

Professor: Dr. A. Fernández  
Contact: [afernand148@fiu.edu](mailto:afernand148@fiu.edu)  
Meeting: OE 105  
MWF 1:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.  
Office Hours: By Appointment

**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.

### 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://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 them directly at: <https://canvas.fiu.edu/support/>

- **Class Participation / Facilitation:** This class focuses on the importance of developing critical reflection skills.

**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 FIU's Center for Excellence in Writing at:*

<https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html>

### GRADING CRITERIA

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	NUMBER OF ITEMS	POINTS PER ITEM	TOTAL POINTS	TOTAL WEIGHT
Attendance/participation/facilitation	14	15	210	15%
Discussion Forums	13	15	195	15%
Weekly Reflections	14	20	280	20%
Research Proposal	1	20	20	20%
Synthesis Essay	1	30	30	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>100%</b>

## GRADING GRID

LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE
A	95-100	B-	80-83	F	< 60
A-	90-94	C+	77-79		
B+	86-89	C	70-76		
B	83-85	D	60-69		

**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.

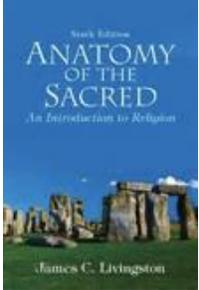
**C+, C:** awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.

**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

	<p><b><i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i></b>  <b>By: James C. Livingston</b></p> <p>MLA (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) citation:          Livingston, James C. <i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009. Print.</p>
---	---

***\*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/>

## **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 ACCOMODATION**

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

DATE	COURSE CONTENT
<b>WEEK 1:</b> <b>AUG 23 – AUG 27</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Welcome to Introduction to Religion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-depth review and discussion of course outlook and directives</b></li> <li>• <b>New teaching modalities in the era of COVID19</b></li> <li>• <b>Canvas</b></li> </ul> <p><b>AUG 25: Discussion Forum 1</b>  <b>AUG 27: Weekly Reflection 1</b></p>
<b>WEEK 2:</b> <b>AUG 30 – SEP 3</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>~Types of Religion~</b>  <b><i>Agents of Worship in Religion</i></b></p> <p><b>AUG 31: Discussion Forum 2</b>  <b>SEP 3: Weekly Reflection 2</b></p>
<b>WEEK 3:</b> <b>SEP 6 – SEP 10</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>~What is the Academic Study of Religion?~</b></p> <p><b>SEP 7: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS</b>  <b>SEP 8: Discussion Forum 3</b>  <b>SEP 10: Weekly Reflection 3</b></p>
<b>WEEK 4:</b> <b>SEP 13 – SEP 17</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>~ Sacred Symbols~</b></p> <p><b>SEP 14: Discussion Forum 4</b>  <b>SEP 17: Weekly Reflection 4</b></p>

<b>WEEK 5:</b> <b>SEP 20 – SEP 24</b>	<b>~ Deities ~</b> <b>SEP 21: Discussion Forum 5</b> <b>SEP 24: Weekly Reflection 5</b>
<b>WEEK 6</b> <b>SEP 27 – OCT 1</b>	<b>~Hermeneutics~</b> <b>SEP 28: Discussion Forum 6</b> <b>OCT 1: Weekly Reflection 6</b> <b>OCT 1: <b>SUBMIT ABSTRACT FOR FINAL PROJECT</b></b>
<b>WEEK 7</b> <b>OCT 4 – OCT 8</b>	<b>~Religion and Music~</b> <b>OCT 5: Discussion Forum 7</b> <b>OCT 8: Weekly Reflection 7</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b> <b>OCT 11 – OCT 15</b>	<b>~Religion and Sexuality</b> <b>OCT 12: Discussion Forum 8</b> <b>OCT 15: Weekly Reflection 8</b>
<b>WEEK 9</b> <b>OCT 18 – OCT 22</b>	<b>~Cosmogony~</b> <b>OCT 19: Discussion Forum 9</b> <b>OCT 22: Weekly Reflection 9</b>
<b>WEEK 10</b> <b>OCT 25 – OCT 29</b>	<b>~Fanaticism~</b> <b>OCT 26: Discussion Forum 10</b> <b>OCT 29: Weekly Reflection 10</b>
<b>WEEK 11</b>	<b>~Pluralism~</b> <b>NOV 2: Discussion Forum 11</b> <b>NOV 5: Weekly Reflection 11</b>

<b>NOV 1 – NOV 5</b>	
<b>WEEK 12</b> <b>NOV 8 – NOV 12</b>	<b>~Secularism~</b> <b>NOV 9: Discussion Forum 12</b> <b>NOV 12: Weekly Reflection 12</b>
<b>WEEK 13</b> <b>NOV 15 – NOV 19</b>	<b>~Sacred Scripture~</b> <b>NOV 16: Discussion Forum 13</b> <b>NOV 19: Weekly Reflection 13</b>
<b>WEEK 14</b> <b>NOV 22 – NOV 26</b>	<b>~Diversity, Coexistence, and Interfaith Dialogues~</b> <b>NOV 24: Discussion Forum 14</b> <b>NOV 26: Weekly Reflection 14</b>
<b>WEEK 15</b> <b>NOV 29 – DEC 3</b>	<b>~ Religions and Social Movements~</b> <i>Mobilizing Activism</i> <b>DEC 1: Discussion Forum 15</b> <b>DEC 3: Weekly Reflection 15</b>
<b>FINALS WEEK</b> <b>DEC 6 – DEC 10</b>	<b><i>CHECK FIU ONESTOP FOR FINALS SCHEDULE</i></b>

**!!! 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.*