

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Studies in World Religions

REL 3308-U04

Fall 2021

Professor: Dr. A. Fernández
Contact: afernand148@fiu.edu
Meeting: Ziff 150
MWF 11:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Religion remains one of the most important facets of the world we live in today. Religion can be explained as a set of beliefs, norms, and values concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a divine agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

In this introductory course we will explore the beliefs, historicities, scriptures, material cultures, practices, institutions, and values of select world religions. Anthropologically, there are three phenomenological criteria that classify a world religion. First, **adherence**, or the religion's number of followers. Second, **diffusion**, or how widespread the religion is across the world. And third, the **historical importance** and what type of influence the religion has had in shaping the world socioculturally to include, but not limited to, aesthetics, education, language, law and politics, social organizations, economics, ecology, and technology.

AIM OF THE COURSE

Interfaith dialogues: This course is designed to help you grow in your own faith tradition through exposure to other religious customs, and asks you to open your eyes, your minds, and your hearts to consider other religions and their voracity, and how similar they just might be to your own religious worldviews. Drawing from interdisciplinary sources, we will open-mindedly, objectively, and respectfully create a space for the neutral exchange of thoughts, feelings, and emotions with regard to several religious traditions. Grounded in a pluralistic approach towards the study of religion, this course seeks to bridge religious ideologies, creating a space that is both culturally diverse and inclusive.

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:

- Introduce you to the major beliefs and features of a range of religious traditions, including important terminology, [un]texts, history, practices, and major figures, showing how religion is seen as a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.
- Teach you to analyze world religions from an informed and reflective perspective.
- Give you the necessary theoretical tools to explore a variety of religious traditions and consider their influence in the analysis of the societies they shape on a global scale.
- Guide you to make important connections between your personal religious worldviews and those of others, in this manner exploring the practice and competency of interfaith dialogues.

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 one (1) 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 one of the specific religious traditions covered in this course following the guidelines set out 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>

GRADING CRITERIA

| COURSE REQUIREMENTS | NUMBER OF ITEMS | POINTS PER ITEM | TOTAL POINTS | TOTAL WEIGHT |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Attendance/participation/facilitation | 15 | 15 | 225 | 15% |
| Discussion Forums | 15 | 15 | 225 | 15% |
| Weekly Reflections | 15 | 20 | 300 | 20% |
| Research Proposal | 1 | 20 | 20 | 20% |
| Synthesis Essay | 1 | 30 | 30 | 30% |
| TOTAL | 47 | N/A | 800 | 100% |

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.

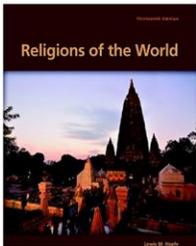
C+, C: awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.

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

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|  | <p>Religions of the World 13th Edition ISBN: 10: 0133793826 ISBN-13:9780133793826 Authors: Lewis M Hopfe, Mark R Woodward, Brett Hendrickson</p> <p>Citation: Hopfe, Lewis M., Mark R. Woodward, and Brett Henrickson. 2014. <i>Religions of the world</i>.</p> |
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**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 be 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 |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WEEK 1: AUG 23 – AUG 27 | <p style="text-align: center;">Welcome to Studies in World Religions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth review and discussion of course outlook and directives • New teaching modalities in the era of COVID19 • Canvas <p>AUG 25: Discussion Forum 1 AUG 27: Weekly Reflection 1</p> |
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| WEEK 2: AUG 30 – SEP 3 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Elements and Styles of Religious Practice~</p> AUG 31: Discussion Forum 2 SEP 3: Weekly Reflection 2 |
| WEEK 3: SEP 6 – SEP 10 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Indigenous Religious Cultures of the Americas~</p> SEP 6: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS SEP 8: Discussion Forum 3 SEP 10: Weekly Reflection 3 |
| WEEK 4: SEP 13 – SEP 17 | <p style="text-align: center;">~African Diaspora Religions (ADR)~</p> SEP 14: Discussion Forum 4 SEP 17: Weekly Reflection 4 |
| WEEK 5: SEP 20 – SEP 24 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Afro-Brazilian Religious Traditions~</p> SEP 21: Discussion Forum 5 SEP 24: Weekly Reflection 5 |
| WEEK 6 SEP 27 – OCT 1 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Haitian Vodou~</p> SEP 28: Discussion Forum 6 OCT 1: Weekly Reflection 6 OCT 1: SUBMIT ABSTRACT FOR FINAL PROJECT |
| WEEK 7 OCT 4 – OCT 8 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Afro-Cuban Religious Traditions~</p> OCT 5: Discussion Forum 7 OCT 8: Weekly Reflection 7 |
| WEEK 8 OCT 11 – OCT 15 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Jamaican Rastafarianism~</p> OCT 12: Discussion Forum 8 OCT 15: Weekly Reflection 8 |
| WEEK 9 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Spirit Mediumship and Ancestor Worship~</p> |

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| OCT 18 – OCT 22 | OCT 19: Discussion Forum 9 OCT 22: Weekly Reflection 9 |
| WEEK 10 OCT 25 – OCT 29 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism~</p> OCT 26: Discussion Forum 10 OCT 29: Weekly Reflection 10 |
| WEEK 11 NOV 1– NOV 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Judaism~</p> NOV 2: Discussion Forum 11 NOV 5: Weekly Reflection 11 |
| WEEK 12 NOV 8 – NOV 12 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Christianity~</p> NOV 9: Discussion Forum 12 NOV 12: Weekly Reflection 12 |
| WEEK 13 NOV 15 – NOV 19 | <p style="text-align: center;">~Islam~</p> NOV 16: Discussion Forum 13 NOV 19: Weekly Reflection 13 |
| WEEK 14 NOV 22 – NOV 26 | <p style="text-align: center;">~ World Religions and Pluralism~</p> NOV 16: Discussion Forum 14 NOV 26: Weekly Reflection 14 |
| WEEK 15 NOV 29 – DEC 3 | <p style="text-align: center;">~World Religions and Social Movements~</p> NOV 30: Discussion Forum 15 DEC 3: Weekly Reflection 15 |
| FINALS WEEK DEC 6 – DEC 10 | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>CHECK FIU ONESTOP FOR FINALS SCHEDULE</i></p> |

!!! 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.***