

REL 2011-U05 (11867) Introduction to Religion: Analysis and Interpretation
Spring 2017

Days and Times: M, W, F, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
Room: CP 117

Instructor: Adam D. Gorelick
Office Hours: OE 165E, by appointment
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PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change. Students should e-mail the instructor with any questions about the assignments and schedule.

Course Description

This course introduces methods of critical reflection on religion and some of their applications to fundamental topics such as knowledge, value, the sacred, the individual, and human society. While we will examine specific examples and respect the particularity of diverse religious traditions, the course will also focus on broad analytical themes applicable to religion in general and interpret these themes using methods from various academic disciplines.

Course Outcomes

Students will be able to...

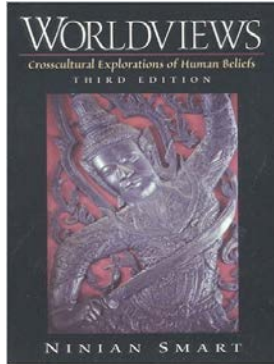
- Apply critical thinking skills to various topics in the field of religious studies.
- Explore the origins, nature, functions, and definitions of religion.
- Bracket out personal bias and attempt to understand the point of view of religious adherents.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems—as pertaining to the development and practice of religions.
- Analyze topics in religious studies through multi-perspective analyses of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world and to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.
- Conduct field research to better understand a religious community.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, etc.

Texts

Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 200.

ISBN-13: 978-0130209801

ISBN-10: 0130209805



Additional selected readings will be assigned.

Gordon Rule Course

This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college level writing skills” throughout your assignments. You will not receive any credit as a Gordon rule course for a C- or lower upon completion of this course. Your written assignments must show good control of grammar, style, and structure. Your papers must have a clear thesis, supporting material, and a conclusion.

Guidelines for Written Work

All written work must consistently adhere to the MLA Formatting and Style Guide. Students are advised to carefully proofread all papers before submitting them. All students are encouraged to take advantage of the University resources for writing to be found in the Center for Excellence in Writing, a full-service writing center providing writing assistance and feedback to university students. For more information, go to <http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/>.

All written work is submitted through <http://turnitin.com>. Plagiarism can result in expulsion from the university and will have a negative effect on your entire college career. All written work must include your name, Panther ID number, course number and the name of the professor on the title page. It must be double spaced, have 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) and be typed in 12 point font, Times New Roman or Calibri.

Religious Holidays

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) (DRC), if you have not done so already.” Please note that if you have a student who is registered with the DRC, you will receive notification about the student’s disability and a detailed description of accommodations the student will require.

Academic Conduct

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 to 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.

Note: Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and written assignments are to be submitted to turnitin.com.

Grading Scale

94 - 100 A
90 - 93 A-
87 - 89 B+
84 - 86 B
80 - 83 B –
77 - 79 C+
74 - 76 C
60 - 73 D
0 - 59 F

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation – **15% of final grade**

Quizzes – Quizzes will be unannounced and will cover material from the readings and lectures. **15% of final grade**

Midterm Essay Exam – The midterm exam will be a take-home essay exam. Students will answer two of three questions (in total, 1000-word minimum). See below for dates. **20% of final grade**

Final Exam – The final exam will be multiple-choice. See below for date. **20% of final grade**

Site Visit Background Research Paper – Students will conduct field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. In preparation for this field study, students will research the religious tradition in question. Students will not only identify the tradition broadly but also specify any relevant sectarian affiliation. Using a minimum of 2 academic sources, students will prepare a short research paper (500-word minimum) presenting their findings and articulating their understanding of the tradition in question. **10% of final grade**

Site Visit Essay – As per above, students will conduct field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of his/her own religious tradition. Students will take notes on site and prepare a (1250-word minimum) paper applying Smart's dimensions as an analytical tool. Additional guidance will be provided on Blackboard. **20% of final grade**

Calendar

Week 1 (1/9 to 1/15)

Class introductions, syllabus review, course plan

Reading: Smart, Introduction

What is Religion?

Week 2 (1/16 to 1/22) [No Class Meeting on MLK Holiday, 1/16]

Reading: Smart, Ch. 1

Week 3 (1/23 to 1/29)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 2

The Experiential or Emotional Dimension

Week 4 (1/30 to 2/5)

Reading: Smart, Ch.3

The Experiential Dimension

Week 5 (2/6 to 2/12)

Reading: Selections TBA

The Mythic and Narrative Dimension

Week 6 (2/13 to 2/19)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 4

Week 7 (2/20 to 2/26)

Reading: Selections TBA

Midterm Take-Home Essay-Exam: available 2/20; due 2/27, 11:59 p.m.

The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension

Week 8 (2/27 to 3/5)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 5

The Ethical or Legal Dimension

Week 9 (3/6 to 3/12)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 6

Spring Break

Week 10 (3/13 to 3/18) **[No Class This Week: SPRING BREAK]**

The Ritual or Practical Dimension

Week 11 (3/20 to 3/26)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 7

Site Visit Background Research Paper: Due 3/27, 11:59 p.m.

Week 12 (3/27 to 4/2)

Reading: Selections TBA

The Social or Institutional Dimension

Week 13 (4/3 to 4/9)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 8

Week 14 (4/10 to 4/16)

Reading: Selections TBA

Conclusion

Week 15 (4/17 to 4/23)

Reading: Smart, Ch. 9 and Postscript

Site-Visit Essay with Field Notes: Due 4/20, 11:59 p.m.

Week 16 (4/24 to 4/29) Finals Week – **Final Exam: 4/26, 9:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. at CP 117**

***This syllabus is subject to change. Please confirm with instructor that you have the latest version.**