

Department of Religious Studies  
Florida International University

## **INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIONS (REL 2011)**

**Instructor:** Raymond K. Awadzi

**Time:** Monday 6:20PM-9:05PM

Office Hour: Mondays 12:30PM -1:30PM at DM 301B or by appointment

Religious Studies Department: 305-348-2186

**Semester:** Spring 2017

**Venue:** ARE 117

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### **Introduction:**

In this introductory course to the study of religions, instructor and students shall use thematic approach to explore selected major themes of religious traditions of the world. By thematic approach, we will engage different topics, themes and characteristic features common to major religious traditions across the globe. As shown in the table of lessons below, the various themes shall be discussed in the light of religious traditions such as the Native American Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, African Indigenous Religion, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In studying the themes from the perspectives of these religious traditions, we will address ourselves with understanding the relevance of these themes to their belief systems as well as their day-to-day practices. As we do these, we shall pay particular attention to how the different religions relate to various topics, taking into consideration the commonalities and differences. Also, we will evaluate some major practices of these religious traditions and how their adherents engage in their beliefs and practices from historical periods to contemporary times. We will, as well, identify the extent to which these religions have, over the years; respond to changing socio-cultural contexts and these contexts may have affected their belief systems. Facilitate our studies, these some representative texts from each religion will be read and discussed for better illustration of the topics. Also we will view and analyse some interesting documentaries on the beliefs and practices of these religious groups from time to time. These approaches will enable students to develop the interest of studying the activities of religious traditions in a broader scope regardless of their adherents, time and respective locations within which these religions operate.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to;

1. Provide the student with the some major themes prevalent in the study of religions by exposing them to the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, and (selected) writings of some of the major world religions.
2. Facilitate and inform cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious. Student will understand some common basis for which people across the world engage in similar or different activities with religious undertone.
3. Broaden and enrich the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student through exposure to the spiritual beauty, vitality, coherence, plausibility and richness of religions other than Christianity and other Western approaches to the transcendent or ultimate reality. This will occur as students observe and analyse the activities of the religious other.

4. Challenge the student to enter sympathetically or empathetically into the worldviews of the religious traditions other their own. This is to enable students envisage different religious world worldviews from a common focal point.
5. Establish the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable the student to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religiously plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

This course will equip the student with analytical skills relevant for addressing some contemporary national and global issues.

### Class Schedules

Dates	Lessons and Readings	Note
<b>Week 1</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction and overview – Defining religion (s) and importance for studying religions in modern times.</li> <li>2. Identifying religion as an aspect of human life and experience in the world.</li> <li>3. Approaches to Studying Religious Phenomena</li> </ol> Read: James C. Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 3-32).	Normal Lessons Begin  Discussion on Religious Site Visit.
<b>Week 2</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approaches to Studying Religious Phenomena (Cont.)</li> <li>2. Universal Nature of Religious Experiences and Expressions.</li> <li>3. Sacred Symbol and Myth and Doctrine</li> </ol> Read: Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 37-71).	
<b>Week 3</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sacred Symbol and Myth and Doctrine (Cont.)</li> <li>2. Sacred Rituals</li> </ol> Read: Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 74-93).	
<b>Week 4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sacred Rituals (Cont.)</li> <li>2. Sacred Scriptures</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 96-121).	
<b>Week 5</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sacred Scriptures (Cont.)</li> <li>2. Society and the Sacred: Social Formation and Transformation of Religion</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 124-147).	
<b>Week 6</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Society and the Sacred: Social Formation and Transformation of Religion (Cont.)</li> </ol>	
<b>Week 7</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deity: Concept of the Divine and Ultimate Reality</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 153-179).	One Page Research Paper Proposal Due on Blackboard
<b>Week 8</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cosmology: Origin of Natural and Social Order</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 183-208).	
<b>Week 9</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Views of Human Problem</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 211-231).	Presentation of a four page Religious site visit report on Blackboard Due.
<b>Week 10</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Theodicy: Encountering Evil (The Problem of Explaining Evil)</li> </ol> Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 235-256).	
<b>Week 11</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ethics: Foundations of Moral Action</li> </ol>	

	Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 259-283)	
<b>Week 12</b>	1. Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 287-304).	Globalization Question Due by 11:59pm on Blackboard
<b>Week 13</b>	1. Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation (Cont.) Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 304-333)	
<b>Week 14</b>	1. Secularization – New Religious Revitalization Movements- Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 341-357)	Research Paper Due by 11:59pm on Blackboard
<b>Week 15</b>	1. Contemporary Challenges to Traditional Religion: The Status and Role of Women-Relations between Religion and the State. Livingston, <i>Anatomy of the Sacred</i> . (pp 361-393)	
<b>Week 16</b>	Final Examination: Time (TBA)	To be taken in Class

**Required Textbook:** James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2009)

**Other Reader:** Lewis M. Hopfe and Mark R. Woodward, *Religions of the World*, 13th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2014).

**Grading:**

Midterm/Field Report: 20%

Final Exams: 40%

Research Paper 30%

Globalization Question: 10%

**Note on Attendance:** Attendance is an absolutely essential part of the course! Although it will not be monitored at the beginning of the course, the instructor may choose to keep track of attendance if there is a major problem with students showing up and participating. If so, attendance will be 10% of the final grade, and the two tests will count for **25%** each. Finally, remember that some material will inevitably be covered in class that is not to be found in the textbook so that each absence negatively affects your ability to do well on the tests. Make sure to come to class regularly.

**Academic Honesty:** Each student is expected to do his or her own work. It is absolutely unacceptable to submit someone else’s work as your own. This is plagiarism and will result in a failing **grade (F)** for the assignment and possible disciplinary action. Thus, when in the course of writing your paper you quote or paraphrase an idea found in one of your sources you must give credit to the original author (usually by means of a footnote). See the University Code of Academic Integrity at <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm>

**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 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.

**Examinations:** Students will be examined on the basis of midterm and final examinations. The Midterm shall take the form of presentation of field reports. The final will be a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching and two essay questions. The final examination covers all course materials discussed throughout the semester.

**Term Paper:** Each student will write a term paper on some topic relating to practices of some religious communities, the goals of their belief system and how these religious traditions are responding to the changing contexts with which they operate. Examples of the former would be how Christianity began in the Near East as a Jewish movement but eventually spread to non-Jews throughout the Roman Empire and the respective religious practices that have developed through to contemporary time. Or how Buddhism started in India but today has spread to places such as China and Japan where it has exerted immense influence, or how the slave trade led to a synthesis of African Indigenous Religions with Christianity producing the religions we know today as Santeria and Vodou.

The topic must receive the approval of the instructor before it is handed in. The proposals will not be graded, but failure to turn in a proposal will result in the final paper grade being lowered a third of a letter grade (e.g. a B would become a B-, a B- would become a C+, etc.). The paper should be between 6-8 pages long, excluding bibliography. Each paper is to be printed or typed, not handwritten, with lines double-spaced. Margins for the pages should be 1 inch on all sides and the style should conform to either that of MLA or the Chicago Manual of Style. In the body of the paper you may use either footnotes or endnotes. Student must as well be consistent in their choice of style of citations.

**Globalization Question:** Read the article “The Case for Contamination” by Kwame Appiah and use the information you have learned in class this semester to answer the following question in 3-4 pages: Describe Appiah’s approach and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. Then explain how religions help people express their identities both as individuals and as members of a group. Also, what did you learn about the need for and the potential of better understanding between religions? In your view, what is the best way to approach interreligious dialogue (For example, should we all become the same or should we value our diversity? If the latter, how do we do this? Is globalization a help or a hindrance to diversity?) This Paper carries 10 % of the total score.

**Note on Internet Use in Research:** You may cite from the internet in your term papers, but you must be discerning. Anyone can post “information” on the internet, and thus some of what is there is inaccurate, incomplete, and sometimes even blatantly untrue. As in print collections in libraries, only scholarly articles on the internet are acceptable as sources for research papers.

Internet articles should ideally have authors. Some will list individual authors; others will list institutions as sources. The credibility of the information depends on the credibility of the source. Acceptable sources include individual scholars with academic credentials, educational institutions (e.g., Institute of Reformation History, Princeton University),

publicly supported national or international institutions (e.g. the World Health Organization or the National Institutes of Health) or other well-known institutions with credible reputations (e.g. the World Council of Churches, the Children's Defense Fund). Most educational institutions have addresses which end with the letters "edu." You must use your judgment since many reputable institutions may not be well known by most students. Also, sometimes websites may list a university as the place from which the material emanates, but which does not sponsor or in any way support the information on that site. (You could set up a website that lists FIU as its origin, and purports that the Pope died last month and was replaced by a ringer!).

There will be some internet sources the reliability of which will be difficult to assess. Sometimes you must judge by the tone and range of an article. If it reads like a magazine or newspaper article and cites none of the sources it used, it is not scholarly. You should ask whether the article demonstrates balance: Does it attempt to tell all sides of the story? Does it ask critical questions of the material it covers? How well does its treatment accord with other treatments of the same material you have found? If you would really like to cite an internet article but have doubts about its acceptability, look up the institution or the author on the internet or in the library. Has the author or institution published other works? Have those been reviewed or cited by other scholars?

When you cite from the internet, you must list the entire address on the web where you found the information and the date you accessed it. When applicable you must also note any search terms needed within the website to find this particular article when these do not appear within the address.

The following are some bibliographic entries:

Musa, Edward, "The Art of the Maya."

<http://www.unescape.org/pop/journal/v1onaal.htm.4/27/2000>.

Zarabozo, Jamaal, "Is Family Planning Allowed in Islam?"

<http://www.albany.edu/~ha4934/famplan.html>. May 9, 2001

**Note:** The course instructor has the sole right to modify or change aspects of this syllabus as and where necessary. However, students will be informed about the changes. Revised: 12/15/2016