

REL 3308 U04 World Religions

Department of Religious Studies

Instructor's Name: Andres Arrazola

Office Hours: Monday 12:00 p.m – 12:50 p.m. Location: GL 150

E-mail: aarra001@fiu.edu

Course Description

This course is a course offered by the Religious Studies Department. The course incorporates the cross cultural study of world religions. This course introduces the five world religions: Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and East Asian religious culture by looking at topics and themes such as doctrine, ritual, scripture, mysticism, ethics, and myth while also introducing methodological approaches to the comparative study of religion. In all, with a comparative approach to the religion, students will gain insights into similarities across religions as well as the most salient elements of religious traditions such as scripture, rituals, and institutions.

Course Objectives

- 1) To analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in personal, social, and global contexts.
- 2) To understand and discuss the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religious truth claims and meaning making practices.
- 3) To develop proficiency in analyzing texts, rituals, behaviors, beliefs and practices of a variety of religious traditions. Because the student will be constantly utilizing various theoretical discourses he/she will be able to analyze the many ways in which concepts, statements, beliefs, and judgments relate to practice, action, and other concepts and beliefs, as clarified through theoretical discourse. Thus the student will develop the skill of evaluating how plural theoretical structures may work together to create an adequate understanding of religion.
- 4) To better understand religious belief and practice within various religious traditions and areas of the world it will contribute to a richer understanding and appreciation of the diversity of religious activities throughout the world.

Course Requirements/Assessments

Attendance: 20%

Participation: 10%

Quizzes: 10%

Exams: 25%

Three Essays: 20%

Presentation: 15%

Essays

Essay One – Choose some issue or topic of interest regarding the relationship between your discipline and religion. It can be understanding some controversial issue involving religion while using the theories and concepts developed within your discipline. It can be the analysis of some aspect of a particular religion using the theories and concepts of your discipline. A topic proposal must be submitted to the professor for approval before writing the paper. You must use standard formatting such as 10 – 12 inch font and 1.0 inch margins in your paper. The paper should be 5 – 7 pages long. Use the citation methods of your discipline, e.g. MLA, APA, etc.

Essay Two – Write an essay detailing what you have learned at your site visits to the class. You must apply the six dimensions of religion learned in class and demonstrate how they manifested themselves during your site visits. The focus of the paper should be a description of how each of these dimensions was present during your visit. The paper must detail the date of each observation described in the paper. Also, consider how the textbook describes the religion researched and if the description is reflected well or poorly by your site visit. Each member of the group must write their own paper. You must use standard formatting such as 10 – 12 inch font and 1.0 inch margins in your paper. The paper should be 5 – 7 pages long.

Essay Three – The third essay will be a hand written essay to be produced during the final covering topics from the textbook and discussed in class. More information on this essay will be discussed during the semester.

Quizzes and Exams - Throughout the course, quizzes will be administered at the professor's discretion. The aim of the quizzes is to assess the level of engagement by the students of the assigned reading. Also, there will be a midterm and a final exam that will assess all of the materials discussed in class. The final exam will not be cumulative.

Group Project/Presentation - Students' will form into groups at the beginning of the semester with the intent of performing a site visit of a particular house of worship. The site chosen should be of a religion different from the one practiced by the members of the group or a religion of familiarity. The group will present the information based on the site visit using Smart's dimensions of religion.

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**

Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, helping another student to cheat, plagiarism, turning in the same paper for two different courses (including those in two different semesters), purchasing papers written by others, manipulating attendance records, and falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.

Course Materials

Readings will be emailed to your FIU email account.

Weekly Schedule

Week of January 9th: **Introduction**

Weeks of January 18th and January 23rd: **Indigenous Religions. Reading:** Geertz PDF

Weeks of January 30th and February 6th: **Hinduism. Reading:** Hindu Politics and Society PDF

Weeks of February 13th and February 20th: **Buddhism. Reading:** Buddhist Politics and Society PDF

Essay 1 Due on Thursday February 23rd. Midterm on Thursday February 23rd

Weeks of February 26th and March 6th: **Judaism. Reading:** Judaism in Politics and Society PDF

Week of March 13th - **SPRING BREAK**

Weeks of March 20th and 27th: **Christianity Reading:** Christianity in Politics and Society PDF

Weeks of April 3rd and 10th: **Islam. Readings:** Islam in Politics and Society PDF

Week of April 17th: **Presentations Week**

Second Essay Due on Thursday April 20th

Final Exam TBA

Syllabus Is Subject To Change