Instructor: Steven M. Vose  
Office: DM 359-A  
Office Hours: M 1:30-3:30, W 12:45-1:45 or by appointment  
Email: svose@fiu.edu  
Phone (off.): (305) 348-6728

Co-Instructors:  
Iqbal Akhtar, DM 359-B, R 10:00-11:00 or by appt., iakhtar@fiu.edu  
Carlos Grenier, DM 301-C, M 2:00-4:00, cgrenier@fiu.edu  
Oren Stier, DM 305-A, by appt. only, stiero@fiu.edu

Course Description:
The Seminar in Sacred Sources introduces students to the concerns and methodologies in the comparative study of religion as it pertains to the study of religious texts and reading practices. The theme for the Spring 2018 semester is “Reading, Religiously.” Each instructor will lead a two- or three-week unit on several texts and commentaries in classical and/or vernacular languages in order to examine their social and theological implications for the study of those traditions and for religion in general. Students will choose sources and topics to work on for their final projects in consultation with the appropriate instructor(s).

Course Objectives:
1. To introduce students to some key concepts, theories, and methodologies concerning the study of sacred sources.
2. To introduce students to the concerns and problems of the comparative study of religion by analyzing a theme thought to be held in common across many religious traditions.
3. To facilitate informed cross-cultural and inter-tradition comparison and evaluation of ways of expressing religious ideas by focused study of selected texts.
4. To engage students in in-depth studies of an individual text or texts covering one or more reading communities, leading to a research paper.
5. To compare reading practices in several religious traditions, and to examine the question of how readings are established, debated, challenged and changed in canonical, commentarial, and other genres of religious texts.

Course Requirements and Grading:
1. Attendance & Participation (25% of the final grade)  
A seminar is only as good as the members who contribute to it. Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to participate in class discussions and activities, and to come to class having completed all assigned readings with questions for discussion. Absences will only be excused in cases of illness or emergency with appropriate documentation.

2. Response Papers (25% of the final grade)  
At the end of each unit, students will submit a 500-750-word critical reflection on the readings examined. They are due on the Friday after each unit at 11:59 PM, posted to
the appropriate Turnitin dropbox on Blackboard. For theoretical readings (Weeks 3-5): Summarize the central argument of the main reading(s) for the unit, demonstrating your understanding of the main ideas in the readings and answer the questions posted on the Turnitin dropbox. For remaining units: Address how the readings illustrate key differences in readings of similar stories in various texts, how readings are established or challenged, how readings change over time or in various kinds of texts (or may exist simultaneously for readers), and/or how the theoretical readings help to illuminate issues pertaining to readings and reading practices. Citations from the readings and a reference(s) page in a Chicago style (notes-bibliography or author-date style) are required. No outside research is required or permitted.

3. Research Paper (50% of the final grade)
Each student will write a research paper of 3,500-4,000 words, the topic to be chosen in consultation with the appropriate faculty member(s). Deadlines for a Topic Proposal (Feb. 5), Annotated Bibliography (Mar. 5), and Title & Abstract (Apr. 2) are set throughout the semester to keep you on pace. Additionally, students must discuss their paper topics with their selected professor by Friday, Feb. 23. Students will present their research papers during the last class meeting during the “final week of instruction” in a symposium format. The Final Draft is due on Wednesday, April 25 at 11:59 PM. Extensions cannot be granted beyond this date without taking an Incomplete.

The grade for the paper will be broken down as follows:
   a. Paper Topic: Due Mon., Feb. 5 at 11:59 PM (10%)
   b. Annotated Bibliography: Due Mon., Mar. 5 at 11:59 PM (10%)
   c. Title & Abstract: Due Mon., Apr. 2 at 11:59 PM (10%)
   d. Presentation of the paper in “final week of instruction” symposium (10%)
   e. Final Draft: Due Wed., Apr. 25 at 11:59 PM (60%)

Policies:
1. Late papers will lose a full letter grade per day and will not be accepted after four days beyond the due date. Late response papers will not be accepted.
2. Written work will only be accepted for a grade if submitted to the proper Turnitin dropbox, accessible via the course Blackboard page. Work will not be accepted by email.
3. All student work must conform to University policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course as well as disciplinary measures.

Grading scale:
A 93-100    A- 90-92    B+ 87-89    B 83-86    B- 80-82    C+ 77-79
C 70-76    D 60-69    F 0-59

Required Readings:
All materials will be posted on Blackboard (Bb) under the “Readings” tab.

Schedule of Readings and Class Meetings:
Introduction to the Study of Sacred Texts
Week 1 (Jan. 8): Introductions, “What is a text? What is a sacred text? What is a classical language? What is a vernacular language? How is reading a sacred text different from reading other kinds of texts?”

Week 2 (Jan. 15): NO CLASS: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
**Unit I: Theorizing Religious Traditions and Religious Reading** (with Prof. Vose)

Week 3 (Jan. 22): Religious Reading Practices  
Reading: Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, all except ch. 6.

Week 4 (Jan. 29): What is a “Religious Tradition”?  
Reading:  
1) W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, selected chapters;  
2) Talal Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic: W.C. Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion*”

Week 5 (Feb. 5): Religious Traditions as Disciplinary Regimes; and Representing Religious Traditions  
Reading:  
1) Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, selected essays;  
2) Said, Introduction to *Orientalism*.

**Paper Topic Proposal due 11:59 PM on Turnitin** (accessible through course Blackboard page)

**Unit II: Retelling the Story of Nemi and Rajul Across Jain Texts** (with Prof. Vose)

Week 6 (Feb. 12): Neminātha and Rājmāti in the Jain Canon and Elite Literature  
Reading:  
1) *Kalpa Sūtra*, “Life of Ariṣṭanemi”;  
2) *Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra*, Ch. 22;  
3) Jain commentaries on UttS 22;  
4) Hemachandra, selections from the *Neminātha-Charita*.  
5) OPTIONAL: Dundas, “The Meat at the Wedding Feasts”.

Week 7 (Feb. 19): A Vernacular Re-Telling of the Story of Nemi and Rajul  
Reading:  
1) *Nemi-Rājul-no Rāso (The Epic of Nemi and Rajul)*;  
2) Selected Nemi-Rājul phāgu poems (Tr. Charlotte Vaudeville);  
3) Kelting, Introduction and Ch. 5 of *Heroic Wives*.

**Meet up with your paper advisor to discuss your topic by Friday, Feb. 23**

**Unit III: The Nur Nama Across the World** (with Prof. Akhtar)

Week 8 (Feb. 26): Sufism and Shia Islam  
Reading:  
1) Shi’a Beliefs;  
2) The Names of God, Meditation, and Mystical Experience;  
3) *Islamic Mystical Poetry*, selections.

Week 9 (Mar. 5): Comparing Tellings of the *Nur Nama*  
Reading:  
1) The Epistle of Muhammadan Light (Persian translation);  

**Annotated Bibliography for Paper due 11:59 PM on Turnitin**

Week 10 (Mar. 12): SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS!!! ENJOY (working on your papers)!!!

**Unit IV: Reading Strategies in Judaism** (with Prof. Stier)

Week 11 (Mar. 19): Classical Jewish Reading Strategies  
Reading:  

4) “PaRDeS,” Ohr Somayach: Ask The Rabbi. https://ohr.edu/ask_db/ask_main.php/163/Q2;


Week 12 (Mar. 26): Close Reading of Jewish Texts

Title & Abstract for Research Paper due 11:59 PM on Turnitin

Unit V: Popular Islam in the Ottoman World (with Dr. Grenier)

Week 13 (Apr. 2): Introducing Islam in the Ottoman World
5) Ahmed Bican, Envaru'l-'Aşıqin, Grenier translation. (All on Bb)

Week 14 (Apr. 9): Esoteric Re-Tellings of Popular Narratives
3) Excerpt from Henry Corbin, Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam. Westchester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995;
4) Noah in Genesis, Qur'an, Envarü'l-'Aşıqin. (All on Bb)

Week 15 (Apr. 16): Stories of Moses and Joseph in Islamic Texts
4) Joseph in the Envarü'l-'Aşıqin. (All on Bb)

Final Paper Presentations, Monday, April 23, 10:30-11:45, GL 250
Final Paper due Wednesday, April 25 at 11:59 PM submitted to Turnitin dropbox on course Blackboard page.