

## **REL 2011 Introduction to Religion**

### Spring 2019 Syllabus and Learning Guide Florida International University

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#### **When and where do we meet?**

Class Discussions: Tue/Thu 2- 3:15 pm in Green Library 132

Office Hours: Tue/Thu 11-12 pm in DM 301B

Questions? Religious Studies Department: 305-348-2186

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#### **What will we do together?**

Look around you, the world is steeped in religion and this course is designed to help you uncover its complex nature. Without religious literacy you will not be able to see how religion has shaped and still continues to shape your day-to-day life, your society, and ultimately our world.

Let's ponder various questions throughout the semester together: What does religion mean to people? Is there inherent power in religion? How are world religions and their sacred practices similar and how are they unique and different? Do religions evolve? What is religious extremism? How can we dispel common misconceptions about religion? Has atheism also become religious? To what extent does religion play a role in technology, science, medicine, and possibly even your own major?

Grasping the foundations of an academic study of religion will also be a central theme as we explore seminal theoretical perspectives and concepts through an interdisciplinary approach. Our study of religion will be seen through various other fields, including but not limited to: psychology, philosophy, economics, politics, international relations, history, gender studies, etc.

Uncovering the heart and soul of religion, namely that of myth and ritual, will also be crucial. Case studies will exemplify how religions are interacting with our world in real-time. In essence you will be given the tools to explore how religions influence and shape cultures within the private and public spheres.

#### **Why is this relevant?**

No matter whom you are or what major you have declared to study, everyone benefits from an enhanced global perspective. This perspective will allow you to think more clearly and critically, giving you the ability to communicate more effectively. This skill enables better collaboration that can ultimately achieve resolving conflict more peacefully and creatively.

**What will you walk away with upon completing this global learning course?**

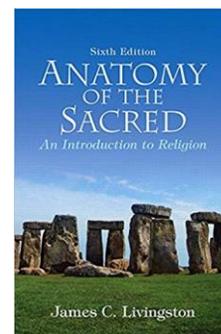
- You will understand how an individual's identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences, fostering appreciation and tolerance for religious and cultural diversity
- You will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives, including: psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, etc.
- You will be able to compare and contrast key elements within Western, Eastern, and Indigenous beliefs and practices
- You will be able to explain the history, development, and evolution of the belief systems and practices of various religious communities
- You will be able to start applying critical thinking to important topics in the field of religious studies, like: art, ecology, politics, and women
- You will be able to appreciate the need and willingness to think creatively and critically about religious issues in a globalized context
- You will be able to evaluate your own and others' religious views as they relate to a better understanding of yourself, others, and solving common problems
- You will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religion

**Required Text**

Livingston, James C

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion (6<sup>th</sup> edition)

**ISBN-10:** 013600380X or **ISBN-13:** 978-0136003809



**Gordon Rule Course**

This is a Gordon Rule course which means you must demonstrate “college-level writing skills” throughout three different writing assignments. Your writing assignments must show good control over grammar, style, and structure. A clear thesis, supporting material, and conclusion must be evident. You will need a grade of a C or higher for successful completion of this course. **You should utilize the writing lab to improve your writing if needed.**

**Grade Components**

**15% PARTICIPATION 45% WRITING 40% TESTS**

- Class:** 15% Attendance/Participation/Discussion
- Writing:** 5% Short Reflection Essay- The Role of Religion in My Life  
10% Reviewing a Scholarly Article  
10% Site Visit Essay- 1<sup>st</sup> Draft  
20% Site Visit Essay- Final Essay
- Tests:** 20%- Mid-term Exam/ MC and Essay  
20%- Final Exam/ MC and Essay

**Task Calendar**

<b>January</b>
❖ 24 <sup>th</sup> Short Reflection Essay
<b>February</b>
❖ 19 <sup>th</sup> Reviewing a Scholarly Article
❖ 28 <sup>th</sup> Mid-term Exam
<b>March</b>
❖ 19 <sup>th</sup> Site Visit Essay Draft
<b>April</b>
❖ 18 <sup>th</sup> Site Visit Final Essay
❖ <b>Scheduled Date</b> Final Exam

**Attendance/Participation/Discussion/Readings**

You are allowed **two absences** but please keep in mind how your absences might impact your grade. Please notify me of religious observances. Will be using roll call on Canvas.

Engagement, discussion, and debate are required for this course.

Keeping up with the reading is foundational. You will be responsible for bringing a copy of your text to class. Please annotate all of your assigned readings. As an active reader you could highlight sections that either resonate with you or confuse you.

All readings are to be done for the week they appear on the course calendar below.

### **Short Reflection Essay: The Role of Religion in Your Life**

A short **2-3 page essay** reflecting on how much, or how little, religion has impacted and shaped your life.

Specific instructions will be posted to Canvas.

### **Reviewing a Scholarly Article**

Some of you are still developing the skills to write a top-notch research paper. Although your site-visit essay is not primarily a research paper, you will still need to include some research to supplement your experience. Great research rests on your ability to determine how credible a source can be. This assignment is created to help you develop the skill of finding a credible and strongly-argued scholarly article. This work will advance your ideas and research for your future site-visit essay.

Specific requirements will be posted to Canvas.

### **Site Visit Draft and Final Essays**

You will write a **6-7 page essay** during the semester.

The essay will be handed in twice:

- As a **draft** worth 10% of the final grade to be turned through **turnitin.com** via Canvas
- As a **final essay** worth 20% of the final grade to be turned in through **turnitin.com** via Canvas

For this essay you will be doing field research by attending a religious service or ceremony outside of your own religious tradition.

A handout with specific requirements will be posted to Canvas.

### **Mid-term Exam**

The mid-term will be a timed 50 question multiple-choice exam and a timed mid-term essay. The essay will target major concepts and ideas in the study of religion from the PowerPoint lectures, discussions, and text. Review will be posted on Canvas.

### **Final Exam**

The final will be a timed 50 question multiple-choice exam and a timed mid-term essay. The essay will target major concepts and ideas in the study of religion from the PowerPoint lectures, discussions, and text. Review will be posted on Canvas.

**No make-up final exams will be allowed unless previously scheduled in advance.**

### **Turnitin**

All writing assignments will all be submitted through turnitin via Canvas **by 11:59 pm on the due dates specified on the course calendar.**

### **Grading Scale**

Each assignment will be graded on the following criteria:

50% Content

25% Grammar

25% Style and Structure

94-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D	0-59	F
90-93	A-	83-86	B	70-76	C				
		80-82	B-						

### **Disability Resources**

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific situation as soon as possible. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at 305-348-3532/ [drc@fiu.edu](mailto:drc@fiu.edu). You should also visit the center to guarantee reasonable accommodations and receive proper documentation based on disability. I will work with the center to accommodate all types of needs. For more information please visit: <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/disability-resource-center/>

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. FIU has a strict policy on academic dishonesty and expects each student to submit work that is uniquely his or her own. All of this work must be done in accordance with established principles of academic integrity. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, can fall into many different categories, including but not limited to:

1. A written work that is entirely stolen from another source
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them
3. Paraphrasing from another source without using proper citations

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. Please review university resources to understand the different types of plagiarism at: <http://integrity.fiu.edu/plagiarism.html>.

**Offenders will receive a 0 for the plagiarized assignment.**

### **Late Policy**

For each late day I will deduct 10% off the total percentage for that assignment. The latest day an assignment will be accepted is THREE DAYS after its original due date with a 30% deduction from the late assignment. If you are experiencing any kind of emergency that prevents a timely submission I must be notified *in advance* for a possible extension.

*Again, there will be no make-up final exams UNLESS previously scheduled.*

### **Course Calendar**

**ALL POWERPOINTS AND CLIPS TO BE POSTED ON CANVAS\*\*\***

#### **Week 1 and 2: Studying and Defining Religion**

- Readings: Chapter 1 and 2 from Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)
- Small Assignment (SA): Craft a definition of religion

#### **Week 3: The Sacred and the Holy**

- Readings: Chapter 3 Anatomy of the Sacred (AS)  
**Short Reflection Essay Due – 1/24<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**

#### **Week 4: Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine**

- Readings: AS Chapter 4
- SA: Bring a “myth” from a tradition to discuss in class

#### **Week 5: Sacred Ritual**

- Readings: AS Chapter 5

#### **Week 6: Sacred Ritual Cont.**

- Film: “Inside Mecca”

#### **Week 7: Sacred Scripture**

- Readings: AS Chapter 6  
**Reviewing a Scholarly Article Due – 2/19<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**

#### **Week 8: Sacred Scripture and Test 1**

- Film: “Inside the Koran”  
**Mid-term Exam**

#### **Week 9: Concepts of the Divine**

- Readings: AS Chapter 8

#### **Week 10: SPRING BREAK**

#### **Week 11: Cosmogony**

- Readings: AS Chapter 9
- SA: Bring a cosmogony from a tradition to discuss in class  
**Site Visit Draft Essay Due – 3/19<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**

#### **Week 12: The Human Problem**

- Film: PBS Special “The Buddha”

**Week 13: The Human Problem Continued**

- Readings: AS Chapter 10

**Week 14: Theodicy**

- Readings: AS Chapter 11

**Week 15: Soteriology**

- Readings: AS Chapter 13
- Film: The World's Biggest Festival: Kumbh Mela  
**Site Visit Final Essay Due – 4/18<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**

**Final Exam**

**Finals Week: 4/22-4/27: Check University Final Exam Schedule**

**References**

Academic Advising  
<https://exploratory.fiu.edu/>

**\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change as the course develops but any changes will be notified in a timely fashion.**

Last Revised: 12/20/2018