

REL 2011 RVBB Introduction to Religion – Fully Online
Spring B 2019-Mini Term – (3/4/19-04/20/19)
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Dr. Iqbal Akhtar

Email: iakhtar@fiu.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW

Why Should I Care about Religion?

Why do bad things happen to good people? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand current events? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to your major? These are just some of the questions that we will explore throughout the semester.

This course is interested in examining the different expressions, practices and interpretations of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although no particular tradition will be favored, materials from several traditions will be chosen to exemplify thematic topics in the experience of the Sacred. We will also focus on the tenets of religions, dispelling common misconceptions and assumptions and looking into the emergence of new practices among the post-denominational generation.

How can this course help you advance in your career?

You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will train you to make important connections between your career and the world of the sacred and the profane. You will be able to understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

Religious illiteracy can greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies.

Our approach is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from many fields of study such as philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This enhances your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other cultures.
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and symbols.
- Evaluate their own religious views in regards to other cultures and paradigms of religious thought.
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies.
- Think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious community.
- Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world

Students will be tested on this material through:

- Time-restricted quizzes – 13 in total
- Essay exams
- A Religious Site Visit Research Paper
- A Critical Analysis Research Paper
- Interactive Discussions

*This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, please visit:

<https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/>

Mini Term Sections of this Course:

Please note that this course is a 15-week semester compressed into 6 weeks. Time management and organizational skills is key to successfully completing this course with minimal stress. Plan your weeks strategically, in order to complete assignments by their respective due dates.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION POLICIES

Please review the [FIU's Policies](#) webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & SKILLS

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. Computer literacy is the ability to manage and organize computer files efficiently, as well as being able to navigate your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the "[What's Required](#)" webpage to find out more information on this subject

Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

Please visit our [ADA Compliance](#) webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).

COURSE PREREQUISITES

For information about prerequisites, [click here](#).

PROCTORED EXAM POLICY

This class does not require proctored exams.

TEXTBOOK

Title: Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion

Author: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall,

Edition: 6th

ISBN: 013600380X

ISBN-13: 9780136003809

Textbooks may be purchased/rented via the [FIU Bookstore](#).

EXPECTATIONS OF THIS COURSE

This is an online course; most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online.

Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. Online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills, which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **Review the how to get started information located in the course content**
- **Introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
- **Attempt the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas
- **Interact** online with instructor/s and peers
- **Review** the course syllabus and calendar
- **Submit** assignments on time

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Communication in this course will take place via Inbox

Conversations are email-like messages sent within Canvas' internal messaging system. Students are alerted to new messages on their dashboard screen upon logging in.

It is recommended that students log in to Canvas daily and review their Inbox for private messages and/or Announcements from the instructor.

DISCUSSION FORUMS (4 in total - worth 10% of final grade)

There will be four (4) discussions in this course. These discussions are meant to stimulate critical thinking about how religions manifest in our globalized world.

Discussion topics will become available Monday, 12:00PM to Sunday, 11:59PM of each week that a discussion topic is posted. See the course calendar for the weeks that have discussion topics posted.

To receive full credit for the discussion assignments, students must post a minimum of 3 discussion threads per discussion topic:

- One post in response to the main discussion topic
- Two responses to other students' posts

Keep in mind that this is an academic forum; all students in the course will see the discussion posts. When criticizing or agreeing with another student's position on a given topic, please make sure to include supporting facts and specific examples to strengthen your arguments. Contribute links to articles, news stories, and/or other media whenever possible.

QUIZZES

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be attempted through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact [FIU Online Support Services](#).

A time-restricted, multiple-choice quiz will be given on each week's religious concept. The questions in the quizzes will draw from the weekly course content, including audio lectures and assigned readings.

Quiz Availability: Open from Monday, 12:00AM to Sunday, 11:59PM (see Course Calendar for specific dates.)

Quiz Duration: Students will have 20 minutes to answer 10 multiple-choice questions.

Quiz Attempts: Quizzes may be attempted twice. The highest of the two attempts will count towards the student's final grade. It is not mandatory to take each quiz twice.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and/or internet connection, it is very important that the "Practice Quiz" be attempted prior to beginning the quizzes or exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

The correct answers for quizzes will not be released to students. Students will be able to see submitted answers only. Students should refer to their course materials for the correct answers.

WRITTEN EXAMS

The essay prompts for **Written Exam 1** and **Written Exam 2** will become available in the Assessment area during the exam availability time (check the weekly calendar).

All assignments can be submitted via Canvas in the Assignments content area.

The written exams should each be approximately 500-750 words long.

All written assignments will be automatically checked for plagiarism. See section titled Course Policies to learn more about what plagiarism is and how to properly cite your work.

RESEARCH PAPER 1 - SITE VISIT ESSAY

All written assignments will be automatically checked for plagiarism. See section titled Course Policies to learn more about what plagiarism is and how to properly cite your work.

****Students May Not Submit Work From A Previous Semester Or From Another Class For This Assignment Or Any Other Assignment In This Course.**

Assignment Details and Instructions:

- Format: MLA Format Required
- Content: Field research and supplementary research
- Length: 1800-2000 Words, Not Including Your Works Cited Page
- Double –Spaced, 12-Pt Font, Arial Or Times New Roman Font
- Sources: 3 Academic Sources Minimum
- Works Cited Page required

For this Site Visit, students will perform field research by attending a religious service outside of their own religious tradition. The goal is to immerse each student in an unfamiliar religious context (example: Christians should perform field research on a non-Christian religion, like Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)

At the top of your paper, please include the name of the religious site visited, the date visited, the names of any individuals you may have interviewed, and the particular sect or denomination of the religion that practices at the site.

[If you visited a Muslim mosque, was it Sunni or Shi'ite? If you visited a Jewish synagogue, was it Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform? If you visited a Buddhist temple, was it Theravada or a Mahayana sect?] You may want to ask this when you call to find out if your visit is acceptable.

Your research should ideally progress in three stages:

(1) Preliminary Research

Before going to the service, it is a good idea to do some preliminary research on the religious tradition. For example, if you're attending a Hindu ceremony, you will want to read the textbook chapter and watch the PowerPoint presentation on Hinduism. Additionally, I strongly recommend that you call the site you'll be visiting and let them know you're coming to do research for a class project. Ask them if there's any dress code requirements, or anything else you should keep in mind. You may also want to ask if they will allow you to take notes during the service. (Some Jewish denominations, for example, do not allow writing on Shabbat {Saturday}.)

(2) Field Research

Attend the service and observe closely. You may want to take notes. Some students have found it helpful to attend services in groups, and you're welcome to do this.

(3) Supplementary research

After your visit, research any elements of the experience that were unfamiliar and that left you with questions, including but not limited to the practices, symbols, dress code, and conversations encountered at the site. In other words, research each practice and find out why it's done in this particular sect.

Examples:

If you go to a Jewish service and you see the men wearing kippahs (or yarmulkes), you don't want to write in your essay, "There were these men and they were wearing these funny hats but I don't know why." This is where your additional research comes in. Find out what the hats are called, and find out why they're worn.

If you go to a Muslim mosque and you see the worshippers washing their hands and feet, you don't want to write in your essay, "Everyone was washing their hands and feet but I don't know why they did that and it was pretty weird."

Upon completing these three stages, write a detailed and insightful essay. It should demonstrate a general understanding of the religious tradition; use your research to explain your experience at the site. What did you see around you? What did the place of worship look like? Did you see any religious art or religious symbols there? How were people dressed? What rituals were performed?

Finally, include your personal reaction to the service. How did you respond? Did you enjoy the visit or did you feel uncomfortable? Were your opinions about the religion challenged or confirmed by the site visit?

RESEARCH PAPER 2- APPIAH ANALYSIS ESSAY

This assignment requires two parts:

1. Discussion (20 POINTS of your assignment grade) and
2. Essay (80 POINTS of your assignment grade)

Assignment instructions:

PART 1 – Discussion Board Portion (20 points)

Read the article "The Case for Contamination" by Kwame Anthony Appiah and post your initial response to the following questions in the Discussion Board:

"What roles do religions play in Appiah's analysis? How is your approach similar to or different from his?"

Once you have posted your answer, respond to at least three of your fellow students' posts and explain how you agree/disagree with them.

In order to receive full credit for this part, a total of 4 posts will be required: 1 original thread + 3 comments

Each response should be at least 100 words and should demonstrate knowledge of the article as well as class readings and PowerPoints.

*The discussion posts are due one week prior to the essay deadline. Check Course Calendar in Syllabus for exact due dates.

PART 2 - Essay (80 points)

****Students May Not Submit Work From A Previous Semester Or From Another Class For This Assignment Or Any Other Assignment In This Course. It Will Be Flagged For Plagiarism By Turnitin.**

Instructions:

After reading your classmates' responses and considering your initial response in Part 1 of this assignment, read the article: "The Case for Contamination" by Kwame Anthony Appiah again. Write a well-structured essay that answers the questions: "What roles do religions play in Appiah's analysis? Do you agree or disagree to his approach towards religion? How does it differ from your individual approach towards religion?"

Guidelines:

- Format: MLA Format Required
- Length: 1000 Words, Not Including Your Works Cited Page
- Double –Spaced, 12-Pt Font, Arial Or Times New Roman Font
- Sources: Class Readings And Powerpoint Lectures

Submit your essay to Assignments via Canvas.

Keep electronic receipts and/or paper copies of all submitted work.

In every Gordon Rule course at FIU, students must demonstrate "college-level writing skills." College-level writing must exhibit the following characteristics:

- It has clear purpose and thesis or controlling ideas.
- The thesis is supported with adequate reasons and evidence.
- It shows sustained analysis and critical thought.
- It is organized clearly and logically.
- It shows knowledge of conventions of standard written English.
- It shows awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery methods.
- Moreover, sources must be cited as appropriate.

Thesis Statement: The thesis is the central idea of your paper around which all your evidence and claims are organized. Every single paragraph should be dedicated in a clear way to proving your thesis. In your essay, the thesis should be stated as quickly and as clearly as possible. In fact, many teachers will expect your thesis statement to appear in the last sentence of your essay's first paragraph. A vivid thesis statement will announce the steps of its argument, not just provide a flat statement of the essay's ultimate goal. Think of the thesis as a roadmap that gives directions to your reader rather than as a picture of your final destination.

A good thesis should not state something that is obviously true. When your thesis is too easy to prove, your essay can become repetitive and you may feel that you do not have enough to write about. A complex thesis, on the other hand, requires you to convince your reader that your argument is logical and will reveal ideas that cannot be easily anticipated. A worthwhile thesis will always outline an argument with which a reader can readily disagree.

These are two links to guide you to write a good thesis statement:

- http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml
- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/>

If link above does not work:

- Go to main website <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>
- Click on the "Handouts" tab
- Under "Writing the Paper" section, click on "Thesis Statements"

When reading your essays, I will be looking at three different elements: Content, Style, and Research. You will receive a grade in each of these areas, and these grades will then be averaged together for your final essay grade.

Content refers to the information in your paper. Is it correct? Is it detailed? Do you demonstrate basic knowledge of the religious tradition? Is this knowledge evident in your description of the service?

Style refers to how that information is presented. This includes the way the information is organized and language skills such as spelling, grammar, and proper sentence structure.

Research refers to the quality and quantity of your research.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Papers

Late submissions will NOT be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.

Avoid leaving assignment/quiz submissions for the last minute before a deadline. "Heavy user traffic" during this timeframe may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

Assignment Submissions

All work has to be submitted through Canvas. Canvas does not allow instructors to submit on behalf of students. Please do not email your assignments to your instructor.

If you encounter errors or issues submitting an assignment, click on “Help” inside Canvas Course (located on the left-hand panel inside the course) and select Chat with Canvas Support (student). A live chat with Canvas support can fix the issue immediately.

Quiz Resets

Please limit quiz reset requests to instances when technical issues compromised both quiz attempts. The second attempt is meant to be a “backup” attempt for situations where the first attempt was not completed successfully.

Reopening quizzes after the due date has passed will require verifiable documentation.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

- a. A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
- b. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
- c. Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the University Code of Academic Integrity at

<http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm>

Offenders will receive a grade of “F” for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.

**Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

Extra Credit

No Extra Credit work will be accepted in this course.

GRADING

Course Requirements	Points	% of Final Grade
<u>Research Paper 1 – Site Visit</u>	100	20%
<u>Research Paper 2</u> Part 1- Discussion Portion Part 2- Appiah Analysis	20 80	20%
13 Multiple Choice Quizzes *Average will be calculated	100	10%
Participation in Discussion Topics (4 in total)	100	10%
Written Exam 1	100	20%
Written Exam 2	100	20%
Total		100%

GRADING SCALE

This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%
A	95 or above	B	83 - 86	C	70 - 76
A-	90 - 94	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 69
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or less

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 1 March 4</p> <p>This week's work will remain open until March 17.</p>	<p>Review and familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, calendar of due dates, and how content items are setup under Modules and Assignments.</p> <p>Section I - The Study of Religion Topic: Defining Religion. Why Are Humans Religious? Why Study Religion? Read: Chapter 1 p. 1-14</p> <p>View Presentations: Dr. Northup - What Is Religion? How Is It Studied? Topic: The Perspective of the Student–Commitment and Objectivity. The Ways Religion Is Studied. Interpreting and Explaining Religion. Read: Chapter 2 p. 15-34</p> <p>DUE: Introduce Yourself in the Discussion Forum DUE: Take Quizzes 1 & 2</p> <p>Section II. Universal Forms of Religious Experience and Expression</p> <p>View Presentation: Dr. Huchingson -The Sacred and the Holy.</p> <p>Topic: The Concept of Sacred Power. The Ambivalence of Sacred Power. The Holy as Mysterium Tremendum and Fascinans. Sacred Space and Sacred Time. Religion as Ultimate Concern.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 3 p. 35-52</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 3: The Sacred and the Holy</p>

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 2</p> <p>March 11 (Spring Break) – Assignments will remain open during Spring Break</p> <p>March 18</p>	<p>View Presentation: Dr. Northup - Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine.</p> <p>Topic: Symbolic Communication. Religious Symbols. Metaphor, Parable, and Story. Religious Myths. Models and Doctrines.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 4 p. 53-73</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 4: Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine DUE: Participate in Discussion Forum 1 View Presentation: Dr. Northup - Sacred Ritual.</p> <p>Topic: Ritual Action. Types of Sacred Ritual. Ritual and Sacrifice. Rituals as Sacraments.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 5 p. 74-95</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 5: Sacred Ritual</p> <p>View Presentation: Dr. Larson - Sacred Scripture.</p> <p>Topic: The Pervasive Role of Sacred Scripture. Using the Term Scripture. Some Distinctive Features of Sacred Scripture. The Authority and Canonicity of Scripture. The Reception and Uses of Scripture. The Interpretation of Scripture.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 6 p. 96-123</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 6: Sacred Scripture DUE: Participate in Discussion Forum 2</p>

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 3 March 25</p>	<p>View Presentation: Dr. Wuaku - Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion.</p> <p>Topic: The Reciprocal Relationship between Religion and Society. Types of Religious Communities. Voluntary Religious Communities. Protest and Change in Voluntary Religious Communities. The Sect. The Cult: New Religious Movements.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 7 p. 124-150</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 7: Society and the Sacred</p> <p>Take Written Exam 1 Covers materials from first half of the course Monday, March 25 - Sunday, March 31, 11:45pm</p> <p>Section III. Universal Components of a Religious Worldview</p> <p>View Presentation: Dr. Huchingson- Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality.</p> <p>Topic: Polytheism and the Worship of Nature. Dualism. Pantheism and Monism. Monotheism.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 8 p. 151-182</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 8: Deity</p> <p>DUE: Research Paper 1- Site Visit due Sunday, March 31</p>

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 4 April 1</p>	<p>View Presentation: Rabbi Shulkes - Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order.</p> <p>Topic: The Practical Basis of Cosmogony. Emergence or Procreation from a Primal Substance or Being. The Sexual Union of a Primal Male and Female. Creation by Conflict and the Ordering of Chaos. Creation by a Divine Craftsman. Creation by Decree or from Nothing. The Rejection of Cosmogonic Speculation. Cosmogony Today.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 9 p. 183-210</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 9: Cosmogony View Presentation: Dr. Wuaku - Anthropology: The Human Problem.</p> <p>Topic: Modern Views of Our Human Plight. Stoicism. Christianity. Theravada Buddhism. Confucianism.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 10 p. 211-234</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 10: The Human Problem</p> <p>DUE: Participate in Discussion Forum 3</p> <p>DUE: This is the last week to do Part 1 of Research Paper 2-Appiah Analysis– Due Sunday, April 7</p>

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 5 April 8</p>	<p>View Presentation: Dr. Gudorf - Theodicy: Encountering Evil.</p> <p>Topic: The Persistent Demand for Theodicy. Theodicy of "Mystical Participation." A Future, This-Worldly Theodicy. Other-Worldly Theodicy. Dualism. The Karma-Samsara Theodicy. Monotheistic Theodicies.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 11 p. 235-258</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 11: Theodicy</p> <p>View Presentation: Dr. Gudorf - Ethics: Patterns of Moral Action.</p> <p>Topic: Virtues and Obligations. The Sources and Norms of Moral Authority.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 12 p. 259-286</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 12: Ethics</p> <p>View Presentation: Dr. Huchingson - Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation.</p> <p>Topic: Ways of Salvation and Liberation. The Way of Grace through Faith. The Way of Devotion. The Way of Action and Obligation. The Way of Mediation and Insight. Goals of Salvation and Liberation. Psychic Wholeness and a Healthy Social Order. Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life. Samadhi and Nirvana.</p> <p>Read: Chapter 13 p. 287-338</p> <p>DUE: Research Paper 2- Appiah Analysis Essay — due Sunday, April 14</p>

Dates	Course Content Calendar
<p>Week 6 April 15</p>	<p>Section IV. The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity View Presentation: Dr. Bidegain - The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity.</p> <p>Topic: Secularization and Pluralism. The Reactions of Religious Fundamentalisms Today. The Characteristics of Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism. The Status and Roles of Women in Religion. Relations between Religion and State.</p> <p>Read: Chapters 14-15 p. 339-398</p> <p>DUE: Take Quiz 13: Soteriology and Fundamentalism DUE: Participate in Discussion Forum 4</p> <p>Due: Take Global Learning Quiz (This is for University Assessment Purposes)</p> <p>You must take the Global Learning Quiz prior to attempting Written Exam 2.</p> <p>Take Written Exam 2 - will only be available Monday- Friday</p> <p>Covers materials from second half of the course Monday, April 15– Saturday, April 20 11:59PM</p>