

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

**INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION – REL 2011**

SPRING 2019

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**Instructor:** Emmanuel Dennis

**Email:** edenn013@fiu.edu/ Canvas email

**Class location:** CBC 254

**Class time:** 9:30am – 10:45am

**Office location:** GL 150

**Office hours:** TBA

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS COURSE

This course provides an in-depth analysis of the different ways in which religion interacts with society. This includes a historical and contemporary outlook on how the sacred informs the secular in various aspects of society. This course examines religion's intricate presence in arts, sports, architecture, gender, dance, food, technology, medicine, environment, and ethics.

The notion of the sacred and ritual practices in these religions (Hinduism, Native American Religions, African Indigenous Religions, Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Daoism, Confucianism) are examined together with various theoretical themes that explain religion.

Reading religious texts and theories about religion, in-class participation, understanding the place of religious practice in contemporary society and the use of multimedia to facilitate the studies are part of the design for this course. Concepts such as sacred space, myth and narratives, cosmology, ethics, and ritual will be examined in this course. Each concept will be conveyed in class lectures, presentations by students, textbook, videos and additional sources provided to the class.

Students will be examined on the information obtained in this course through quizzes, research papers, presentations, mid-term exam and final exam.

Two research papers will assess the student's ability to conduct research and writing prowess. The first research paper entails a site visit where students research the religious nature and practices of a religious tradition in Miami, Florida. For the second essay, the student will propose a research interest based on the contents studied for this course. The research interest of the student will be reviewed by the instructor and suggestions will be made on them where necessary. Student presentations for this course are based on the definitions of religious traditions and practice and each student will present on ritual aspects of the various religions named. This course fulfills the Gordon rule requirement.

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS COURSE

Students will be able to:

- ✚ Compare and contrast religious traditions and cultures in the local, national and international context.
- ✚ Situate these religious traditions and cultures within contemporary and historical perspective.
- ✚ Engage critically the issue of religious diversity in national and international context.

## GLOBAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

Students will be able to:

- ✚ Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in a contemporary and multifaceted world.
- ✚ Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religion.
- ✚ Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple viewpoints.

## REQUIRED TEXT FOR THIS COURSE

**Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion** by James C. Livingston is the required reading material for this course. The sixth edition of this book is the preferred material to obtain for student's readings.

There are other materials suited for this course and these will be available on Canvas throughout the duration of this course this semester.

## COURSE COMMUNICATION

- ✚ Pertinent information pertaining to student's activities for this course will be conveyed primarily in class. Information will also be provided via Canvas email and announcements for this course.
- ✚ Students will receive responses to important information pertaining to them when they communicate via email.
- ✚ All submissions for this course must be done on Canvas. There are no exceptions. Students need to be abreast of Canvas and should seek out information that will be provided there for this course.

## EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES FOR THIS COURSE

- ✦ You are to come prepared for each class having done the readings for the class and be ready to engage in discussions held in class. Your involvement matters and is critical to you succeeding in this course. You are advised to stay on top of the workload for this course as things develop quickly. Quickly notify about anything you do not clearly grasp about the demands for this course.
- ✦ Taking this course will require you to study assertions and positions that may be conflicting. Maintain an open mind. You can do this by observing the argument from the viewpoint it is being presented. This will offer a balanced approach to the study of religion.
- ✦ All coursework for this course should be submitted based on the instructions given for them and must be submitted on or before the due date and time. Late submissions will not be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.
- ✦ You cannot submit work from a previous semester to fulfil an assignment for this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism.
- ✦ There is no extra credit work for this course.
- ✦ Consistent class attendance and participation are important requirements for success in this course.
  
- ✦ **The instructor reserves the right to amend any part of this syllabus by announcements in class and on Canvas with enough time allowed for students to adjust and respond appropriately.**

## GRADING CRITERIA

A minimum “C” grade is required to pass this course.

- ❖ 93 – 100 [**A**]
- ❖ 90 – 92 [**A-**]
- ❖ 86 – 89 [**B+**]
- ❖ 83 – 85 [**B**]
- ❖ 80 – 82 [**B-**]
- ❖ 77 – 79 [**C+**]
- ❖ 70 – 76 [**C**]
- ❖ 60 – 69 [**D**]
- ❖ 0 – 59 [**F**]

## COURSE ASSESSMENT

- + 10 quizzes (MCOs) – 30 marks
- + presentations – 20 marks
- + research paper 1 (site visit) – 5 marks
- + research paper 2 – 5 marks
- + mid-term exam – 20 marks
- + final exam – 20 marks
- + TOTAL – 100 MARKS

## CLASS SHCEDULE AND CALENDAR

**Week One** – Understanding Religion  
(January 8th & 10th)

**Week Two** – Ways of Studying Religion  
(January 15th & 17th)

**Week Three** – The Sacred and the Holy  
(January 22nd & 24th)

**Week Four** – Sacred Symbol, Myth and Doctrine  
(January 29th & 31st)

**Week Five** – Sacred Ritual  
(February 5th & 7th)

**Week Six** – Sacred Scripture  
(February 12th & 14th)

**Week Seven** – Society and the Sacred  
(February 19th & 21st)

**Week Eight** – Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality  
(February 26th & 28th)

**Week Nine** – Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order  
(March 5th & 7th)

**Week Ten** – Spring Break  
(March 11th - 16th)

**Week Eleven** – Views of the Human Problem  
(March 19th & 21st)

**Week Twelve** – Theodicy: encountering Evil  
(March 26th & 28th)

**Week Thirteen** – Theodicy Contd.  
(April 2nd & 4th)

**Week Fourteen** – Ethics: Foundations of Moral Action  
(April 9th & 11th)

**Week Fifteen** – Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation  
(April 16th & 18th)

**Week Sixteen** – Final Exam (TBA)

**\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change as the semester progresses. Any changes will be communicated in a timely fashion to allow for adjustments.**