

# Course Syllabus

## REL 2011: Introduction to Religion: Section UHA

Professor Thomas Norris, DMin, MDiv, MSW

Email: Use Canvas Inbox

(305) 348-2186

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### Course Description and Purpose

This hybrid **Gordon Rule course** introduces students to the academic study of religion and explores several of the major Eastern and Western religious traditions, both ancient and contemporary, to discover beliefs, patterns, themes, methods, practices, rituals, and symbols that shed light on the overall meaning of religion within the context of human existence. This interdisciplinary exploration delves into the various dimensions of the nature of the sacred and religion, while considering historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, archeological, philosophical, socio-economic and theological perspectives.

### Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze how religion has influenced every culture throughout history, including their own
  2. Discover how religion has played a role in the student's own life
  3. Determine how religion affects global affairs as well as local affairs
  4. Recognize how religions develop and evolve, both ancient and modern
  5. Identify basic, underlying principles present in all religions
  6. Embrace a more empathetic awareness of the religious diversity in our world
  7. Compare and contrast the major religious traditions, both ancient and modern
  8. Apply the course knowledge to an ethnographic field site visit to a religious site and worship service unfamiliar to the student
  9. Correlate economic, sociological, anthropological, archeological, psychological, scientific, historical and theological principles in studying religions
- Develop a personal learning process and plan required for his/her success in this religious studies course

### Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)

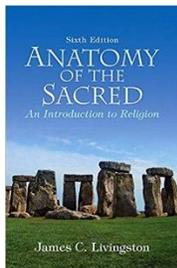
## Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

## Proctored Exam Policy

All quizzes and exams are online, so there are no proctored exams for this course.

## Textbook and Course Materials



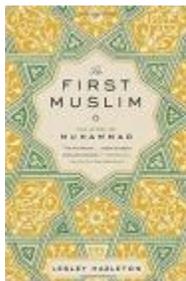
### **Anatomy of the Sacred (Required)**

James C. Livingston

Pearson, 6th edition, 2009

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-600380-9

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).



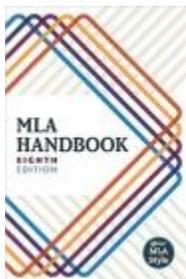
### **The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad (Required)**

Lesley Hazleton

Riverhead Books, 1st edition, 2014

ISBN-13: 978-1594632303

You may purchase your textbook online at the [FIU Bookstore \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).



### **MLA Handbook (Recommended)**

The Modern Language Association of America

MLA, 8th edition, 2016

ISBN-13: 978-1603292627

## Expectations of this Course

This is a hybrid course, which means part of the course work will be conducted online and part in class. Expectations for performance in a hybrid online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, hybrid online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

- Course Communication - how to contact your professor
  - Communication in this course will take place via the Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.
- Respect, Courtesy, and Communication
  - It is the student's responsibility to be attentive, respectful, keep up with the work, and hand in assignments on time.
  - **Cell phones** must be turned off during class. There will be no texting or leaving class to take a telephone call.
  - There is no surfing or **social media** on computers in class! Computers are only used for taking notes!
  - If a student is having any difficulties with the assignments, readings, papers, tests, punctuality, attendance, or medical issues, they should speak to the professor before it becomes a problem. **Good communication** will always lead to a **successful resolution of the issue**.
- Behavioral Misconduct
  - Any student who is subject to sexual harassment, stalking, physical or verbal abuse should immediately speak to the instructor. The university has policies to protect students in these instances and the instructor will immediately refer the student to the appropriate program or resource.

## **Attendance (5%)**

Regular **in-person attendance is required** to pass this course. Students are to arrive on time and stay until the class period is over. If you need to leave early, discuss with me before class. Repeated tardiness is counted as an absence for that day.

Attendance counts for **5% of your final grade** and it is calculated by the percentage of times present and absent. However, if you miss more than three classes, a greater percentage is deducted.

The 5% Attendance grade is for regular attendance, but missing too many of the classes in the course is not acceptable and leads to failure. Much of the in-class portion of the course is based on lecture, discussion and participation, and not just taking quizzes or turning in papers.

## **Religious Holidays**

By university policy, students must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance that he/she wishes to observe a religious holy day. The student will be excused from class without penalty. The student is still responsible for the material and will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up any work missed after discussion with the instructor.

## **Discussion Forums (10%)**

You will be required to participate in the following three (3) online discussions:

- *Essay: "The Case for Contamination"* by Kwame Anthony Appiah
- *Film: Gandhi* (1982)
- *Book: The First Muslim - The Story of Muhammad*, by Lesley Hazleton

A minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each) is required for each forum. Doing the minimum earns you a C (75%); anything more brings a higher grade, as long as the comments are substantive and thoughtful.

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

## **Quizzes**

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the [Practice Quiz](#) from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. For quiz duration, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the [important information about quizzes](#) page.

### **Writing Rules Quiz (2%)**

This quiz will test your understanding of good essay and writing skills. The quiz consists of 15 questions with 45 minutes to complete. You will be allowed two (2) attempts. Your score and submitted answers will be available immediately after each submission. Correct answers will be made available in *My Grades* after each quiz deadline.

### **Chapter Quizzes (27%)**

You will take nine (9) online quizzes based on assigned textbook chapters. Each quiz consists of 20 questions with 30 minutes to complete. Your score will be available immediately after submission. Correct answers will be made available in *My Grades* after each quiz deadline.

### **Midterm and Final Quizzes (10%)**

These quizzes will be based upon both lecture and textbook material (about a 50-50 ratio), so passing will require regular attendance, taking good notes, and reading the textbook. Each exam will consist of 40 questions with 60 minutes to complete.

It is not recommended that you take the quizzes or exams as an open book test as they are time limited and you will not have time to look up material and answer all the questions.

- **Midterm Quiz (5%):** covers content from weeks 1-7
- **Final Quiz (5%):** covers content from weeks 8-15

## Assignments

For assignment availability, detailed instructions, grading criteria and feedback response time, please review the [important information about assignments](#) page.

This is a **Gordon Rule course** with a three-paper requirement and you must attain at least a "C" to pass a Gordon Rule course. Under the Gordon Rule, FIU requires that student papers:

1. have a clear thesis or controlling idea;
2. have a thesis supported with adequate reasons and evidence;
3. be organized clearly and logically;
4. show sustained analysis and critical thought;
5. show knowledge of conventions of standard written English; and
6. show awareness of disciplinary conventions in regard to content, style, form, and delivery method.

Please review each assignment's general requirements below, along with the assignment **grading rubrics** online in the *Assignment Dropbox* section of the course.

## General Guidelines

- We use The **MLA Handbook** for writing papers in this course. You must know how to perform parenthetical referencing to provide appropriate citations for your sources.
- Read **Dr. Norris' Excellent Tips for Writing Papers in Canvas** to guide you in writing your essays. All written assignments are formal essays and should follow college essay format.
- **You may write more than the minimum word requirement, but not less without penalty.** In fact, most of your papers will need more than the minimum to adequately cover the topic and make your points.
- While there is a wealth of sound **research information** at your disposal on the Internet, there is a greater deal of dubious material, so please be discerning. Acceptable authorship includes individual, recognized experts, educational institutions (e.g. Institute of Reformation History, Stanford University), publicly supported national or international institutes (e.g. World Health Organization), and other well-known institutions with solid reputations (e.g. World Council of Churches). Please visit the Wabash Center' Page, [Annotated Links to Websites on Religion and Theology \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#), for excellent religious studies sources. This site will also be posted on **Canvas**.
- Please take advantage of the (free) Writing Lab that will provide you with someone to go over your papers for grammatical, format, and content issues before you hand it in. Visit

our [Writing Resources \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#) webpage for guidance and assistance with writing assignments.

### **Weekly Research Questions (5%)**

You will be presented with a weekly question or topic to research out of class. You must submit your responses online **before the next scheduled in-person meeting**. Students are expected to actively participate in class by making relevant comments, and asking and answering questions.

### **Opinion Essay on "*The Case for Contamination*" (10%)**

This individual essay assignment follows the online discussion of Anthony Appiah's "A Case for Contamination" essay.

*Think, Pair, Share:* Use the online discussion to deepen your understanding of the article, to answer anything you did not understand about Appiah's argument, to analyze the article, and to challenge each other—so you can write a better, more comprehensive essay. Make it a true back and forth discussion.

After the discussion period, write your individual **750-word** opinion essay addressing the following points about Appiah's essay:

1. What is Appiah's overall thesis? State clearly.
2. What does Appiah mean by "contamination"?
3. What role does religion play in Appiah's essay?
4. What are Appiah's major themes?
5. What are the major contrasting viewpoints Appiah discusses. Define, describe, explain, compare and contrast them: Cultural Preservation, Cosmopolitanism, and Neofundamentalism.
6. In the essay provide and explain at least three examples Appiah gives to make his argument.
7. Provide and explain at least three personal examples you can think of that could also be used to support Appiah's argument or your own counterargument.
8. Explain how you agree or disagree with Appiah.
9. Assume your audience has not read the article, so make sure you explain things clearly and fully. Your paper will not be accepted if you do not participate in the discussion with a minimum of three substantive, thoughtful comments (at least 50 words/5 lines each).

The paper should reflect some of your discussion points. If you use outside sources, you must cite according to MLA format and add a Works Cited page.

### **Religious Site Visit and Essay (20%)**

Visit a worship service or ceremony (temple, mosque, church, cathedral, or worship facility) outside of your own religious background or current religious practice. *Note:* Remember that if your religious background or current practice is Christian, you cannot do this Field Visit Essay on any other Christian Churches (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal, etc.). If you do, the paper will not be accepted. Then, write about your experience in a **1,000-word** essay: what you observed, what you learned, how you felt (personal reflection), and anyone you interviewed. As an ethnographic exercise, detail is essential.

Your essay must address the following points.

- Conduct an interview with a priest, minister, rabbi, imam, monk, lay leader or church official with all questions and responses integrated into the body of the paper. Provide an appendix at the end of the paper listing the questions you asked.
- Describe the service, building structure, art and cultic objects, clothing, rituals, ancillary practices (such as serving special foods), “the feel of the place,” demographics of the participants, and anything else relating to the religion and the service. Specify the religion and the branch or sect you attended for the site visit
- Demonstrate that you have done some research ahead of time (citations and a Works Cited page) so that you have some basic knowledge of what you are going to experience. When you use outside sources, you must cite according to MLA format and add a Works Cited page. You must provide a minimum of three scholarly, professional research sources (books and professional journals) for this research.
- Identify and discuss your own religious background or current practice in the introduction.
- Respect the church, temple, or mosque. **DO NOT TAKE NOTES DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE, PRAYERS OR MEDITATIONS.** Do your research ahead of time and in interviews. Sit quietly and participate appropriately during the worship service, following the other worshippers in what to do. **DO NOT MAKE ANY CRITICAL OR DISPARAGING COMMENTS TO ANYONE WHILE ATTENDING SOMEONE ELSE’S SACRED SPACE.**

### References

You must provide a minimum of two (2) scholarly, professional references (books, journal articles, interviews, feature news articles, documentaries, etc.) of which only one may come from the Internet (except for full e-books and online academic articles).

Please **DO NOT use** any of the following sources as one of your references:

- Hopfe and Woodward textbook or other course textbooks
- Wikipedia, encyclopedias, atlases, or dictionaries
- Original sources, such as the Bible, the Torah or the Quran

### **Research Paper (20%)**

For this assignment, you will be required to choose one of the four topics listed below and write a **1,500-word** research paper on the chosen topic. Please consult the **MLA Handbook** to reference and **Dr. Norris' Tips for Excellent Papers in Canvas** for everything you need to write a solid research paper.

### Choose ONE of the Following Topics

- *Matriarchy Versus Patriarchy—The Treatment of Women within Religion throughout History*: Do not focus on just one religion or just one individual within a religion. Instead, compare ancient versus modern religions, or compare across several modern religions, but show the similarities and differences in the treatment of women (beliefs, practices, symbols, rituals, patterns and themes).
- *Indigenous Versus Colonial—The Differences between the God of the Native Americans and the God of the White European Settlers*: Do not just provide a listing of similarities and differences, but compare and contrast by exploring underlying themes, beliefs, rituals, symbols, and practices.
- *Moral Versus Immoral—The Moral Teachings of Religion*: Compare and contrast the moral teachings of various religions (ancient, indigenous, and/or modern), particularly regarding their history, cross-cultural connections, similarities and differences. Make sure that you include a scholarly discussion of the difference between morals and ethics.
- *The Historical and Modern Reasons for Hostility between the Religions of the People of the Book*: Explore why the Abrahamic Religions have been at war in one way or another throughout their history. Discuss and review ancient and modern reasons. Is this hostility primarily based upon religion or does it have socio-economic and socio-political roots as well?

### References

You must provide a minimum of five (5) references (books, journal articles, interviews, feature news articles, documentaries, etc.) of which only one may come from the Internet (except for full e-books and online academic articles). The Internet source must be a scholarly, professional expert source.

Please **DO NOT** use any of the following sources as one of your references:

- Hopfe and Woodward textbook or other course textbooks
- Wikipedia, Theopedia, encyclopedias, atlases, or dictionaries
- Original sources, such as the Bible, the Torah or the Quran

### **Extra Credit Opportunities (up to 2%)**

You may write **ONE** Extra Credit Essay from the following choices:

- *500-Word Extra Credit Essay* of all the religions we studied (besides the one you practice or the one you were raised in), which had the most positive impact on you and why?

- *500-Word Film Review Essay* on "The Peaceful Warrior" with Nick Nolte, OR "The Da Vinci Code" with Tom Hanks, OR "Joshua" with F. Murray Abraham and Tony Goldwyn. Explain and discuss the religious themes of the movie, the spiritual and religious traditions, how the story affected you, and what it means today.
- *500-Word Movie Review Essay on the documentary "Jesus Camp"*. Analyze the movie, especially what you liked/disliked about the religious training depicted and the larger issue of the separation of religion and state.

## **Grading**

### **Who Receives an "A" Grade?**

This student:

1. Provides consistent, excellent, high quality work on all assignments and exams
2. Actively participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions
3. Exhibits superior college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
4. Knows how to conduct and demonstrate solid research to support their paper's arguments
5. Demonstrates superior observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit
6. Submits all assignments on time
7. Demonstrates near perfect attendance and punctuality
8. Is highly motivated to learn and improve academic skills

### **Who Receives a "C" Grade?**

This student:

1. Provides consistent, average quality work on all assignments
2. Participates in class and Discussion Boards on a regular basis with relevant comments and answers to questions.
3. Exhibits average college level writing skills and has mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
4. Knows how to conduct and demonstrate basic research to support their paper's arguments.
5. Demonstrates adequate, average observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit.
6. Submits all or most assignments on time
7. Demonstrates good attendance and punctuality
8. Shows average motivation to learn and improve academic skills

### **Who Receives an "F" Grade?**

This student:

1. Provides extremely poor quality work on most or all assignments that does not meet even minimal academic standards
2. Does not participate in class and Discussion Boards at even a minimal level and is unable to provide knowledgeable, insightful and relevant comments and answers to questions
3. Does not exhibit college level writing skills and has not mastered the elements of an opinion essay and a research essay.
4. Does not demonstrate college level observational skills and reporting during the Site Visit
5. Does not know how to or fails to conduct and demonstrate research skills to support their paper's arguments
6. Does not turn in assignments on time or fails to turn in assignments
7. May demonstrate extremely poor attendance and punctuality
8. Has not shown the motivation to learn and improve their academic skills

Assignment Weights	
<b>Course Requirements</b>	<b>Weight</b>
In-Person Attendance (15)	5%
Weekly Research Questions (10)	5%
Online Discussions (3)	10%
Opinion Essay on "The Case for Contamination"	10%
Religious Site Visit and Essay	14%
Research Paper	17%
Writing Rules Quiz	2%
Chapter Quizzes (9)	27%
Midterm Quiz	5%
Final Quiz	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Extra Credit Opportunities</i>	<b>2%</b>

Grading Schema					
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

### Grading Schema

<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range%</b>	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range%</b>	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Range%</b>
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or less