

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
REL 3308, Section B51
Studies in World Religions
Spring 2019
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 p.m.-1:45 p.m.
Academic One, Room 130
Dr. Jayne A. Klein

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00-3:00 p.m.
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Course Description

Ever since the beginning of humanity's existence on Earth, religion has been a singularly powerful influence on the lives of a vast majority of its occupants, and it seems likely that it will remain so for as far into the future as our minds can project. While there are some who view religion as a singularly powerful means for promoting goodness and morality in the world, there are others who see it as the source of most of the hatred and violence in the world. Whatever one's opinion, however, it is incumbent upon all of us today to develop a familiarity with several of the World's major religions, so that we may be better able to understand our neighbors in what, today, is an enormously complex, interdependent, and global world.

This course will introduce students to some of the World's major and most enduring religious traditions – both Eastern and Western – by exploring their basic beliefs, practices, rituals, associated narratives, and relevant figures.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Analyze the differences and similarities between the religions studied.
- Analyze the historical development of the religious traditions presented.
- Compare religious societies and cultures in their local, national, and global contexts.
- Recognize the different ways of being religious and of interpreting the sacred, or the holy.
- Appreciate the importance that the various religious traditions discussed throughout the semester hold for their practitioners.

Textbook: Hopfe, L.M., and Woodward, M.R. Religions of the World. Copyright © 2004 by Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall. You may purchase the 11th, 12th or 13th edition of the text.

Other required readings will be in the form of handouts, which the professor will distribute to you at various times during the semester; or they will be posted on Canvas and/or on the Library Course Reserves.

Attendance and Class Participation:

Ten percent of your final grade depends on regular attendance and class participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **Regular attendance and punctuality are expected of all.** Only **two unexcused absences** will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence beyond that will cause a drop of one rung on the final grading scale, i.e., from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, and so on. If you will be unable to attend a class, you are expected to inform the professor **beforehand** (whenever possible) via e-mail or telephone and explain your reason.

You are all expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading material, to present your ideas to the class, and to ask questions.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: **Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism** – the use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source, and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

***NOTE:** The professor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus at any time. Students will receive verbal and/or written notification of any modifications, should they be made.

Grade Point Distribution:

- 10% Attendance and Class Participation
- 15% Exam #1 – Thursday, January 31
- 15% Exam #2 – Tuesday, March 5
- 15% Exam #3 – Final Examination – Tuesday, April 23, 12:00-2:00 p.m.
- 25% Research Paper – Due Thursday, March 28 – For this assignment, you are to select one religion (other than that of the religion you were raised in or are currently practicing). Once chosen, you are to research it, in terms of its practices and beliefs, and then attend at least one service/ceremony at its house of worship. You will then present your research in a paper of 7-8 pages in length. Further instructions will be distributed separately.
- 20% Reflection papers – subjects and instructions will be posted on Announcements

In addition, you will have an opportunity to earn **extra credit** by visiting the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach and writing a 3-page paper describing it and your impressions of the experience. For successful completion of this assignment, you will receive 15 points added to your lowest exam grade.

Grading Scale:

94-99	A	76-79	C+
90-93	A-	75-70	C
87-89	B+	69-64	D
84-86	B	63-0	F
83-80	B-		

Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule

Week beginning Tuesday, January 8 (Week #1)

Introduction to the course: course overview; review of course syllabus; defining religion; theories on the origin of religion.

Film: *Zeitgeist*, part one, on religion (the first 41 minutes of film) – the link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNXTEMnpmb8>

Watch the video and write a 1-2 page reflection paper answering the following questions: (1) Which of the theories on the origin of religion does the film express the best? (2) How did watching the film make you feel? Do you agree or disagree with its point of view, and why?

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction/Overview and Chapter 1 (Basic Religions – this material has been posted, for your convenience, on the Library Course Reserves AND I have sent power points summarizing the Introduction and Chapter 1.

Week beginning Tuesday, January 15 (Week #2)

After reading the list of definitions/assessments of the term “religion,” choose one or two and explain WHY you find it/them the definition closest to what you believe. Write down your answer in a few paragraphs.

Basic Religions

Introduction to African Religion

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward: African Religion, Chapter 3; and Laurenti Magesa, African Religion (Chapter 2, “The Moral Universe”) – both are on the Library Course Reserves and outlined in the form of power points

Week beginning Tuesday, January 22 (Week #3)

African Religion (continued)

Film: *Sorcerers of Zaire*

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Middle Passage – lecture and discussion

Reading Assignment: Power Points on Library Course Reserves (Papal Bulls and Transatlantic Slave Trade)

Week beginning Tuesday, January 29 (Week #4)

Film: *The Middle Passage*

Thursday, January 31, Exam #1 – this exam will cover all introductory material; the theories about the origins of religion; Basic Religions; and African Religion (including films viewed)

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

Week beginning Tuesday, February 5 (Week #5)

Hinduism – lecture and discussion

Week beginning Tuesday, February 12 (Week #6)

Hinduism (lecture and discussion continued)

Film: *Mystic India*

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 6 (Buddhism)

Week beginning Tuesday, February 19 (Week #7)

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

Film: Excerpts from film *Little Buddha*

Week beginning Tuesday, February 26 (Week #8)

Buddhism (continued)

Film: *Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama*

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

Week beginning Tuesday, March 5 (Week #9)

Tuesday, March 5 – Exam #2 (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

Introduction to Judaism (lecture & discussion)

Week beginning Tuesday, March 12 (Week #10) – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week beginning Tuesday, March 19 (Week #11)

Judaism – lecture and discussion

Film: *A History of God, Part I*

Reading Assignment: Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 13 (Islam)

Week beginning Tuesday, March 26 (Week #12)

Judaism (lecture & discussion continued)

Research Paper is due on Thursday, March 28

Film: *The Mystery of the Jews*

Week beginning Tuesday, April 2 (Week #13)

Islam: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

Film: *A History of God, Part 3*

Reading Assignment: Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 12 (Christianity)

Week beginning Tuesday, April 9 (Week #14)

Film: *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

Film: *A History of God, Part 2*

Week beginning Tuesday, April 16 (Week #15)

Christianity (lecture and discussion)

April 18 is last day of class!

Week #16 – Final exam week – no regular classes

Final exam (on Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) – ***Tuesday, April 23***