

REL 3308
STUDIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Department of Religious Studies, FIU
Professor: Dr. Carlos Grenier (cagrenie@fiu.edu)
Office and Office Hours: DM 301C, Mondays 2-4 PM.

Overview: This class will explore many religious traditions practiced throughout the world. By paying constant attention to their similarities and differences, it is hoped that this course will acquire a large-scale picture of global religious diversity. We will examine the practices of major and minor world religions – from Native American traditions, through Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and East Asian religions, and finally the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will discuss the historical contexts of their emergence and spread, the points of contact and dialogue with each other, the nuances of their belief systems and institutions, and their individual contributions to world civilization. This course will also place a great emphasis on discussion of primary texts.

Aims:

- a) To provide the student with a large amount of details and information on the beliefs, rituals, symbols, and scriptures of major world religions.
- b) To facilitate cross-cultural comparisons of religious faith and practice.
- c) To broaden the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the beauty, vitality, truth, and power of religious approaches to reality, especially within non-Western frameworks.
- d) To challenge the student to enter sympathetically into the worldviews of the religious traditions selected for study.
- e) To prepare the student for informed, ethical participation in our religiously plural world.

EVALUATION:

1. Site Visit Report (15% of grade)
2. Site Visit Presentations (5% of grade)
3. Quiz (Concepts, Indigenous Religions) (10% of grade)
4. Midterm (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, East Asian Religions) (20% of grade)
5. Final (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) (20% of grade)
6. Attendance (10% of grade)
7. Discussion Participation (20% of grade)

1-2. Site Visit:

At any time prior to Week 14 of the semester, students will individually visit a religious site in the South Florida area (listed at the end of this syllabus). The Site Visit and Report must deal with a religious tradition that is **not the student's own**. The student will then complete two assignments based on this visit.

1. Site Visit Report: Guidelines for this 3-4 page report will be posted on Canvas.
2. Site Visit Presentation: Students will execute an extremely short (<5 minutes) presentation of their visit.

3-5. Exams:

All exams will take place in class. Most exams will comprise of two sections: a) an objective section, including matching, fill-in-the blank, and lists, and b) an essay section, involving short essay answers. The length of each section will depend on the nature of the exam.

6-7. Attendance and In-Class Discussions:

Many weeks, I will assign a short reading in PDF format, along with a set of guiding questions. For part of the following class session I will solicit responses from students on this reading. You are expected to discuss them informedly in class. This discussion is **mandatory** and participation will count towards 20% of the final grade.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Attendance at lectures offered by the Religious Studies Department, Mohsin and Fauzia Jaffer Muslim World Studies Center, Middle East Studies Center, Judaic Studies Center, Institute of Asian Studies, and Center for Spirituality will each count for one (1) percentage point towards the final grade.

REQUIRED READINGS:

There will be NO required textbook for this class.

However, **additional mandatory readings** will be posted on the Canvas page and **must** be read prior to class discussion. Readings will be posted in the MANDATORY READINGS section under the MODULES heading of the Canvas site.

Additionally, supplementary readings will be provided on the Canvas site.

PowerPoint presentations will be posted in the POWERPOINTS section under the MODULES heading after each class lecture.

Week 1 (January 7)

What is Religion?

Indigenous Religions

Week 2 (January 14)

Indigenous Religions (continued)

- Read Ife Creation stories (on CANVAS)

Week 3 (January 21)

Hinduism

- Read selection from *Bhagavad Gita* for class discussion.

Week 4 (January 28)

Hinduism (continued)

Jainism (Guest lecture)

Week 5 (February 4)

Quiz 1 (Concepts, Indigenous Religions)

Buddhism

Week 6 (February 11)

Buddhism (continued)

- Read selection from *Early Buddhist Scriptures* for class discussion.

Sikhism

Week 7 (February 18)

Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism

Week 8 (February 25)

Midterm (IN CLASS, 90 minutes)

Intro to Religions of the Middle East

- Read selection from *Enuma Elish* for class discussion.

Week 9 (March 4)

Judaism

- Read selections from *Genesis* and *Exodus* for class discussion.

Week 10 (March 18)

Judaism (continued)

Christianity

- Read selections from *Matthew* and Augustine's *Confessions* for class discussion.

Week 11 (March 25)

Christianity (continued)

Week 12 (April 1)

Islam

- Read selections from the *Qur'an* for class discussion.

Week 13 (April 8)

Islam (continued)

New Religions?

Week 15 (April 15)

Site Visit Presentations

Final Exam Review

RELIGIOUS SITES OF SOUTH FLORIDA

The Site Visit and Report must deal with a religious tradition that is **not the student's own**. If a phone number is no longer valid, call information and please let the instructor know that the number(s) has been changed so that the directory can be updated. If you learn about other sites not included below, please let the instructor know also.

ISLAMIC: the times to go are Fridays and Sundays at 1:30 p.m. Female students can bring a scarf with them if they don't want to stand out, but it is not required.

Ershad Center Miami (Shia)
6669 SW 59 Place
Miami, FL 33143
(305) 970-5202

Miami Gardens Mosque (Sunni)
4305 N.W. 183 street
Miami, Florida 33055

Mosque of Miami (Sunni)
7350 N.W. 3rd Street
Miami, Florida 33126
305-261-7622

Masjid Al-Ansar (Sunni)
5245 N.W. 7th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33127
(305) 757-8741

Islamic School of Miami
Masjid al-Noor (Sunni)
11699 SW 147 Ave
Miami, FL 33196
(305) 408-0400

Islamic Jafferia Association Imambara (Shia)
10554 N.W. 132nd Street
Hialeah Gardens, Florida 33016
(305) 557-6835
<http://www.ijamiami.org/>

Muhammad's Mosque # 29 (Nation of Islam)
5660 N.W. 7th Ave.
Miami, Florida

305-756-9136

BAHAI

FIU Bahai Club
305-436-2490

Bahai Faith (South)
9300 S. Dixie Hwy.
Miami, Florida
305-570-8886

Bahai Faith (North)
4365 Rock Island Rd.
Ft. Lauderdale
(North of Commercial)
954-524-4084

BUDDHIST

(Nichiren Buddhist)
Sokka Gakkai International
Miami Community Center
20000 S.W. 36th St.
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33332
954-349-5200

Avalokitesvara Buddhist Study Center (Buddhist)
7550 S.W. 82nd Court
Miami, Florida 33143
305-271-6361
267-8000

International Zen Institute of Florida (Buddhist)
Dharma House
3860 Crawford Avenue
Miami, Florida 33133
305-448-8969

Wat Buddharamsi Temple (Thai, Buddhist)
15200 S.W., 240th Street
Homestead, Florida
305-245-2702

Amida Temple ("Pure Land" Buddhist)
c/o Kuang-Hsi Wu

12815 S.W. 119 Terrace
Miami, Florida 33186
305-385-2866

International Dharma Center (Buddhist)
P.O. Box 141728
Coral Gables, Florida
33114-1728
305-267-8000 (Ileana Davis)

Kagyü Shedrup Chöling (Tibetan Buddhist)
1905 Monroe Street
Hollywood, Florida 33020 954-920-1346

HINDU: Plan to attend Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Shiva Vishnu Temple 5661 Dykes Rd.
(S.W. 160th Ave)
Pembroke Pines (Davie)
954-689-0471
webmaster@shivavishnu.org
(I-75 north, exit at Sheridan, go west to Dykes Road, then go north for about a mile, temple on the left)

The South Florida Hindu Temple
13010 Griffin Road
Davie, Florida
954-438-3675
info@sfht.org

Hare Krishna Temple
3220 Virginia St.
Coconut Grove, Florida
305-442-7218

SIKH: Plan to attend Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Sikh Society of Florida
16000 Sterling Rd.
Pembroke Pines, Florida
954-680-0221
(Same directions as to Shiva Hindu Temple, but closer to Sheridan on Dykes Road)

JAIN

Jain Center of South Florida
1960 N. Commerce Parkway #11
Weston, FL 33326
<http://jaincentersfl.com/direction.html>

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN

Synagogues: Friday evenings, near Sundown; and Saturday mornings, 8:00 a.m. only.
Christian churches: 11:00 a.m. morning service. Consult Yellow Pages for synagogue or church nearest where you live.

Students are encouraged to do detective work and find representatives of the other major world religions in Miami or the South Florida area: **Taoism**, **Confucianism** (Chinese), **Shinto** (Japanese), and **Zoroastrianism**.