

REL 2011 Introduction to Religion
Spring 2020 Syllabus
REL-2011-U03 (14936)

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



Instructor: Eric Isaac

Contact: Please use Canvas Messages. In case of emergencies email me at Eisaa001@fiu.edu

When and Where do we meet?

Class discussions: Comp, Arts, Science & Education Building 132 TuTh 12:30PM-1:45PM

Office Hours: DM301b Tuesday/Thursday 1:45pm-2:45pm and/or by appointment

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.

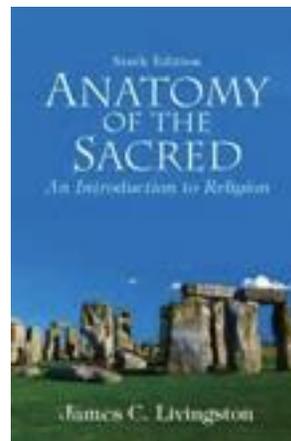
Religious illiteracy can greatly impact our ability to understand personal and social motivations behind financial decisions, political engagement, science and technological advancement, environmental and migration policies, family planning, diet and food production, gender relations, war and terrorist attacks, and more. Whether you notice or not, religion is a universal phenomenon that continues to transform and be transformed by our societies. Religion greatly influences one's epistemology, or the way they deal with what is true or false, as well as the way they look at the world. If we fail to understand religion & secularization, we may fail to understand people.

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.

I. How will you succeed in this course?

1. Buy the required text

Anatomy of the Sacred: An introduction to
Religion by James C. Livingston
ISBN 978-0-13-600380-9 ISBN 0-13-
600380-x



2. Take good notes in class so you can do well on the exams, presentation, and participation portions!

Examinations (20%)

Participation (10%)

Presentation (15%)

45% of total course weight

3. Do not procrastinate on the writing assignments or the site visit!

First Draft of Site Visit Essay (10%)

Final Draft of Site Visit (15%)

Site Visit Proof Submitted on Time (5%)

First Draft Personal Analysis Essay (10%)

Final Draft Personal Analysis Essay (15%)

55% of total course weight

II. Course Objectives, Goals, & Plagiarism Statement

Objectives

1. Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
2. Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
4. Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
5. Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
6. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

Goals

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development

Global Learning Objectives

As a Global Learning course, students will be meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

1. Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
2. Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
3. Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

Statement on Plagiarism

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the [University Code of Academic Integrity](#) if you need further clarification. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely or partially stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
3. 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> if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F (0 points) for the plagiarized

assignment, and possibly for the course. Please be aware: Previously submitted papers are not allowed, even if it is your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

III. Course breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Scale In points	Percentage of Final Grade
Site Visit Essay (First Draft)	1	100	10
Site Visit Essay (Final Draft after revision)	1	150	15
Site Visit Completed w/ proof by deadline	1	50	5
Personal Analysis Essay (First Draft)	1	100	10
Personal Analysis Essay	1	150	15
Midterm	1	100	10
Final	1	100	10
Participation/Attendance	1	100	10
Presentation & Project	1	150	15
Total	9	1000	100%

IV. Assessment Descriptions

A. Essays

Gordon Rule Requirement

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. **The essays must have a thesis, and adequately support that thesis. The essays must be organized clearly and logically.** Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA, Chicago,

or APA Style and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score of over 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur additional penalties, up to and including receiving an F (0 points). Please do NOT send any writing assignments as email or message attachments! All writing assignments must be submitted in the proper drop box in Canvas; there are no exceptions. Late papers may be accepted with a legitimate excuse and a 10% penalty for late submission. After more than two weeks, papers either be refused, or will be discounted by 50 percent at the professor's discretion.

1. Essay 1: Religious Site Visit

For this essay, you will need to visit a religious site from a religious tradition that is not your own and write a report on it. This paper must have a thesis. Detailed assignment instructions and format are provided in the course. You will be revising this essay.

- First draft of essay 1 Site Visit is due **Friday, Jan 31 at 11:59 pm, ET**, and it is worth **10% of the final grade**. You must submit at least 1000 of the minimum 1500 words, include your thesis, and a bulleted plan for any parts missing from your essay to receive full credit on the first draft.
- The Essay Revision (after my feedback on first draft) is due **Friday, Feb 13 at 11:59 pm, ET**, and it is worth an additional **15% of the final grade**.

2. Essay 2: Personal Analysis

For this essay, you will analyze yourself using the theoretical frameworks for analysis presented in this class. The purpose of this assignment is to assess whether you understand the basic concepts of the study of religion. Using Geertz's definition of religion on page 8 of *Anatomy of the Sacred*, identify what system of symbols act most powerfully in your life to the ends he describes. This will serve as your thesis for this assignment. Following this, support the 'thesis' going through each of the themes of the course as they relate to your lived experience. Detailed assignment instructions and format are provided in the course.

- First draft is due **Friday, April. 2 at 11:59 pm, ET**, and it is worth **10% of the final grade**. You must submit at least 1000 of the minimum 1500

words, include your thesis, and a bulleted plan for any parts missing from your essay to receive full credit on the first draft.

- Final draft is due **Friday, April 17 at 11:59 pm, ET**, and it is worth **15% of the final grade**.

B. Site Visit

In order to complete the first essay, you must select a religious site and provide proof that you were there. A picture with you at the site is sufficient.

- Visiting the site by the deadline and submitting the proof by the deadline alone is worth 5% of your total grade. Your grade for this this assignment will drop by 20% for every day you are late.
- Site Visit is due **January 30th**

C. Group Presentation & Project

1. Group project

Each group will collaborate to present a lecture on an assigned topic from the readings. Further assignment details are provided in the course and will be discussed during the in-person sessions. Please refer to the weekly calendar for dates.

- You will be afforded time in class to brainstorm and work on this presentation.
- This project is worth 5% of your final grade. Please review in the assignment description.
- Your team mates will have an influence on this grade.

2. Group presentation

You will give a group presentation for your group project. Each group presentation might include a demonstration, an explanation of a term/idea, a brief travel description, or slide show. You are encouraged to be creative and informative!

- Each group member should speak for about 5-10 minutes (You have 35 minutes total as a group)
- You will be afforded time in class to brainstorm and work on this presentation.
- The presentation will be worth 10% of the final grade. Please review in the assignment description in Canvas.

D. Exams

The Midterm Exam and Final Exam will be available online during their respective scheduled dates. Each exam is worth 10% of the final grade, for a total of 20% of the final grade. Format: multiple-choice and true/false questions based on assigned readings. No late submissions will be accepted.

- Midterm: material from weeks 1-8. Available online Feb. 20 - March 6 11:59 pm, ET.
- Final: material from weeks 9-15. Available online April 17 - April 25, from 12:00 am - 11:59 pm, ET.

E. Participation

Attendance is mandatory for this course. Showing up to class on time and participating in discussions throughout the class can easily get you 10% of your grade. Participation will be measured in 3 parts per class, per day.

- One point is awarded for attending the whole class.
- One point is awarded for arriving on time.
- One point is awarded for participating in group/class discussion

F. Extra Credit Opportunities

The maximum amount of extra credits that are possible are 4 percent of your final grade. All extra credit assignments are due no later than Friday, April 17 at 11:59 pm, ET. Absolutely no extra credits or make-up work will be accepted after the date.

1. Extra-Credit film review

Review a movie and write a three- paragraph film review (300 words) describing the role that religion plays in the story or event. Focus on religious symbols, rituals, myths or the ways in which religious beliefs or practices influence the plot or meaning of the movie. Do not tell the whole story of the movie, but just enough so that your points are clear. **The movie selection must be approved by the instructor.** This extra credit paper is worth up to 2% of the final grade.

2. Extra Credit site visit

Visit a religious site from a tradition that is not your own, and that you did not visit for the first essay. Following the same guidelines as the first essay provide evidence of your visit. Then write a three-paragraph site review (300 words) detailing your experience interacting with the site. The extra credit paper is worth up to 2% of the final grade.

V. Grading Scale

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

VI. Course Calendar

Topic: What is Religion?**Week 1**

Jan. 6 - Jan. 12

- READING: Chapter 1, pp. 1-14
- Jan. 7: Introductions, syllabus review, class plan
- Jan. 9: Lecture “What is Religion”

Remember to start your Religious Site Visit research early!

Ways of Studying Religion**Week 2**

Jan. 13 - Jan. 19

- READING: Chapter 2, pp. 15-34
- Jan. 14: Lecture: Social Science & Religion
- Jan. 16: Lecture: Interpreting Religion + Group Project Assignments

Have you done your Site Visit?????Proof is due by next Thursdays class!!!

The Sacred and the Holy**Week 3**

Jan. 20 - Jan. 26

- READING: Chapter 3, pp. 35-52
- Jan. 21: Lecture, Sacred Power
- Jan. 23: Lecture: “The Sacred and the Holy”
- **REMEMBER TO DO YOUR SITE VISIT W/PROOF**

So... the first draft of the site visit is due Thursday of next week

Sacred Symbol, Myth and Doctrine**Week 4**

Jan. 27 - Feb. 2

- READING: Chapter 4, pp. 53-73
- Jan. 28: Lecture “Myth I.”
- **TURN IN SITE VISIT PROOF JAN 30!**
- Jan. 30: Lecture “Myth II.” (Example of group presentation)
- **TURN IN: Site Visit Draft due by Friday, January. 31 at 11:59 pm**

Sacred Ritual**Week 5**

Feb. 3 - Feb. 9

- READING: Read Chapter 5, pp. 74-95
- Feb. 4: Lecture "Ritual I"
- Feb. 6: **First draft Reviews/Reflection**

Sacred Scripture

Week 6
Feb. 10 - Feb. 16

- Read Chapter 6, pp.96-123
- Feb. 11: Lecture "Scripture I"
- Feb. 13: *Group Presentation-Scripture*
- **FEB 13: TURN IN: Final Draft Site Visit Paper**

Society and the Sacred + Concepts of Deity/ Ultimate Reality

Week 7
Feb. 17 - Feb. 23

- Read Chapter 7 p. 124-150, Read Chapter 8, pp. 151-182
- Feb. 18: Lecture "Society and the Sacred"
- Feb. 20: Lecture "Deity" (**MID TERM REVIEW**)
- **DUE MARCH 6: MID TERM EXAM (Open Feb 20 3:00pm-March 6) NO LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Week 8
SPRING BREAK
Feb. 24 – March 1

In-person: SPRING BREAK

- **Take Midterm Exam by Friday, March 6 at 11:59 pm, ET NO LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Cosmogony

Week 9
March 2 – March 8

- Read Chapter 9, pp. 183-210
- March 3: Lecture "Cosmogony" (Guest Speaker Dr. Joe Holbrook)
- March 5: *Group Presentation-Cosmogony*
- **Take Midterm Exam by Friday, March 6 at 11:59 pm, ET NO LATE SUBMISSIONS**

The Human Problem

Week 10
March 9 – March 15

- Read Chapter 10 pp. 211-234
- March 10: Lecture "The Human Problem"
- March 12: *Group Presentation-The Human Problem*
- March 12: Reflection Paper discussion

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Week 11

March 16 – March 22

- Read Chapter 11 pp. 235-258
- March 17: Lecture "Theodicy"
- March 19: Lecture "Theodicy II" discussion of current events news item

Ethics

Week 12

March 23 – March 29

- Read Chapter 12 pp. 259-286
- March 24: Lecture "Ethics"
- March 26: *Group Presentation*-Ethics

Salvation and Liberation

Week 13

March 30 – April 5

- Read Chapter 13 pp. 287-337
- March 31: Lecture "Soteriology: Salvation & Liberation"
- April 2: *Group Presentation* "Salvation & Liberation"
- **April 2: TURN IN FIRST DRAFT PERSONAL ANALYSIS PAPER**

New Age and New Religious Movements

Week 14

April 6 – April 12

- Read Chapter 14 pp. 341-360
- April 7: Lecture "Secularization/New Religious Movements"
- April 9: *Group Presentations*-New Religious Movements ++
April 9: **PERSONAL ANALYSIS PAPER REVIEW**
- **All Extra-Credit assignments due on Friday, April 17 at 11:59 pm, ET**

Secularization and Pluralism

Week 15

April 13-April 19

- Read Chapter 15
- April 14: Lecture: "Contemporary Challenges"
- April 16: FINAL EXAM REVIEW
- **APRIL 17: TURN IN PERSONAL ANALYSIS FINAL PAPER**
- **All Extra-Credit assignments due on Friday, April 17 at 11:59 pm, ET**
- **Take Final Exam ONLINE by April 25 at 11:59 pm, ET.**
(Any later and I cannot give you a grade for it)

Final Exam Week

Week 16

April 20 – April 25

- Final Exam open April 17 12:01 pm – April 25 11:59 pm
 - **Take Final Exam ONLINE by April 25 at 11:59 pm, ET.**
(Any later and I cannot give you a grade for it)
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