

REL 3308 Studies in World Religions
Spring 2020 Learning Guide
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Sharma Dammar

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When and Where do we meet?

Class discussions: Thursdays 6:30p.m - 9:05p.m. in Academic Center Two, Rm. 115

Office Hours: By appointments on Thursdays/ 9:05p.m. to 11:05p.m.

Why Should I Care about Religion?

Maybe Jesus was a Buddhist monk. Where exactly did your yoga class come from? Why are Native Americans some of the best eco-advocates today? Is Judaism a religion, a culture, or a tribe? Is God dead? God may be alive, but is he a woman? It might be good to wonder if religion is a force for good or evil to begin with? Can we still be spiritual without being religious?

These are not just entertaining questions, but are highly relevant to your personal and professional development in our globalized world. In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore these questions and many more that emerge as we investigate humanity, religion, and the cosmos.

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 explore the variety of religious expressions and frameworks that shape societies around the world, and the role religion plays in local and international affairs.

Religious literacy will 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.

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.

How will you succeed in this course?

Examinations (50%): Exam #1 (25%)

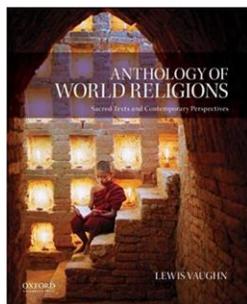
Exam #2 (25%)

Assignments (50%): Comparative Reaction Paper on Indigenous Religions & New Religious Movements (25%)

Religious Visitation Paper (25%)

Extra Credit: 5 points

Required Text



Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives

ISBN-13: 978-0195332360

ISBN-10: 0195332369

** Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor. Scantron forms, #2 pencils and a usb flash drive are required for this course.*

Course breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Points	Percentage of final Grade
Academic Papers	2	200	50
Examinations	2	200	50
Total			100%

There will be **two exams**, a **religious visitation paper**, and a **comparative reaction paper on Indigenous Religions & New Religious Movements** where each is worth ¼ of your final grade. Examinations will entail multiple choice questions and essay questions. The religious visitation paper and the comparative reaction paper are mandatory as this course has a writing requirement. Extra credit is optional and can only elevate the final grade by 5 points.

<u>Coursework</u>	<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Exam #1	100	25%
Exam #2	100	25%
Comparative Reaction Paper: Indigenous Religions & New Religious Movements	100	25%
Religious Visitation Paper	100	25%

Grading Scale

A	=	95 – 100
A-	=	90 – 94.99
B+	=	87 – 89.99
B	=	83 – 86.99
B-	=	80 – 82.99
C+	=	77 – 79.99
C	=	70 – 76.99
D	=	60 – 69.99
F	=	below 60

Examination Policy

Exams will cover material from lectures as well as from the assigned textbook. In order to obtain a good grade on exams students need to read and understand material from the chapters of the assigned textbook. It is the student's duty to contact the professor if he/she needs to make up an exam. Make-up exams will only be approved by the discretion of the professor. Students will only be able to take a make-up exam due to legitimate reasons. In order to take a make-up exam, students must provide proper documentation as to why he/she missed the scheduled exam. There are no make-ups if you miss Exam #2 unless there is/was a true emergency that restricted you from taking it. In other words, if you are absent, you will not be able to take Exam #2 which will result in a failing grade.

Goals

- Analyze and interpret the universal dimensions of the sacred.
- Discover the relevance and practice of religion in everyday life.
- Recognize the academic impact of religion as an interdisciplinary field.
- Identify the role of religion as a transformational force for the self and society.
- Develop a critical and open-minded approach to religion that questions assumptions.
- Explore religion as a platform that increases civic engagement and global awareness.

Objectives

1. Understanding the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization.
2. Recognize the strength of utilizing different approaches, theories, and methodologies to better understand the universal forms of religious experience and expression such as sacred symbols, rituals, myths, scriptures, ethics, and communities.
3. Identify religious themes and patterns that shape our everyday life.
4. Analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in our individual, cultural, economic, and political contexts.
5. Critically engage the issue of religious diversity and dialogue in national and international context.
6. Reflect upon and enhance student's potential for moral agency and compassion.

Gordon Rule Requirement

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA 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). A grade of "C" or higher must be earned to receive credit for this course.

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.

Plagiarism

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely 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.

Course Policies

1. Read each assignment prior to the date on which it is scheduled to be discussed. Students are expected to complete the required reading for each session and formulate Discussion Points concerning the readings to facilitate class discussion.
2. Take exams and turn in assignments at the scheduled times.
3. Be on time, if student must arrive late or leave early, he /she should be courteous and observe silence.
4. Be respectful of the beliefs of others. This is of utmost importance in a world religions class.
5. Know and abide by FIU's Student Conduct and Honor Code. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in an "F" for this course.
6. Turn off all cellular phones. Texting is not permitted in class.
7. The use of any recording device (visual and/or audio) is prohibited.
8. Silence is golden when your professor/classmate is speaking. Essentially, one individual at a time has the right to speak unless otherwise instructed by your professor.
9. Disrespectful behavior (sleeping, using headphones as well as using electronic devices to oppose academic purposes, verbal disruption, and physical disruption) is unacceptable and may result in removal from the classroom/course.
10. Physical contact with your professor is forbidden such as hugs, handshakes, etc.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor. Changes will be announced in a fair and timely fashion. Assignments, homework, exams and reviews will be adapted for the benefit of the student; students will always know of any changes ahead of time. Always stay in contact with another student (group member) to keep up with any potential changes or modifications to our class as we progress through the semester, especially if you are not sure, were absent, or were late. Check the inbox of your student email account daily for possible course updates.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is an expectation of this course and attendance will be tracked. Any student who misses **more than 3 class meetings** will be subject to losing one letter grade for the course. Students may be excused at the professor's discretion for legitimate reasons to be absent, such as verified illnesses, emergencies, etc. Reasonable verification as to the nature of the absence must be provided, such as a doctor's note, etc. Being absent because of work, vacations, or sport activities will not be excused. It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed notes and assignments. **Communicating with your professor before you are absent is a key to your success.**

COURSE OUTLINE

CLASS DATE	SUBJECT
January 9	Welcome, Introduction to Class & Dimensions of Religion
January 16	Fieldworks, Instructions for Religious Visitation Paper & Video
January 23	The Beginning of Understanding
January 30	Hinduism
February 6	Buddhism
February 13	Jainism & Sikhism
February 20	Confucianism, Daoism & Comparative Reaction Paper (Hard Copy Due in Class)
February 27	No class Spring Break
March 5	Video & Exam #1
March 12	Shinto & Zoroastrianism
March 19	Judaism
March 26	Christianity & Religious Visitation Paper (Hard Copy Due in Class)
April 2	Islam
April 9	Video, Exam #2 & Extra Credit PowerPoint (File Due in Class)
April 16	Extra Credit Group Presentation

EXAM	SUBJECT ON EXAM
Exam One	The Beginning of Understanding
	Hinduism
	Buddhism
	Jainism
	Sikhism
Exam Two	Confucianism
	Daoism
	Shinto
	Zoroastrianism
	Judaism
	Christianity
Islam	