

# REL 3308: Studies in World Religions; Section B51

Spring 2020 Learning Guide

Florida International University

**Instructor:** Dr. Jayne A. Klein  
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## Important Information

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)

### When and Where do we meet?

**Class discussions:** Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 p.m., in Academic One, 264

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 1:45 to 2:30 p.m., and by appointment

### 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 ecology advocates today? Is Judaism a religion, a culture, or a

tribe? Is God dead? God may be alive, but is God a woman? Might it 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 rather, they 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 your 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 many diverse societies.

Our approach in this course is interdisciplinary, which means you will be critically reflecting from the points of view of many varied 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?**

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF FINAL</b>	<b>DUE DATE</b>
<b>Research Paper</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>Thursday, April 2</b>
<b>Reflection Papers</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Varied (see Syllabus)</b>
<b>Visit to Holocaust Museum</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Thursday, March 26</b>
<b>Quizzes (see Syllabus)</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Varied</b>
<b>Midterm Exam (Exam 1)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Tuesday, March 10</b>
<b>Final Exam (Exam 2)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>TBA</b>
<b>Attendance/Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>	
<b>TOTAL %</b>	<b>100</b>	

**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.*

**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 can increase civic engagement and global awareness.

**Objectives**

1. Understand 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 two Research papers and three Reflection papers. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA or APA style. 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). The reflection papers will be composed of 500-700 words each.

**Global Learning Objectives**

As a Global Learning course, students will 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.

## GRADING SCALE

This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**. This means that a **“C” or better must be earned** to receive credit for this course.

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

**\*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.

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## **Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule**

### **Week beginning Tuesday, January 7 (Week #1)**

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

For Thursday, 1/9, read the list of definitions/assessments of the term “religion” (see Canvas Announcements) and choose two or three to discuss in class. Your discussion should include an explanation of WHY you find them of interest and how they are closest to – or furthest from – what you perceive to be a satisfactory definition.

**Assignment – Reflection #1: Watch the film, *Zeitgeist*, part one, “On Religion”** (the first 41 minutes of film) – the link for it is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNXTEMnpmb8> (Links to an external site.)



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 most clearly? (2) How did watching the film make you **feel**? What is the film’s main theme? Do you agree or disagree with its point of view? Why?

**Due date:** Tuesday, January 14.

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology of World Religions*, Chapters 1 & 2; Power Points on Papal Bulls and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

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### **Week beginning Tuesday, January 14 (Week #2)**

African Spirituality

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

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology of World Religions*, Chapter 3 (Hinduism)

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### **Week beginning Tuesday, January 21 (Week #3)**

#### **Thursday, January 23 - Quiz #1**

Hinduism -- lecture and discussion

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**Week beginning Tuesday, January 28 (Week #4)**

Hinduism

**Assignment – Reflection #2 – Film: *Mystic India*** – due date Tuesday, February 4 – see Canvas Announcements for details

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmulyUDJL5E> (Links to an external site.)



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**Week beginning Tuesday, February 4 (Week #5)**

Hinduism – continued

Jainism – Lecture and Discussion

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology*, Chapter 5 (Buddhism)

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**Week beginning Tuesday, February 11 (Week #6)**

**Thursday, February 13 – Quiz #2** (Hinduism)

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

**Film:** Excerpts from film "*Little Buddha*"

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**Week beginning Tuesday, February 18 (Week #7)**

Buddhism (continued)

**Film (shown in class):** *Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama*

**Thursday, February 20 – Quiz #3** (Buddhism)

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology*, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

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**Week of February 24-29 (Week #8) -- Spring Break -- NO CLASSES!**

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**Week beginning Tuesday, March 3 (Week #9)**

Introduction to Judaism -- lecture and discussion

*Film (shown in class): A History of God, Pt. 1*

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**Week beginning Tuesday, March 10 (Week #10)**

**Tuesday, March 10 – Midterm Exam**

Judaism (continued)

**Reflection #3 – Film: *The Mystery of the Jews* – due date Tuesday, March 17** – see Canvas Announcements for details



[The Mystery of the Jews \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology*, Chapter 13 (Islam)

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**Week beginning Tuesday, March 17 (Week #11)**

**Tuesday, March 17 – Quiz #4 (Judaism)**

Islam: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

**Film (shown in class): *A History of God, Part 3***

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**Week beginning Tuesday, March 24 (Week #12)**

Islam (Continued)

**Paper on Holocaust Memorial due on Thursday, March 26**

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**Week beginning Tuesday, March 31 (Week #13)**

Islam

**Reading Assignment:** *Anthology*, Chapter 12 (Christianity)

**Research Paper is due on Thursday, April 2**

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**Week beginning Tuesday, April 7 (Week #14)**

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

**Film (shown in class):** *A History of God, Part 2*

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**Week beginning Tuesday, April 14 (Week #15)**

Christianity (continued)

**Thursday, April 16 -- last day of class!**

**FINAL EXAM DATE: TBA**

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**Final exam week – April 20-25 -- no regular classes**

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