

**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

Studies in World Religions

REL 3308-U03

Spring 2020

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Professor: Dr. A. Fernandez

Contact: [afernand148@fiu.edu](mailto:afernand148@fiu.edu)

Days: MWF 9:00 am – 9:50 am

Location: College of Business: CBC 142

Office Hours: MWF 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  
and BY APPOINTMENT**Course Description**

In this introductory course we will explore the beliefs, historicity, scriptures, material cultures, practices, institutions, and values of select world religions. Anthropologically, there are three phenomenological criteria that classify a world religion. First, adherence, or the religion's number of followers. Second, diffusion, or how widespread the religion is across the world. And third, the historical importance and what type of influence the religion has had in shaping the world socioculturally to include, but not limited to, aesthetics, education, language, law and politics, social organizations, economics, and technology. Drawing from interdisciplinary sources, we will open-mindedly, objectively, and respectfully create a space for the neutral exchange of thoughts, feelings, and emotions with regard to religions. Grounded in a pluralistic approach to the study of religion, this course seeks to bridge religious ideologies, creating a space that is both culturally diverse and inclusive.

**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 a 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, and more. Whether you notice it 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 anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, among others. This scholarly examination

will enhance your ability to think critically, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others, and creatively resolve conflict.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. **Canvas:** All students are required to regularly utilize Canvas for this course. Through this website, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload the assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and access grades.
2. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, and absences will affect your grade. If you know that you will have a conflict, notify the instructor in advance. Timely attendance is also critical, therefore recurrent lateness will affect your participation.
3. **Class Participation:** It is critical that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This class requires small group work and critical reflection. Not only will the quality of your participation in class affect your final grade, but also lack of participation will make this a very long and tedious class meeting. **DO NOT BE LATE TO CLASS!!!**
4. **Class Facilitation:** Based on an even and fair rotation, all students will be required to present on the weekly readings, and facilitate class discussions throughout the semester by themselves, or in collaboration with one or two of their classmates. At the beginning of each class, designated students will present a short list of questions (2 or 3) based on summaries made from the assigned readings and bring them to class to engage the weekly peer review exercise, and to facilitate discussion.
  4. A) **Current Event News Item:** Found under the “NEWS” tab in the Google search engine, a current even news item is required for the weekly presentations. An item of your choice, the student should be able to bring the weekly class topic into conversation with the current event piece.
  4. B) **The week that the student facilitates,** that presentation counts as their weekly summary.
5. **Summaries:** Weekly summaries of 350 – 500 words, will briefly analyze key terms and concepts from the assigned readings, discussions, and summaries. This tool is used to ensure that the student is reading the text and intently following the class lectures as well.
6. **Creating Your Own Religion:** This assignment is divided into two (2) segments: a brief abstract and the final presentation. The purpose of this project is to create a new religion discussing it’s historical origins, contemporary practice, and changes and adaptations that have developed in recent years with the religion’s movement toward globalization and modernity. The exact details for successful completion of this project is detailed at the end of this document in **Appendix I.**

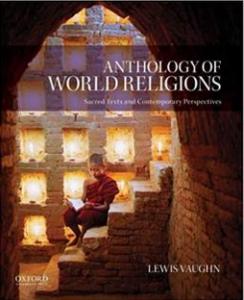
**\*Students are encouraged to make use of FIUs Center for Excellence in Writing at: <https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html>**

### **GRADING CRITERIA**

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>WEIGHT BY POINTS</b>
Class attendance	15
Class participation/facilitation	25
Summaries	25
Create Your Own Religion Project	35

### **GRADING GRID**

<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	<b>RANGE</b>	<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	<b>RANGE</b>	<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	<b>RANGE</b>
A	95-100	B-	81-83	D+	67-70
A-	91-94	C+	77-80	D	64-66
B+	87-90	C	74-76	D-	61-63
B	84-86	C-	71-73	F	>61

	<p><i>Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives</i>  <b>By: Lewis Vaughn</b></p> <p>MLA (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) citation:            Vaughn, Lewis. <i>Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives</i>. , 2017. Print.</p>
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**\*Additional readings will be assigned by the instructor during the semester.**

### **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, double spaced – approximately four (4) pages – 12-Pt Font, Times New Roman Font, 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).

### **Global Learning Objectives**

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

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

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

\*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, please visit: <https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/>

### **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:

- A written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
- Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
- 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.

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**Accessibility and Accommodation:** The Disability Resource Center (**DRC**) collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available

to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at (305) 348–3532 or visit its office at the Graham Center (GC) 190.

**!!! IMPORTANT !!!**

***\* I DO NOT ALLOW the use of recording devices in my classroom at any time. The only exception to this is if the student requires academic accommodation as stated by the Disability Resource Center (DRC). In this case, the student is allowed and encouraged to record the lecture, however, the recorded information is for personal use and “will not be shared, duplicated or disseminated to others” as stated by the disability center.***

***\*\*This is a Cellphone FREE environment!!! DON'T TEXT AND LEARN, it's hazardous to your health!***

***\*\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!! Because teaching and learning are creative and fun processes, I reserve the ABSOLUTE right to amend, alter, change, transform, adapt, modify, readjust, and/or revise this syllabus AT ANY TIME.***

***\*\*\*\*ATHLETES: Please note, I have a great working relationship with Ayssa Roza, the Associate Director of the SAAC. With her I verify any absences, and meticulously discuss the performance of all the student-athletes in my classes. As an avid supporter of FIU Athletics in general, I ask you to please hold-up your end of the bargain and NOT FALL BEHIND! I ask that all travel and practice itineraries be presented to me during the first week of class.***

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

DATE	COURSE CONTENT
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS!!!</b></p> <p><b>1/6:</b> Professor/student meet and greet: Who are we? Why are we here?            What are we getting into? What should we walk away with?            - In-depth review and discussion of syllabus</p>

<p><b>WEEK 1:</b> <b>JAN 6 – JAN 10</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What does religion mean to you?</li> <li>- Learning to keep the peace!</li> </ul> <p><b>1/8: Vaughn Chapter 1: <i>The Beginning of Understanding</i></b>  <b>Review pgs.: 7 – Key Terms, 15 – Mircea Eliade, 23 – Karl Marx, 25 – Sigmund Freud</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> </ul> <p><b>1/10: SUMMARY 1 DUE</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 2:</b> <b>JAN 13 – JAN 17</b></p>	<p><b>1/13: When God Was a Woman</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vaughn pgs. 26 – 28, Merlin Stone</li> </ul> <p><b>1/15: Article: <i>God Has Been a Woman Since the Beginning of Time</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <p><b>1/17: SUMMARY 2 DUE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Assign student-groups for class project</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>WEEK 3:</b> <b>JAN 20 – JAN 24</b></p>	<p><b>1/20: Dr. Martin Luther King Day – NO CLASS</b></p> <p><b>1/22: Indigenous Religions: American Indians</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vaughn pgs. 41–45, 65– 67</li> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <p><b>1/24: Article: <i>Two Spirits, One Heart, Five Genders.</i></b>  <b>SUMMARY 3 DUE</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 4:</b> <b>JAN 27 – JAN 31</b></p>	<p><b>1/27 – 1/29: Indigenous Religions: African Diaspora/Afro-Brazilian Candomble</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vaughn pgs. 67–71</li> </ul> <p><b>Article: <i>Candomblé Beads and Identity in Salvador Da Bahia, Brazil</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <p><b>1/31: SUMMARY 4 DUE</b>  <b>***ABSTRACT DUE IN CLASS</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 5:</b> <b>FEB 3 – FEB 7</b></p>	<p><b>2/3: Indigenous Religions: African Diaspora/Afro-Cuban Santería</b>  <b>Article: <i>Odu in Motion: Embodiment, Autoethnography, and the [un]texting of a Living Religious Practice</i></b></p> <p><b>2/5: Divination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <p><b>2/7: SUMMARY 5 DUE</b></p>



<b>WEEK 12</b> <b>MAR 23 – MAR 27</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <b>3/27: SUMMARY 12 DUE</b>
<b>WEEK 13</b> <b>MAR 30 – APR 3</b>	<b>3/30 – 4/1: Religious Pluralism</b> <b>Article: <i>How (not) to Talk About Religious Pluralism</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussion of assigned reading</li> <li>- Current event news item</li> </ul> <b>4/3: SUMMARY 13 DUE</b>
<b>WEEK 14</b> <b>APR 6 – APR 10</b>	<b>4/ 6 – 4/10: Synthesis Week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student lead discussions of synthesis assignment</li> </ul> <b>4/10: SYNTHESIS SUMMARY 14 DUE</b>
<b>WEEK 15</b> <b>APR 13 – APR 17</b>	<b>FINAL PRESENTATIONS WEEK</b>
<b>FINALS WEEK</b> <b>APR 20 – 25</b>	CHECK FIU ONESTOP FOR FINALS SCHEDULE <a href="https://onestop.fiu.edu/academic-calendar/">https://onestop.fiu.edu/academic-calendar/</a>
	<b>!!!!!!!!!!!!THANK YOU FOR AN AWESOME SEMESTER!!!!!!!!!!!!</b>

**WEEK 2:** Hastings, Christobel. “God Has Been a Woman Since the Beginning of Time.” *Vice*, 17 Aug. 2018, [www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/paw8bv/god-is-a-woman-history-goddess-worship-ariana-grande](http://www.vice.com/en_us/article/paw8bv/god-is-a-woman-history-goddess-worship-ariana-grande).

[https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/paw8bv/god-is-a-woman-history-goddess-worship-ariana-grande](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/paw8bv/god-is-a-woman-history-goddess-worship-ariana-grande)

**WEEK 3:** Brayboy, Duane. “Two Spirits, One Heart, Five Genders.” *IndianCountryToday.com*, September 7, 2017.

[https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/two-spirits-one-heart-five-genders-9UH\\_xnbfVEWQHwkjNn0rQQ](https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/two-spirits-one-heart-five-genders-9UH_xnbfVEWQHwkjNn0rQQ)

**WEEK 4:** Shirey, Heather. "Candomblé Beads and Identity in Salvador Da Bahia, Brazil." *Nova Religio: Nr: the Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. 16 (2012): 36-60. Print.

[http://www.iupui.edu/~womrel/REL%20300%20Spirit/REL%20300\\_Spirit/CandombleBeads&Identity.pdf](http://www.iupui.edu/~womrel/REL%20300%20Spirit/REL%20300_Spirit/CandombleBeads&Identity.pdf)

**WEEK 5:** Fernández, Alexander. "Odu in Motion: Embodiment, Autoethnography, and the [un]texting of a Living Religious Practice." *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures*. 2.1 (2017): 101. Print.

<https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.fiu.edu/article/681948?>

**WEEK 6:** Mohammed, Patricia. "The Sign of the Loa." *Small Axe : a Journal of Criticism*. (1997): 124-149. Print.

<https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.fiu.edu/article/187927?>

**WEEK 7:** Dolin, Kasey Qynn. "Words, Sounds, and Power in Jamaican Rastafari." *MACLAS Latin American Essays*, 2001, p. 55+. *Gale General OneFile*

[https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T002&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA92615133&docType=Article&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZGPP-MOD1&prodId=ITOF&contentSet=GALE%7CA92615133&searchId=R1&userGroupName=miam11506&inPS=true](https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T002&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA92615133&docType=Article&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZGPP-MOD1&prodId=ITOF&contentSet=GALE%7CA92615133&searchId=R1&userGroupName=miam11506&inPS=true)

**WEEK 13:** Walker, Andrew T. "How (Not) to Talk about Religious Pluralism,"

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/how-not-to-talk-about-religious-pluralism>

Fall 2019  
**Creating Your Own Religion**  
**Project Part I&II**

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The purpose of this project is to create a new religion discussing its historical origins, contemporary practice, and changes and adaptations that have developed in recent years with the religion's movement toward globalization and modernity using an anthropological design, specifically ethnography, or a research method where **researchers observe and/or interact with a study's participants in their real-life environment**. Accordingly, student-groups will present their created religions as if they had lived among the group or visited regularly in order to devise a sound ethnographic analysis. The following is a link that can help to better understand the ethnographic method of anthropological research necessary to successfully complete this project. BTW, it's the only video that I found to be uncomplicated!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Izz3DIEWQ>

By the second week of classes, student-groups will come to class prepared to hand in a short abstract of an idea for their project. It is helpful to think about a known religion, one that is not necessarily personal to you, or any of the ones made available in the reading materials assigned for this class and use this information as a tool to structure your own religion. Though this assignment allows you to extract ideas and doctrines from established religious cultures, your final work must be completely unique, innovative, compelling, and creative.

*Here are the topics that abstract of your project should address:*

- Name of your religion (tentative)
- Give a detailed creation myth for your religion (brief)
- Main belief/s of your religion (doctrines)
- Holy figure/deities/gods

**\*You should briefly describe as much as possible your religion with examples, details, and stories.**

**\*\*No more that 300 typed words, Times New Roman style, 12pt font, and double spaced**

***Part II: The Final Product***

For Part II of your project, student-groups will do a formal oral presentation of their work for their classmates and invited guests (PowerPoints are optional, but helpful, and nice to look at). Please feel free to explore your creativity as much as you want! The aim of this section of the assignment is to assist you in learning how to turn the written word into an artistically designed mental picture that serves as both an instructional and educational product. Cyberspace will provide you with a plethora of material in order for your project to be successful, so navigate somewhat unreservedly.

***Order of Presentation (PowerPoints are optional)***

The following are the criteria that should be developed thoroughly and comprehensively for your final project to be successful.

- 1) The name of the religion – what are the origins and meanings of the name?
- 2) Why did you choose this religious group for this ethnographic project?
- 3) What is the history of the religion? Give a detailed creation myth for your religion.
- 4) Approximately when (what century) and how was this religion or philosophy established?
- 5) What region of the world is home to your religion?
- 6) Main beliefs of your religion (doctrines)?
- 7) Holy figure/deities/gods, priesthood, adherents?
- 8) What is the demographic of this religious culture?
- 9) Rituals/ceremonies/initiations/rites of passage?
- 10) Sacred text/oral tradition?
- 11) Sacred symbol/s?
- 12) Foods/dietary dictums?
- 13) Dress/particular garments or ritual wear?
- 14) Language?
- 15) This religion has been subdivided throughout time. What caused these divisions? What are the newly established subgroups? How do these differ from the original culture? What were the results of the divisions occurring?
- 16) Were there important changes as the faith globalized, or spread from one place to another? How did it spread and who made that possible? Were there conflicts between this faith and others with its movement and migrations, and what were the consequences?
- 17) What is the current state of the faith? Would the original founder or leaders recognize it as it is practiced today? What elements have remained throughout the centuries?
- 18) How does your religion engage other world religions? You must address major continuities here if you have not already done so for your religion, as in which beliefs and practices have persisted (Hint: It may not be “all of them”).
- 19) Conclusion: The student-group will present their individual thoughts regarding the religious culture studied. The points of view can be as open and candid as desired.

***A final written synopsis of you overall project is due physically to the professor the last day of class.***

***You will be speaking to your classmates*** – peers and colleagues – so if you have a naturally quiet voice, a tendency to speak very quickly, or a tendency to mumble, work on that while you rehearse. Practice making eye contact versus looking at your notes or the computer screen the majority of the time. Plan on asking audience members if they have any questions at the end of your presentation.

***A warning to students who put off work: DO NOT PROCRASTINATE!*** Staying home to finish a project is the same as skipping class, and this will count against your grade, and it is a bad coping strategy for when you are stressed. Smart is as smart does – start your research and your work early so procrastination will not happen to you!

***GOOD LUCK ON WHAT PROMISES TO BE A GREAT SEMESTER!!!!***