

## REL 2011 Introduction to Religion UM4

### Sumer-A 2020 Syllabus

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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*“He who knows one [religion], knows none.”*

– Max Müller

*After the terrors of Verdun, after the traumas of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the gulags, to speak of God is an insult unless we speak in a new way...God must die so that God might be reborn. Atheistically. How this might happen is a matter of interpretation. A question of belief of disbelief –or some middle space between.*

– Richard Kearney

Instructor: Stephanie Londono

Contact: **Use Canvas Messaging\***

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### When and Where do we meet?

Class discussions: M, W, F 9:30- 11:45 AM

Remote Learning / Zoom

- Sessions will be accessed through Zoom invitations.

Office Hours: M, W, F After 2- 4 PM

By appointment | DM 301 – Zoom

- Email or talk to me after class to set up a meeting or a chat.

Coaching sessions: By appointment | MWF –Flexible hours after 2 PM

## **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?**

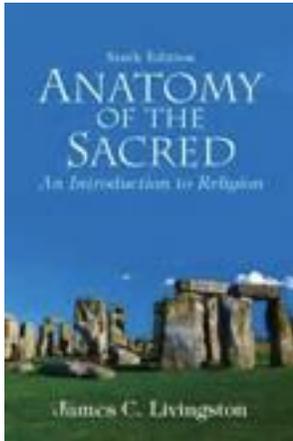
You do not need to be “religious,” majoring in religious studies, or in a field within humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will prepare you to make important connections between your career and the roles that religions play in individual, local, and international 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.

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, collaborate, and communicate effectively and sensitively.

### 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

*\* Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor.*

### Web Resources

- **Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project**

Research and extensive U.S. religious landscape survey data.

<http://religions.pewforum.org/report>

### Recommended texts:

- *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World and Why Their Differences Matter* by Stephen Prothero
- *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn't* by Stephen Prothero.
- *The Great Transformation* by Karen Armstrong
- *Anatheism: God after God* by Richard Kearney

*Ask me for other recommended material:* I can help you explore the intersection between religion and your field/s of interest such as politics, art, business, environmentalism, gender studies, etc.

## How will you succeed in this course?

### Ask/Participate:

Learning is a complex process, but what is certain is that those who do the teaching or share their ideas with others are the ones who do the learning. Prepare and be ready to be involved in-class and on-line discussions. There will be a variety of majors being represented in class, which will make conversations more dynamic and enriching.

### Reach out:

This may be a course that is very different from other courses, with complex interdisciplinary theories and field-work assignments. To maximize your learning experience, I have set aside coaching sessions to help you address challenges with content and/or writing, presenting, or any other project. I will meet with you or respond to your email within 24 hours (except during the weekends). You should let me know what ideas of projects are challenging so that we may work together to help you learn.

- [Sources and Plagiarism](#): As you will be conducting academic research and writing, it is important to identify what qualifies as an [academic sources](#) and what is considered [plagiarism](#).

### Take risks:

Religion is commonly considered a taboo topic, but our classroom is a safe space for honest and controversial debate and conversation. You will be rewarded for going out on a limb and proposing your critical views as long as you support your arguments in a transparent manner.

Have fun: whatever we do we joy we remember.

## How will your progress be evaluated?

### 1. Examinations- Online (30%)

There will be a midterm and a final exam. Each examination is worth 100 points, consisting of 50 multiple choice/ true and false/ matching questions to be completed online. See dates in the schedule below.

- Midterm – Modules 1- 6
- Final – Modules 7- 12

## 2. Quizzes – Online (5%)

There will be 11 quizzes online to help you study the material and prepare you for the examinations. Each module will have an available quiz online with 15 questions. The questions for the examinations will be drawn from the quizzes.

- Quizzes will open Mondays and close on Sundays.
- You will have two chances to take each quiz- lowest score will be dropped.

## 3. Assignments (45%)

There will be three written projects: Two short papers and a term paper. Essays will be turned into Turnitin.com via Assignments in Canvas. It is not necessary to create a separate Turnitin account. Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your protection, keep a copy of your Turnitin.com electronic receipt until you have received your final grade for the course.

- The Social Justice and Final Paper have two parts, Part A and B.
- Use MLA style to cite academic sources. [MLA style instructions](#)
- Go to the writing center to help you edit your paper.
  - Extra credit of up to five points will be given to students who bring proof of attending the writing center. You should add to your paper name of consultant, time, location, and number of confirmation of appointment.
  - <https://writingcenter.fiu.edu>

### A. Short Paper 1 – Religion and Social Justice (15%)

Choose one of the following options:

- Religion and Social Justice-** See instructions on Canvas.
- Interreligious Dialogue and Conflict-** See instructions on Canvas.

#### Technicalities:

- 550-750 words double-spaced, 12-size Times New Roman font.

- At least two academic sources required.
- Ask me: If you need help finding sources.
- MLA style and bibliography.

### **B. Short Paper 2: New Atheism Debate (10%)**

Atheism has always contributed greatly to the study of religion. In this assignment, you are to critique what has been dubbed as “New Atheism.” [See Canvas assignment for details.](#)

- **Length:** The paper must be 550-750 words, double-spaced, 12-size Times New Roman font.
- **Sources:** You must have at least one extra academic source aside from the material provided for this assignment.
  - a. Use MLA style to cite your sources.

### **C. Final Paper: Propose your own topic (20%)**

As an interdisciplinary field, religious studies provides a lens that can be used to analyze not only topics related to the humanities but also economics, the sciences, and technology. Use this paper to merge your topic of interest/ major and religion. See detailed instructions and prompts in Canvas.

- Choose a topic from the list provided and use the theories we studied to explore it.
- **Every student must schedule an appointment** with the instructor to get cleared before embarking on the research.
- **Part A: (10 points) – See due dates in calendar below.**
  - [Thesis statement.](#)
  - Paper outline.
  - Tentative bibliography – At least five academic sources.
- **Part B: (90 points) See due dates in calendar below.**
  - Submit final report. See detailed instructions below and on Canvas.
  - Length: 1200-1500 words, double-spaced, 12-size Times New Roman font.
  - Sources: You should cite our textbook and four academic sources. MLA style.

## **4. Group Presentation (10%)**

Students will sign up for a group during the first week of classes. If you fail to sign up, you will be assigned one. Groups will organize and put together a presentation based on the theme of the week using visual aids such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar technology. Students will present once with their respective groups during the semester. The list with group members and their emails will be posted on Canvas.

- Presentations are worth 50 points.
- Length of presentation 4-7 minutes per student.
- Each student should present their topic and current event.
- One Kahoot activity per group.
- Confirm your topic with the instructor.

**Instructions:**

- 1) **Topic and case study (3-4 min):** Each student must choose a case study/example that showcases the theory studied during that week of class. Every student has three to five minutes to present their case.
  - **Example:** If you are presenting the chapter on “the sacred and the holy,” you must choose one of the theories covered in the chapter and then present an example applying the theory.
    - An option would be to cover Eliade’s theory about sacred space: Why is Mecca, Jerusalem, Machu Pichu or the White House, sacred places?
- 2) **Current event (1 min):** Find a current event related to your topic. This information can be obtained from various sources that are included in the sites I recommend on the blog.
  - The current event doesn’t necessarily have to be related to your specific topic, just make sure to explain how the current event is related to your chapter.
  - **Example:** The White House decision to acknowledge Jerusalem the capital of Israel.
- 3) **Group Quiz:** Prepare a Kahoot game to quiz your peers on the material presented.

**5. Attendance/ Participation (10%)**

You are expected to be present in class and engage in our discussions. This includes attendance and posting weekly questions on the reading/media material.

- Your phone is required for in-class online poll participation.
- If you do not have a smartphone, you may submit your attendance on paper.

### Weekly Questions

Every week students must formulate and post a question and a current event related to the readings of that week on the Canvas discussion board. Your question must be posted by Wednesdays / 6 pm.

- Weekly questions must be open-ended and related to the chapter of the week.
  - **Example:**
    - **Question:** According to Mircea Eliade's theory of sacred space, why is Jerusalem a sacred place for Islam?
    - **Current event:** The White House decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- You must respond to at least two of your peers by Sunday 6 pm.
  - Length: 75-85 words.

### Course breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Scale	Percentage of final Grade
Academic Papers	3	300	45%
Examinations	2	200	30%
Quizzes	11	165	5%
Attendance Participation		100	10%
Group Presentation	1	50	10%

Total		815	100%
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Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range
A	Above 93	B-	81-83	D+	67-70
A-	91-92	C+	77-80	D	64-66
B+	87-90	C	74-76	D-	61-63
B	84-86	C-	71-73	F	< 61

## Weekly Schedule

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Sunday
<b>1. May 11-15</b>	<b>Ch1 -Society and the Sacred</b>	<b>Ch 2- Ways of Studying Religion</b>	<b>Lecture and discussion.</b>	
<b>Topic Ch 1-2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction and class plan.</li> <li>What is religion?</li> </ul> Religious illiteracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways of studying religion.</li> <li>What is hermeneutics?</li> <li>What is secularization?</li> </ul>	Lecture and discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religious dialogue and Ana-theism?</li> </ul>	
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Livingston Ch 1.</li> <li>S. Prothero "Nation of Religious Illiterates" (Canvas)</li> <li><a href="#">Religious landscape in America.</a></li> <li><a href="#">How religious is your state?</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Livingston Ch. 2</li> <li>S. Prothero "Religion Matters" (Canvas).</li> <li>Watch video- R. Kearney.</li> </ul>		
<b>Due</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post Question #1</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quizzes 1, 2 Close.</li> <li>Discussion #1- Post responses.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2 May 18-22</b>	<b>Ch 3- The Sacred and the Holy</b>	<b>Ch4 -Sacred symbol, myth, and doctrine.</b>	<b>Lecture and discussion.</b>	
<b>Topic Ch 3-4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Religion and the experience of the sacred and the holy.</li> <li>Rudolf Otto and the Numinous.</li> </ul>	Why is the language of religion metaphorical?	Presentation- Film: Black Robe	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mircea Eliade- Sacred time and place.</li> <li>• <b>Case study: Jerusalem</b></li> <li>• Sacred spaces and the Coronavirus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Jung and the psychotherapeutic theory of myth.</li> </ul>		
Tasks	Livingston Ch 3. Sufi Mysticism, Rumi- Excerpt. Canvas – Videos.	1. Livingston Ch. 4 2. S. Prothero “Religion Matters” (Canvas). 3. Watch video- R. Kearney.		
Due		Post Question #2	Groups #1, 2 Presentations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 3, 4 Close.</li> <li>- Discussion #2- Post responses.</li> </ul> <b>Short paper 1- Religion and Social Justice 6 PM.</b>
Week 3 May 25-29	Ch 5- Sacred Ritual	Ch 6- Sacred Scripture	Lecture and discussion.	Sunday
Topic Ch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorial Day – No class</li> <li>• What is a sacred ritual?</li> <li>• Types and purpose of rituals.</li> <li>• Stages of ritual.</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Rene Girard- Religion and violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is sacred scripture?</li> <li>• Interpretation and hermeneutics.</li> <li>• Open v. closed canon.</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Liberation Theology and Marxism.</li> <li>• <b>Luther and the Protestant Revolution.</b></li> </ul>	<b>Presentations.</b>  Film Debate: Luther and the Protestant Revolution.	
Tasks	Livingston Ch 5. See Canvas for videos.	1. Livingston Ch. 6		
Due		Post Question #3	Groups # 3, 4 Presentations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 5, 6 Close.</li> <li>- Discussion #3- Post responses.</li> <li>- <b>Midterm Due 6PM. (Ch 1-6)</b></li> </ul>
Week 4 Jun. 1-5	Ch 7- The Sacred and Society	Ch8 -Deity: Concepts of the Divine	Lecture and discussion.	Sunday

<p><b>Topic</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between society and the sacred?</li> <li>• Types of sacred communities.</li> <li>• Charismatic leaders and founded religions.</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do different religions conceptualize the divine?</li> <li>• Before and after the Axial Age: From Polytheism to more abstract faces of God. Monotheism, dualism, monism, pantheism, panentheism.</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Karen Armstrong- The Axial Age and the idea of God</li> <li>• The vanishing of the Goddess.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentations.</b></p>	
<p><b>Tasks</b></p>	<p>Livingston Ch 7. See Canvas – Videos.</p>	<p>1. Livingston Ch. 8 See Canvas- Videos.</p>		
<p><b>Due</b></p>		<p><b>Post Question #4</b></p>	<p><b>Group #5,6 Presentation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 7,8 Close.</li> <li>• Discussion #4- Post responses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Short paper 2- New Atheism Debate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>6 PM.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 5 Jun. 8-12</b></p>	<p>Ch 9- Cosmogonies: Stories of Creation</p>	<p>Ch 10- Views of the Human Problem</p>	<p>Lecture and discussion.</p>	<p><b>Sunday</b></p>
<p><b>Topic</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are cosmogonies?</li> <li>• Types and purpose of stories of creation.</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Enuma Elish and Genesis One.</li> <li>• Genesis two: Purpose and interpretations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cosmic pharmacy: How is the human condition viewed in different religions?</li> <li>• <b>Case study:</b> Plato, Buddhism, and Confucianism.</li> <li>• <b>Harry Potter and the Human problem according to Christianity.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentations</b></p> <p><b>Persuasive analysis:</b> -Genesis and: the environment, women rights, LGBTQ rights.</p>	
<p><b>Tasks</b></p>	<p>Livingston Ch 9. See Canvas. Excerpt of Enuma Elish</p>	<p>Livingston Ch 10. See Canvas- videos.</p>		

	Excerpts of Genesis			
Due		Post Question #5	Groups # 7,8 Presentations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quizzes 9, 10 Close.</li> <li>Discussion #5- Post responses.</li> </ul> <b>Final paper – Part A, Thesis. 6 PM.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 PM</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6 Jun. 15-19</b>	Ch11 -Theodicy: The Problem of Evil	Lecture and discussion.	Debate and discussion.	<b>Sunday</b>
Topic	Defining Theodicy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The predicament of Monotheism and the problem of evil.</li> <li>The Book Job.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cosmic court: God on Trial</li> <li><b>Case study:</b> The Shoa</li> <li>Theodicies that defend, accuse, protest, or ignore God.</li> </ul>	<b>Presentation.</b> Debate: God on Trial.	
Tasks	Livingston Ch 11. See canvas. Excerpts of Job (Canvas) Dostoevsky (Canvas)	See Canvas. Movie: God on Trial		
Due		Post Question #6	Group #9 Presentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiz #11 Closes.</li> <li>Discussion #6- Post responses.</li> </ul> <b>Final paper – Part B. 6 PM.</b>
				<b>Final Exam, Online – Ch 7-11.</b>

