

## General Information

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### Professor Information



**Instructor :** Erik Larson, Ph.D.

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[Erik.Larson@fiu.edu](mailto:Erik.Larson@fiu.edu)

**Phone :** 305-348-3518

**Office By Appointment  
Hours :**

**Website :** <https://religion.fiu.edu/faculty/full-time-faculty/erik-larson/>

**Course Time** Eastern Standard  
**Zone :** Time (EST) | Course  
due dates are  
according to this time  
zone.

## Course Description and Purpose

Religion is not a museum piece but a vibrant force in the lives of many people around the world today. Studies in World Religions is a sympathetic approach to what is living and significant in the world's major religious traditions and in various new movements that are arising. This course provides a clear and straightforward account of the development, doctrines, and practices of the major faiths followed today. The emphasis throughout is on the personal consciousness of believers and their own accounts of their religion and its relevance in contemporary life.

### Why should you 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.

## Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast religious societies and cultures in the local, national and/or international context.
2. Examine these societies and cultures within contemporary and historical perspective.
3. Discuss the issue of religious diversity in national and/or international context.
4. Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
5. Evaluate how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions.
6. Demonstrate creative thinking about religious issues in the contemporary world.

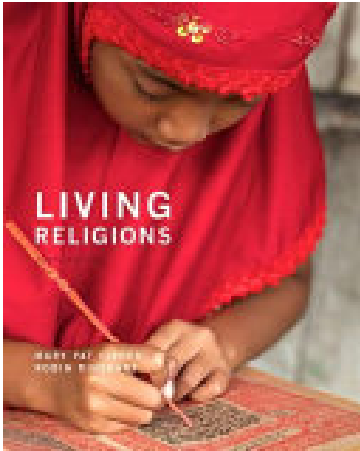
## Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. More information about prerequisites can be found in the [FIU course catalog](#).

## Proctored Exam Policy

This class does not require proctored exams.

## Textbook



### Title : Living Religions, 10th Edition

**Authors :** Mary Pat Fisher, Robin Rinehart

**Publish Date :** Jan-2016

**ISBN 13 :** 9780134168975

**Publisher :** Pearson

**ISBN 10 :** 0134168976

**Notes :** Print or digital versions of the book may be used for REL3308: 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th editions are acceptable.

[Purchase/Rent at FIU Bookstore](#)

## Important Information

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## Course Expectations

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

In addition to the completion of writing assignments and exams, the primary requirement for successful completion of this course will be an open mind. Students are expected to exhibit respect to all religious traditions and peoples at all times. Thus, disrespectful or derisive commentary will not be tolerated in this course. Religion is, after all, a very personal and sensitive subject for many.

On the other hand, class participants can expect academic freedom to express their views. Although religion can be personal, this is an academic course taken for college credit and thus students are expected to examine the topics rigorously. Religion shall not be exempt from the scrutiny placed on any and all academic subjects.

Students are expected to:

- review the getting started page located in the course modules;
- introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- interact online with instructor and peers;
- review and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- log in to the course at least 5 times per week;
- respond to discussions by the due date specified. No late work will be accepted;
- respond to emails/messages within 3 days or sooner;
- submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

The instructor will:

- log in to the course 4 times per week;
- respond to discussion postings within 2 days of the deadline;
- respond to emails/messages within 48 hours;
- grade assignments within 2 weeks of the assignment deadline.

## Policies

Please review the [FIU's Policies and Netiquette](#) webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

As a member of the FIU community you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the [FIU Student Code of Conduct](#).

## Technical Requirements and Skills

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently, and learning to use your computer's operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the "[What's Required](#)" webpage to find out more information on this subject.

Privacy Policy Statements for partners and Vendors

- [Canvas](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [Google](#)
- [Turnitin](#)
- [Zoom](#)

Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

## Accessibility and Accommodation

The Disability Resource Center 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 them at the Graham Center GC 190.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).

Web Accessibility Statements for Partners and Vendors

- [Canvas](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [Google](#)
- [Turnitin](#)
- [Zoom](#)

Please visit our [ADA Compliance](#) webpage for additional information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

## Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes:

**Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not.

**Plagiarism** – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

## Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate’s well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with [FIU’s Panthers Care website](#).

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don’t wait to call (305) 348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

## Course Detail

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### Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox. I will respond to all correspondences within 48 hours.

## Late Assignments

Late submissions will NOT be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.

Avoid leaving assignment/quiz submissions for the last minute before a deadline. “Heavy user traffic” during this timeframe may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

## Assignment Submissions

All work has to be submitted through Canvas. Canvas does not allow instructors to submit on behalf of students. Please do not email your assignments to your instructor.

If you encounter errors or issues submitting an assignment, click on “Help” inside Canvas Course (located on the left-hand panel inside the course) and select Chat with Canvas Support (student). A live chat with Canvas support can fix the issue immediately.

## Quiz Resets

Please limit quiz reset requests to instances when technical issues compromised both quiz attempts. The second attempt is meant to be a “backup” attempt for situations where the first attempt was not completed successfully.

Reopening quizzes after the due date has passed will require verifiable documentation.

## Plagiarism

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 stolen from another source;
2. Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
3. Paraphrasing from another source without proper

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the [University Code of Academic Integrity](#).

Offenders will receive a grade of “F” for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.

\*\*Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

## Extra Credit

No Extra Credit work will be accepted in this course.

## Assessments

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

All assessments will auto-submit when (1) the timer runs out OR (2) the closing date/time is reached, **whichever happens first**. For example, if a quiz has a closing time of 5:00 pm but the student begins the exam at 4:55 pm, the student will only have 5 minutes to complete the quiz.

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact [FIU Online Support Services](#).

## Grading

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Weight
Discussion Board Assignments	6	20	15%
Quizzes	12	10	15%
Exams	2	150	50%
Term Paper	1	100	20%
<b>Total</b>	21	N/A	100%



## Discussion Board Assignments (15% of overall grade)

There will be six (6) discussions in this course. These discussions are meant to stimulate critical thinking about how religions manifest in our globalized world.

Discussion topics will become available Monday, 12:00PM to Sunday, 11:59PM of each week that a discussion topic is posted. See the course calendar for the weeks that have discussion topics posted.

To receive full credit for the discussion assignments, students must post a minimum of 3 discussion threads per discussion topic:

- One post in response to the main discussion topic
- Two responses to other students' posts

Keep in mind that this is an academic forum; all students in the course will see the discussion posts. When criticizing or agreeing with another student's position on a given topic, please make sure to include supporting facts and specific examples to strengthen your position. Contribute links to articles, news stories, and/or other media whenever possible.

## Quizzes (15% of overall grade)

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be attempted through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact FIU Online Support Services.

A time-restricted, multiple-choice quiz will be given on each week's religious concept. The questions in the quizzes will draw from the weekly course content, including audio lectures and assigned readings.

Quiz Availability: Open from Monday, 12:00AM to Sunday, 11:59PM (see Course Calendar for specific dates)

Quiz Duration: Students will have 20 minutes to answer 10 multiple-choice questions.

Quiz Attempts: Quizzes may be attempted twice. The higher of the two attempts will count towards the student's final grade. It is not mandatory to take each quiz twice.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and internet connection, it is very important that the "Practice Quiz" be attempted prior to beginning the quizzes or exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

The correct answers for quizzes will not be released to students. Students will be able to see submitted answers only. Students should refer to their course materials for the correct answers.

## Exams (50% of overall grade)

The Midterm Exam (25% of overall grade) and Final Exam (25% of overall grade) consist of both objective and essay portions.

The Midterm Exam will cover: Indigenous Religions, African Religions, Native American Religions, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

The Final Exam will cover: Daoism/Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, New Religious Movements, and Religion in the 21st Century

The objective portions are online, time-restricted examinations. Unlike the quizzes, students will have only **one attempt** to complete the objective portions of the Midterm and Final Exams. Please make note of this important difference.

The essay prompts for the exams will become available during the exam availability period. The essay portions of these exams must be submitted via Canvas and will be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin. The essay portion of the exams should be approximately 500-750 words long.

# Term Paper (20% of overall grade)

## Important Information

The term paper will be automatically checked for plagiarism using [Turnitin](#) via Canvas. It is not necessary to create an account on Turnitin.com to submit this assignment.

Students may not submit work from a previous semester or from another class for this assignment or any other assignment in this course. It will be flagged for plagiarism by Turnitin.

Keep electronic and paper copies of all written work. For your own protection, keep a copy of your Turnitin electronic receipt (confirmation of assignment submission) until you have received your final grade for the course.

## Instructions for Students

Length: 1500-2000 words, in addition to a bibliography/works cited page

Formatting: Double-spaced, 12-pt font size, Arial or Times New Roman Font

Bibliography: a minimum of 3 academic sources; preferably peer-reviewed publications and books. One of these must be a book reference. These academic sources are in addition to your textbook/weekly readings/lectures. Do not use Wikipedia as an Internet source.

The textbook and required readings will not have enough information about any of the topic questions above to formulate substantial responses. To succeed in this assignment, set aside sufficient time to research the chosen topic thoroughly.

## Paper Topics

Construct an argument to answer **one** of the following three questions:

1. Identify one of the religions covered in this course that emphasizes behavior/deeds over adherence to creeds/beliefs/spiritual experiences in our current era. Then, compare it to another religion that you interpret as emphasizing the opposite, i.e., creeds/beliefs/spiritual experiences over behavior/deeds. Explain the reasons for such possible differences in emphases by exploring underlying sociological and historical themes. What were major world events or cultural developments that may have led each of these religions to emphasize each of these particular aspects over the other?
2. Although Buddhism and Hinduism share similar beliefs, their approaches to the self, or the 'soul' are very different. Explain the metaphysical and practical distinctions between *anatman* and *atman*, and how these concepts tie into each religion's unique approach to the sacred (god/gods) and the path to salvation. Make sure you specify which branches of Buddhism and Hinduism your analysis is tackling.
3. What is the meaning of the word *Jihad* in Islam? Select two distinct sects of Islam and explain key differences/similarities in the interpretation and practices of this term. What role, if any, does *Jihad* serve in the sects you have selected, in today's world? How has this role changed from previous historical time periods and/or how has it remained the same?

## Grading Criteria

- Please refer to the [rubric](#) for details on what criteria your Term Paper will be evaluated on.
- Pay special attention to the following items:
  - The information in your paper. Is it correct? Is it detailed? Do you demonstrate basic knowledge of the religious tradition from which the concept is taken? Is this knowledge evident in your description? You must use at least three academic sources in your paper. One of them must be a book reference.

- How your information is presented. This includes the way the it is organized and language skills such as spelling, grammar, and proper sentence structure.
- The quality of your analysis, how well you support the main argument of your paper.

## Research Resources

The following resources can assist with your research for this assignment:

- [ATLA](#) Religion Database
- [JSTOR](#)
- [Web Site evaluation video](#) (4 minutes)
- [Web site evaluation guidelines](#) from Berkeley

## Grading Scheme

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

## Course Calendar

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# Modules

## ▼ Module 0 | Getting Started

 [REL 3308: Start Here](#)

### Student Resources

 [Student Resources](#)

 [Pearson Revel - Student Guide](#)

### Mod. 0 - Assignments

 [Discussion - Introduce Yourself](#)

 [Academic Honesty Policy](#)  
1 pts

 [Practice Quiz](#)  
4 pts

## ▼ Term Paper

 [Term Paper](#)  
Jun 14 | 100 pts

## ▼ Week 1 (May 11 - May 17)

### Module 1 | Introduction and Indigenous Religions

 [Mod. 1 - Overview](#)

### Mod. 1 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 1 - Reading](#)


 [Mod. 1 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 1 - Video](#)


## Mod. 1 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 1 | Religious Responses and Indigenous Sacred Ways](#)  
May 17 | 10 pts

## Module 2 | Native American Religions

 [Mod. 2 - Overview](#)

### Mod. 2 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 2 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 2 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 2 - Video](#)

## Mod. 2 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 2 | Native American Religions](#)  
May 17 | 10 pts

 [Discussion - Mod. 2 | Native American Religions](#)  
May 17 | 20 pts

Will unlock May 11, 2020 at 12:00 am

## ▼ Week 2 (May 18 - May 24)

## Module 3 | African Religions

 [Mod. 3 - Overview](#)

### Mod. 3 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 3 - Reading](#)


 [Mod. 3 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 3 - Video](#)

## Mod. 3 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 3 | African Religions](#)  
May 24 | 10 pts

## Module 4 | Hinduism

 [Mod. 4 - Overview](#)

### Mod. 4 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 4 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 4 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 4 - Video](#)

### Mod. 4 - Assignments


 [Quiz - Mod. 4 | Hinduism](#)  
May 24 | 10 pts

 [Discussion - Mod. 4 | Hinduism](#)  
May 24 | 20 pts


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▼ Week 3 (May 25 - May 31)

## Module 5 | Jainism

 [Mod. 5 - Overview](#)

### Mod. 5 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 5 - Reading](#)


 [Mod. 5 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 5 - Video](#)

### Mod. 5 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 5 | Jainism](#)  
May 31 | 10 pts

## Module 6 | Buddhism

 [Mod. 6 - Overview](#)

## Mod. 6 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 6 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 6 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 6 - Video](#)


## Mod. 6 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 6 | Buddhism](#)  
May 31 | 10 pts

 [Discussion - Mod. 6 | Buddhism](#)  
May 31 | 20 pts

## Midterm Exam

 [Midterm Exam \(Overview\)](#)

 [Midterm Exam - Objective](#)  
May 31 | 100 pts

 [Midterm Exam - Essay](#)  
May 31 | 50 pts

Will unlock May 25, 2020 at 12:00 am

### ▼ Week 4 (June 1 - June 7)

## Module 7 | Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto

 [Mod. 7 - Overview](#)

## Mod. 7 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 7 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 7 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 7 - Video](#)


## Mod. 7 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 7 | Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto](#)  
Jun 07 | 10 pts



 [Discussion - Mod. 7 | Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto](#)  
Jun 07 | 20 pts

## Module 8 | Judaism

 [Mod. 8 - Overview](#)


### Mod. 8 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 8 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 8 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 8 - Video](#)

### Mod. 8 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 8 | Judaism](#)  
Jun 07 | 10 pts

Will unlock Jun 01, 2020 at 12:00 am

## ▼ Week 5 (June 8 - June 14)

## Module 9 | Islam and Sikhism

 [Mod. 9 - Overview](#)


### Mod. 9 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 9 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 9 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 9 - Video](#)

### Mod. 9 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 9 | Islam and Sikhism](#)  
Jun 14 | 10 pts

 [Discussion - Mod. 9 | Islam](#)  
Jun 14 | 20 pts

## Module 10 | Christianity

 [Mod. 10 - Overview](#)

## Mod. 10 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 10 - Reading](#)


 [Mod. 10 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 10 - Video](#)

## Mod. 10 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 10 | Christianity](#)  
Jun 14 | 10 pts

## Term Paper

 [Term Paper](#)  
Jun 14 | 100 pts

Will unlock Jun 08, 2020 at 12:00 am

### ▼ Week 6 (June 15 - June 21)

## Module 11 | New Religious Movements

 [Mod. 11 - Overview](#)

## Mod. 11 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 11 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 11 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 11 - Video](#)

## Mod. 11 - Assignments

 [Quiz - Mod. 11 | New Religious Movements](#)  
Jun 21 | 10 pts

## Module 12 | Religion in the 21st Century

 [Mod. 12 - Overview](#)

## Mod. 12 - Instructional Materials

 [Mod. 12 - Reading](#)

 [Mod. 12 - Lecture](#)

 [Mod. 12 - Video](#)


## Mod. 12 - Assignments


 [Quiz - Mod. 12 | Religion in the 21st Century](#)  
Jun 21 | 10 pts

 [Discussion - Mod. 12 | Religion in the 21st Century](#)  
Jun 21 | 20 pts

## Final Exam

 [Final Exam \(Overview\)](#)

 [Final Exam - Objective](#)  
Jun 21 | 100 pts

 [Final Exam - Essay](#)  
Jun 21 | 50 pts

Will unlock Jun 15, 2020 at 12:00 am