REL 2011 Introduction to Religion Syllabus
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Summer A 2021

“He who knows one [religion], knows none”
– Max Müller

WHEN AND WHERE DO WE MEET?

• M, W, F, 9:30-11:45 AM, Bayview Housing, Room 127
• Office hours: Zoom, M, W, F 12-5 PM. Email me for an appointment (Ask for alternative days and times). You must meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your progress and final paper
• Note: The preferred mode of communication is through Canvas messaging

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT RELIGION?
The sacred is a universal human experience, and yet, when we talk about religion, we are reckoning with one of the most complex, controversial, and misunderstood concepts. This lack of religious literacy is namely problematic because it hinders our capacity for dialogue and compassion, which are essential to democracies and our development as individuals.

By wrestling with the powerful and changing anatomy of the sacred (the title of our textbook), you will be able to tackle practical and existential questions such as:
Why do bad things happen to good people? How is religion relevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? How can the study of religion help us understand the geopolitics of our time? What does religion have to do with current debates on global warming, same-sex marriage, democracy, racism, and sexism? Is religion a creative or destructive force? How does the study of religion relate to my major? How can I reach my highest potential?

WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?
This course will look into a pantheon of interdisciplinary thinkers such as Marx, Jung, and Weber to analyze salient theories about the patterns and paradoxes of sacred experiences across religions. We will explore how communities from various times and geographies express their sacred experiences through symbols, myths, scriptures, time, and space and how these are accessed and transformed through diverse interpretations. Our fundamental aim will be to
discover the intrinsic connection between the sacred and our notions of self, nature, society, reality, and so on.

Ultimately, this course will prepare you to formulate your own theoretical questions and methodology to create and apply new knowledge in any field of study. It will also provide you with the necessary tools to guide your individual quest. Welcome!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Points for Each</th>
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<th>Points Available</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<td>600</td>
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<td>Group Presentation</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Attendance¹ and in-class participation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>Short paper</td>
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<tr>
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<td>95 or above</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 - 76</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80 - 82</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 - 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 - 79</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 or less</td>
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¹ Attendance: You have one unexcused absence. Please reach out to the instructor ASAP if you have an emergency that will prevent you from attending class.
Required Text
* Other reading materials will be provided by the instructor through Canvas.

Web Resources
- Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project
  Research and extensive U.S. religious landscape survey data.
  http://religions.pewforum.org/reports
- Religious Congregations & Membership Study
  Data files on hundreds of religion surveys and provides the ability to map U.S. congregation data
- Gallup Poll Topics and Trends
  Provides survey data and reports on a number of religion trends in the United States.
  http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/Religion.aspx
- Hartford Institute for Religion Research
  Comprehensive list of online religion data resources.
  http://hirr.hartsem.edu/sociology/research_datasets.html
- The Tanenbaum Center
  Resources including etiquette guides for addressing religious leaders and entering houses of
  worship.
  http://www.tanenbaum.org
- University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture
  Research / publications on religious trends in the U.S.
  http://crcc.usc.edu

Recommended texts:
- God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World and Why Their Differences
  Matter 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 your progress be evaluated?

Examinations (30%)
There will be a midterm and a final exam. Each test will consist of 50 objective questions. See the dates in the schedule below.
- Midterm – Modules 1-6
- Final – Modules 7-12

Quizzes – Online (5%)
There will be 6 quizzes online to help you study the material and prepare you for the midterm and final exams. Each module will have an online quiz with 20 questions based on the lectures and reading material of the week. The questions for the midterm and final exams will be drawn from the quizzes. Quizzes will open Mondays and close on Sundays, 11:59 PM.
- You will have two chances to take each quiz
- You will complete 20 questions in 45 min
- The quiz with the lowest grade will be dropped

Assignments (35%)
You are required to write two essays for the semester, one short paper and a final 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. Detailed instructions for each paper are available on Canvas.

1. Short Paper – the New Atheism Movement debate (15 %): In this paper, students will investigate what is “New Atheism” and its growing influence on the age-old debate on religion and science. To do this, we will look into the arguments of scientist Richard Dawkins and philosopher and theologian Keith Ward. See deadline and detailed instructions in Canvas.

2. Final Paper (20%): Be creative and propose your topic. Toward the end of the semester, you will be exposed to a variety of theories and topics from which to choose. I recommend finding a topic that is related to your major. See the prompts and detailed instructions in Canvas.
- The final paper will be divided into two parts, Part A (10 points), and Part B (90 points)
General Guidelines for Written Assignments

- All papers should be double-spaced, use 12-size font, follow the MLA format, and include a bibliography
- Use Turnitin to submit through Canvas
- For academic sources use our library - https://library.fiu.edu
  - If you are not sure what an academic source is, ask the instructor or a librarian
  - Find relevant sources at the end of each chapter in our Livingston textbook
  - Don’t use Wikipedia
- Late papers may be accepted. Check with the instructor as soon as you foresee a problem
- Avoid receiving a zero due to plagiarism. See details on plagiarism in the section below

Resources and Extra Credit:

- Writing Center: Make an appoint at https://writingcenter.fiu.edu to receive help with your writing. You may receive up to five extra points toward your grade if you take your paper to the center. To earn the points, add the name of the person who helped you along with the appointment confirmation number at the top of your paper.
- Ask me about coaching sessions to improve your writing and presentation skills

Plagiarism
Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking your instructor, a representative from the writing center, or a librarian. 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.

Attendance and In-Person Participation (5%)
You are expected to be in class on time and prepared to discuss the material of the week.

- Your phone is required for in-class online poll participation.
- If you do not have a smartphone, you may submit your attendance on paper.
Online Discussion Questions (10%)
Students are required to respond to three discussion questions. Discussion posts must be well-written and supported with arguments and examples from the week’s material. Your discussion must be submitted by Thursday at 11:59 PM. See detailed instructions on Canvas.

Group Presentation (10%)
Students will sign up for a group presentation during the first week of classes. If you don't sign up, you will be assigned one without your consent. Groups will organize and put together a lecture based on the week's theme 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. Confirm your presentation topic with the instruction before your presentation date
• Presentations are worth 50 points
• Length of presentation 5 minutes per student
• Each student must present their own topic and current event
• See detailed instructions on Canvas.

Extra Credit
Blog: What you didn’t learn in Religion Class
This is our class blog. This blog is a public space for us to connect with each other and the world. Every student will receive an invitation to become an author and receive up to 30 points toward your final grade.

Your contribution as an author:
1. Post one story per week. This can be any day of the week. You will post this under the “Thinktank” section of “REL 2011.”
   a. You will receive an invitation from WordPress. Make sure to accept it and follow the steps to create your account. Use your name and last name as your username to receive credit for your participation.
   b. Find a story (print, audio, video) that is relevant to the course. The current event can be related to arts, politics, economics, food, fashion, music, literature, etc.
   c. In one paragraph of about 200-250 words, explain in your words how this event is “religious” or connected to religious studies. Use the theories and vocabulary of the class/readings to elaborate on this connection.
• If you are still unsure about how to access the blog and post, see me.

More extra credit opportunities will be available throughout the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments – See Canvas Readings are due for these days.</th>
<th>Due: Submit through Canvas</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1    | May 10-16 | **Introduction:** Ch 1 - What is religion? Ch 2 – Ways of Studying Religion | • Sign up for group presentations  
• Quiz #1  
• Discussion question #1 |
|      |        | M  
• Why Study Religion?  
|      |        | W  
• Ch 1 and 2 – Livingston (Chapters available in Canvas)  
F  
Analyze the following Pew Studies:  
• Religious landscape in America.  
• How religious is your state? | |
| 2    | May 17-23 | Ch 3- The Sacred and the Holy  
Ch 4 - Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine | • Quiz #2  
• Discussion question #2 |
|      |        | M  
• Ch 3 Livingston- The Sacred and The Holy  
• Video: The Telescope at Mount Kea | |
|      |        | W  
• Ch 4- Livingston- Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine | |
|      |        | F  
• Joseph Campbell video – The Power of Myth | |
| 3    | May 24-30 | Ch 5- Sacred Ritual  
Ch 6- Sacred Scripture | • Quiz #3  
• Short paper – New Atheism Debate, due Sunday 11:59 PM |
|      |        | M  
• Ch 5 Livingston  
• Video clips - Samsara and Confucius | |
|      |        | W  
• Ch 6 Livingston | |
|      |        | F  
• Movie – Luther | |
| 4    | May 31-June 6 | Ch 7- Society and the Sacred  
Ch 8 - Deity: Concepts of the Divine | • Quiz #4  
• Discussion question #3  
• Midterm - Opens Wednesday -Closes Sunday. (Ch 1-7) See Canvas for Review Document |
|      |        | M  
• Ch 7 Livingston  
• Watch short video on cults, sects, and charismatic leaders | |
|      |        | W  
• Ch 8 Livingston | |
|      |        | F  
• Watch video: “A History of God”  
• Read and analyze Pew Study – When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean? | |
| 5    | June 7-13 | Ch 9- Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order  
Ch 10- The Human Problem | • Quiz #5  
• Submit: Part A, Final Paper (Sunday 11:59 PM) |
|      |        | M  
• Ch 9 Livingston  
• Read Genesis 1 and 2 NIV  
• See Canvas for recommended readings | |
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| **6** | **June 13-20** | **Ch 10 Livingston**  
|       |       | TED video clip: Plato’s Cave  
|       |       | Recommended Film: “The Perverts Guide to Ideology,” Slavoj Žižek  
| **F** |       |       |
| **7** | **June 21-27** | **Ch 11 Livingston**  
|       |       | See Movie “God on Trial”  
|       |       | “Read excerpts from the Book of Job (Canvas).”  
|       |       | Recommended: Excerpt- Hanna Arendt, “The Banality of Evil”  
| **M** |       |       |
| **M** |       | Final Exam  
|       |       | See final exam review sheet  
|       |       | Jeopardy review Zoom session (optional)  
| **W** |       |       |
| **F** |       |       |
|       |       | **Quiz #6**  
|       |       | Submit Part B- Final Paper (Sunday 11:59 PM)  
|       |       |       |
| **M** |       | **Final Exam (Weeks 8-15)**  

**Goals of the course**
- 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.
- Investigate the potential 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 of the course**
1. Understanding the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization.
2. Dissect 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 a better understanding of religion in our individual, cultural, economic, and political contexts.
5. Recognize the strength of utilizing different approaches, theories, and methodologies to better understand the study of religion.
6. Evaluate the interrelationship between the student’s own and other’s religious views to avoid uninformed assumptions.
7. Inspire students to formulate their own religious beliefs or philosophies of life.
8. Develop college-level academic writing and communication skills.
9. Understand and discuss the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religious truth claims and
meaning-making practices.
10. Foster creativity and self-confidence in a communal setting.
11. Better understand how an individual’s identity and outlook are shaped by religious influences.
12. Critically engage the issue of religious diversity and dialogue in national and international contexts.
13. 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).

**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.