FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
REL 3308, Section B51
Academic One, Room 130
Studies in World Religions
Mon/Wed/Fri 12:00 p.m.-12:50 p.m.
Dr. Jayne A. Klein

Office Hours: Monday: 1:00-2:30 p.m.            Phone: (305) 919-5597
Office: AC1 – 214                                e-mail: martinj@fiu.edu

Course Description

Ever since the beginning of humanity’s existence on Earth, religion has been a
singularly powerful influence on the lives of a vast majority of its occupants, and it seems
likely that it will remain so for as far into the future as our minds can project. While there
are some who view religion as a singularly powerful means for promoting goodness and
morality in the world, there are others who see it as the source of most of the hatred and
violence in the world. Whatever one’s opinion, however, it is incumbent upon all of us
today to develop a familiarity with a number of the World’s major religions, so that we
may be better able to understand our neighbors in what, today, is an enormously
complex, interdependent, and global world.

This course will introduce students to some of the World’s major and most
enduring religious traditions – both Eastern and Western – by exploring their basic
beliefs, practices, rituals, associated narratives, and relevant figures.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Analyze the differences and similarities between the religions studied.
- Analyze the historical development of the religious traditions presented.
- Compare and contrast religious societies and cultures in their local, national, and
global context.
- Recognize the different ways of being religious and of interpreting the sacred.
- Appreciate the importance that the various religious traditions discussed
throughout the semester hold for their practitioners.

Textbook: Hopfe, L.M., and Woodward, M.R. Religions of the World. 9th, 10th, 11th or

(Other required readings will be in the form of handouts, which the professor will
distribute to you at various times during the course of the semester, or they will be posted
on the Library Course Reserves.)
Attendance and Class Participation:

Fifteen percent of your final grade depends on regular attendance and class participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **Regular attendance and punctuality are expected of all.** Only one unexcused absence will go without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence will cause a drop of one rung on the final grading scale, i.e., from an A to an A-, an A- to a B+, and so on.

**Lateness,** particularly if it is disruptive and/or habitual, will have a similar negative impact on your grade. If you will be unable to attend a particular class, you are expected to inform the professor beforehand via e-mail or telephone and explain your reason.

You are all expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading material, to present your ideas to the class, and to ask questions.

*NOTE:* The professor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus at any time. Students will receive verbal notification of any modifications, should they be made.

Grade Point Distribution:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Attendance and Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Exam #1 – Friday, September 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Midterm Examination – Monday, October 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Final Examination – TBA – during week of Monday, December 7</td>
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Grading Scale:

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Class and Reading/Assignment Schedule

Week of Monday, August 26

Introduction to the course: course overview, review of course syllabus, discussion of various assessments of the term “religion,” some theories about the origins of religion

Reading Assignment for Wednesday, September 4: Hopfe & Woodward, Introduction /Overview (pp. 1-10) and Chapter 1(pp. 15-28) – on-line at Library Course Reserves
Week of Monday, September 2

**Film:** Excerpt from the film “Zeitgeist”

**Lecture and Discussion:** Characteristics of Basic religions

**Reading Assignment for week of September 9:** Hopfe & Woodward, Chapter 3; and Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion*, Chapter 2, “The Moral Universe” (on-line at Library Course Reserves)

Week of Monday, September 9

African Religions

**Film:** *Sorcerers of Zaire*

Week of Monday, September 16

African Religions

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Middle Passage

Week of Monday, September 23

**Film:** *The Middle Passage*

Friday, September 27 – **Exam #1**

**Reading Assignment for week of September 30:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 4 (Hinduism)

Week of Monday, September 30

Hinduism

**Reading Assignment for week of October 7:** Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 6 (Buddhism)

Week of Monday, October 7

Introduction to Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

**Film:** *Compassion in Exile: The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet*
Week of Monday, October 14

Buddhism (continued)

*Reading assignment for week of October 21:* Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 11 (Judaism)

Week of Monday, October 21

Monday, October 21 – Midterm Examination (on Hinduism and Buddhism)

Introduction to Judaism

*Film:* *A History of God, Part I*

Week of Monday, October 28

Judaism

*Reading Assignment for week of November 4:* Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 13 (Islam)

Week of Monday, November 4

Judaism

Islam: Introduction to Islam and the Life of Muhammad

Week of Monday, November 11

Islam

*Film:* *A History of God, Part III*

Week of Monday, November 18

Islam

*Film:* *Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way*

*Reading Assignment for week of November 25:* Hopfe and Woodward, Chapter 12 (Christianity)
Week of Monday, November 25

Introduction to Christianity and the Life of Jesus

Film: *A History of God*, Part 2

Week of Monday, December 2

Christianity (continued)

**Final week of semester – Final Exam** (on Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) – exact date TBD – Final exam schedule has not been published yet by the University