REL 2011: RELIGION: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

REL – 2011: Religious Analysis and Interpretation

Instructor: Andres Arrazola
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Time: T/R- 9:30 - 10:45 am

Room: CP 111

OFFICE HOURS: Monday 1:00 – 3:00 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is intended as an academic introduction to the phenomenon of religion. Together, we will examine different elements which are commonly found among the world’s religions. We will take these elements and compare how the different religions of the world understand these concepts. Also, we will reflect on the female experience of religion and contrast it to the male experience of religion. Next, we will take a look at the relationship between religion and the secular. Finally, as a Gordon Rule class, we will actively work on the student’s writing ability.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1) Students will build a community of learners within the classroom and students develop interpersonal study habits.
2) Students will be introduced to the academic study of religion.
3) Students will have a working understanding of the different dimensions of a religion as illustrated by Ninian Smart.
4) Students will enhance their ability to write formal academic essays.
5) Students will be enabled to compare and contrast the different dimensions of religion.
6) Students will have an understanding of the space and effect of religion within society.
7) Students will be able to assemble a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international and intercultural problems.*
8) Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.*
9) Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.*
   • * = Global Learning Initiative
REQUIRED TEXT:

*Religion: Beyond a Concept* edited by Hent de Vries, [Fordham University Press]

*Worldviews: Cross-Cultural Study into the World’s Religions* by Ninian Smart, [Prentice Hall] – This will be the basis for the quizzes each week unless stipulated in the calendar.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) To write a 3 - 4 page paper answering the following question: Do you think that there is one religion which sufficiently satisfies the religious needs of everyone, or do you think that there is a need for multiple religions in the world? *The focus of this assignment is for the student to construct a logical, organized, and factually accurate argument that is free of grammatical and stylistic errors.* This assignment is eligible as a rewrite and so there are two grades attached the assignment. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade.

2) Write an 8-10 page paper interfacing the *Worldviews* textbook with the “The Case for Contamination” article by Appiah and the “6th Declaration of the Selva Lacandon” by the Zapatista Movement. What role do you see religion playing in the tense relationship between the views of Appiah and the Zapatistas? What are the dangers and pitfalls for religion? What opportunities are there for religion to play a constructive role with respect to the arguments of each author? How do these social issues affect and change the dimensions of religion? Finally, after reading the approaches of the Zapatistas and Appiah, consider what was your approach to these issues and if it changed in any significant way after taking this class? Do you see any way of reconciliation? This will be worth 10% of the final grade.

3) A group activity which a detailed explanation of this assignment is located further down the syllabus. This is worth 20% of the final grade.

4) Write a 5 - 6 page paper articulating your understanding of how the dimensions of religion operate within your group’s religion. This is worth 10% of the grade.

5) To answer the weekly quizzes on the readings. The readings will be posted on Blackboard will be worth 10% of the final grade.

6) To complete the daily reflection assignments on the daily topics and exercises. This will be worth 10% of the final grade.

7) To answer an objective midterm and final that will be posted on Blackboard. The each exam will be worth 10% of the final grade.
8) Participation will count as **10%** of the final grade. The participation aspect of the grade will be drawn from classroom discussions and also from discussions posted on Blackboard.

9) All assignments must be not only be completed, but completed on time or there will be a penalty.

**SEMESTER GROUP WORK ACTIVITY**

On the second week of class, you will be divided into small groups. Throughout the course of the semester, your group will create a new religion using the different dimensions we will be discussing in class. Each member of the group needs to make sure that the other members understand (and are able to explain) how the different religious dimensions are functioning together within the group’s religion. **All students are required to attend every group presentation.** Failure to attend the group presentations will result in a letter grade drop.

These groups will also be used during class whenever there is a group work assignment.

**ESSAYS**

All essays will be submitted through [http://www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), but you are also required to turn in a hard copy on the date the assignment is due. You must cite whatever source you are using in your papers. You may use any citation style (MLA, Chicago, etc.) but you must be consistent throughout your paper.

**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 citations.

Students are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. You may review FIU’s College of Education’s tutorial on plagiarism at [http://coeweb.fiu.edu/plagiarism](http://coeweb.fiu.edu/plagiarism). You should also review the University Code of Academic Integrity at [http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm](http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm) if you need further clarification. Offenders will receive a grade of F for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course.
GRADING SCALE

A    = 100 – 93        C+  = 79 – 77
A -  =  92 – 90         C    = 76 – 73
B +  =  89 – 87         C -  = 72 – 70
B     =  86 – 83         D    = 69 – 60
B -  =   82 – 80         F    = 59 – 0

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory for students to complete their in-class reflections. Students are granted two absences to use during the semester in case of emergency. The only time students may not use their absences is during presentation week. Students who are habitually late will be penalized.

CLASS POLICIES

Excessive tardiness will be penalized. Rudeness, disrespect to any student or to the instructor and any other inappropriate or disruptive behavior will be not tolerated. You must be in class for the period to receive attendance credit. No work will be accepted after the due date.

CALENDAR

Week 1: Introduction to the class. What is religion? Why study religion?

    Reading assignments: Ch. Intro and Ch. 1 Smart

Week 2: Doctrinal Dimension.

    Reading assignments: Ch. 5 Smart

Week 3: Experiential Dimension.

    Reading assignments: Ch. 3 Smart

Week 4: Ethics.

    Reading assignment: Ch. 6 Smart
Week 5: Sacred Scripture and Myth
  Reading assignment: Ch. 4 *Smart*

Week 6: Sacred Ritual
  Reading assignment: Ch. 7 *Smart*

Week 7: Religion, and the Social Dimension
  Reading assignment: Ch. 6 *Smart*

**First writing assignment due on Friday at 5 p.m. online.**

Week 8: Founding Figures
  Reading assignment: =)

  **Midterm on Blackboard.**

Week 9: Writing Workshop
  Reading assignment: Appiah and Zapatista article

Week 10: Religion and Memory
  Reading assignment: “Religion as Memory” – Daniele Hervieu-Leger; “Abraham, the Other” – Jacques Derrida – *Religion*

  **Second assignment due on Friday at the 5 p.m. online.**

Week 11: Secularization and Religion

Week 12: Religion, Technology, and Nature
Week 13: Religion and Philosophy


Week 14: Religion and Politics


   Third writing assignment due on Friday at 5 p.m.

Week 15: Group Presentations.

   Assignments: The final exam will be posted on Blackboard.

Week 16: Group Presentations (if necessary).

This syllabus represents a contract between the instructor and the student. The syllabus is subject to change.