

REL 2011 - U01
INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION
FALL 2022

Meeting Location: PC 213

Meeting Time: Tu & Th 9:30 am-10:45 am

Instructor:

Teaching Assistant

Dr. Alfonso Matas
Department of Religious Studies

N/A

Office: DM 3rd Floor

Office Hours: By appointment every Tu and Th before/after class

Email: CANVAS Inbox

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 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 understand the complexity of the definitions of religion and secularization, and the role religion plays in 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, communicate effectively, respond sensitively, collaborate with others and creatively resolve conflict.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Explain the basic history, development, and belief systems of various religious traditions.
- Recognize religious themes and concepts found in other field of study
- Identify the meaning behind religious concepts and practices
- Evaluate their own religious views regarding other cultures and paradigms of religious belief and practice
- Apply critical thinking to various topics in the field of religious studies
- Perform field research to better understand a particular religious
- Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world

Global Learning Objectives Targeted

- Analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives
- Assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world

Coursework:

Quizzes (20% of grade)

Worldview Essay (10% of grade): 1000 words – Due Sep 18th

Midterm Exam (20% of grade) – Due date October 16th

Site Visit Report (15% of grade): 4000 words – Due date Nov 20th

Preliminary One-page Visit Report (5% of final grade)

Final Exam (20% of grade) – December 8th

Attendance (5% of grade)

Class Participation (5% of grade)

Textbook:

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion

Author: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall, Edition: 6th ISBN: 013600380X ISBN-13: 9780136003809

1. INDIVIDUAL (ONLINE) CANVAS QUIZZES (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

These are short multiple choice, True/false, and/or short answer quizzes on the week's content that you will be taken individually, online after the class chapter is covered. No make-ups are allowed for these quizzes. Even if you are not planning to attend the lecture, you are required to take the quiz online before class time. Late submissions will not be accepted, so plan accordingly.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, 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 quiz 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.

2. WORLDVIEW ESSAY (10% OF FINAL GRADE)

This is a 1000 personal worldview essay. Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS.

3. MID-TERM EXAM (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

This is 24 question multiple choice which included three short essay questions covering the material the first 7 textbook chapters plus class content.

4. INDIVIDUAL REL SITE VISIT REPORT (15% OF FINAL GRADE)

For this individual project students are required to write a term paper (5 pages) based on their fieldwork in a chosen religious site. Further guidelines for this project can be found in CANVAS. (Global Awareness, Global Perspective, and Global Engagement).

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5. PRELIMINARY SITE VISIT REPORT (5% OF FINAL GRADE)

This is a one-page report you are required to submit prior to attending your final visit to the religious site you have selected (read the project description in CANVAS).

6. FINAL EXAM - ONLINE (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

The final Exam is a multiple-choice exam. You will take it online during finals week. It is a timed test. It will test your overall understanding/learning in the course. It will not be based on memorization. It will be based on your individual assignments, team activities/discussions, and key learning points in the course. You can find the detailed guidelines and exam review on CANVAS.

7. ATTENDANCE - (5% OF FINAL GRADE)**8. CLASS PARTICIPATION - (5% OF FINAL GRADE)****Attendance policy:**

Attendance: all students are expected to be prepared and to be on time. Students are expected to treat the instructor, as well as other students with dignity and respect, especially in cases where a diversity of opinion arises. Students who engage in disruptive behavior are subject to disciplinary action, including removal from the course. Attendance will be graded and will represent 5% of your final grade. If you need to miss a class due to illness (medical doctor's note), religious observances or team participation (official paperwork) you must notify me prior to the class. In order to receive attendance credit for justified irregular attendances student must send me a CANVAS mail identifying in detail the missed calendar dates and provide as well a justifiable excused. If this step is omitted the student will receive a grade commensurate with FIU Check In records. Your attendance score is calculated by the number of times you attend class, divided by total class meetings. It is your responsibility to make sure you are signed in for attendance. Attendance will be taken through an electronic attendance solution called FIU Check-in. If you leave class early or arrive to class late, it will be reflected in your attendance score.

COURSE POLICIES:

CANVAS - My Grades: Check your grades periodically. It is your responsibility to check your grades on CANVAS and to inform me on missing grades/assignments before the semester ends.

ACADEMIC CUNDUCT. 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 to honestly 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.

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 at <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2codeofacainteg.htm>. 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.

TARDINESS: Assignments received after the deadline will lose 1/2 or 1 grade; one week and over 1 full grade or more.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS: Please notify the faculty prior to or immediately upon commencement of this course about your accommodation needs as in accordance with FIU policy. You will be accommodated accordingly.

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 Main Campus (see below).

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.

Covid 19

For the latest, please check the COVID Information link on your CANVAS' navigation bar.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's

constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he or she sees it.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint of belief.

Getting Help

Please come to me with any problems or questions because I want to help you succeed in my class. Beyond the instructor, students may benefit from other resources FIU offers. Here are some frequent obstacles students face, and the programs and services that FIU provides to assist with the obstacle.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

I'm having trouble with a writing assignment. I can't get started, organize my ideas, develop this beyond the first two pages, etc.

[Center for Excellence in Writing](#) (more casually called the Writing Center): During any stage of the writing process, the writing consultants at the writing center are available to help you set clear goals, bring focus to your ideas, and encourage creative and critical thinking. I may, at any point in the semester, recommend you visit the writing center. However, I do actively encourage all students to take advantage of this great resource. Even the most confident writers can benefit from the help our writing center provides.

I'm having trouble reading these academic articles. I am finding it difficult to study effectively. My high school study strategies aren't working in college.

[University Learning Center](#): The Learning Center also has peer tutors available to help you. The Learning Center is the place to go if you want assistance focused on reading or study skills.

I'm really stressed out and it's affecting my classwork or my life. I'm having personal problems that are interfering with school.

[Counseling Services](#): If you find your academic performance (or just your daily life) is hindered because of anxiety, stress, depression, relationship issues, or other personal struggles, FIU offers Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to help you. CAPS consists of licensed psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and trainees with expertise in dealing with student concerns and development. Registered students are eligible to utilize these services and participate in the programs.

I have a diagnosed disability and need accommodations to do my best.

[Disability Resource Center](#): Any student with a diagnosed disability has access to special accommodations through the DRC. You must register with the DRC to receive such accommodations.

I am encountering technical problems in my Canvas course.

[LMS Help Support Services](#): Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring. I can usually help you if you are having a problem with a very specific assignment. However, if you are having trouble accessing Canvas or if you are noticing something that seems like a technical glitch, please contact Canvas support.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week dates do not represent calendar weeks. They indicate the beginning/end of Chapter lectures*

WEEK 1 - AUG Tu 23, Th 25 & Tu 30

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 1

What is religion? Why are humans religious?

WEEK 2 - SEP Th 1, Tu 6

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 2

Ways of Studying Religion

Quiz 1 - Chapters 1 & 2 due Sep 1 before 9 am

WEEK 3 - SEP Th 8, Tu 13

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 3

The Sacred and the Holy

Quiz 2 - Chapter 3 due Sep 8 before 9 am

WEEK 4 - SEP Th 15, Tu 20

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 4
Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine

Quiz 3 - Chapter 4 due Sep 15 before 9 am

Worldview essay due! - September 18!

WEEK 5 - SEP Th 22, Tu 27

Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 5
Sacred Ritual

Quiz 4 - Chapter 5 due Sep 22 before 9 am

WEEK 6 - SEP Th 29, OCT Tu 4

Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 6
Sacred Scripture

Quiz 5 - Chapter 6 due Sep 29 before 9 am

WEEK 7 - OCT Th 6, OCT Tu 11

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 7
Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion

Quiz 6 - Chapter 7 due Oct 6 before 9 am

WEEK 8 - OCT Th 13, OCT Tu 18

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 8
Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality

Quiz 7 - Chapter 8 due Oct 13 before 9 am

Midterm Exam due October 16 @ 11:59 pm (taken online)

WEEK 9 - OCT Th 20, OCT Tu 25

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 9
Cosmogony: Order of the Natural and Social Order

WEEK 10 - OCT Th 27, NOV Tu 1

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 10

Views of the Human Problem

WEEK 11 - NOV Th 3, NOV Tu 8

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 11

Theodicy: Encountering Evil

Quiz 8 - Chapter 11 due Nov 3 before 9 am

WEEK 12 - NOV Th 10, NOV Tu 15

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 12

Ethics: Foundations of Moral Action (Th 10th)

Religions of the World (Not in the book. Class lecture - T 15th)

WEEK 13 - NOV Th 17, NOV Tu 22

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 13

Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation (Th 17th)

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 14

Secularization – New Religious Revitalization Movements – Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism (Tu 22nd)

Quiz 9 - due Nov 17 before 9 am

Quiz 10 - due Nov 20 before 11:50 pm

Religious Site Visit report - Due November 20th

WEEK 14 - NOV Tu 29

Read Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Chapter 14

Secularization – New Religious Revitalization Movements – Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism

WEEK 15 - DEC Th 1

Final exam review

Final Exam December 6th (taken online)