

Florida international university

Introduction to Religion  
REL 2011–U03 & U4M  
Fall 2022

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Professor: Dr. A. Fernández  
Contact: CANVAS Email  
MWF 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.  
Office Hours: By Appointment

### **Why Should I Care about Religion?**

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.

### **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 anthropology, 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.

## **LEARNING OUTCOME**

**Advantages of this course:** You do not need to be personally religious, majoring in religious studies, or in a field within the humanities to benefit from this course. Whatever your academic field is, this course will:

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Expand ability to apply different methodologies to the study of religion.
- Create an atmosphere of self-exploration and self-understanding.
- Nurture creative and critical thinking in the study of religion.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious concepts from ancient to contemporary times.
- Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
- Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
- Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources in the study of religion.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The content covered in this course has no intended bearing on an individual's own faith or religious beliefs. This class is a safe space for generative and thought-provoking discussion, always carried out with the highest levels of respect from all participants. All ideas of belief are welcome as are all points of view, keeping in mind that everybody has the right to think, believe, and practice – or not – in whatever capacity is meaningful to them.

This is an academic environment; please come with a curious, respectful, engaging, and open mind and be ready to embrace the knowledge shared herein in a scholarly, diverse, inclusive, and objective manner.

This course, its content, its delivery, and interpretation[s] are not meant in any way, shape, or form to coerce, convince, or convert any of the individuals enrolled in this class.

Our mission here is NOT to question the validity of the religious theories we will discuss, but instead, we will ask HOW they exist, for whom, and why.

### **TEACHING METHODOLOGIES**

Our approach for this course is *interdisciplinary*, which means you will learn how to critically draw from theories reflecting diverse fields of study to include, but not limited to, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, history, economics, gender studies, and ecology.

- This course is taught in *seminar style* as opposed to a lecture format. This means that as a collective – professor/students – we help guide one another to understand the ideas reflected in the assigned material through a group discussion format.

### **COURSE PREREQUISITES**

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

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

**CANVAS** is the main resource for this class. Strictly adhering to the instructions detailed in Canvas is a crucial part of successfully passing this class. With that said, all students are required to regularly monitor Canvas for updates and deadlines. In Canvas, students will be able to access course information and materials, upload assignments, view course announcements, send and receive messages, and monitor progress. If you should encounter any technical issues with Canvas, please contact them directly at: <https://canvas.fiu.edu/support/>

**Attendance** – Class Participation – Facilitation: Each student is an essential part of the overall learning experience of this course. Timely attendance in weekly sessions is mandatory and graded on a point scale, thus absences will greatly affect your overall grade. It is important to notify the professor of absences before scheduled class meetings unless there is an emergency. The following is **FIU's policy on attendance**:

- At the discretion of the professor, excusable absences include personal illness, military obligations, jury duty, religious holidays, death of an immediate relative, disability accommodations as approved by FIU's Disability Resource Center (DRC), serious family emergencies, and/or participation in official university activities, i.e., athletic events, artistic performances, and other required curricular activities.
  - **NOTE:** Sustainable and verifiable documentation must be submitted either via email or upon the immediate return to class.
    - **NOTE:** the professor **WILL** validate documentation. Falsifying documentation can lead to serious academic disciplinary action.

**Discussion Forums:** Students will respond to and interact with their colleagues to contemporary topics posted to the weekly forums using a modern lens for the study of the religious traditions covered in the course. *Each forum response must be at least a paragraph (4-5 sentences).*

**Summaries:** Weekly summaries are designed to critically analyze the key terms and concepts from the assigned readings and discussions for each week. These assignments offer students the rare opportunity to develop their writing skills in scholarly, academic fashion.

**Synthesis Essay:** The final project for this class asks the student to write a synthesis essay on how religion is impacting a current social movement or global crisis. Suggested topics and guidelines are in the assignment titled: **FINAL ESSAY: A SYNTHESIS PROJECT**

*\*Students are encouraged to make use of FIU's Center for Excellence in Writing at:*

<https://writingcenter.fiu.edu/index.html>

### **Late Assignments???**

- **Late submissions** will **NOT** be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies. (See **FIU's policy on attendance** above).
- **Avoid leaving assignment submissions** for the 30 minutes before a deadline. **Heavy user traffic** in Canvas during this time frame guarantees delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

### **GRADING CRITERIA**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	NUMBER OF ITEMS	POINTS PER ITEM	TOTAL WEIGHT
Attendance/participation/facilitation	15	15	15%
Discussion Forums	15	15	15%
Weekly Reflections	15	20	20%
Research Proposal	1	20	20%
Synthesis Essay	1	30	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **GRADING GRID**

LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE	LETTER GRADE	RANGE
A	95-100	B-	80-83	F	< 60
A-	90-94	C+	77-79		
B+	86-89	C	70-76		
B	83-85	D	60-69		

**A, A-:** awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing an impressive academic level.

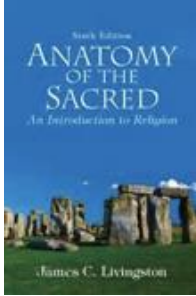
**B+, B, B-:** awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.

**C+, C:** awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.

**D:** awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.

**F:** awarded for unacceptable work.

### **Textbook**

	<p><b><i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i></b>  <b>By: James C. Livingston</b></p> <p>MLA (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) citation:          Livingston, James C. <i>Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009. Print.</p>
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### **GORDON RULE REQUIREMENT**

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write one major assignment. This final paper will be at least 1500-2000 words, double spaced – approximately four (4) pages, Times New Roman 12 pt. Font, and will be submitted through **Turnitin**. All source material must be cited correctly using **Chicago Manuel of Style** and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers processed through **Turnitin** 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) for the course.

### **GLOBAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

As a Global Learning course, students will be meet the following objectives through text readings, assignments, and class discussions:

- Students will be able to analyze topics in the field of religious studies from multiple perspectives.
- Students will be able to assess how global issues and trends are interrelated with the development and practice of religions
- Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to think creatively about religious issues in the contemporary world.

\*This course fulfills the **Gordon Rule requirement**; a “C” or better must be earned to receive credit for this course.

\*This course fulfills the **Global Learning Foundations requirement**.

To learn more about Global Learning requirements, please visit: <https://goglobal.fiu.edu/courses/graduation-requirement/>

## **PLAGIARISM**

Do you know what *plagiarism* is? 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:

- A written work that is entirely stolen from another source.
- Using quotations from another source without properly citing them.
- Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations.

**See the University Code of Academic Integrity at:** <http://integrity.fiu.edu/plagiarism.html>

All work will be submitted through Turnitin. Work turned in with a greater than **35% similarity rating** 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.

**How to submit a Turnitin Assignment at:** <https://help.turnitin.com/integrity/student/canvas/assignments/submitting-an-assignment.htm> (Links to an external site.)

## **ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMODATION**

The Disability Resource Center (**DRC**) collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at (305) 348–3532 or visit its office at the Graham Center (GC) 190.

**ATHLETES:** *Please have the Associate Director of the SAAC – email me all your travel and practice itineraries during the first week of class.*

**DO NOT PROCRASTINATE!** *A warning to students who put off work:* Smart is as smart does – start your research and your work early so procrastination will not happen to you! Procrastination can lead you to lose precious time, pass by good opportunities, not meet important goals, ruin your career, and even damage your reputation. In the words of good ole Benjamin Franklin **“Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.”**

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

DATE	COURSE CONTENT
<b>WEEK 1:</b> <b>AUG 22 – AUG 26</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Welcome to Introduction to Religion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-depth review and discussion of course outlook and directives</b></li> </ul> <b>AUG 24: Discussion Forum 1</b> <b>AUG 26: Weekly Reflection 1</b>
<b>WEEK 2:</b> <b>AUG 29 – SEPT 2</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~What is the Academic Study of Religion? ~  ~Agents of Worship in Religion~</p> <b>AUG 29: Discussion Forum 2</b> <b>SEPT 2: Weekly Reflection 2</b>
<b>WEEK 3:</b> <b>SEPT 5 – SEPT 9</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~ Sacred Symbols~</p> <b>SEPT 5: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS</b> <b>SEPT 5: Discussion Forum 3</b> <b>SEPT 9: Weekly Reflection 3</b>
<b>WEEK 4:</b> <b>SEPT 12 – SEPT 16</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~ Deities ~</p> <b>SEPT 12: Discussion Forum 4</b> <b>SEPT 16: Weekly Reflection 4</b>
<b>WEEK 5:</b> <b>SEPT 19 – SEPT 23</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~Hermeneutics~</p> <b>SEPT 19: Discussion Forum 5</b> <b>SEPT 23: Weekly Reflection 5</b> <b>SEPT 24: RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE at 11:59 P.M.</b>
<b>WEEK 6</b> <b>SEPT 26 – SEPT 30</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~Religion and Music~</p> <b>SEP 26: Discussion Forum 6</b> <b>SEPT 30: Weekly Reflection 6</b>
<b>WEEK 7</b> <b>OCT 3 – OCT 7</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~Religion and Sexuality~</p> <b>OCT 3: Discussion Forum 7</b> <b>OCT 7: Weekly Reflection 7</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b> <b>OCT 10– OCT 14</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~Cosmogony and Creationism~</p> <b>OCT 10: Discussion Forum 8</b> <b>OCT 14: Weekly Reflection 8</b>
<b>WEEK 9</b> <b>OCT 17 – OCT 21</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">~Fanaticism~</p> <b>OCT 17: Discussion Forum 9</b> <b>OCT 21: Weekly Reflection 9</b>

<b>WEEK 10</b> <b>OCT 24 – OCT 28</b>	<b>~Diversity, Coexistence, and Interfaith Dialogues~</b>  OCT 24: Discussion Forum 10 OCT 28: Weekly Reflection 10
<b>WEEK 11</b> <b>OCT 31 – NOV 4</b>	<b>~Secularism~</b>  OCT 31: Discussion Forum 11 NOV 4: Weekly Reflection 11
<b>WEEK 12</b> <b>NOV 7 – NOV 11</b>	<b>~Sacred Scripture~</b> <b>~Hermeneutics~</b>  NOV 7: Discussion Forum 12 NOV 11: Weekly Reflection 12 NOV 11: VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS: <i>Thank a Veteran for their service!</i>
<b>WEEK 13</b> <b>NOV 14 – NOV 18</b>	<b>~ Religions and Social Movements~</b>  NOV 14: Discussion Forum 13 NOV 18: Weekly Reflection 13
<b>WEEK 14</b> <b>NOV 21 – NOV 25</b>	<b>~Generation Z and Current Religiosity~</b>  NOV 21: Discussion Forum 14 NOV 25: Weekly Reflection 14 NOV 25-26: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!! – <i>Show gratefulness on this day!</i>
<b>WEEK 15</b> <b>NOV 28 – DEC 2</b>	<b>~FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS~</b>  DEC 2: LAST REGULAR DAY OF CLASSES
<b>FINALS WEEK</b> <b>DEC 7 – DEC 11</b>	<b><i>CHECK FIU ONESTOP FOR FINALS SCHEDULE</i></b>

**!!! IMPORTANT !!!**

**\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!!** *Because teaching and learning are creative and fun processes, I reserve the absolute right to amend, alter, change, transform, adapt, modify, readjust, and/or revise this syllabus at any time, all in the interest of enhancing the student's overall learning experience. Any changes to the syllabus are discussed with students in a timely manner.*