

REL 3308 Introduction to Religion  
Fall 2022 Syllabus

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



Instructor: Eric Isaac

### **When and Where do we meet?**

Charles E. Perry (PC) 213 MoWeFr 3:00PM - 3:50PM

Contact: Please use Canvas Messages. Alternatively use: [Eisaac@fiu.edu](mailto:Eisaac@fiu.edu)

Office Hours:  
By appointment

**What is this course about?** This course will cover living religious traditions of the world: Native American Religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Their major teachings will be discussed in detail and set in their proper historical and cultural contexts. Similarities and differences between the religions will be considered, as well as each religion's unique contribution to world civilization. In addition, some representative texts from each will be read and discussed.

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

Why do I struggle to lead a meaningful life? How do I determine what makes life worth it in the face of suffering and evil? Is religion irrelevant in our fast-paced technological world? Does the sacred look the same across traditions? Is religion a creative or destructive force? 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 religion will be favored, materials from several religions 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. Religion greatly influences one's epistemology, or the way they deal with what is true or false, as well as the way they look at the world. If we fail to understand religion & secularization, we may fail to understand people.

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.

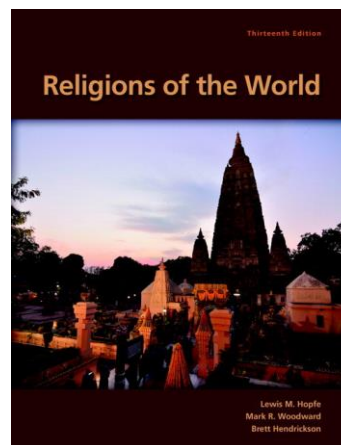
## **I. How will you succeed in this course?**

### **1. Buy the required text**

Feel free to buy older editions to save, but you are still responsible for the material in the below edition.

Textbook: Lewis M. Hopfe, Mark R. Woodward, and Brett Hendrickson, Religions of the World, 13th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall 2015) = RW.

To access the online book, visit this link and sign in using your credentials:  
<https://console.pearson.com/enrollment/stjq9c>



### **2. Take good notes in class & show up! so you can do well on the exams, and discussion portions!**

Examinations (20%)

In-Class Group Discussions (25%)

Attendance (15%)

60% of total course weight

### **3. Do not procrastinate on the writing assignments!**

First Draft Essay 1 (10%)

Final Draft Essay 1 (10%)

First Draft Essay 2 (10%)

Final Draft Essay 2 (10%)

40% of total course weight

## **II. Course Objectives, Goals, & Plagiarism Statement**

### **Course Objectives:**

**This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum for Humanities Group Two (FIU required) as supported by the following learning outcomes for our course:**

1. To provide the student with the "raw materials" for the study of religion by immersing the student in the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, and (select) scriptures of some of the major world religions.
2. To facilitate the informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.
3. To widen, enhance and enrich the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the spiritual beauty, vitality, coherence, plausibility and richness of non-Christian, non-Western approaches to the transcendent or ultimate reality.
4. To encourage the student to enter sympathetically into the worldview of the religious traditions selected for study.
5. To provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable the student to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religiously plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

### **Goals**

- Foster tolerance of and appreciation for differences in human culture and diverse religious expressions.
- Develop fluency in ancient and contemporary religious history.
- 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.
- Identify the relevance of studying religion to contemporary life, human thought, and professional development

## **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.

## **Statement on Plagiarism**

You are expected to understand the definition of plagiarism. See the [University Code of Academic Integrity](#) if you need further clarification. 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 or partially 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.

## **Statement on Academic Freedom & Neutrality**

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.

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## **Late Assignment Policy**

I may accept late assignments, however, if you turn in late work the highest grade you can get for that assignment is an 75%. This even includes first drafts that are ‘replaced’ by final draft grades.

No, you cannot turn in all of your assignments at the end of this course I will not accept assignments more than 10 days after the due date.

No assignments will be accepted after April 23, 2022 with the exception of the final exam. No exceptions.

### **III. Course breakdown**

Course Landmarks	Items	Scale In points	Percentage of Final Grade
In Class Discussion	7	250 (35.71x7)	25
Attendance	1	150	15
Essay I (First Draft)	1	100	10
Essay I (Final Draft after revision)	1	100	10
Essay II (First Draft)	1	100	10
Essay II (Final Draft after revision)	1	100	10
Midterm	1	100	10
Final	1	100	10
Total	14	1000	100%

### **IV. Assessment Descriptions**

#### **A. Essays**

##### **Gordon Rule Requirement**

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to write a minimum of two major assignments. **The essays must have a thesis, and adequately support that thesis. The essays must be organized clearly and logically.** Each paper will be 1,200 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using Chicago style formatting. 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). Please do NOT send any writing assignments as email or message attachments! All writing assignments must be submitted in the proper drop box in Canvas; there are no exceptions. Late papers may be accepted with a legitimate excuse and the maximum score will be 75%.

**1. Essay 1:** You will research your assigned religion and argue what the perspective of the religion is on an approved social issue. You will begin the essay by first describing the central beliefs of the religion, second, you will describe a social issue from the list below, finally, you will talk about how the beliefs of the religion lead members of the religion to act in response to a social issue. Your task is to represent the religion well and write about how the religion addresses and potentially offers answers to and perspectives on the contemporary issue.

- Human Rights. (Choose the existence of OR violation of them)
  - These can be any human right. You can also do social issue rights like LGBTQ+ issues, racial issues. Make sure you get it approved by me first.
- A religious conflict
  - Israel Palestine Conflict
  - India Pakistan Conflict
  - Myanmar Rohingya Conflict
  - Yemen Crisis
  - Armenia Azerbaijan Conflict
  - Sudanese Civil War
- Genocide (choose a specific one in history)
- Political Polarization in the United States
- Economic injustice/Exploitation (Imperialism, or wage differences)
- Inter-religious Dialogue & Cooperation
- Religious/Ethnic Nationalism
  - **First Draft:** You must submit a 1,200-word first draft. The purpose of this first draft is to give you feedback and make you a better writer.
  - **Final Draft:** After my feedback on first draft the final draft must be at least 1,200 words long.

**2. Essay 2:** You will compare and contrast two religions that we have covered in the class. Your thesis must clearly state that the paper will be comparing and contrasting two religions. Your paper should offer at least 3 points of similarity and 3 points of difference between the two religions.

- **First Draft:** You must submit a 1,200-word first draft. The purpose of this first draft is to give you feedback and make you a better writer.
- **Final Draft:** After my feedback on first draft the final draft must be at least 1,200 words long.

### **C. Group Discussions**

There will in class discussions you will participate in with your group. The discussions will take place in class, there are no make ups available. Attendance is essential. You will be assigned a group at the beginning of the course. Each group will be assigned a religion that it will represent throughout the entire semester. The discussions will see each group address a global issue.

The groups will each represent one of the below 'religions' chosen by me.

- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- Islam
- Christianity
- Secular Humanism

### **D. Exams**

The Midterm Exam and Final Exam will be available online during their respective scheduled dates. Each exam is worth 10% of the final grade, for a total of 20% of the final grade.

Format: multiple-choice and true/false questions based on assigned readings.

No late submissions will be accepted.

### **E. Participation/Attendance**

Your attendance will be monitored and makes up 15% of the final grade of the course. If you are not in class (physically or virtually depending on circumstance), your grade will be affected. You will also be lacking critical information to complete the assignments.

Everyone gets 3 days they can miss. Do not abuse them.

Attendance will be calculated at the end of the semester, if I calculate it before hand it will not calculate correctly.

### **F. Extra Credit Opportunities**

Extra credit can account for up to 5% of your final grade. You get one opportunity to do this.

1. Proof that you went to the writing center. You must go and have them help you write one of your essays. You automatically get 5% for doing this. Make the appointment early and show up. Do not email me proof of this. Upload it on canvas.

### **V. Grading Scale**

Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)
A	95 or above	B	83 - 86	C	70 - 76
A-	90 - 94	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 69
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or less

### **VI. Course Calendar**



Week 1

**Topic: What is Religion?**

- READING: Intro & Chapter 1, pp. 1-22
- Introductions, syllabus review, class plan

Week 2

**Native American Religions**

- READING: Chapter 2//3, pp. 22-52

Week 3

**Presentation Week**

- READING: Chapter 2//3, pp. 22-52
- **Group In-class Discussion 1: Present your Religion (Due throughout the week in Class)**

Week 4

**Hinduism + Jainism**

- READING: Chapter 4

Week 5

**Hinduism + Jainism**

- READING: Chapter 5
- **DUE: First Draft Religion Issue Paper Fri. Sept 23**

Week 6

**Buddhism + Sikhism**

- READING: Read Chapter 6
- **Group In-class Discussion 2: Topic TBA**

Week 7

**Buddhism + Sikhism**

- READING: Read Chapter 7
- **DUE: Final Draft Religion Issue Paper Fri. OCT 7**

Week 8

**Chinese Religions + Shinto**

- Read Chapter 8
- **Mid Term Open: Oct 10-17**

Week 9

**Judaism**

- Read Chapter 9
- **Group In-class Discussion 3: Topic TBA**

Week 10

**Judaism**

- Read Chapter 10
- Lecture “The Human Problem”
- **Group In-class Discussion 4: Topic TBA**

Week 11

**Christianity**

- Read Chapter 11
- **Group In-class Discussion 5: Topic TBA**

Week 12

**Christianity/Writing Week**

- Read Chapter 12
- **DUE: First Draft Comparison Essay Friday Nov 11**
- **Written Discussion Topic Friday Nov 11**

Week 13

**Islam**

- Read Chapter 13

Week 14

**Islam**

- Read Chapter 14
- **Group In-class Discussion 7: Topic TBA**



Week 15

**Secular Humanism**

- Read Chapter 15
- **Due: Final Draft COMPARISON ESSAY DEC 2**
- Last Day of Class: APR 22

Week 16

- **Final Exam open DEC 5-9**
- **any later and I cannot give you any grade other than 0**

