

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
REL 2011 INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION  
FALL 2023

Instructor: Mr. Daniel Alvarez

Class Hours: TR 11:00-12:15 p.m.

Office Hours: TBA

GC 287B

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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the study of religion. It will analyze various elements common to world religions and their expressions. In addition, it will examine the search for the transcendent and its implications at both the personal and the social level.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As a **Gordon Rule course**, written assignments are required of all students in order to fulfill the State-mandated standards for this course. The Gordon Rule requirement will be met by:

1. Two (2) Short Essays Mid-Term Exam, 500-700 words (Essay format) (20%)
2. Two (2) Short Essay Final Exam, 500-700 words (Essay format) (20%)
3. Four (4) Group Discussions based on the Readings (20%)
4. Globalization Essay 3-4 pages (5%)
5. One (1) Site Visit Report, 4-5 pages, based on visits to places of worship of select world religions represented in the South Florida area. The Site Visit must be written in *essay* form (20%).
6. Cumulative Objective Exam, 50 questions multiple choice/true or false (15%). You will get **two (2) attempts for the exam**. It will be posted Monday-Thursday during finals week.

**All work is to be done online and submitted to Canvas. No emailed work will be accepted.**

#### OBJECTIVE FINAL

The objective final will be fifty (50) multiple choice and true or false questions. It will be available in Blackboard. You will get two attempts, with the highest score as final score. The exam will be open during the Final Exam week (but must be completed before 11:30 p.m. on the final day of the posting).

#### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Mid-Term Exam: 20% of final grade. Final Exam: 20% of final grade

Group Discussions: 20% of final grade

Site Visit Report: 20% of final grade

Cumulative Objective Exam: 15% of final grade

Globalization Essay: 5% of final grade

#### EXTRA CREDIT

During the course of the term, there will various extra credit opportunities available to the student. You will earn one (1) point towards the final grade, based on 100 points. So if you attend five (5) extra credit events, you will have earned five (5) whole points toward your final score total. Students will be allowed to earn **up to 5 extra credit points**. Proof of attendance to an extra credit event will be submitting a **3x5 index card**, which will be collected by the professor and the Teaching Assistants (TAs) after the conclusion of the event (not before).

Only special lectures offered by the Religious Studies Department, Muslim World Studies Initiative, Middle East Studies Center, Judaic Studies, Institute of Asian Studies, and Center for Spirituality count toward extra-credit opportunities and will be announced in class and via email to all students.

#### SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Students will have one week to submit assignments to TURNITIN.COM (ON CANVAS). Due dates will be posted on the weeks assignments are due. Papers submitted **any time within one week** after the first week dates will (that is, the second week) be deducted **10 points**; any time during the week after that (the third week) **20 points**. **No paper will be accepted after the third week** (see dates below).

This late papers policy does not apply to the final exam. Final exams will be submitted during the announced submission period and will not be accepted after that.

**GET THE RECEIPT:** Students should print the **Turnitin.com receipt** that verifies the date and the hour you they submitted their work. Receipts are essential to settle disputes as to when and whether a paper was submitted (and avoid possible late submission point deductions).

All written work will be submitted through TURNITIN.COM (midterm, final, and site visit).

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and in a "normal" (12 pt) size font (written work submitted in *large* font will not be acceptable); and any quotations should follow the manual of style or the standard style recommended by FIU.

This course may also fulfill the **Critical Inquiry** requirement of the FIU core curriculum if the student earns a grade of "C" or higher. A "C-" or lower grade will **not** satisfy the Critical Inquiry requirement.

Grades will be posted **10 days after the last due date** of the week papers are submitted. Please do not ask for your grade before the ten days are up.

**Quotations from internet sources** (Wikipedia, Encarta, and the like) **will not be accepted**. All source quotations must be from the assigned textbooks.

## TEXTBOOKS

Daniel Pals, *TenTheories of Religion* (Oxford) (0195165708)

James C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, 6th Edition (Prentice Hall, 2009)  
(0136003809)

ADDITIONAL READINGS of brief selections or articles, either REQUIRED (REQ) or RECOMMENDED (REC), by the major architects of the study of religion, and the GLOBALIZATION QUESTION in the final exam (all **very short** selections) are either in the Daniel Pals *Nine Theories of Religion* (PALS) or posted on CANVAS:

“E. B. Tylor and James Frazer” in PALS (REQ)

“Emile Durkheim,” in PALS (REQ)

“Karl Marx,” in PALS (REQ)

“Clifford Geertz,” in PALS (REQ)

“Freud,” in PALS (REQ)

“Mircea Eliade,” in PALS (REQ)

REQ=REQUIRED; REC=RECOMMENDED.

ON GLOBALIZATION QUESTION: Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Case for Contamination” (on Canvas, REQ).

David F. Strauss, Preface to the *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (on Canvas, REC)

Ludwig Feuerbach, “The Essence of Christianity” (on Canvas, REC) Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy” (on Canvas, REC)

Max Stirner, selection from *The Ego and its Own* (on Canvas, REC)

Ernst Troeltsch, “The Place of Christianity among the World Religions” (on Canvas, REC)

\_\_\_\_\_, “Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology” (on Canvas, REC) Rudolf Otto, selection from *The Idea of the Holy* (on Canvas, REC)

Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (on Canvas, REC)

Peter Berger, selection from *The Sacred Canopy: A Sociological Theory of Religion* (on Canvas, REC)

Martin Heidegger, selection from “Letter on Humanism” (Canvas, REC)

Thomas Nagel, selection from *Mind and Cosmos: Why the materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly Wrong* (on Canvas, REC)

## COURSE STRUCTURE

In this course the student will be introduced, using a chronological approach, the analysis and interpretation of religion from the earliest times to the present. The phases or stages of the study of religion are:

I. The conflict of Greek-Roman Naturalism and the Supernaturalism of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) (600 b.c-400 c.e.).

II. The victory of Supernaturalism in the West (c.a. 381 c.e.) until the shattering of the Medieval Christian consensus by the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation (400-1600).

III. The Re-emergence of Scientific Naturalism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment (1600- 1800).

IV. The reaction to Enlightenment Naturalism during the first half of the 19th century and philosophic-religious defense of religion (Schleiermacher and Hegel), and the counter-critique of that defense (Ludwig Feuerbach, David. F. Strauss, Karl Marx, Max Stirner, F. Nietzsche) (1840-1859); The Triumph of Scientific Naturalism during the second half of the 19th century and consequent rise of naturalistic sociological, anthropological, and psychological analyses and interpretations of religion (E. B. Tylor, James Frazer, Durkheim, Weber, Freud) (1859-1980);

V. The emerging critique of scientific naturalism (Heidegger, Thomas Nagel) and the philosophical defense of religion (Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland), and the rapprochement between religion and the social sciences (anthropology and sociology, led by Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, Clifford Geertz, Peter Berger, Victor Turner) (1980-present).

Guided by the chronological approach outlined above, in the lectures I will provide the raw data for analysis, comparison, and the application of the conceptual tools and categories of the study of religion (for this course, the categories and analysis proffered by Daniel Pals in his *Eight Theories of Religion*, and James C. Livingston in his *Anatomy of the Sacred* [6th edition]). Complementing these text books, which emphasize categories, concepts, and structures that can be applied to most religious phenomena around the

globe, short selections from sources will be included that focus on the analysis of religion per se (Pals, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Strauss, Berger, and the like) will allow the student to grasp the categories through which religion has been analyzed and interpreted. I remind the student that Livingston's approach is not chronological but conceptual, thus it is a complement to my lectures. Students are expected to read the material assigned from Livingston even though it may not coincide on a particular day with what I am lecturing on. This is particularly important since midterm and final essay questions (including questions from the cumulative objective final exam) will be drawn from both Livingston and Pals.

To further enhance the appreciation of the religious dimension of the human, the student will select **one** (1) religious tradition **outside his/her own** (whether you practice the religious tradition of your parents or culture is irrelevant) for personal observation through visits to places of worship (from the list provided by instructor). The format of the field reports will also be provided by the instructor (see end of syllabus).

Films/videos giving the student a unique audio-visual perspective into the rituals, symbols, practices, sensibilities, "look and feel" of religious traditions selected for study in this course will complement the lectures and discussions. Last but not least, the reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* will afford the student the opportunity to engage at a serious and sustained level one of the major non-Christian Scriptures.

In addition to the readings on the world religions, as I explained above, I have posted short selections from the major interpretations of religion. Throughout the course I will be commenting on these interpretations, an understanding of which is fundamental to the central objective of this course, and which is also indispensable for answering the GLOBALIZATION QUESTION included in the final exam.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To provide the student with the "raw materials" for the study of religion by immersing the student in the beliefs, doctrines, rituals, symbols, (select) scriptures, and experiences (through site visits) of five of the major world religions.

To facilitate the informed cross-cultural comparison and evaluation of ways of being religious by focused study of select world religions.

To introduce the student to the interpretive categories or "dimensions" for the study of religion as proffered by a renowned religious scholar, Ninian Smart, and through the

focused study and site visits of select world religions assess/test their applicability to actual religious phenomena.

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.

To challenge the student to situate him/herself if only for the duration of a term in the "shoes" of a practitioner of at least one of the great world religions and to "see" the world as the practitioner sees it, to adopt the practitioner's "perspective," to enter sympathetically and creatively into the worldview of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

To equip the student with the conceptual tools and to provide the context for dialogue and discussion that will enable him or her to live in an enormously complex, interdependent, and religious plural world with patience, understanding, and appreciation for that which is different, and in some cases irreconcilably different, from his or her own "worldview."

#### UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS: GLOBAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Global Awareness:** Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the inter-relatedness between local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.

**Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape the actions of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.

**Global Perspectives:** Students will be able to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.

**Course Learning Outcome:** Students will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals/persons – economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.

**Global Engagement:** Students will be able to demonstrate a willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

**Course Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage in negotiation regarding actions of global import within the context of the class simulation.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

## FIU Academic Misconduct Statement

*Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellence in 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 honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct that 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 Honors College Student Handbook.*

*Academic misconduct includes:*

**Cheating** – *The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources, or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations or other work; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Cheating violates both University and College codes.*

**Plagiarism** – *The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source, and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, commits plagiarism. Plagiarism violates both University and College codes.*

**Unacceptable behavior** – *Students who show repeated or egregious disrespect for classmates or instructors, are disruptive, or consistently violate course rules are subject to the sanctions of the Honors College.*

### GRADE CRITERIA

A-A- = Outstanding/Exceptional in terms of content (grasp of concepts, depth of analysis and comprehension) and expression (grammar, diction, syntax, style, organization/structure) B+-B = Above average to Very Good

B+-B= Good to above average



C+ = Above average

C= Average, achieving minimum standards

F= Failed

A	94-100	C	68-72
A-	90-93	C-	64-67
B+	87-89	D+	60-63
B	82-86	D	58-59
B-	78-81	D-	56-57
C+	73-77	F	0-55

## Religious Observances

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

## Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, if you have not done so already.

# COURSE OUTLINE

## Week 1

### I. The conflict of Greek-Roman Naturalism and the Supernaturalism of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) (600 b.c-400 c.e.).

The Pre-Socratics (600 b.c.) to Late Antiquity (400 c.e.)

Introduction: Syllabus, Requirements, Overview of course

The Analysis of Religion: Greek Naturalism vs. Judeo-Christian

Supernaturalism: Historical vs. Dogmatic Method in the Study of Religion

*Required Reading:* ; Livingston, Chapters 1: "What is Religion?" (3-14); Chapter 8: "Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality" 153-179.

## Week 2

### II. The Victory of Supernaturalism East and West (400-1600)

The Study of Religion in the 19th century (II)

*Required Reading:* Livingston, chapter 2: "Ways of Studying Religion" (15-32); Chapter 9: "Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order" (183-208).

## Week 3

### III. The Rise of Scientific Naturalism: Renaissance and Reformation to the Enlightenment (1600-1800): Spinoza, Reimarus, Hume, and Kant

Livingston, Chapter 4: "Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine" (53-73).

Week 4

## IV. Reaction to Enlightenment Naturalism in the 19th Century

Defense of Religion in the in the First Half of the 19th Century:  
Schleiermacher and Hegel (1800-1840)

*Required Reading:* Alvarez, "Study of Religion in the West: 1800-1900" (on Canvas);  
Livingston, Chapter 5: "Sacred Ritual" (74-93).

*Recommended:* David F. Strauss, Preface to the *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (on Canvas).

### CASE STUDY I: RITUAL & SACRIFICE IN ANCIENT RELIGIONS

Week 5

The Radical Defense of Scientific Naturalism: The "Hegelian Left"  
(Feuerbach, Strauss, Stirner, and Marx), Darwin, and Nietzsche)

*Required Reading:* Alvarez, "Study of Religion in the West: 1900-1960" (on Blackboard);  
Livingston, Chapter 6: "Sacred Scripture" (96-123).

*Recommended:* Ludwig Feuerbach, "The Essence of Christianity"; Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy" (on Canvas).

Week 6

The Triumph of Scientific Naturalism: The Sociological; Anthropological-  
Psychological Analysis of Religion (2nd week later paper submission: 10  
point deduction)

*Required Reading:* Livingston, Chapter 10: "Views of the Human Problem" (212-231);  
"Karl Marx" (in Pals).

*Recommended:* Max Stirner, selection from *The Ego and its Own* (on Canvas).

**CASE STUDY II:** A Sociological Interpretation & Critique of the *Bhagavad Gita* Karl Marx  
versus Emile Durkheim

## Week 7

*Required Reading:* “Emile Durkheim” (in Pals). Livingston, Chapter 13: “Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation” (287-337).

## Week 8      MIDTERM EXAM DUE (ON CANVAS)

*Required Reading:* “E. B. Tylor and James Frazer” (in Pals); Readings from the Bible that illustrate the Numinous: Exodus 1-4; II Kings 3:24-27; Kingship Ideology: Psalm 2, 89, II Chronicles 13; Prophetic Critique of religion and kingship ideology: I Kings 12, Isaiah 58, 61, Jeremiah 7.

## Week 9

(Second week late paper submission: 10 points deduction)

*Required Reading:* Livingston, Chapter 12, “Ethics: The Foundations of Moral Action” (259-283).

*Recommended:* Peter Berger, selection from *The Sacred Canopy* (on Canvas).

**CASE STUDY III:** Kingship Propaganda in Ancient Israel and the Prophetic Critique

## Week 10

Christianity: Sects, Church, and Cults: Bureaucrats, Prophets, and Charismatic Leaders

*Required Reading:* Livingston, Chapter 7: “Society and the Sacred” (124-147); “Max Weber” (in Pals).

**CASE STUDY IV:** EARLY CATHOLICISM & BHAGAVAD GITA

## Week 11

Freud (and others) and the Psychological Interpretation of Religion

*Required Reading:* “Freud” in Pals.

## Week 12

### V. Scientific Naturalism Challenged: The Recovery of the Sacred (Otto, Eliade, Geertz, Heidegger)

*The Sociological/Anthropological Rapprochement with Religion*

*Required Readings:* Livingston, Chapter 11: “Theodicy: Encountering Evil” (35-254); Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (on Canvas).

## Week 13

*Required Reading:* Livingston, Chapter 3: “The Sacred and the Holy” (37-50); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (on Canvas); “Mircea Eliade,” in Pals; selections from Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” (on Canvas)

## Week 14

The Philosophical Defense of Religion: Thomas Nagel, William Lane Craig, Alvin Plantinga, and the Rise of Fundamentalism

*Required Reading:* Livingston, Chapter 14: “Secularization [and] Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism” (341-357); J. P. Moreland, “Slouching Toward Theism: Reflections on Thomas Nagel’s *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is almost Certainly Wrong*” (on Canvas).

### CASE STUDY V: VARIETIES OF FUNDAMENTALISMS

## Week 15    OBJECTIVE FINAL EXAM POSTED WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS

History, Horizons, Relativism, and the Question of Truth