



REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: RVFB

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2026

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

UCC Category Description

This course satisfies the University Core Curriculum **Humanities, Group 2** requirement.

Humanities courses afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy.

Professor Information

Erik Larson

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TBA

Roles: Primary Instructor

Department or Academic Unit: Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the nature and variety of religious phenomena, belief, and practice. It shows the ways religion is studied, a cross-cultural study of the variety of history forms of religious belief and practice, such as deity conceptions at the divine myth, ritual scripture, rites of passage, views of the human problem evil, and the ways and goals of an examination of the challenges faced by religion today.

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.

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.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- See Course Goals

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James C Livingston

Publisher: Prentice Hall

Publication Date: 2008

ISBN 10: 9780136003809

ISBN 13: 9780136003809

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the [Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop](#).

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Review the how to get started information located in the course content
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum and an appropriate photo
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas
- Interact online with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course calendar
- Log in to the course 4 times per week
- Respond to discussion board postings within 2 business days
- Respond to emails/messages within 2 business days
- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline
- Check official FIU email and Canvas Messages daily

The instructor will:

- Log in to the course 3 times per week
- Respond to emails/messages within 2 business days (excluding holidays and weekends)
- Grade assignments within 7 business days of the assignment deadline

Assignments from the text and other resources are listed for each class session. Students are expected to pace their learning according to the posted course assignments. It is expected that interactive learning and teaching will enrich the learning experience of all students, and that each student will work in partnership with the professor to create a positive learning experience for all. Student engagement is a necessary condition for an effective learning experience and includes contributions to debate and discussion (if any), positive interactive learning with others, and an enthusiastic attitude towards inquiry. Everyone is expected to be a positive contributor to the class learning community, and students are expected to share the responsibility of teaching each other.

Assignments & Assessments

Discussion Forums

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

Discussion Forum Expectations:

- Provide clear guidance on the expectations and requirements
- Available dates (unlimited or for a specific time)
- Criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of students' comments and grade credit expected
(Rubric is highly encouraged)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades.

Assignments

- Provide clear guidance on the expectations and requirements
- Provide due dates and late assignment policies
- Define if it is an individual or group assignment (groups: Let the students know how the groups will be formed)
- Specify and describe how to submit assignments
- State the criteria for evaluation (Rubric or list of criteria)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades

Quizzes

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the Practice Quiz from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet.

- List all assessments (i.e. graded or practice)
- Provide the dates and times when assessments will become available (i.e. From Monday 10:00 am – Tuesday 11:59 pm)
- Provide assessment duration (i.e. 30 minutes, 1 hour)
- Provide details for results
- When will students be able to see the results (i.e. Immediately after the exam, after the availability period has ended, or not at all)
- What will they be able to see the results (i.e. Total score only, all of the questions and answers, etc.)
- The expected turn-around time for feedback or grades

Grading

Grading

Late Work

Late submissions will not be accepted, except in cases of genuine and documented emergencies.

Avoid leaving assignment/quiz submissions for the last minute before a deadline. "Heavy user traffic" during this timeframe may cause delays and/or errors, which can lead to students missing crucial deadlines.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus by means of announcements or messages with ample time allowed for students to respond and adjust appropriately.

Extra Credit

No extra credit will be offered or accepted in this course.

Discussion Forums	3	15	10%
Quizzes	12	10	10%
Exams	2	100	40%
Research Papers	2	100	40%
Total	19	N/A	100%

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

This syllabus is subject to change; you are responsible for regularly monitoring Canvas Announcements, Conversations/Inbox and your FIU student email to be aware of any noted changes

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via the Canvas Inbox. Check out the [Canvas Conversations Tutorial](#) or [Canvas Guide](#) to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox. I will respond to all correspondences within 24 hours.

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 (This week's work will remain open until end of week 2 for students who register during ADD/DROP week.)	Module 0 Getting Started & Module 1 The Study of Religion & Module 2 The Sacred and the Holy	Instructional Materials: • Module 0 Getting Started • Course Syllabus • Textbook: Ch. 1 - "What is Religion?" • Textbook: Ch. 2 - "Ways of Studying Religion" • Lecture: Dr. Northup - "What Is Religion? How Is It Studied?" • Textbook: Ch. 3 - "The Sacred and the Holy" • Lecture: Dr. Huchingson - "The Sacred and the Holy"
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		Assignments (Due Sunday, 11:59 PM): • Discussion - Introduce Yourself • Practice Quiz • Academic Honesty Policy Quiz • Quiz 1 - Ways of Studying Religion • Quiz 2 - The Sacred and the Holy • Discussion 1 - The Study of Religion
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Week 2	Module 3 Symbols, Myth, and Doctrines & Module 4 Sacred Ritual & Module 5 Sacred Scripture	Instructional Materials: • Textbook: Ch. 4 - "Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine" • Lecture: Dr. Northup - "Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine" • Textbook: Ch. 5 - "Sacred Ritual" • Lecture: Dr. Northup - "Sacred Ritual" • Textbook: Ch. 6 - "Sacred Scripture" • Lecture: Dr. Larson - "Sacred Scripture" Assignments (Due Sunday, 11:59 PM): • Quiz 3 - Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine • Quiz 4 - Sacred Ritual • Quiz 5 - Sacred Scripture • Discussion 2 - The Sacred and the Holy
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Week 3	Module 6 Society and the Sacred & Midterm Exam & Module 7 Deity & Research Paper 1	Instructional Materials: • Textbook: Ch. 7 - "Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion" • Lecture: Dr. Wuaku - "Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion" • Review: All material from Modules 1-6 (for Midterm Exam) • Textbook: Ch. 8 - "Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality" • Lecture: Dr. Huchingson - "Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality" Assignments (Due Sunday, 11:59 PM): • Quiz 6 - Society and the Sacred • Midterm Exam • Quiz 7 - Deity • Research Paper 1 Site Visit Essay
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Week 4	Module 8 Cosmogony & Module 9 The Human Problem & Research Paper 2 - Part 1	Instructional Materials: • Textbook: Ch. 9 - "Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order" • Lecture: Rabbi Shulkes - "Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order" • Textbook: Ch. 10 - "Views of the Human Problem" • Lecture: Dr. Wuaku - "Anthropology: The Human Problem" Assignments (Due Sunday, 11:59 PM): • Quiz 8 - Cosmogony • Quiz 9 - The Human Problem • Research Paper 2 Appiah Analysis, Part 1 - Discussion
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Week 5	Module 10 Theodicy & Module 11 Ethics & Module 12 Soteriology & Research Paper 2 - Part 2	Instructional Materials: • Textbook: Ch. 11 - "Theodicy: Encountering Evil" • Lecture: Dr. Gudorf - "Theodicy: Encountering Evil" • Textbook: Ch. 12 - "Ethics: Patterns of Moral Action" • Lecture: Dr. Gudorf - "Ethics: Patterns of Moral Action" • Textbook: Ch. 13 - "Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation" • Lecture: Daniel Alvarez - "Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation" Assignments (Due Sunday, 11:59 PM): • Quiz 10 - Theodicy • Quiz 11 - Ethics • Quiz 12 - Soteriology and Fundamentalism • Research Paper 2 Appiah Analysis, Part 2 - Essay
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Week 6	Module 13 The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity & Final Exam	Instructional Materials: • Textbook: Ch. 14 - "Secularization - New Religious Revitalization Movements - Contemporary Religious Fundamentalism" • Textbook: Ch. 15 - "Contemporary Challenges to Traditional Religion: The Status and the Roles of Women - Relations Between Religion and the State" • Lecture: Dr. Bidegain - "The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity" • Review: All material from Modules 7-13 (for Final Exam) Assignments (Due Friday, 11:59 PM): • Global Learning Quiz • Discussion 3 - The Sacred and the Secular in Modernity • SPOTS (Course Evaluation) • Final Exam
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Policies & Resources

Please review the [FIU's Policies webpage](#). The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses. For additional information, please visit [FIU's Policy and Procedure Library](#).

As a member of the FIU community, you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the [FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code](#).

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights** (OCR) is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.