



REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U05

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

What is this Course about?

This course will look into a pantheon of interdisciplinary thinkers such as Jung, Weber, and Geertz to analyze salient theories about the patterns and paradoxes of sacred experiences across religions. We will explore how communities from various times and geographies express their sacred experiences through symbols, myths, scriptures, time, and space and how these are accessed and transformed through diverse interpretations. Our fundamental aim will be to discover the intrinsic connection between the sacred and our notions of self, nature, society, reality, and so on.

Ultimately, this course will prepare you to formulate your own theoretical

questions and methodology to create and apply new knowledge in any field of study. It will also provide you with the necessary tools to guide your individual quest. Welcome!

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.

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.

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James Livingston

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 2006

Copyright Date: 2006

ISBN 10: 013600380X

ISBN 13: 013600380X

Chapters/Pages: All

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](#).

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

1. Identify key thinkers such as Jung, Durkheim, and Weber and their interdisciplinary theories about the patterns and paradoxes of sacred experiences across traditions
2. Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, sociological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
3. Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of many religions.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.
5. Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
6. Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
7. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

Expectations of the Course

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.

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 the last day of in person class with the exception of the final exam. No exceptions.

Assignments & Assessments

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 and/or AI 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: Religious Site Visit

For this essay, you will need to visit a religious site from a religious tradition that is not your own and write a report on it. This paper must have a thesis. Detailed assignment instructions and format are provided in the course. You will be revising this essay. People plagiarize all the time on this assignment, if you do, you will fail the course. In order to complete the first essay, you must select a religious site and provide proof that you were there. A picture with you at the site is sufficient, if you happen to attend a physical service.

1. 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.

1. You need to submit a picture of yourself at the site for credit. Please attach photo to submission at end of word doc.

2. Final Draft: After my feedback on first draft the final draft must be at least 1,200 words long and cover 3 elements of the religion or site you are visiting.

1. You need to submit a picture of yourself at the site for credit. Please attach photo to submission at end of word doc.

2. Essay 2: Personal Analysis

For this essay, you will analyze yourself using the theoretical frameworks for analysis presented in this class. The purpose of this assignment is to assess whether you understand the basic concepts of the study of religion through naming what is sacred in your life as the thesis. Support the 'thesis' by describing & defending your chosen sacred value meaning against the backdrop of suffering

& evil, and the human problem. Detailed assignment instructions and format are provided in the course.

1. **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.

1. **Final Draft:** After my feedback on first draft the final draft must be at least 1,200 words long and address the human problem and the problem of evil.

C. Discussions

There will be a total of 8 in-class discussions. The discussions will be done in class on paper with pen. They will be in response to various topics in my lectures.

D. Exams

The Midterm Exam and Final Exam will be available online during their respective scheduled dates. Each exam is worth 8.75% of the final grade, for a total of 17.5% 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. Don't 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. It must be submitted on Canvas, not emailed to me.

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.

Grading

Insert notes about grading here. You may want to use something similar to the table below. Edit or remove the table as needed for your course.

Example:

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Discussions	8	22.5	170.5	17.5
Attendance	1	150	150	15
Site Visit Essay (First Draft)	1	100	100	10
Site Visit Essay (Final Draft after 1 revision)	1	150	150	15
Personal Analysis Essay (First Draft)	1	100	100	10
Personal Analysis Essay (Final Draft after revision)	1	150	150	15
Midterm	1	87.5	87.5	8.75
Total	14	1000	1000	100

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Final	1	87.5	87.5	8.75
Total	14	1000	1000	100

Schedule of Topics

This is an outline of the course. It is subject to change with written notice.

Week 1: What is Religion-Chapter 1

Week 2: How to study Religion- Chapter 2

Week 3: What is Sacred? -Chapter 3

Week 4-5: What is Myth? Chapter 4

Week Week 6: Ritual- Chapter 5

Week 7: Scripture Chapter 6

Week 8: Religion Shapes Society Chapter 7

Week 9: Creation/Cosmogony & How it Shapes our view of humanity -Ch 8

Week 10: Concepts of Deity and How Virtue is Shaped - Ch 9

Week 11: Human Problem of Purpose & Meaning - CH 10

Week 12: The Problem of Evil Despair & Hope as Solution - Ch 11

Week 13: Soteriology/Salvation- Ch 12

Week 14: Ethics - Ch 13

Week 15: Modernity and Religious Vaccums -Ch 14-16

Nondiscrimination Statement

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