



REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U06

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Classes are twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday, from 9:30 to 10:45 AM in PC 431.

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

Saiyad Ahmad

Roles: Primary Instructor

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Phone: 305-248-2186

Office Location: SIPA II 526

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 description.

Students will examine the varieties of religious belief and practice: conceptions of deity/divinity, myth ritual, scripture, rites, views of the human problem, evil, and the notion of salvation.

Students will be encouraged and challenged throughout the course to consider how religion responds to a world dominated secularism.

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred

Subtitle: An Introduction to Religion, 6th

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Pearson

Publication Date: 2009

Copyright Date: 2009

ISBN 10: 013600380X

ISBN 13: 978-0136003809

Chapters/Pages: 1-448

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 the Course

Students are expected to attend all lectures, take careful notes, participate in all class discussions and to keep up with all assigned readings.

Assignments & Assessments

Textbook and Assigned Readings

Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion, 6th ed. James C. Livingston. (Pearson, 2009) is the only textbook for this course. A schedule of

readings is given below. The topics refer to chapter titles in the aforementioned textbook rather than giving page numbers.

Week 1 Aug. 25 Introducing each other and the course

Aug. 27 Ch. 1 What is religion?

Week 2 Sept. 1, 2 Ch. 2 Ways of Studying Religion

Week 3 Sept. 8, 10 Ch. 3 The Sacred and the Holy

Week 4 Sept. 15, 17 Ch. 4 Sacred Symbol, Myth, and Doctrine

Week 5 Sept. 22, 24 Ch. 5 Sacred Ritual

Week 6 Sept. 29, Oct. 1 Ch. 6 Sacred Scripture

Week 7 Oct. 6, 8 Ch. 7 Society and the Sacred: The Social Formations and Transformations of Religion

Week 8 Oct. 13 ****Mid-term Exam IN CLASS on Oct. 13th (50 points)****

Oct. 15 Ch. 8 Deity: Concepts of the Divine and Ultimate Reality

Week 9 Oct. 20, 22 Ch. 9 Cosmogony: Origins of the Natural and Social Order

Week 10 Oct. 27, 29 Ch. 10 Views of the Human Problem

Week 11 Nov. 3, 5 Ch. 11 Theodicy: Encountering Evil

Week 12 Nov. 10, 12 Ch. 12 Ethics: Foundations of Moral Action

Week 13 Nov. 17, 19 Ch. 13 Soteriology: Ways and Goals of Salvation and Liberation

Week 14 Nov. 24 Ch. 14 Secularization

*****Nov. 25-29 Thanksgiving Break, No Class*****

Week 15 Dec. 1, 3 Ch. 15 Contemporary Challenges to Traditional Religion

FINALS WEEK ****Final Exam ON LINE (50 points) DATE TBA****

Grading

Grading Scale

A 95–100 C+ 76–79

A– 90–94 C 73–75

B+ 86–89 C– 70–72

B 83–85 D 60–69

B– 80–82 F below 60

Course Goals

REL 2011 INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION offers a broad-ranged introduction to the nature of religion and the manner in which it is studied. We shall employ a cross-cultural approach in order to examine the varieties of religious belief and practice: conceptions of deity/divinity, myth ritual, scripture, rites, views of the human problem, evil, and the notion of salvation. An important concern throughout the course will be to examine the challenges faced by religion in a world dominated secularism.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take be directly with the professor in class, during office hours, via email, via office phone, and via Canvas.

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Nondiscrimination Statement

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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.