



REL 2011

Introduction to Religion

Section: U11

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

2 pm- 3:15 Tuesday and Thursday

Room 1233 Academic

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

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.

Textbook and Course Materials

Anatomy of the Sacred An Introduction to Religion

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: James C. Livingston

Publisher: Pearson/Prentice Hall

Publication Date: 2009

Copyright Date: TBD

ISBN 10: NA

ISBN 13: 9780136003809

Chapters/Pages: The entire book

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](#).

Course Goals

To broaden one's understanding of self and the world in which he/she lives by understanding how religion impacts the world in which we live.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- 1. Classify and utilize various approaches to the study of religion, including but not limited to ethnographic, psychological, anthropological, ethical, phenomenological, and so on.
- 2. Compare and contrast the key underlying beliefs and principles of the major Eastern, Western, indigenous and shamanic religions.
- 3. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and movement of religious

beliefs from ancient to contemporary times.

- 4. Speak intelligently about the relationship between religion and other cultural phenomena such as art, literature, music, film, and so on.
- 5. Demonstrate an increased empathetic awareness of religious diversity and differences.
- 6. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs
- 6. Correctly distinguish between primary vs secondary sources, insider/ideological vs outsider/academic sources, and scholarly vs journalistic sources.

Expectations of the Course

Attendance is necessary

Presentations

Gordon Rule Requirement

As this is a Gordon Rule course, students will be required to complete at least two major assignments. Each paper will be at least 1500-2000 words and will be submitted through Turnitin. All source material must be cited correctly using MLA Style, and long quotes should be avoided. Please be aware that papers with an originality score exceeding 35% similarity will be subject to additional scrutiny and may incur penalties, up to and including an F (0 points).

Plagiarism

Do you know what plagiarism is? Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by asking me, a representative from the writing center, or our library to explain. Many students end up plagiarizing material because they do not know what it entails. In short, plagiarism, or attempting to pass off another's work as your own, falls into three different categories:

1. A written work that is entirely 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 they are your own work and even if you are retaking this class. You may not “reuse” papers.

Assignments & Assessments

Examinations: Midterm Exam 30%

Final Exam 30%

Assignments: 20% Class Presentation with Paper (papers should be 1500-2000 words). You are to visit a house of worship and write about your experience. Discuss their belief system, how their belief system functions in that setting, and how you experience their belief system.

Assignment Paper: 20%

Topics: Septuagint, Koran, The King James Bible, Akhenaten, Athanasius, Martin Luther, The Slave Bible, William Tyndale, Taoism, Protestant Reformation (you can choose from one of the topics). The paper should be 1500-2000 words. An in-class oral presentation is also required with the paper. Also, be prepared for questions on each presentation.

Grading

Course breakdown

Course Landmarks	Items	Scale	Percentage of final Grade
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Academic Papers	1		20%
Examinations	2		60%
Participation			10%
Group Talk/ Activity	1		10%
Total			100%

Schedule of Topics

Week	Lecture Topic	Major Themes
1	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion	What is religion? Definitions, methods, insider vs. outsider perspectives
2	Religious Symbolism and Sacred Myth	Myth, symbols, meaning, worldview, creation narratives
3	Sacred Ritual and Worship	Ritual theory, rites of passage, sacrifice, prayer, pilgrimage
4	Religious Experience	Mysticism, conversion, visions, and altered states of consciousness
5	The Sacred Self	Human nature, sin, salvation, enlightenment, liberation
6	Ethics and Moral Decision-Making	Divine command, virtue, justice, compassion, social ethics
7	Sacred Scriptures and Revelation	Canon, inspiration, oral tradition, interpretation (hermeneutics)

Week	Lecture Topic	Major Themes
8	Midterm Review and Examination	Comprehensive review
9	Religious Institutions and Leadership	Priesthood, prophets, clergy, monasticism, authority
10	Religion and Society	Politics, economics, family, education, civil religion
11	Religion and Science	Evolution, creation, bioethics, technology, cosmology
12	Religion, Gender, and Race	Feminist theology, race, ethnicity, identity, equality
13	Death, Afterlife, and Eschatology	Heaven, hell, reincarnation, resurrection, judgment
14	Religion in the Modern World	Secularization, globalization, new religious movements, and interfaith dialogue
15	Religion and the Future	Artificial intelligence, environmental ethics, religious pluralism, and course synthesis

Major Lecture Units

You could organize the semester into six broader units:

1. Understanding Religion

- What is religion?
- Theories of religion
- Religious language and symbolism

2. How Religion Functions

- Myth
- Ritual

- Religious experience
- Sacred time and sacred space

3. Belief and Practice

- Scripture
- Theology
- Ethics
- Prayer and worship

4. Religious Communities

- Leadership
- Institutions
- Tradition
- Religious authority

5. Religion and Contemporary Issues

- Science
- Politics
- Gender
- Race
- Human rights

6. Global Religious Perspectives

- Comparative approaches
- Religious diversity
- Interfaith dialogue
- Future of religion

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

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.

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.

